

DESKILLED ABROAD, UPSKILLED IN THE PHILIPPINES: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FILIPINO TEACHERS

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Abstract

This phenomenological study explored the lives of “Sa Pinas, Ikaw ang Ma’am at Sir” or SPIMS beneficiaries, specifically those with no teaching experiences abroad. Using an in-depth interview, this study aimed to identify the four respondents’ challenges in the current demands of education in the Philippines and ascertain the activities that close the gaps between past and present work experiences. Data were gathered online for the two respondents living in distant towns while the rest were interviewed in person. The Colaizzi method was employed to arrive at four major themes. The first two themes refer to the challenges faced by the respondents, and these are identified as 1) technological deficiency and 2) lack of confidence in delivering lessons. On the other hand, the other two are the activities that help the respondents meet their work demands. The last two themes are 3) informal induction from the experienced teachers and 4) conduct of training and seminars. The emerging themes denote that SPIMS beneficiaries face challenges in adjusting to the learning demands of 21st century education. These challenges prompt them to engage in various activities that will advance their pedagogical approaches and increase their confidence in teaching the Digi-centric generation.

Keywords: Deskilled, Upskilled, Filipino Teachers, Abroad

Introduction

Teachers have a critical role in a country’s progress. They activate the young nation builders’ full potential, solidify their economic knowledge and skills, and leverage their cultural and social experiences to continuously meet the country’s desired goals. However, the diaspora of teachers has become a worldwide phenomenon that results in insufficient numbers of high-quality teachers in a nation.

In the Philippines, a shortfall in the number of teachers has been a perennial problem. It became more evident in the infancy years of the K-to-12 program as DepEd. reported a looming demand of 60,000-82,000 teachers nationwide

(Tucay, 2022) and the reports on the continuous upward trend of migrant Filipino teachers (Novio, 2022). The increasing demand for Filipino teachers abroad can be disheartening as the best and brightest teachers opt to serve other nationalities, but it is more heartbreaking to see some of them could be deskilled abroad (Cruz, Tan, & Yonaha, 2015). In response to this issue, the National Reintegration Center for Overseas Filipino Workers (NRCO) of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) designed a convergence program “Sa Pinas Ikaw and Ma’am/Sir (SPIMS)” in 2014.

SPIMS is an employment reintegration program of DOLE through OWWA-NCRO. Its primary objectives are to: a) provide returning

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OFW-Licensure Examination for Teachers (OFW-LET) passers with gainful employment as public-school teachers in the Philippines; b) mitigate the shortage of public school teachers in the country in line with K-12 implementation of DepEd., and c) encourage OFW-LET passers to further enhance their teaching skills by providing online refresher course to retrain their teaching and pedagogic skills necessary with the demands of the present day education practice consistent with the K-12 curriculum of DepEd. Department of Labor and Employment indicates in Department Order No.190 series of 2018 the online refresher course is only offered to those who do not have teaching experience or those who acquired teaching experience more than five years ago. This online refresher course is very much beneficial to OFW-LET passers who work as caregivers, domestic helpers, factory workers, and other work practices abroad as the course can help bridge the work gaps. With the provided intervention of the SPIMS program, a number of beneficiaries have successfully filled in the **Teaching 1** position across the country. Department of Education (2021) indicates in Division Memo No. 590, series of 2021 that the Division of Bohol presented a total of thirty-two (32) SPIMS beneficiaries. Seventeen (17) of the beneficiaries are assigned to the elementary level while fifteen (15) are in junior high school.

While there has been a noticeable growth in the number of SPIMS beneficiaries, the voices of those who received the online refresher course remain underrepresented; in fact, studies relative to this program is scant. It is significant to know if the provided online refresher course completely closes the gaps between a beneficiary's work experiences and the work demands of Philippine education, most especially during the implementation of the K-12 program and the increasing demands of Filipino learners during the time of the pandemic. As Podolsky, Kini, and Hammond (2019) expressed in their study result, there was a significant relationship between teaching experiences and students' academic achievement. In fact, teaching experience helps teachers

accommodate the needs of diverse Filipino learners.

Within this context, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive description of the SPIMS beneficiaries' lived experiences. However, this study is limited to those beneficiaries who have no teaching experiences abroad and/or those who received the online refresher course intervention provided by Philippine Christian University.

The Purpose of the Study

The ultimate goal of this study was to describe the lived experiences of the SPIMS beneficiaries who had no teaching experiences abroad.

With the overarching question, What are the lived experiences of *Sa Pinas, Ikaw ang Maam at Sir*

Hence, this study aims to ascertain the:

1. Challenges of an OFW-LET passer who had a different work experience abroad;
2. Activities that close the gap between a different work experience and the current demands of Philippine education; and
3. Recommendations that can be constituted to address the identified challenges.

Literature Review

In the research conducted on the lived experiences of Filipino educators living in Qatar, Reyes, and Sangcopan, the findings revealed that Filipino educators are constantly facing opportunities overseas that are paired with difficulties they need to overcome. However, issues such as discrimination and isolation can be present and can affect the performance of Filipino educators. This is usually when nationalities are offered more benefits than Filipino educators, despite having the same position.

In a similar study conducted by Cabiladas (2020), found that the teaching English Program gave them a sense of fulfillment because Thai students in the classroom had positive attitudes toward learning English with Filipino teachers. It also contributed to their positive outlook on

their future plans. Some negative experiences were encountered such as problems with class size, students' language, limited teaching materials due to complexity of content and problem in teaching strategies.

In the same way, Chua (2021) conducted the study in the USA in the lived experiences of Filipino educators in Texas, it has been seen that Filipino educators teaching in the US are burdened with the challenges of acculturation, mental health issues, and their search to form their own identities within diaspora.

In the Philippines, Antipolo and Rogayan (2021) the teachers rarely encounter challenges in terms of personal growth and professional development as well as community linkages and professional development. The administration may allocate adequate funding for the provision of additional instructional facilities and equipment. The college administrations in house spearhead seminars to develop content knowledge and another pedagogical dimension.

Apart from this, the study about the lived experiences of teachers in far-flung schools in the Philippines, Lariosa and Diendo It is a practice in the Philippines that those neophytes teachers are assigned in ill flavored places, like far-flung schools. The desire of the new teachers to gain employment is commonly for economic reasons. Traveling to and from the nearest road requires stamina and courage.

Methodology

Study Design

This study employed a Husserlian phenomenological approach to developing an in-depth understanding of the SPIMS beneficiaries' lived experiences in meeting the current demands of young Filipino learners. This approach describes the interpretations of the participants' experiences. Guillen (2019) claimed that hermeneutic phenomenologists gave descriptions and interpretations of what participants had in common as they experience a phenomenon and such experiences create meaning and importance in pedagogy, psychology, and sociology. Therefore, this

approach is beneficial in describing and interpreting the lived experiences of SPIMS beneficiaries.

Key Informants

This study utilized purposeful and snowball sampling. The researcher selected the respondents through the following criteria: 1) licensed Filipino teachers who are beneficiaries of "Sa Pinas Ikaw ang Ma'am at Sir" or SPIMS; and 2) no significant teaching experiences abroad. The researcher initially sought qualified respondents from a city division in the seventh region. According to Creswell (Alase, 2017), the number of respondents for phenomenological research is between two and twenty-five homogenous respondents to create meaningful descriptions and interpretations of their overall perceptions of their lived experiences. Hence, the researcher selected five respondents to get the responses necessary for the study.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected by interviewing the five selected respondents through their preferred social media platforms, in order to reduce the risk of exposure to the highly contagious disease. They were informed to participate in a semi-structured interview and encouraged to use the language that they feel comfortable with while narrating their experiences. Further, they were informed that the researcher used pseudonyms in recording narratives to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

Respondents were asked questions that were validated by three experts. Creswell (Alase, 2017) stated that researchers were to use probing and open-ended questions when asking the central and sub-central questions to get an in-depth description of their experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon. Hence, the questions provided to the respondents were probing and open-ended.

Guided by the phenomenological psychological reduction form of bracketing, the researcher ignored all preconceived beliefs and personal experiences as a SPIMS beneficiary to avoid any forms of biases. Phenomenological psychological reduction allowed the researcher

to focus on the respondents' experiences and perceptions and resist the interplay of whatever object or state of an affair presented to her (Christensen, Welch, & Barr, 2017).

Data Analysis

Colaizzi's method was used to analyze the themes and extract the common patterns of the respondents. Praveena and Sasikumar (2021) presented Colaizzi's seven steps of data analysis which are: 1) obtaining a general sense of each transcript, 2) extracting significant statements, 3) formulation of meanings, 4) organization of formulated meanings into clusters of themes and themes, 5) exhaustively describing the phenomenon, 6) describing the fundamental structure of the phenomenon, and 7) returning to the participants to validate the findings from the study participants.

Research Rigor

In this research, rigor is addressed through multiple interviews with the key informants, school heads, and colleagues of the respondents to establish credibility and trustworthiness in the study. Creswell (2009) presents eight procedures to validate qualitative strategies, these include triangulation of data; member checking; using rich, thick description to convey the findings; clarifying the researcher's bias; presentation of negative or discrepant information; prolonged time in the field; peer debriefing; and using an external auditor.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher observed the basic ethical considerations when conducting the study. Research respondents were provided with consent forms and were informed of their freedom to choose whether to participate in the study or decline. Further, they were adequately informed about the conducted research and the entirety of its process before the researcher completely obtained the respondents' agreement.

Results

Four themes emerged that are at the core of "Sa Pinas, Ikaw ang Ma'am at Sir" or SPIMS beneficiaries that explicate their lived experiences the in Philippine education system. The first two themes address their challenges while the other two refer to the activities that close the gaps between their past work experiences and the current demands of education:

Theme 1: Deficiency of Technological Literacy

The first challenge identified by the SPIMS beneficiaries is a deficiency of technological literacy. This theme emerged in response to the question: Did you experience work dilemmas or crises during your first year of teaching? If so, what were they?

Most of the interviewed respondents had informal teaching experiences working as nannies and, at the same time, tutors abroad; however, it is evident in their responses that they are technologically challenged.

Jane: "Naglisod jud ko! Problema jud nako ang technology kay dili man jud ko ingon nga literate ko ug computer jud. Ang ahoa ra jud kanang basic encoding ra unja maglisod jud ko sa una anang maghimo ug exam." (*Technology has been a huge challenge for me because I am not well-versed in technology or computers. I am only familiar with basic encoding skills which is why it is difficult for me to make an exam.*)

Kate: "Actually...naglisodko...Naglisod ko sa pagama lesson plan ug excel kay although naa koy experience sa Du Ek Sam, nakalimot naman ko kay dugay naman to kaayo." (*Actually, I encountered difficulties in making lesson plans and doing excel works because my past experiences at Du Ek Sam happened long time ago.*)

Kat: “Yes, sa pagama sa school reports, pag enroll sa students, ug pag COT (Classroom Observation Tool).” (*Yes, in making school reports, enrolling students, and conducting classroom observation.*)

Although the above responses cannot represent a large population of SPIMS beneficiaries due to the adaptation of modular distance learning, they expressed difficulties in using technology. Raulston and Alexio-Ray (Boholano, Jamon, Jamon, & Boholano, 2021) described technology-literate teachers as those who were exposed to technology and those who have maximized the use of technology in the classroom. In this fast-paced world of technology, teachers need to advance their pedagogical approaches to align them with the needs of the Digi-centric generation. In congruence, Vidosavljević and Vidosavljević (2019) concluded that ICT application and digital literacy are pivotal in achieving quality education. Also, Javier (2021) stated that the demand for technology in education necessitates teachers to increase their technological competencies to equip learners with skills necessary for 21st-century learning. These claims indicate the importance of technological competencies as education shifts to a new paradigm, requiring teachers to integrate technological advancement in teaching and learning for the learner’s achievement. However, the above responses clearly indicate that the respondents’ past work experiences have reduced their ability to fully maximize the wide-ranging opportunities of technology.

Theme 2: Lack of Confidence in Delivering Lessons

The second emerging theme is a lack of confidence in delivering lessons. Despite the adaptation of modular distance learning during the pandemic, the Department of Education required the continuous conduct of classroom observations by teachers which have become a burden to the respondents. Jane’s, Kate’s, and Kat’s responses illustrated this theme:

Jane: “Kinakulbaan pud ning demo. Gikujapan jud ko ug taman taman... Ga practice

jud ko ug tudlo sa mga pag-umangkon naho... nangutana pud ko sa ubang teachers ug unsaon naho.” (*I felt extremely anxious when performing a classroom demonstration... I practiced delivering lessons to my nephews and nieces, and I also asked pieces of advice from my co-teachers.*)

Kate: “Kadto pud pag COT... na problema pud ko adto kay syempre wala baya ko’y experience sa teaching... Kuan pud... murag problema sa communication skills kay wa baya ko maanad ug storya sa atubangan... Kuan pud... sa mastery of topic kay although nagtuon ko medyo naa jud point nga makalimtan kana pud sa power point nga mokalit ra ug ka kuan... technical problems...” (*I had difficulties delivering my lesson during classroom observation because I had no teaching experiences at all... Another problem was my communication skills because I was not used to talking in public. I also failed to master my topic despite doing multiple practices... and there were technical problems too.*)

Kat: “Challenging ang COT!” (*Classroom observation was challenging!*)

Department of Education (2022) states in memorandum no.004, series of 2022 the measures of teachers’ performance in preparation for the implementation of progressive limited in-person learning in Tagbilaran City. With this memorandum, teachers are required to demonstrate teaching practices in a real classroom setting with school heads as observers to continuously enrich the professional development experiences of both novice and experienced teachers. This opportunity increases the confidence of teachers to deliver their lessons efficiently and effectively as teaching mentoring equips teachers with knowledge and skills appropriate for the 21st century learners. In correlation, Julaihi, Liew, Voon, and Ahmad (2019) presented in their study the significant relationship between the confidence level of a teacher and his self-efficacy beliefs. However, the conduct of classroom observation is new to the respondents, especially since they did not receive any teaching training after working abroad, hence

they become anxious in teaching in front of the observers.

Theme 3: Informal Induction from the Experienced Teachers

The third emerging theme is informal induction from experienced teachers, and it is in response to the question: What activities helped you bridge the gap between your past and present work experiences?

Jane: “Nagtuon ra jud ko...mangutana pud ko sa akong mga kauban nga maestra...” (*Self-study...and I asked help from my colleagues.*)

Kate: “Mangutana pud ko sa mga nakahibaw na...” (*I asked from the experienced teachers.*)

Lucy: “Guide sa co-teachers and school head.” (*Guidance from my co-teachers and school head.*)

Kat: “The help of my colleagues...”

The data implies that the respondents need guidance from experienced teachers in order to fully adjust to their new work environment. Akiri and Dori (2022) stated that novice teachers need mentorship from experienced teachers for their professional growth. Similarly, Petrovska, Sivevska, Popeska, and Runcheva (2018) stated that mentoring process is advantageous to both novice and experienced teachers as the former acquire appropriate knowledge and teaching skills while the latter has the opportunity to assess and make sense of one’s pedagogical practices.

Theme 4: Conduct of Quality Trainings and Seminars

The fourth response refers to the need of acquiring training and seminars designed to reskill and upskill the identified respondents. This need is evident from their responses:

Jane: “Kinahanglan naa jud seminars... ug mga workshops.” (*Seminars...and workshops are substantial.*)

Kate: “Siguro mga seminar ug trainings...” (*Probably, seminars and trainings...*)

Sophie: “Training and seminars.”

Lucy: “...Workshop and seminars for no teaching experience abroad for us nga ma ready in real teaching world.” (*Workshops and*

seminars are necessary to ready the SPIMS beneficiaries, with no sufficient teaching experiences, in the real teaching world.)

Kat: “By attending seminars and activities funded by DepEd.”

The responses indicate that the respondents are not confident of their current pedagogical approaches, and this may create a negative impact on the current shift to hybrid delivery of instructions. Hence, seminars and workshops are necessary to reskill the respondents, who have no significant teaching experiences abroad. Deped memorandum No.050, s. 2020 presents the role of conducting professional development programs to continuously upskill and reskill teachers and school leaders. This development program is pivotal to the successful achievement of school goals. In congruence, Timbol (2021) concluded that the provision of in-service training significantly contributed to achieving the desired goals of providing quality education to learners.

On the other hand, the respondents’ interest to receive appropriate seminars and training denote that they are willing to reactivate their teaching skills or avail any activities that could help close the gaps between their old and current work demands because they are clearly grateful for the opportunities offered by SPIMS program. All respondents have one common response to the question: How beneficial is the SPIMS program to Filipino teachers? The only response is-yes!

Discussion and Conclusion

Relative to K to 12 basic education curriculum’s goal which gears towards the development of a holistically developed Filipino learner with 21st century skills and is ready for employment, entrepreneurship, middle level skills development and higher education upon graduation from Grade 12, it is incumbent on teachers to demonstrate competence in using technology and demonstrate confidence in his or her handled subjects in order to foster creativity and flexibility of pedagogical skills

and become adept at trends and issues on quality-related concerns in a learning environment. In congruence to the claim, there are studies that reveal a significant relationship between teacher competence and student academic achievement as competent teachers ensure effective instructional delivery in the classroom and increase the learners' motivation to meet higher learning proficiency (Podungge, Rahayu, Setiawan, & Sudiro, 2019; Duru, Dominic, Udoha, & Ochuba, 2020; Gamayao & Biñas, 2021). Clearly, the claims highlight the needs of teachers to achieve the optimum degree of digital advantage and competence in teaching to effectively and efficiently equip learners with the identified 21st century skills: 1) information, media and technology skills, 2) learning and innovation skills, 3) effective communication skills, and 4) life and career skills.

With the results of this study, it can be concluded that education leaders need to appropriately address the emerging problems of the SPIMS beneficiaries in order to produce 21st century Filipino learners. Results show that the first two core themes are deficiency of technological literacy and lack of confidence in delivering lessons. Respondents shared that their fundamental computer skills do not suffice the needs of the 21st-century learners, especially since technology plays an important role in education. The second theme is lack of confidence in delivering lessons as their experiences outside the country are not related to teaching.

The other two major themes refer to the activities that helped them adapt to their new work environment: informal induction from experienced teachers and the conduct of quality training and seminars. The informal induction from experienced teachers offers an opportunity for both novice and experienced teachers. With the assistance of experienced teachers, the novices were calibrated with appropriate knowledge and teaching skills. Meanwhile, the experienced teachers also created an opportunity to assess the effectivity of the adapted pedagogical approaches. The other one

is the conduct of quality training and seminars, especially since the respondents had no sufficient exposure to teaching experiences.

Although the respondents generally expressed satisfaction with the opportunities they have experienced, their responses denote that SPIMS beneficiaries have challenges that need to be properly addressed to become more effective and efficient in creating future Filipino leaders.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are therefore offered:

1. SPIMS beneficiaries, with no significant teaching experiences abroad, should be provided with appropriate intervention, such as training and seminars that would help them become technologically-literate teachers and update them with the effective pedagogical approaches in the 21st century. Upskilling and reskilling the SPIMS beneficiaries would help them gain confidence in delivering lessons in the classroom and help them adjust to their new work environment.

2. School heads should design a teacher support program to help novice SPIMS beneficiaries.

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