

Resilience and Adaptation in the Teaching Profession: The Lived Experiences of Beginning Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences, resilience, and adaptation of beginning Filipino teachers during their first years of teaching in the United States. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, nine beginning teachers with two to four years of classroom experience, currently employed in public schools within Johnston County, North Carolina, were purposively selected based on defined inclusion criteria. Data were gathered through validated, semi-structured one-on-one interviews conducted via Zoom, supported by field notes, and transcribed verbatim. The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis, and trustworthiness was ensured through member checking, peer debriefing, and researcher reflexivity, in line with Lincoln and Guba's criteria. Anchored in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, the study yielded six major domains and twenty-four themes aligned to the research questions. Findings revealed that participants moved from initial professional vulnerability—emotional exhaustion, self-doubt, and impostor syndrome—toward stability and instructional expertise, anchored by a professional identity that was reconstructed rather than surrendered. They faced layered, co-occurring challenges, including recalibrating classroom management for vocal and dynamic learners, crossing language barriers, navigating differentiation and IEP documentation, and bearing heavy workloads compounded by homesickness. Resilience emerged as a collaborative achievement built on a dual-layered support system combining the Bayanihan-grounded Filipino community with formal mentoring, though community engagement was selective rather than uniform. Through reflective practice and accumulated classroom victories, participants built confidence, competence, and professional agency, moving from surviving to thriving. Cultural adaptation strengthened rather than diluted their identity, and participants identified concrete induction, mentoring, and reintegration gaps—including the absence of any DepEd mechanism to share returnees' expertise. The study recommends practical, differentiated onboarding, growth-oriented evaluation, yearlong mentoring, culturally responsive preparation, and a DepEd reintegration pathway.

Keywords: beginning teachers, teacher resilience, adaptation, lived experiences, Filipino teachers

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary classroom has developed into a highly dynamic and demanding setting, making teaching a rigorous test of emotional fortitude, structural agility, and psychological endurance. Effective teaching is no longer determined by subject-matter expertise alone; it requires an extraordinary ability to adjust quickly to complex student behaviors, burdensome administrative structures, and changing institutional measures. When beginning teachers enter this high-stakes environment, their early experiences lay the groundwork for either early, stress-induced turnover or a long-lasting, meaningful career.

Globally, educational research increasingly views teacher resilience as a systemic phenomenon rather than a singular individual characteristic. Contextual factors such as local school culture, community support, and policy contexts significantly influence an educator's ability to handle professional pressures (Mullen et al., 2021). Despite this knowledge, roughly half of newly hired teachers worldwide still leave the profession within the first five years due to severe operational stress and a perceived lack of focused institutional support (Stewart, Rotheram-Fuller, & Liou, 2021). This trend highlights a persistent weakness at the entry point of the teaching pipeline. It underscores the urgent need to investigate how new teachers adapt and develop resilience across diverse learning contexts.

In the United States, this vulnerability manifests as a persistent, systemic teacher shortage that affects high-need fields including STEM, special education, and rural districts. Arriving teachers are sometimes placed directly into demanding classrooms with little transitional buffering, where they are expected to perform immediately. While resilience and well-developed socioemotional skills are essential for enhancing student engagement, classroom management, and instructional efficacy, the absence of these protective factors leaves new teachers vulnerable to burnout, driving high turnover and institutional instability (Stewart et al., 2021). For Filipino educators who migrate to teach in the United States, these pressures are compounded by the need to adapt to unfamiliar classroom cultures, administrative systems, and community contexts while sustaining their professional identity.

Despite extensive macro-level documentation of attrition rates and systemic resource deficits, there remains a critical shortage of qualitative, deeply contextualized research examining the specific internal negotiations, bicultural identity formations, and everyday adaptive mechanisms of beginning international teachers as they navigate these friction points. General resilience and mentoring models exist, but their effectiveness varies because they are rarely grounded in teachers' real, unvarnished lived experiences. By capturing the genuine stories of beginning Filipino teachers in the United States, this study addresses the empirical gap. It provides qualitative insights needed to develop focused interventions, optimize instructional self-efficacy, and translate early operational survival into long-term professional mastery.

Objective of the Study

This study examined the resilience and adaptation strategies of beginning Filipino teachers as they negotiated the challenges of the teaching profession in the United States. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How did beginning teachers describe their lived experiences during their first years of teaching?
2. What challenges and stressors did they encounter during their transition into the teaching profession?
3. What coping mechanisms, adaptation strategies, and support systems helped them overcome these challenges?
4. How did these experiences contribute to their personal and professional transformation as teachers?
5. What cultural changes did they encounter, and how did they overcome them?
6. What insights were drawn to enhance induction programs and policies for new teachers?

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is anchored in Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), which explains that human functioning results from the continuous, reciprocal interaction of three factors: personal factors (beliefs, identity, emotions, knowledge, motivation, and self-efficacy); behavioral factors (actions, coping mechanisms, teaching practices, help-seeking, and persistence); and environmental factors (workplace conditions, cultural expectations, school policies, mentoring, professional development, and community support).

The framework proposes that the resilience and adaptation of beginning Filipino teachers develop through the reciprocal interaction of these factors. Challenging classroom and organizational conditions may initially weaken confidence and produce stress, loneliness, and self-doubt. However, successful teaching experiences, observation of colleagues, encouragement from mentors, and emotional support from Filipino communities strengthen self-efficacy. Bandura identifies mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and emotional or physiological states as key sources of self-efficacy. As teachers develop stronger self-efficacy, they become more willing to modify their practices, persist through challenges, seek assistance, and exercise professional agency—generating further successful experiences and creating a reinforcing cycle of resilience and growth that moves teachers from survival to thriving.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

To investigate the lived experiences of beginning teachers regarding resilience and adaptability, this study

employed a qualitative phenomenological design. In contrast to approaches that measure predetermined variables or examine statistical relationships, phenomenology concentrates on subjective human experience as the main subject of study (Käufner & Chemero, 2021). Because it aims to comprehend and characterize the fundamental nature of human experiences from the first-hand viewpoint of those who lived them, this design was highly appropriate (Badil et al., 2023). The study therefore collected the unfiltered, detailed narratives of beginning teachers to capture the depth, structural meaning-making, and emotional complexity of their coping mechanisms and adaptive strategies.

Research Locale and Participants

The study was conducted in selected public schools across Johnston County, North Carolina, United States. The participants were nine (9) beginning teachers with two to four years of experience in US classrooms—the period considered most crucial for professional growth, when resilient and adaptive mechanisms are most evident. To ensure focus on the realities of the public education system, participants were currently employed solely in US public schools. Only regular classroom teachers responsible for direct lesson delivery, classroom management, and student engagement were invited; those with coordinator or administrative roles were excluded to maintain group homogeneity. All participants gave informed consent and voluntarily agreed to share their genuine personal and professional experiences.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants who could give rich, in-depth descriptions of their own experiences. By inviting teachers from public schools across varied educational environments, the study was able to capture a range of obstacles and adaptation strategies. Purposive sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest.

Data Gathering Instrument and Procedure

A semi-structured interview guide served as the main tool for collecting comprehensive data. This method allowed the researcher to ask pre-planned questions while giving participants the flexibility to elaborate and introduce new ideas, combining structure with openness. The guide, reviewed and validated by the research adviser and by experts in qualitative research and education, covered the structural demands of the profession, coping strategies, adaptation techniques, and the role of institutional support in building resilience. After coordinating with district offices and school administrators through official letters and securing informed consent, one-on-one interviews were conducted via Zoom in quiet settings that facilitated clear communication. Field notes recorded observations, nonverbal cues, and contextual details. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded, and organized into preliminary codes and broader themes.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurrent patterns and themes in participants' lived experiences, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase framework: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and read repeatedly for full immersion. Initial codes were systematically generated to capture significant textual passages on challenges, coping techniques, adaptation strategies, and resilience. Codes were collated into candidate themes—such as workload management, cultural adaptation, institutional support, emotional resilience, and professional-identity construction—which were then reviewed, refined, and defined, with direct participant quotations used to preserve authenticity.

Trustworthiness

To demonstrate the reliability of this qualitative analysis, the study employed the concepts of credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability, as outlined in Lincoln and Guba's (1985) model. Member checking, peer debriefing, and researcher reflexivity were used to guarantee dependability. The researcher acknowledged personal biases and ensured that participant voices remained central to the study.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the study's findings, organized according to the six research questions. Each domain yielded a set of essential themes, presented in tabular form and supported by verbatim excerpts drawn from the participants' transcripts. Participants are identified by their assigned codes (e.g., Mrs. M.G., Mr. J.B.) to preserve confidentiality.

Profile of Participants

The participants were nine beginning Filipino teachers employed in public schools in Johnston County, North Carolina, each with two to four years of US classroom experience. They represented a range of teaching assignments, including English, ESL, special education, science and mathematics, and had prior teaching experience in the Philippines before migrating. All voluntarily participated without expecting any return.

Table 1 Profile of the Participants

No.	Code	Sex	Age	Teaching Assignment	Years in Service
1	Mrs. F.C.	Female	40	SpEd	2
2	Mr. J.B.	Male	36	English	4
3	Mrs. G.D.	Female	35	Mathematics	4
4	Mrs. M.G.	Female	39	ESL	2
5	Mrs. J.M.	Female	37	Science	3
6	Mrs. M.J.	Female	38	Mathematics	3
7	Mrs. J.S.	Female	37	Science	4
8	Mrs. I.M.	Female	50	SpEd	2
9	Mr. L.M.	Male	36	Mathematics	3

Negotiating a Filipino Professional Identity in a New Teaching Context

Shown in Table 2 are the essential themes and core ideas extracted during the interview on negotiating a Filipino professional identity in a new teaching context

Table 2 Negotiating a Filipino Professional Identity in a New Teaching Context

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Carrying Filipino Pedagogical Roots Across Borders	• Bringing years of home-country experience as a foundation • Treating Filipino identity as an asset, not a liability
Entering US Teaching Through Aspiration and Risk-Taking	• Pursuing growth and opportunity • Acknowledging uncertainty and fear of not measuring up
Experiencing Early Uncertainty and Emotional Dislocation	• Feeling nervous and overwhelmed at first • Homesickness affecting early efficiency
Reconstructing Professional Identity Through Growth	• Re-grounding identity through supported growth • Becoming a better teacher and person

Carrying Filipino Pedagogical Roots Across Borders. The first theme of the research question tackles how participants entered U.S. classrooms while consciously carrying the pedagogical experience, discipline, and values they had built in the Philippines. This migration did not erase prior professional formation; instead, participants framed their years of home-country teaching as a foundation that traveled with them. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Bringing years of home-country experience as a foundation, and idea 2. Treating Filipino identity as an asset, not a liability. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

It was both an exciting and challenging beginning, because I was entering a completely new education system and culture while carrying with me the experience I had built over many years back home. (Mrs. M.G.)

I started teaching here in the U.S. in 2022. Teaching here wasn't my primary dream... but I was driven by curiosity about our fellow Filipinos who were teaching here—and before I knew it, I was here. (Mr. J.B.)

Entering U.S. Teaching Through Aspiration and Risk-Taking. The second theme of the research question examines how participants were motivated to migrate, clustered into a pattern of aspiration entangled with risk. Participants described entering U.S. teaching to pursue growth and opportunity while simultaneously acknowledging uncertainty, chance, and the fear of not measuring up. Professional identity in the new landscape began with vulnerability rather than confidence. Aspiration and risk-taking set the emotional baseline against which later growth is measured, reinforcing the main theme's account of identity as something negotiated under uncertainty. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Pursuing growth and opportunity, and idea 2. Acknowledging uncertainty and fear of not measuring up. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

I started teaching in America in 2024... I just tried my luck, and fortunately, I got hired... My only concern was whether I could teach according to US standards. (Mrs. F.C.)

Honestly, none of this was planned. I never planned to be here in the USA to teach—it just happened during the pandemic... I didn't expect to pass... I was also nervous about facing a completely different system. (Mrs. G.D.)

I chose to teach here to gain professional knowledge and skills... I was excited at first, but later on, nervousness took over. (Mrs. I.M.)

Experiencing Early Uncertainty and Emotional Dislocation. The third theme of the research question examines participants' first weeks and months of teaching experiences described as self-doubt, anxiety, and culture shock. This theme captures the lowest point of the identity trajectory: a period in which prior competence felt provisional. It revealed that early practice produced a genuine emotional dislocation in which participants' established sense of competence was temporarily destabilized. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Feeling nervous and overwhelmed at first, and idea 2. Homesickness affecting early efficiency. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

I decided to teach in the US to experience professional growth and a new academic environment. At first, I was anxious that I would not be good enough to teach international students in a foreign land. (Mrs. J.S.)

I was nervous during the first few weeks. Teaching higher math in a high school setting is quite a challenge. I lost confidence at first—I wasn't sure if I could handle it—and I was shocked by the students, their behavior, and their classroom culture. (Mr. L.M.)

Reconstructing Professional Identity Through Growth. The fourth theme of the research question examines recovery, support, and the early re-grounding of professional identity of the participants. This documented the turn toward reconstruction rather than its completion, and it interprets the available extracts as first movements out of dislocation. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Re-grounding identity through supported growth, and idea 2. Becoming a better teacher and person. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

I arrived a few days after school started and felt excited and nervous. The Assistant Principal warmly welcomed me... What stood out to me was the school's support and the warm welcome. (Mrs. I.M.)

I felt quite anxious and nervous. However, the administrators always smile at me, making me feel welcome and always supporting me. (Mrs. F.C.)

Confronting Layered Pressures in the Transition to U.S. Schools

Shown in Table 3 are the essential themes and core ideas extracted during the interview on Confronting Layered Pressures in the Transition to U.S. Schools

Table 3 Confronting Layered Pressures in the Transition to U.S. Schools

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Recalibrating Classroom Management for Vocal and Dynamic Learners	• Adjusting from silent discipline to expressive classrooms • Building firm, predictable routines and structure
Crossing Language and Communication Barriers	• Navigating accents, jargon, and idioms • Managing miscommunication with students and colleagues
Navigating Differentiation, IEPs, and Learner Diversity	• Meeting IEP and ELL requirements • Differentiating for diverse learners
Bearing Workload, Documentation, and Bureaucratic Ambiguity	• Managing heavy loads and multiple preparations • Coping with paperwork amplified by homesickness

Recalibrating Classroom Management for Vocal and Dynamic Learners. This research theme examines how participants described student behavior, noise, firmness, and structure. Participants had to recalibrate—not simply reassert—their classroom-management approach for learners who were markedly more vocal and dynamic than those they had taught before. This demonstrated that classroom management was the most immediate layer of pressure in the transition, and that participants met it by rebuilding structure rather than importing silence. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Adjusting from silent discipline to expressive classrooms, and idea 2. Building firm, predictable routines and structure. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed

The most challenging aspect of teaching here in the US is, first and foremost, the students’ behavior... Kids here are vocal about their rights, so you have to be careful, especially when dealing with them. (Mrs. F.C.)

I was overwhelmed by the students’ behavior. It was stressful and draining. During those first few months when the kids wouldn’t listen, I felt disappointed and started doubting myself. (Mrs. M.J.)

Classroom management is the hard part. You have to be firm with the rules; otherwise, if you let something slide for one student, they’ll hold it against you. (Mr. L.M.)

A strong classroom structure helps the students know exactly where to sit, how to pass in papers, and what to do when they finish early... Predictability creates a haven, especially for students who experience chaotic home environments. (Mrs. J.M.)

Crossing Language and Communication Barriers. The second theme of the research question examines communication and language-of-instruction pressure during the transition itself. Participants responded that language and communication differences added a distinct early layer of strain, especially where instruction crossed into unfamiliar linguistic territory. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Navigating accents, jargon, and idioms, and idea 2. Managing miscommunication with students and colleagues. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

In addition to teaching English as an ESL teacher, I was assigned as a Math push-in teacher for multilingual learners... I initially felt very anxious about the responsibility of teaching mathematics. (Mrs. M.G.)

But I experienced culture shock. It was so noisy! At first, I felt like they didn’t respect me because, apparently, I’m a foreigner. (Mrs. M.J.)

Culture shock is part of the transition; students are more expressive and informal, which can initially appear disrespectful. (Mrs. J.M.)

Navigating Differentiation, IEPs, and Learner Diversity. The third theme of the research question examines references to IEPs, special-education records, differentiated activities, and diverse learner needs, clustered here. Participants faced substantial instructional-design pressure to adapt to differentiation requirements and formal individualized-education obligations that were often unfamiliar in scope. They narrated their experiences through

the following core ideas: idea 1. Meeting IEP and ELL requirements, and idea 2. Differentiating for diverse learners. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

The workload of making and conducting IEP meetings is too much. (Mrs. F.C.)

I've experienced difficulties managing my classroom, overwhelming workloads, and pressure while maintaining organized records for IEPs, behavior interventions, lesson planning, and documentation. (Mrs. I.M.)

I created two different types of activities. For the standard classes, the activities had to be collaborative so the students could interact with their classmates. For the honors classes, the work had to be independent, given their high academic standing. (Mr. L.M.)

In addition to teaching English as an ESL teacher, I was assigned as a Math push-in teacher for multilingual learners... I initially felt very anxious about the responsibility of teaching mathematics. (Mrs. M.G.)

Bearing Workload, Documentation, and Bureaucratic Ambiguity. The fourth theme of the research question examines overwhelming workload, heavy documentation, multiple preparations, unclear support, and the emotional depletion of starting over far from family. Participants expressed that cumulative administrative and workload burden—often experienced as ambiguity about expectations—was a decisive pressure of the transition. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Managing heavy loads and multiple preparations, and idea 2. Coping with paperwork amplified by homesickness. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

So, you're teaching advanced subjects and math to a standard class—four teaching loads with three different lesson preparations? It can be discouraging at times... because they hand you a textbook that even I can't understand. (Mr. L.M.)

I really struggled with the cultural differences—whether it was classroom management or the workload; even though I only teach for six hours, the workload is heavy. I sometimes feel so overwhelmed and, of course, doubt myself. (Mrs. M.J.)

During my first few months here, homesickness affected my efficiency as a teacher... being away from my family—I find it difficult to transition. (Mr. J.B.)

The most difficult for me is homesickness, because working miles away from my husband and son gave me worries and fears. I was so afraid of living on my own. (Mrs. J.S.)

Mobilizing Personal, Professional, and Communal Resources

Shown in Table 4 are the essential themes and core ideas extracted during the interview on Mobilizing Personal, Professional, and Communal Resources

Table 4 Mobilizing Personal, Professional, and Communal Resources

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Adapting Pedagogy, Routines, and Communication	• Redesigning activities per class type • Establishing clear routines and expectations
Learning Through Mentoring, Observation, and PD	• Learning from assigned mentors and coaches • Attending professional-development sessions
Drawing Strength From Bayanihan and Collegial Support	• Relying on Filipino community and housemates • Experiencing the Bayanihan spirit among strangers
Sustaining the Self Through Reflection and Motivation	• Self-directed learning and reflection • Selective, comfortable community engagement

Adapting Pedagogy, Routines, and Communication. The first theme of the research question examines participants' adapting pedagogy, routines, and communication. This described changes to instruction, routines,

technology use, and procedural understanding. This showed that participants actively adapted their pedagogy and communication as personal resources, translating the support they received into revised classroom practice. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Redesigning activities per class type, and idea 2. Establishing clear routines and expectations. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

My Colombian mentor taught me various learning sites to make my lessons more engaging and fun... especially the effective use of AI in the classroom, made me more confident as a teacher. (Mrs. J.S.)

Most of the time I ask my Filipino colleagues at home to better understand the steps and procedures. (Mrs. F.C.)

Learning Through Mentoring, Observation, and PD. The second theme of the research question examines district professional development, mentor—mentee programs, classroom observations, and structured feedback. Participants expressed that formal and semi-formal learning structures were a central professional resource, though participants also signaled their limits. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Learning from assigned mentors and coaches, and idea 2. Attending professional-development sessions. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

I equipped myself by attending professional development sessions, one-to-one conferences with my mentors, and observing local teachers to see how they manage their classes. (Mr. J.B.)

During her planning period, she usually observed my classroom... After her observations, we sat down together and devised specific strategies tailored to my classroom and students... This support system allowed... my confidence to develop. (Mrs. G.D.)

The school district provided several forms of professional development... onboarding for new teachers, a mentor—mentee program, social-emotional learning (SEL) workshops, and quarterly professional development focused on ESL instruction. (Mrs. M.G.)

Our school district designated mentors for all new mentees... Professional Development sessions are religiously held on schedule... I was able to hear constructive feedback, which really helped me to adjust to the new learning milieu. (Mrs. J.S.)

Drawing Strength From Bayanihan and Collegial Support. The third theme of the research question examines how participants drew strength from bayanihan and collegial support. This includes Filipino co-teachers and housemates, a sense of community belonging, and collegial encouragement, alongside selective or ambivalent engagement. Participants reported that communal support was the most frequently cited resource, functioning as both an emotional buffer and a practical scaffold—though not experienced uniformly by all participants. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Relying on the Filipino community and housemates, and idea 2. Experiencing the Bayanihan spirit among strangers. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

You have a very supportive community; it really builds your confidence, resilience, and fellowship... as a small community in a foreign country, we should support each other in every way possible and uplift one another to succeed as one. (Mr. J.B.)

You will see a Bayanihan Spirit even though we don't know each other; we seem to have known each other for a long time, or sometimes we are treated like brothers... my loneliness has lessened. (Mrs. G.D.)

My Filipino housemates, who are also teachers, are very supportive and reliable... they were able to assist me with carpooling, medical requirements, and other IDs I needed. With these, I was able to focus on my teaching. (Mrs. J.S.)

Bonding with fellow Filipinos is what brings joy and relieves the feeling of being alone—it makes you feel like you're back in the Philippines, even if the fatigue and loneliness don't completely go away. (Mr. L.M.)

I much prefer smaller groups that I'm comfortable with. So, I don't engage more with the Filipino community. (Mrs. F.C.)

Some teachers in the Philippines are helpful and willing to support, but some are selfish... On the other hand, interesting fellows are lessons learned. (Mr. J.B.)

Sustaining the Self Through Reflection and Motivation. The fourth theme of the research question examines self-directed learning, the limits of formal induction, emotional and spiritual support, and isolation as the lone Filipino. Participants reported that when external support was thin or superficial, they sustained themselves through inner resources—reflection, motivation, and emotional regulation—and through selective reliance on trusted individuals. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Self-directed learning and reflection, and idea 2. Selective, comfortable community engagement. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

I received training, seminars, and workshops from the district, but they were only superficial. You still have to learn things on your own. (Mr. L.M.)

The school administration provided orientations, grade-level meetings, and, above all, administrative support... You have to learn on your own, even with all that support. (Mrs. M.J.)

I am the first Filipino here at my school now. Therefore, it was really hard to depend on the local teachers here. (Mr. J.B.)

I am happy with my mentor. They guide me emotionally and, above all, spiritually. They are a shoulder to cry on and always give me advice. (Mr. L.M.)

Transforming Adversity Into Professional Agency

Shown in Table 5 are the essential themes and core ideas extracted during the interview on Transforming Adversity Into Professional Agency.

Table 5 Transforming Adversity Into Professional Agency

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Building Confidence Through Mastery Experiences	• Gaining confidence from classroom victories • Separating self-worth from daily disruptions
Developing Competence Through Reflective Adaptation	• Refining practice through reflection • Reframing obstacles as problems to solve
Strengthening a Resilient Professional Identity	• Becoming adaptable, confident, and resilient • Emerging as an effective teacher
Moving From Survival Toward Thriving and Purpose	• Shifting from surviving to thriving • Becoming a source of support for others

Building Confidence Through Mastery Experiences. The first theme of the research question examines hard-won confidence, becoming a source of support, and competitive competence. Participants reported that confidence was built experientially—through accumulated mastery—rather than granted at the outset. It established confidence as the first fruit of transformation, earned through mastery. It grounds the more process-oriented competence examined next. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Gaining confidence from classroom victories, and idea 2. Separating self-worth from daily disruptions. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

From a receiver of support, I have now become a source of support for others. From questioning my abilities... to being a more confident contributor and a source of strength and support for others. (Mrs. G.D.)

I became a better teacher and also a better person. I also became more independent and confident... I am a truly globally competitive teacher who can face challenges and finish them like a real champion. (Mrs. J.S.)

Developing Competence Through Reflective Adaptation. The second theme of the research question examines organized, well-planned, and reflectively improved practice. Participants reported that competence developed through iterative reflection and adaptation—participants became more effective by continually revising how they worked. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Refining practice through reflection, and idea 2. Reframing obstacles as problems to solve. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

Who I am today is the result of being adaptable, confident, and resilient. Everything I do has become more organized and well-planned. I now provide clearer instructions and tasks to the students. (Mrs. M.J.)

Because of my persistence, adaptability, and resilience, I am who I am today. I became more particular about classroom management, carefully planned lessons, and organization. (Mr. L.M.)

Strengthening a Resilient Professional Identity. The third theme of the research question examines resilience forged under pressure and identity as an ongoing, integrative project. Participants reported that transformation consolidated into a resilient professional identity that linked past and present selves. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Becoming adaptable, confident, and resilient, and idea 2. Emerging as an effective teacher. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

Like a pearl formed under pressure, I became a resilient and effective teacher because of the challenges. (Mrs. I.M.)

It would be a bridge in progress... I continuously connect everything: who I am and what I had as a teacher in the Philippines... and everything I learned and who I have become now. (Mr. J.B.)

Moving From Survival Toward Thriving and Purpose. The fourth theme of the research question examines explicitly narrating a shift from survival to thriving, purpose, and belonging. Participants reported that transformation culminated in a reorientation from getting through each day toward meaning, contribution, and a sense of place. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Shifting from surviving to thriving, and idea 2. Becoming a source of support for others. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

As I adapted the system, I no longer feel like I'm just surviving each day, but rather thriving and learning to blend my own identity as a Filipino teacher with the American educational system. (Mrs. J.M.)

From surviving to thriving—moving from that feeling of just wanting to get through the daily grind to a state where I have adjusted, adapted, and become resilient. (Mr. L.M.)

At first, it was more about survival and adjustment... As I gained experience, it became more about confidence and professional growth. Now, I see it as a journey of purpose and impact. (Mrs. M.G.)

I have been resilient every day so I can move forward, as every day has been a struggle. I need to stand by the choice I made... So I need to learn to adapt to their culture and routines to survive. (Mrs. F.C.)

Negotiating Culture, Communication, and Belonging

Shown in Table 6 are the essential themes and core ideas extracted during the interview on Negotiating Culture, Communication, and Belonging

Table 6 Negotiating Culture, Communication, and Belonging

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Decoding Language, Jargon, and Communication Norms	• Learning new terms, idioms, and techniques • Adjusting to different communication styles
Understanding Student Directness and Informality	• Reframing expressiveness as engagement • Adjusting to vocal, informal classrooms

Reframing Cultural Difference Rather Than Personal Disrespect	• Interpreting directness as culture, not insult • Responding professionally to friction
Blending Into the New Context While Retaining Filipino Identity	• Adapting while staying true to Filipino self • Achieving belonging without assimilation

Decoding Language, Jargon, and Communication Norms. The first theme of the research question examines language barriers and shifts in communication norms. Participants reported that they first had to decode unfamiliar language, jargon, and forms of address before they could participate fluently in the new setting. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Learning new terms, idioms, and techniques, and idea 2. Adjusting to different communication styles. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

Language barrier—they have a communication style I’m not very familiar with... Sometimes I ask them to explain what something means, or most of the time, I ask them to repeat it. (Mrs. F.C.)

Students here have different ways of communicating—specifically in how they address their teachers. Back home, we are called ‘Sir’ or ‘Ma’am,’ whereas here, they might call you by your first name or use ‘Mr.’ or ‘Miss. (Mr. J.B.)

Understanding Student Directness and Informality. The second theme of the research question examines shock at student reactions and the gradual understanding of student directness. Participants reported moving from being unsettled by informality and open disagreement to understanding it as a cultural norm. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Reframing expressiveness as engagement, and idea 2. Adjusting to vocal, informal classrooms. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

I was shocked and taken aback by the students’ reactions... sometimes, when a student laughs at you, it can shake your confidence. You really need to study their culture, learn, and adjust to succeed in teaching. (Mrs. G.D.)

There was a student who openly disagreed with me in class, which surprised me... Over time, I’ve realized that it was part of their culture and I don’t have to take it personally. (Mrs. I.M.)

Reframing Cultural Difference Rather Than Personal Disrespect. The third theme of the research question examines behavior as culture, reframing differences as opportunities, and resolving misunderstandings. Participants reported that they actively reframed cultural difference—refusing to read it as personal disrespect—which enabled more effective relationships. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Interpreting directness as culture, not insult, and idea 2. Responding professionally to friction. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

Students were usually moving around and talking with their seatmates, which sometimes made me feel that they were misbehaving. But later on, I realized that that is their nature. They were more collaborative in learning with others. (Mrs. J.M.)

Cultural differences should not be seen as barriers but as opportunities for learning and growth. By being open-minded and willing to adapt, I became a more effective teacher and built stronger relationships with my students. (Mrs. M.G.)

Simple gestures and words mean a lot. I was misinterpreted for an action I never intended. I spoke with the school administration to resolve misunderstandings. We closed the incident by allowing the administration to intervene. (Mrs. J.S.)

Blending Into the New Context While Retaining Filipino Identity. The fourth theme of the research question examines a know—understand—adapt—blend cycle and identity-anchored adaptation. Participants reported that belonging was achieved by blending into the new context while deliberately retaining Filipino identity—adaptation without assimilation. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Adapting while staying true to Filipino self, and idea 2. Achieving belonging without assimilation. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

There are so many cultural differences; that is why there is a need to know this, understand it, adapt, and later on, it blends in with the children. (Mr. L.M.)

By staying true to your identity as a Filipino teacher while adapting to the unfamiliar environment, it built confidence. (Mrs. I.M.)

Reimagining Induction, Support, and Knowledge Reintegration

Shown in Table 7 are the essential themes and core ideas extracted during the interview on Reimagining Induction, Support, and Knowledge Reintegration.

Table 7 Reimagining Induction, Support, and Knowledge Reintegration

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Providing Practical and Role-Specific Onboarding	• Replacing abstract orientation with hands-on training • Tailoring onboarding to actual assignments
Sustaining Mentoring and Emotional Support Beyond Orientation	• Continuing mentoring past induction • Recognizing emotional and dual-role demands
Clarifying Administrative Communication and Differentiated Guidance	• Providing clear, situation-specific instructions • Establishing regular feedback loops
Creating a Philippine/DepEd Reintegration Pathway	• Establishing a knowledge-sharing mechanism for returnees • Contributing acquired expertise to the home system

Providing Practical and Role-Specific Onboarding. The first theme of the research question examines hands-on, practical, role-specific support rather than abstract guidance. A participant reported that onboarding addressed the concrete realities of their daily roles. She narrated her experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Replacing abstract orientation with hands-on training, and idea 2. Tailoring onboarding to actual assignments. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participant expressed:

Leaders should support beginning teachers. Like me, I need a hands-on seminar, training, or workshop. Mahilig ang mga leaders sa abstract na instructions... I strive more when I know someone is there to help me navigate daily classroom routines. (Mrs. J.M.)

Sustaining Mentoring and Emotional Support Beyond Orientation. The second theme of the research question examines the call for continued mentoring, recognition of hidden emotional and dual-role demands, and support that persists past the induction window. Participants reported that support should be sustained and emotionally attuned, not front-loaded and then withdrawn. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Continuing mentoring past induction, and idea 2. Recognizing emotional and dual-role demands. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

We need direct support, such as guidance from mentors, clear direction, and the chance to be heard, to be felt, and to be given importance. If addressed, international teachers can achieve a 100% success rate in the school's goals. (Mr. J.B.)

Support systems such as mentorship, a collaborative school culture, and focused professional development are important, but it is equally important to recognize the personal challenges caused by relocation, separation from family, and cultural transition. (Mrs. M.G.)

School leaders should recognize that Filipino teachers' contributions to the school's success stem from their dedication, adaptability, and resilience. However, continued support should be provided. (Mrs. I.M.)

Clarifying Administrative Communication and Differentiated Guidance. The third theme of the research question examines a mismatch between abstract administrative communication and teachers' need for clear, differentiated guidance. Participants reported that clearer, differentiated administrative communication is a measured but genuine priority, and it models transparent reuse of evidence for a distinct analytic function. They

narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Providing clear, situation-specific instructions, and idea 2. Establishing regular feedback loops. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

Leaders should support beginning teachers. Like me, I need a hands-on seminar, training, or workshop. Leaders usually give abstract instructions... I strive more when I know someone is there to help me navigate daily classroom routines. (Mrs. J.M.)

Support systems such as mentorship, a collaborative school culture, and focused professional development are important. Still, it is equally important to recognize the personal challenges caused by relocation, separation from family, and cultural transition. (Mrs. M.G.)

Creating a Philippine/DepEd Reintegration Pathway. The fourth theme of the research question examines recommendations that the Philippine government and DepEd create programs to share returnees' expertise. Participants reported envisioning their overseas experience as a national resource that currently has no formal pathway home, and as extending the horizon of support beyond the host country to participants' eventual return, thereby defining a reintegration and knowledge-sharing pathway. They narrated their experiences through the following core ideas: idea 1. Establishing a knowledge-sharing mechanism for returnees, and idea 2. Contributing acquired expertise to the home system. Lifted from the transcripts of the interview, the participants expressed:

The Philippine government should provide an opportunity for us to share our experience... The Philippine government has established no program to share the expertise we acquired in the USA. (Mrs. M.J.)

After five years, I will be returning to the Philippines, but the Philippine government needs to have a concrete program in place so I can share what I have learned and contribute to DepEd's success as well. (Mr. L.M.)

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that transcultural teacher adaptation is not a forced choice between complete assimilation and rigid adherence to native teaching techniques; rather, it is an active identity negotiation in which home-country culture serves as a stabilizing anchor for professional growth. Consistent with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, participants' self-efficacy was shaped by the reciprocal interaction of personal beliefs, adaptive behaviors, and the school and community environment. The initial phase of vulnerability—emotional exhaustion, self-doubt, and impostor syndrome—was not a sign of personal failure but an anticipated stage in transcultural adjustment, gradually transformed into stability through reflective adaptation and accumulated mastery experiences (Mullen et al., 2021; Stewart et al., 2021).

The results further show that the challenges of transition are layered and simultaneous rather than sequential. Classroom-management recalibration, language barriers, differentiation and IEP obligations, and heavy workloads co-occurred and were amplified by homesickness, indicating that support must address these pressures concurrently. Resilience, in turn, was a collaborative achievement drawn from a dual-layered support system that combined the Bayanihan-grounded Filipino community with formal mentoring and coaching. Notably, community engagement was selective and at times ambivalent rather than uniform, suggesting that support systems should offer layered, flexible options rather than a single prescribed pathway.

Finally, cultural adaptation strengthened rather than diluted identity. By reframing student directness and blending into the new context while remaining true to their Filipino teaching selves, participants achieved belonging without assimilation. Their identified induction, mentoring, administrative-communication, and reintegration gaps—including the absence of any DepEd mechanism to share returnees' expertise—indicate that support and knowledge are currently under-designed at both ends of the migration journey.

This study concludes that the resilience and adaptation of beginning Filipino teachers in the United States is best understood as an active, reciprocal process of identity negotiation rather than a passive experience of survival. Participants moved from initial professional vulnerability toward instructional expertise and thriving by reconstructing—rather than surrendering—their professional identity, mobilizing a dual-layered system of formal and communal support, and reframing cultural difference as an opportunity for growth. Their professional

identity, anchored in Filipino pedagogical roots, functioned as the stabilizing foundation that made later adaptation possible without loss of self.

Because the pressures of transition are layered and simultaneous, and because resilience is built collaboratively and unevenly, the study affirms that support systems must be sustained, differentiated, and flexible. It recommends replacing general orientation with practical, role-specific onboarding; adopting growth-oriented evaluation during the first year; instituting yearlong mentoring with emotional and pastoral support; providing culturally responsive preparation that affirms Filipino identity; and—crucially—establishing a Philippine/DepEd reintegration and knowledge-sharing mechanism through which returning teachers can contribute their acquired expertise to the home education system. These insights can inform induction frameworks, mentoring programs, and educational policy that transform early operational survival into long-term professional mastery.

While this study offers rich, contextualized insight into the lived experiences of beginning Filipino teachers, several directions are recommended to extend and strengthen this line of inquiry. First, future research should include larger and more diverse groups of international teachers drawn from different countries of origin, host settings, and educational systems, so that emerging patterns of resilience and adaptation can be compared across contexts and their applicability broadened beyond a single national or district setting. Second, the trustworthiness and depth of the data would be strengthened by incorporating additional sources of evidence—such as direct classroom observations, participants’ reflective journals, and the perspectives of school administrators and mentors—thereby enabling fuller triangulation and reducing reliance on self-reported interview data alone. Third, the Philippine/DepEd reintegration and knowledge-sharing mechanism identified in this study could be developed further into a fully articulated policy model—specifying structures, roles, and processes through which returning teachers can systematically contribute their acquired expertise to the home education system. Pursuing these directions would enhance the transferability, rigor, and policy relevance of future scholarship on international teacher migration, resilience, and adaptation.

Implications for Educational Practice

The findings offer a roadmap for school administrators, policymakers, and teacher-preparation programs in both the host-country and Philippine contexts. Home-country identity should be treated as an asset to be integrated rather than an obstacle to be overcome. Because transition pressures are layered and resilience is collaborative and uneven, support must be sustained, role-specific, and flexible rather than delivered as a one-time orientation. Evaluation during the first year should recognize adaptive growth over time rather than demand uniform, immediate thriving, and preparation should build cultural reinterpretation skills without pressuring teachers toward assimilation.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study strictly adhered to the ethical standards for research involving human participants and was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Graduate School, La Carlota City College, La Carlota City, Negros Occidental, through its Research and Creative Works Office (Certification dated July 9, 2026), chaired by Ermi V. Miranda, PhD, CESO VI. In compliance with the institution's Ethical Standard Policy, the study title was verified to be accurate, relevant, and consistent with ethical requirements. All participants were treated with respect regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, maternity, marital status, family status, disability, age, or place of origin. Participation was entirely voluntary and free from any pressure or influence, and participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and its potential benefits, particularly its contribution to improving education and quality of life. All information collected was kept strictly confidential, and the names and identities of the participants were not revealed in any part of the study. The dignity and well-being of the participants were protected at all times, and all sources of information were properly cited and referenced to uphold honesty and integrity in academic work.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The researcher declares that there is no conflict of interest in relation to this study. The researcher further affirms that this dissertation was accomplished through his own independent work and that no person was paid or engaged to write any part of it on his behalf.

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