

# DELVING INTO THE PLIGHTS OF FILIPINO TEACHERS IN CHINA: THEIR STORIES OF STRUGGLES AND TRIUMPHS

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## Abstract

*This study explored the experiences, struggles and triumphs, coping mechanisms, and insights of Filipino teachers working in International School in China. The participants were coming from Beilun District, Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, China specifically in Access International Academy Ningbo. There were ten (10) teachers who participated in the study. This study made use of a phenomenological approach to extract the ideas from the participants. The participants were purposely selected as representatives from the group of Filipino teachers who are assigned to different grade levels but in the same school. The virtual in-depth interview was employed to gather significant information with regard to their respective lived experiences. Using the thematic analysis, the following themes emerged pertaining to their lived experiences: aiming for financial security, professional growth and development, experiencing a sense of fulfilment, benefiting from the Chinese Influences, and hurdling personal and professional challenges. There were three (3) subthemes that emerged on the challenges experienced by the participants. These are poor collegial relationships, language barriers and unmotivated learners. The coping mechanisms of Filipino teachers on the challenges they experienced were: continuous self-improvement and learning to be resilient. The educational management insights drawn from the participants were: Appreciating cultural differences, survival and adaptation and the value of self-improvement. Thus, the educational institutions where Filipino teachers may be employed may assign experienced senior teachers who can offer essential support networks for newly hired Filipino teachers. This support can be provided through various means such as training programs or mentorships, which encompass academically, culturally, and institutionally specific information.*

*Key Words: Lived experiences; struggles; success; filipino teachers; china*

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## 1. Introduction

Teaching is regarded as the noblest mission, career, and profession because it primarily contributes to the nonmaterial satisfaction of its practitioners; nonetheless, it is not a high-paying job. Going abroad is a wonderful chance for Filipino teachers seeking better pastures to work, earn a living, provide for their families, and experience new cultures. Although Filipino teachers are lauded for their exceptional qualities wherever they may be, this is also seen as a challenge for them who must establish their worth in the global arena and share their knowledge and abilities with students and the educational community in which they reside. Even if it is clear that cultures in other nations are distinct from their own, it is a challenge for Filipino teachers to integrate with their students, colleagues, other teachers, and community and to strive for professional success in a foreign country. Their goal is to better their lives and keep up in times of obstacles.

As the world attempts to raise the standard for educational excellence, more competent and world-class educators are needed. As a result, schools in other nations hire teachers regardless of race or ethnicity, valuing competency, character, and the capacity to manage with learners in a dynamic and varied classroom.

Teachers are moving abroad for professional growth and work. 30,000 European teachers sought work permits abroad between 2010 and 2014. (Bense, 2016). Australia has also traditionally welcomed teachers. UK, Ireland, US, Canada, and more recently China and Africa sent teachers to Australia. South African schools filled teacher shortages in London, England's largest and most diverse city. Indian teachers are also in demand. According to Sharma (2012), Indian instructors go to rich countries like the UK, Canada, Australia, and the US, Gulf countries like Kuwait, the UAE, Sharjah, and Qatar, and Asian countries like Singapore, Malaysia, and the Maldives. According to Education International's 2014 global study, migrant teachers take risks to support their families, improve their living conditions, or advance their careers. Teaching abroad allows teachers to travel, learn about various cultures, and build intercultural skills (Chacko & Lin, 2015)

Despite the limitations, Filipinos seek teaching opportunities abroad. Currently, there are Filipino teachers all over the world and even in Asian countries like in South Korea, Japan, Thailand, Singapore and China. In a recent study of Bagapuro and Delos Santos (2021) for Filipino teachers to be competent internationally in the teaching profession, educational preparation plays a crucial role. In China, teachers with professional licenses are more competent and competitive in the employment market. Additionally, advantages and privileges, particularly compensation, are not as competitive in the Philippines as they are in China, even for teachers with minimal education. Filipinos were enticed to teach in that country by its lucrative remuneration. Teachers in the Philippines have superior teaching skills because they are well educated, professionally prepared and have access to a variety of learning opportunities but sharing their skills or providing services to non-Filipino learners after mastering the teaching skills in the Philippines may be a challenge for the Department of Education.

As a researcher who is also working in China, I believe that it is crucial to identify the reasons why Filipino teachers like me resigned from their job or profession in the Philippines and apply to teach abroad. I also wish to investigate their positive and unpleasant personal and professional experiences working overseas. The research gap focuses on the difficulties they may encounter as foreign educators in a non-English native country. That is why I am particularly motivated to dive into the deeper aspects of their professional experiences as Filipino teachers teaching in China. I also want to investigate deeper their coping techniques and the insights they gained so that their experiences will become an inspiration or might be a learning example for others.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to ascertain or explore the lived experiences of international school teachers in China specifically in Beilun District, Ningbo, Zhejiang Province. This is a qualitative research endeavor that focuses on the participants' viewpoints on the widespread occurrence of Filipinos quitting their employment in the Philippines and go overseas, primarily to work as teachers in foreign schools in other countries. As a constructivist researcher, I am interested in the individual realities and professional identities of the participants, as well as the implications of these constructions for their work as educators. Hence, the purpose of the study was to provide thorough descriptions and narratives that mirrored the participants' interpretations of the phenomena. In light of the fact that the majority of teachers who are permitted to work overseas are competent and exceptional in their profession, the Filipino Government must also be aware of the motivations or motives that cause instructors to quit their positions. The most effective educators choose employment that satisfies not just their requirements but also their desires. Indeed, this is a challenge. Moreover, the lessons learned by the participants may serve as an eye-opener for all those affiliated with local or foreign academic institutions. In addition, given the low number of studies undertaken on teachers' experiences and perspectives on working outside their comfort zones, this paper will fill in the literature and pave the path for future local empirical research. Importantly, the outcomes of this study will inform policymakers, school administrators, and educators as to what they can do to fill the gap in the current studies. Thus, this study is thought to be of considerable importance.

### *Research Questions*

1. What are the struggles and triumphs of Filipino teachers working in an international school in China?
2. How do Filipino teachers cope with the challenges they experienced as foreign teachers in China?
3. What educational management insights can be learned from the experiences Filipinos as foreign teachers in China?

## **II. Method**

The study was conducted using a qualitative-inquiry-based phenomenological research design using open-ended questions. Phenomenological research is a kind of investigation in which the researcher identifies the essence of participants' descriptions of a phenomenon. The researcher brackets or sets aside his or her own experiences in order to understand the experiences of the study participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researcher was able to produce a description of the school heads' shared meanings with regard to their leadership experiences while emphasizing the similarity of their experiences (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenological approaches are particularly effective at bringing to the fore individual experiences and perceptions from their own points of view, and so challenging structural or normative assumptions. Adding an interpretive component to phenomenological research allows it to inform, support, or question policy and action by allowing it to be utilized as the foundation for practical theory (Lester et al., 2009). As a result, the research methodology is a good fit for capturing the thoughts and experiences of school heads amidst the Covid-19 outbreak. According to Bogart (2017), gaining a clearer image of the occurrence will aid in filling research gaps and providing suggestions for improvement, which in the context of the current study refers to the personal and professional experiences of Filipino teachers working in an international school in China. The study attempted to present the "living worlds" of the participants, finally exposing their personal relevance in relation to the experience, as a design that captures the experiences of a "chosen few" addressing specific phenomena.

Further, this study also employed participants' observations in an In-Depth Interview (IDI). According to Denzel & Lincoln (2000), as cited by Lee (2007) in Pelobello (2015), this method involves the use and collection of variety of interviews, observations, history, interactional and visual texts that describe routines, problems and meaning of individual lives. It is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions that explore a social or human problem. It builds a holistic picture, analyzes words, reports, detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

Furthermore, real life situations need to be explored in terms of their contextual nature as seen by the participants. Therefore, phenomenology is an appropriate and applicable technique to explore the topics on the lived experiences of Filipino teachers working abroad. Common themes will be analyzed, coded and extracted from all of the interviews.

## *Ethical Considerations*

### *Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation*

The participants were adequately informed about the research undertaking through an informed consent. Consent was given freely and the researcher made sure that the participants understood what was being asked and emphasized that their participations were just purely voluntary. All participants were required to provide written informed consent. The potential participants were approached individually online and given an explanation of the purpose of the study and data collection process. They were also given an appropriate time to ask questions and address concerns. It was explained that their participation was voluntary; they may also refuse to participate or withdraw from the study while it was in progress. When the participants agreed to be part of the In-Depth Interview (IDI), a date, time, and venue were set.

### *Anonymity and Confidentiality*

The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were preserved by not revealing their names and identity in the data collection, analysis and reporting of the study findings. Privacy and confidentiality of the interview environment were managed carefully during the interview sessions, data analysis and dissemination of the findings. The confidentiality of handling the data is in accordance to Republic Act 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

### *Interview Sessions*

Each interview was conducted individual through online. The interview was done with the use of google meet, google sheets and messenger application. The researcher was the only knowledgeable person who can match the identity of the participants in voice and in video recordings. In recording the data, interviews were audio-taped and video recorded with the permission of the participants, and the voice records were transcribed verbatimly. Some notes were taken by the researcher to have genuine, accurate and authentic transcription but the identification of the information of the participants were removed or disguised. Further, the interviews, transcriptions and consent forms were kept in a secured location. To safeguard confidentiality, consent forms were stored in a separate location from the other data so there is no way they can be linked to the interviews.

## *Research Participants*

This study was conducted in an international school of Beilun District, Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, China specifically in Access International Academy Ningbo (AIAN, Chinese: 宁波爱学国际学校). It is an international school in the Beilun District of Ningbo, China offering educational programs from Nursery to Grade 12 to students of 28 nationalities. AIAN is the only international school in Ningbo accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). AIAN is a member of the Association of China and Mongolia International Schools (ACAMIS) and the East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools

(EARCOS). The place is a Coastal City that lies in the south of the populous Yangtze River delta and faces the East China Sea to the east. Only 8 teacher participants served as the key informants who were included and were purposely selected based on the nature of their work as OFW teachers and who already experienced at least one year or more teaching in China. The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses. According to Bernard (2006), it is a non-random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of informants. It was the researcher who decided what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience.

Purposive sampling is exemplified through the key informant technique wherein one or a few individuals are solicited to act as guides to the phenomenon. Key informants are observant, reflective members of the community of interest who know much about the topic and are both able and willing to share their knowledge.

To gain a variance in perspective from participants, the effort was extended to include both males and females as well as individuals with various levels of educational training, attainment and rank. Specifically, the inclusion criteria include the following: (1) an OFW with at least one year of experience teaching in China and who has three years of experience as a teacher in a Philippine School; (2) A Filipino teacher in China who experienced personal and professional challenges working away from home and (3) a Filipino teacher who experienced teaching in China in the old and new normal.

### *Data Collection*

In gathering the data, I prepared the interview guide which is composed of three (3) main significant questions which inquired about the experiences of the OFW teachers. A thorough deliberation was made on the aspect of determining the problems of teachers. I made sure that my interview guide was validated by the experts. Moreover, I made sure that all ethical protocols were observed and implemented as I collected the data.

An official letter was sent individually to the participants in China and to Rizal Memorial Colleges asking permission to conduct the study. After receiving the approval letter, the conditions set by the approving authority and the participants will be considered and met. Then, the interview session followed. The interviews were conducted in private areas to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Since the study was conducted during the pandemic - COVID-19, Facebook Messenger, Google Sheets, Zoom, and Google meet were also used for other participants to adhere to the protocols. The interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participants.

In addition, participants were asked to refrain from using names during the interview (names of people and places). At each interview, I discussed the purpose of the study, the structure of the interview, and the nature, benefits, and risks of participation were discussed with the participants. They were, likewise, informed that participation is voluntary

and that all the information gathered are held with strict measures of confidentiality. They were informed that there is no financial compensation for their participation and their participation could raise awareness and provide insight on the phenomenon being investigated. Right after, the transcription of In-depth Interviews (IDI) proceedings was done with the help of the note taker and recorder. I also utilized Inscribe software trial version in transcribing the participants' responses and I also ensured the authentic responses of the informants. In the process, I was able to establish rapport with the interviewees to elicit honest and open responses. After the IDI process, I re-stated or summarized the information, then, presented it to them to vouch for accuracy.

The sharing of findings with the participants allows them to critically analyze and comment on it. The participants also affirmed that the summaries presented to them is an original reflection of their views, feelings, and experiences. In this study, their affirmation of the accuracy and completeness of the information contributed much to the credibility of the study. The data gathered from the IDI were organized accordingly into themes for analysis.

### *Data Analysis*

In this study all the data collected were carefully examined and thoughtfully analyzed. The researcher first described personal experiences with the phenomenon under study. The researcher began with full description of her own experience of the phenomenon. This is an attempt to set aside the researcher's personal experiences so that the focus can be directed to the participants. He developed a list of significant statements. He then finds statements about how individuals were experiencing the topic, lists these significant statements as having equal worth, and works to develop a list of nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping, statements. The researcher took the significant statements and then grouped them into larger units of information, called "meaning units" or themes. He wrote a description of "what" the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon. Next, he wrote a description of "how" the experience happened. This was called "structural description," and the inquirer reflects on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced. Finally, he wrote a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both the textural and structural descriptions. This passage is the "essence" of the experience and represents the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study.

*Thematic Content Analysis.* A thematic analysis strives to identify patterns of themes in the interview data. One of the advantages of thematic analysis is that it's a flexible method that can be used both for explorative studies, where the researcher do not have a clear idea of what patterns is being searched for, as well as for more deductive studies, where the researcher know exactly what he or she is interested in. No matter which type of study is being done and for what purpose, the most important thing in the analysis is that the researcher respects the data and try to represent the results of the interview as honestly as possible (Montensen, 2020).



*Document analysis.* Document analysis is a form of qualitative research that uses a systematic procedure to analyze documentary evidence and answer specific research questions. Similar to other methods of analysis in qualitative research, document analysis requires repeated review, examination, and interpretation of the data in order to gain meaning and empirical knowledge of the construct being studied. Document analysis can be conducted as a stand-alone study or as a component of a larger qualitative or mixed methods study, where it is often used to triangulate findings gathered from another data source (e.g., interview or focus group transcripts, observation, surveys). When used in triangulation, documents can corroborate or refute, elucidate, or expand on findings across other data sources, which helps to guard against bias (Frey, Bruce B., 2018).

*Triangulation of Data.* Triangulation means using more than one method to collect data on the same topic. This is a way of assuring the validity of research through the use of a variety of methods to collect data on the same topic, which involves different types of samples as well as methods of data collection. However, the purpose of triangulation is not necessarily to cross-validate data but rather to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon (Kulkarni, Prashant, 2013).

*Environmental triangulation* - The use of Environmental triangulation is limited only to those studies where the findings can be influenced by certain environmental factors. This type of triangulation uses different settings, locations, and other factors such as the time, day, and season in which the study took place. The idea is to determine which of these factors influence the information received, these factors are then changed to see if the findings are the same. If the findings remain unaltered under varying environmental factors, then validity can be established (Naeem, Saira, 2019). In this study, such triangulation was used considering that the requirement as mentioned was the use of environmental triangulation that best suits the environment of the research being conducted.

### **III-Results and Discussions**

#### *The struggles and triumphs of Filipino teachers working in China*

In analyzing the struggles and triumph of Filipino teachers working in China, based on the interview answers shared by the teachers themselves (P1-P10), I was able to identify five major themes: Aiming for Financial Security, Professional Growth and Development, experiencing a Sense of Fulfillment, benefiting from the Chinese Influences and Hurdling Personal and Professional Challenges. There were three (3) subthemes that emerged on the challenges experienced by the participants. These are Poor Collegial Relationships, Language Barriers and Unmotivated Learners.

Filipino educators employed overseas have conveyed a range of positive and negative work-life encounters. However, the prevailing majority of these experiences are characterized by valuable learning opportunities, which serve as the primary motivation for their sustained commitment to working outside their familiar environments. Teaching abroad offers a valuable opportunity for individuals to engage in a structured learning experience that facilitates personal growth, exploration, and the pursuit of new adventures. The majority of participants share a common method for identifying opportunities to work in Chinese international schools. Similarly, they possess a comparable justification for their decision to depart from their employment in the Philippines and establish residence in China.

*Aiming for Financial Security.* An increasing number of educators are opting to explore additional opportunities and seek better prospects overseas. The Philippines' education system has been confronted with a persistent issue in the past decade, characterized by a significant outflow of teachers seeking improved employment opportunities abroad. The study participants articulated their perspectives on working abroad, highlighting the significance of their monthly basic salary as a crucial factor to be taken into account. The amount of payment varies depending on the institution. Nevertheless, the remuneration provided only marginally met the rising expenses associated with fundamental necessities, leading the participants to perceive it as insufficient where financial security was considered the main reason why they leave the country. When asked about the main reasons why they left their jobs in the Philippines, the following reasons were noted:

Seeing my other family members and friends living a better life while working in China and where compensation is better than in the Philippines. (P2)

There was an opportunity opened and good salary. It is always my aim to experience financial freedom and security while giving my all as a teacher. (P3)

Satisfying benefits and good compensation that school in China can provide had a great impact for me to leave my jobs in the Philippines. (P5)

As narrated by P2, observing the comparatively improved quality of life experienced by his relatives and acquaintances residing in China, where remuneration surpasses that of the Philippines motivated him to leave and teach abroad. P3 shared that an opportunity presented itself, accompanied by a competitive salary was the main reason she left. She added that the primary objective as well was to attain financial independence and stability, while simultaneously exerting maximum effort in her role as an educator. P5 expressed further that the attractive benefits and competitive compensation offered by Chinese schools exerted a significant influence on her decision to resign from her teaching position in the Philippines.

This finding is similar to the discussions of Johnson (2013) when he stated that teaching in other countries is becoming increasingly popular. The benefits and advantages that may be gained by attending a school in a different country are a major draw for many people. Educators choose to work in other countries because of the higher salaries they might expect there. The same is true among the participants in the study where higher salary and financial stability were important for them.

*Professional Growth and Development.* Teaching in China is a distinct and enriching experience that leaves an indelible mark on the lives of educators who undertake this journey. China offers a multitude of reasons for a new instructor to consider it as a teaching destination. From its thriving culture to its expanding economy, teaching in China presents a rare opportunity for personal and professional development. It is known that China's education system is continuously evolving and provides numerous opportunities for professional growth. As for the participants, they are given the opportunity to improve their teaching skills, acquire valuable cross-cultural experience, and gain knowledge of innovative teaching techniques. Collaboration with local colleagues and direct exposure to the Chinese education system have broadened their perspective and increased their teaching competence, making them more adaptable and globally competitive educators.

Specifically, some responses of the participants were noted:

To experience teaching foreign students, grab higher offer of salary. Live and work independently while learning also the culture and practices of China. (P4)

To develop my skills and it is always a great opportunity to learn about new cultures and gain work experience in a different country. (P6)



I believe that I can enhance my career more outside the country, while exploring new culture, environment, and meeting people from different parts of the world. (P7)

P4 expressed that she decided to teach abroad in order to gain exposure to teaching foreign students. To her, it was great to seek employment opportunities that offer a higher salary and as well as to engage in the pursuit of independent living and professional endeavors, concurrently immersing oneself in the study and assimilation of Chinese culture and customs. P6 shared that the acquisition of skills and the exploration of diverse cultures, coupled with the accumulation of professional experience in a foreign nation, present valuable opportunities for personal and professional growth. P7 also added that she was of the opinion that pursuing career opportunities abroad can potentially contribute to professional growth through exposure to diverse cultures, environments, and individuals from various global regions.

This finding is related to different notions. Teaching in another country is an experience that educators will remember for the rest of their existence where they can improve personally and professionally to become better teachers in the field. Teachers can improve their abilities by taking advantage of pre-departure resources, training, and assistance from the government and their sponsoring agencies (Explore Asia, 2020). Teachers become more motivated to go abroad to prove themselves worthy of being chosen among the many candidates, according to Toraman, Ozdemir, and Orakci (2020). They are more convinced that they have what it takes to teach in another country as foreign teachers. They are also interested in learning about the cultures of different countries and experiencing life abroad. According to Serin (2017), teaching overseas has a number of advantages, including foreign experience, learning about cultural practices, and understanding people from various cultures that may add to their competence personally and professionally.

*Benefiting from the Chinese Influences.* The school's culture is constituted by the shared values, customs, and behaviors that prevail within the school community. The complexity of contemporary society poses a significant difficulty for students, parents, and teachers in understanding the interplay between their cultural backgrounds and the school environment, particularly when these cultures exhibit limited compatibility. Despite the heterogeneous composition of Chinese population, characterized by diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, Filipino educators are influenced by various Chinese cultural factors irrespective of their own backgrounds. When queried about the impact of the school's culture on their role as educators, participants expressed various favorable perspectives regarding the influence of Chinese values.

For the participants, teaching in China provides a unique opportunity for an immersive cultural experience that is unparalleled. The nation of China possesses a wealth of historical significance, cultural traditions, and a heterogeneous population, fostering an environment conducive to gaining genuine comprehension and admiration for an alternative way of existence. By engaging in language acquisition and indulging in their values and traditions, individuals will find themselves fully immersed in a captivating cultural milieu that presents boundless opportunities for exploration and enlightenment.

Some narratives of the participants on this context were elaborated:

Chinese respect teacher, they put them in a pedestal so, as a teacher, we are given lots of respect. Competitive nature of Chinese people plays an important part to motivate students. (P5)

Culture influences the way I teach my students. I need to limit my discussion with regards to religion, politics, and disputes between countries. (P7)

In all the schools that I have worked at, the Chinese culture has a very strong influence on how the schools are managed, whilst international school can be more accepting of other culture than in public school, final

decision is taken in reverence for Chinese culture. (P10)

P5 explained that in Chinese culture, there was a strong reverence for teachers, resulting in their elevated status. Consequently, teachers were afforded a significant degree of respect. The competitive nature exhibited by individuals of Chinese descent significantly contributes to student motivation. P7 shared that the teaching methods she employed were shaped by cultural factors where respect was part of it. P10 shared that in the various educational institutions where he had been employed, the Chinese culture exerts a significant impact on the management practices. While international schools tend to demonstrate greater openness towards embracing diverse cultures compared to public schools, the ultimate decision-making process remains deeply respectful of Chinese cultural norms.

This finding is supported by the concept that teachers prefer improving their teaching techniques and professional progress by observing the many practices that they accomplished in the foreign school where they were hired. They gained a fresh and deeper understanding of educational approaches that they might apply in their home countries (Kong, 2020). Furthermore, according to Ellwood (2015), teachers who work with international students acquire experience engaging with people from different cultures and gain a better understanding of the host country's practices, traditions, values and customs. Indeed, not only can international experience help teachers gain cultural understanding, allowing them to make strong relationships with students from a range of backgrounds, but it also enables instructors to develop effective teaching approaches (Altun, 2015). With these, Teachers must comprehend the values and beliefs of students from diverse cultures in order to educate them effectively (De Villar & Jiang, 2012). It is self-evident that mandating students to follow the same curriculum and instructional approaches will appeal to a variety of individuals without forgetting the value of respect and individual differences.

*Experiencing a Sense of Fulfillment.* Teaching continues to be regarded as a highly gratifying career option. Teaching is a profession that entails significant demands, yet it also presents a unique opportunity to effectuate substantial and meaningful change. Although there is literature on teacher burnout and stress in the profession, it is important to note that a significant number of teachers still possess a strong affinity for their profession especially when they are able to receive better compensation, value and affection. The act of teaching is often regarded as being highly fulfilling and gratifying. The gratification derived from engaging with malleable students who exhibit a strong desire for knowledge acquisition can surpass the challenges inherent in the teaching profession. In the study, the advantages associated with teaching in China extend beyond the realm of the teaching profession as per the teachers. Employers across various industries place significant importance on the acquisition of international work experience. Educators have acquired the skills to effectively navigate diverse cultural contexts, successfully adapt to unfamiliar environments and cultures, and effectively address the demands associated with autonomous work. Individuals possess enhanced linguistic and interpersonal abilities, as well as a more comprehensive perspective on global affairs. These attributes render them a highly advantageous asset within any professional setting, concurrently enabling them to achieve personal satisfaction and contentment in their professional and personal lives.

These were emphasized by the answers of the participants if they are satisfied or contented in their decision leaving the Philippines to teach in China. They confidently mentioned the following:

I am satisfied working here in China because I can afford to buy what I want. Aside from this, I am also becoming better everyday here although we are given extra-work sometimes, we feel fulfilled and contented with all the benefits we gain. Aside from gaining monetary value, we also gained professional advancement that made life as a teacher more fulfilling and satisfying. (P1)

Yes, all my children's tuition fees are shouldered by the school. Benefits wise, it is compensating and doing so, we could also support our family back home. (P2)

Definitely Yes, I am given an opportunity to grow professionally with trainings, tasks and different responsibilities every semester. Being well compensated doesn't hurt to be more motivated to show your best. Life in China as a teacher is indeed fulfilling. (P5)

P1 shared that working here in China made her happy because she can already buy what she wanted. Aside from that, she was also getting better every day, and even though teachers sometimes were given extra work, they were still happy with all the perks they can get. They not only made more money, but we also moved up in their careers, which made being a teacher more rewarding and satisfying. P2 focused on the benefits given by his employer to him that are enough to help his family back home. P5 expressed fulfillment in the training, jobs, and new responsibilities every term assigned to her that helped her grow professionally. According to her, it did not even hurt to be more driven to do your best if you are paid well. As a teacher in China, life is at its best.

This is related to the findings of Tseng & Newtown (as referenced in Alghamdi & Otte, 2016), that working overseas is connected with personal and professional challenges, discrimination, and even homesickness. Although teachers experienced these negative situations, their personal attributes and values will lead them to become competent, better, and fulfilled educators. By experiencing better life abroad than in their origin country, teachers always feel satisfied and fulfilled as foreign workers.

*Hurdling Personal and Professional Challenges.* Every profession may be difficult, and some are frequently misunderstood. Every job can be challenging to adjust to, and it may take years of effort to acquire the necessary expertise to fully master it. Even in the past, teaching was a demanding profession. Yet, each year thousands of new teachers enter the field, embracing both the profession's benefits and difficulties. When the participants were asked emotionally about their experiences working abroad, they emphasized having mixed perceptions, feelings, and emotions. The participants considered different personal and professional challenges. The adjustment one must do being away from his or her comfort zone truly takes a lot of effort and perseverance but at the end of the day, being satisfied with a certain decision can compensate for all the negative feelings one will feel as a teacher abroad. The specific challenges of the participants are discussed below.

*Poor Collegial Relationship.* Upon exploring the challenges experienced by Filipino teachers working abroad, the participants expressed various sentiments and the first theme considered and was really manifested on their expressions and gestures is on the poor collegial relationship or on creating harmonious relationship with colleagues and their bosses. They have difficulties adjusting to the expectations of the people around them and on communicating with their co-teachers.

The participants' emotions overflowed by expressing the following:

Personal Problems- making friends with Chinese easily, language barrier, cultural differences (P1)

Problem with the colleagues- difference in culture, straight forward, sensitive, lack of effective communication, always announcing things at the last minutes, some colleagues are working only for their personal benefits, professionalism and jealousy at times. (P3)

Professional Problems- they just work on how they paid, disagreeing with the standard of the output, China always changing rules and policies for foreign workers. Filipinos are acknowledged as a great educator, however in terms of marketing, the school prefers western people as the face of the school, unfair bosses. (P4)

P1 shared those Filipino teachers encountered personal challenges in establishing friendships with Chinese individuals due to factors such as the language barrier and cultural disparities. P3 added that the issue at hand pertains to intercultural differences among colleagues, characterized by a direct and straightforward communication style that may be perceived as insensitive. Moreover, there seems to be a deficiency in effective communication, as important announcements are consistently made with minimal notice. Additionally, certain colleagues appear to prioritize personal gain over collective objectives, thereby compromising professionalism. Furthermore, occasional instances of jealousy further contribute to the problematic dynamics within the group. P4 expressed Issues in the Professional Sphere: A Focus on Compensation Discrepancies, Dissatisfaction with Output Standards, and China's Dynamic Policies Regarding Foreign Labor. Filipinos are widely recognized for their exceptional prowess in the field of education. However, when it comes to marketing strategies, there appears to be a preference for individuals of Western descent to represent the school, thereby raising concerns about the fairness of the management.

Indeed, having the opportunity to live and teach in another country comes with its own set of dangers and challenges (ElbazLuwisch, 2004). The finding is related to the conceptualizations of different individuals. According to Tseng and Newtown (quoted in Alghamdi and Otte, 2016), working abroad is associated with linguistic problems, discrimination, and homesickness. According to Gul & Gokce (2020), teachers also confront professional problems, such as grasping a new curriculum, familiarizing themselves with students' interests, and creating harmonious relationships with coworkers and superiors.

*Language Barriers.* The concept of "language barriers" pertains to the difficulties encountered by individuals in terms of linguistic communication, as well as the strategies employed to overcome these challenges. Effective communication plays a pivotal role in cultivating a vibrant and productive work environment as it facilitates mutual comprehension among individuals and promotes efficiency. The presence of obstacles in communication between two parties has the potential to restrict constructive dialogue and increase the likelihood of misunderstandings. When engaging in pedagogical activities within an international educational institution situated in China, it is expected that collaborating with the locals will present certain difficulties. The participants encountered challenges in acclimating to their unfamiliar work environment, establishing effective communication with colleagues, comprehending their colleagues' perspectives, and encountering difficulties in communicating with individuals across the educational institution.

Specific responses of the participants on language as a challenge were noted:

The most difficult hurdle to overcome is the language barrier. Knowing that Chinese people are not native English speakers in the first place. I feel like I have to talk clearly and slowly just to let the school individuals understand me. (P6)

Accents are another issue. Another cause is communication difficulties or a language barrier. Some pupils claim that the teacher's accent confuses and distracts them. (P7)

Language, the terms used by professionals and adults in their native tongue, and their pronunciation were difficult for me to comprehend. (P8)

P6 shared that one of the most challenging obstacles to surmount is the linguistic barrier. Given the fact that individuals of Chinese descent typically do not have English as their first language. He perceived a need to enunciate his words with clarity and deliberate pace in order to effectively communicate with members of the educational institution. P7 expressed that accents pose an additional concern. Another contributing factor is the presence of communication difficulties or a language barrier. Several students assert that the teacher's accent causes confusion and serves as a distraction to their learning process. P8 added that he encountered challenges in comprehending the language, including the specialized terminology employed by professionals

and adults in their native tongue, as well as the nuances of pronunciation.

This is related to the findings that both linguistic and paralinguistic [body language, gestures, and facial expressions] components of languages play a vital role in the communication process when it comes to multicultural problems (Byram et al, 2009). As a result, miscommunications may occur in the classroom or during interactions with members of the host community. Even though international teachers have gathered a substantial corpus of language in the target language, it may not be enough for effective communication. The process of communication may be hindered by a variety of new accents, dialects, idioms, pauses, spelling, and body language (Ephratt, 2011; Mancini-Cross et al, 2009).

Further, both native and non-native English teachers failed to relate their teaching practices with their international students in reality. Both teachers, according to Ulla (2018), face obstacles to their students' learning, such as a lack of exposure to the English language, a non-established English curriculum, insufficient teacher training, and a lack of motivation in learning English. Teachers working overseas, according to Altun (2015), are exposed to a variety of curriculum that differ from their own.

*Unmotivated learners.* Motivation is a psychological trait that stimulates the desire to attain a specific objective. Students have diverse educational objectives. Teachers spend the most time with students and should be able to inspire them to achieve their objectives. There are a variety of methods in which teachers can implement this but, in the study, participants considered motivating learners to learn as a problem faced. Most of the learners are demotivated to learn. Although the task of motivating students can be challenging, the benefits derived from it are highly valuable. Naturally, students who are motivated exhibit higher levels of enthusiasm toward learning and active engagement in classroom activities. In essence, instructing a cohort of highly motivated students is a mutually gratifying experience for both educators and learners. Certain students exhibit self-motivation and possess an inherent inclination towards acquiring knowledge but in the study, learners are generally demotivated.

On this note, the participants' shared the following:

Learners are not always motivated to learn and they also have poor study habits. (P2)

Students do not have great concerns about learning. If they do not like the subject or lessons, teachers double their efforts to teach effectively and efficiently. (P6)

Learners go to school to just be physically present but not really enthusiastically learning. (P7)

Participants 2, 6 and 7 have explained almost the same points and views. Students in their classes showed a Lack of motivation and inadequate study habits and are common challenges faced by teachers. Students do not exhibit significant apprehensions regarding the process of acquiring knowledge. In the event that students exhibit disinterest or dissatisfaction towards a particular subject or lesson, educators intensify their endeavors to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of their teaching methods. Students attend school merely for the purpose of being physically present, rather than actively engaging in enthusiastic learning.

The finding is the same with the study of Ulla (2018) where english language teaching and learning are regarded as essential for the nation's and its people's development; hence, English language teaching in Asia like in Thailand, Korea, China and Singapore has become one of the most sought-after careers for both native and non-native English speaker-teachers. In a second study by Ulla (2018), nine (9) Filipino university and college English instructors' experiences and perspectives on teaching English as a foreign language in Thailand are offered. The findings revealed that although Filipino teachers were enthusiastic about teaching English to Thai students, they perceived English language instruction in Thailand to be a difficult task due to students' lack of interest in the English language, lack of exposure to and support for an English-speaking environment, unclear and inappropriate English language curriculum, and lack of teacher professional developmen

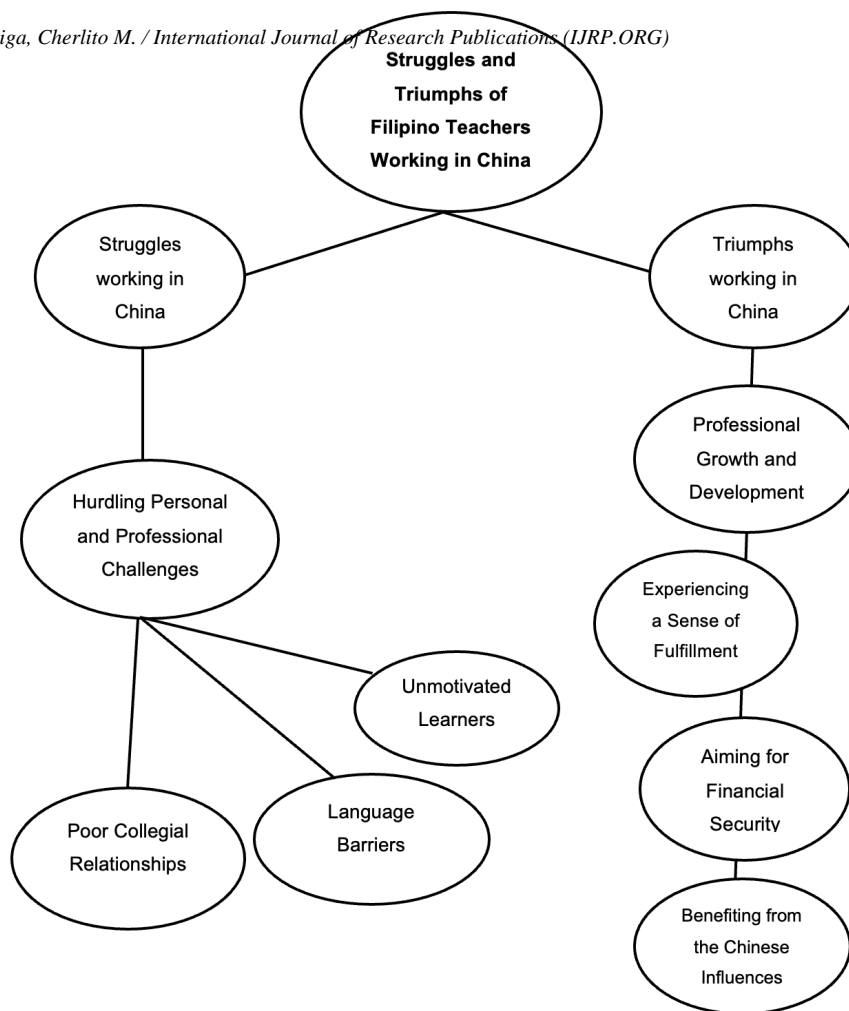


Figure 3. The Struggles and Triumphs of Filipino Teachers Working in China

#### *The coping strategies of Filipino teachers working in China*

The second research objective of this study focuses on the coping mechanisms of Filipino teachers working in China on the challenges they experienced. Figure four shows the summary of their coping strategies. As seen in Figure 4 below, the coping strategies of school leaders are divided into two major themes. These are continuous self-improvement and learning to be resilient. These summarized the coping strategies of Filipino teachers as they deal with the challenges of the current research circumstances.

*Continuous Professional Improvement.* In this research conducted, self-development for educators is characterized as an ongoing endeavor that involves critically examining one's own performance, appraising both strengths and areas in need of improvement, and subsequently formulating a personalized approach to initiate and assess enhancements in the identified areas. The impact of social, economic, and technological advancements on the teaching profession is widely recognized. Hence, it is imperative for an educator to perceive their profession as an ongoing learning endeavor in order to remain abreast of the dynamic and evolving educational landscape. This suggests that educators consistently possess opportunities for personal and professional development, as there is perpetually a skill to refine or a pedagogical obstacle to overcome. The participants held the belief that in order to effectively navigate the difficulties associated with working in



a foreign country, they perceive it as an opportunity for ongoing personal and professional growth.

The participant's insights as to this regard were noted:

Being a teacher is not just a profession, but a mission that you have to execute accordingly to have a fruitful outcome. To cope with the challenging situations, I continuously do self-learning to grow in my profession. (P7)

Working abroad made me view life from a more positive perspective. It helped me developed my skills and keep honing it. To learn and grow more in the field of teaching, I participated in trainings and learn from my experiences. (P8)

As an international teacher my perspective about education and pedagogy becomes clearer with the help of my rich experience in classroom management. I continuously grow professionally and attended different online trainings and even face-to-face seminars. (P9)

The participants of this study presented their ideas as to how they coped with some difficulties or challenges they experienced. P7 shared that being a teacher entails more than just a vocation; it encompasses a sense of purpose that necessitates the diligent execution of responsibilities in order to achieve favorable outcomes. In order to effectively navigate difficult circumstances, teachers must engage in ongoing self-directed learning to enhance their professional development. The experience of working overseas has provided P8 a newfound outlook on life that is characterized by a greater sense of positivity. The experience facilitated the development and continuous refinement of his skills. Further, P8 shared that in order to enhance his professional development efforts in the field of education, he actively engaged in various training programs and sought to derive valuable insights from his practical experiences. P9 expressed that as an educator with a global background, her understanding of education and pedagogy is further enhanced through her extensive experience in effectively managing classroom dynamics. She consistently engaged in professional development by actively participating in various online training programs as well as attending in-person seminars.

Undoubtedly, the experience of working abroad has consistently proven advantageous for educators in both their personal and professional development, notwithstanding the challenges encountered by certain individuals. According to Altun (2015), engaging in international experiences not only facilitates instructors in developing cultural awareness, thereby enabling them to establish favorable connections with students from diverse backgrounds, but it also enables them to cultivate efficient teaching methodologies. One of the primary advantages associated with international experience pertains to the acquisition of knowledge about diverse cultures and the understanding of individuals' lives from various countries. This knowledge equips individuals with a heightened awareness of the unique requirements of students from diverse cultural backgrounds, enabling them to deliver education effectively by tailoring it to meet these specific needs. In order to effectively educate students from diverse cultural backgrounds, it is imperative that teachers possess a comprehensive understanding of the values and beliefs held by these children (De Villar & Jiang, 2012). It is evident that the implementation of a standardized curriculum and instructional approaches will have a broad appeal among a diverse student population.

*Learning to be Resilient.* Educators who choose to teach abroad and investigate schools and life in other contexts are undeniably pushing themselves to their limits. Taking risks on a personal and professional level. This decision alone demonstrates the need for resilience among educators. Teaching is one of the most rewarding and fulfilling professions in the world, but becoming a teacher requires a great deal of effort and perseverance. Teacher autonomy makes teaching one of the most dynamic, intriguing, and adaptable

professions available. Every day is an opportunity to inspire, engage, and connect with eager-to-explore students who possess an abundance of skills, aspirations, and ideas. However, study participants conveyed situations in reverse order. They stated that it requires fortitude and bravery to teach abroad due to the constant presence of uncertainty. The term "resilience" was mentioned by nearly all of the participants in response to the question "What was your greatest overseas learning?" When asked for advice for aspiring international teachers, the motif of the need to be resilient in the face of life's uncertainties emerged.

Specifically, the participants insights as to this regard were noted:

I become more independent and knowledgeable especially in teaching, taking responsibilities for myself and in work not anymore, a struggle for me. I learned to be really resilient amidst life uncertainties. (P4)

Filipinos are adaptable and are resilient. I am always proud of our heritage that we are capable to any school work and our education, professional experiences with other nationalities. (P5)

I am more resilient, confident, appreciative, and open-minded. This is due to the fact that I had a lot of trainings attended international convention and acquainted with numerous experienced educators.(P6)

P4 mentioned that he had experienced a notable increase in independence and knowledge, particularly in the realm of teaching. He assumed greater personal responsibility and found that the challenges associated with his work are no longer as formidable. He acquired the ability to demonstrate significant resilience in the face of unpredictable circumstances in life. P5 shared that Filipinos naturally exhibit a remarkable capacity for adaptability and resilience. She took great pride in the cultural heritage as Filipino, which enables her to excel in academic pursuits, as well as in other educational and professional interactions with individuals from diverse national backgrounds. P6 explained that he exhibited a greater degree of resilience, confidence, appreciation, and open-mindedness. This can be attributed to the extensive training he received, her participation in international conventions, and her interactions with a multitude of experienced educators.

The finding is related to numerous scholarly investigations that have examined the challenging encounters faced by educators while teaching in foreign nations. In a study conducted by Miller (2018), an investigation was undertaken to explore the strategies employed by teachers who received training abroad in order to navigate their professional responsibilities and teaching encounters in England, in comparison to their teaching experiences in their respective home nations. The results suggest that foreign-trained teachers are able to cope with the demands of their profession, although they may not be experiencing significant success in certain aspects. In a study conducted by Roy and Lavery (2017), an examination was undertaken to explore the experiences of educators who received their training outside of Australia prior to their employment in a public secondary school setting within the country. The researchers sought to investigate the obstacles and difficulties encountered by teachers prior to securing employment in the field of education. Their study revealed several noteworthy findings, including a dearth of information pertaining to post-immigration life, the perils associated with misinformation, delays in the registration process, inconsistencies in English language proficiency requirements, and challenging living conditions in rural locales. However, despite these challenges, the teachers exhibited resilience and managed to fulfill their contractual obligations overseas. In a study conducted by Mizzi (2017), the focus was on investigating the experiences of visiting professors within post-secondary educational institutions. The findings of the study indicated that being a visiting academic presents a valuable opportunity for individuals to enhance their intercultural competence and professional practice. Based on the results, the provision of a preparatory pedagogy has the potential to support faculty members in their exploration of the

diverse challenges and advantages associated with teaching or conducting research abroad. Undoubtedly, the act of working in a foreign country requires individuals to possess both courage and resilience, which aligns with the findings of the aforementioned scholarly works, as the participants in the study similarly encountered these challenges.

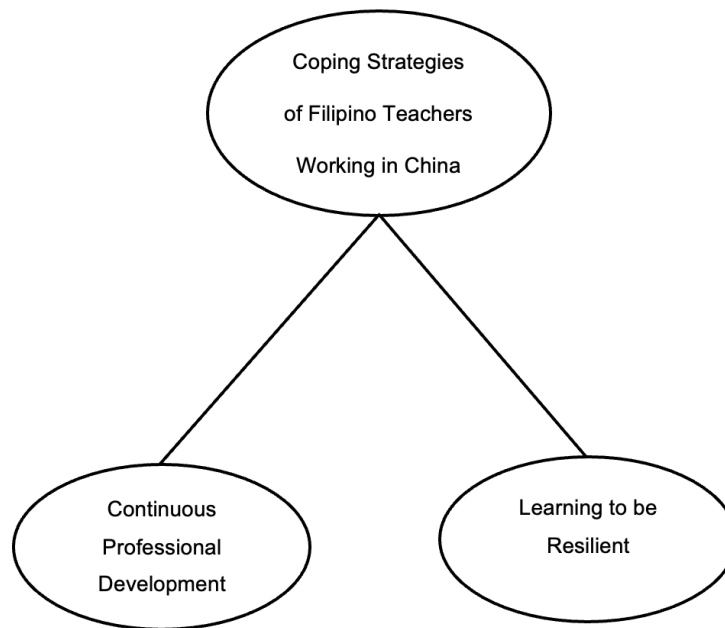


Figure 4. The coping strategies of Filipino teachers working in China

*Educational management insights drawn from the experiences and challenges of Filipino teachers working in China*

The third research objective of this study focuses on the insights or lessons learned by Filipino Teachers in China. Figure five shows the summary of insights and lessons learned. Based on the experiences and challenges of Filipino teachers, the participants of this study had their respective insights to further improve their work-life situations and experiences. These insights were some of the personal thoughts of the participants that they deemed significant in understanding their real situations working in an international school.

As seen in Figure 5, the insights of the participants are divided into three major themes. These are The Beauty of Cultural Differences, Survival and adaptation and the Value of self-improvement. These summarized the insights of the teachers based on their experiences in an international school including the challenges and coping mechanisms. Based on their responses, although they experienced ups and downs in the process, still their insights have always reminded them of the lessons and things that they learned which made them more equipped and competent as Filipino Teachers working away from their own country.

*The Beauty of Cultural Differences.* Cultural distinctions encompass a range of ideas, attitudes, languages, practices, and expressions that are considered unique to individuals of a specific ethnicity, race, or national origin. The participants in this study identified several instances of cultural differences in the

workplace, specifically among teachers, students, administrators, and other school personnel. These differences encompassed various aspects such as racial and ethnic backgrounds, linguistic diversity, and unique approaches to handling different tasks and situations. The predominant characteristic of individuals in Chinese culture is autonomy. Individuals within Filipino culture commonly exhibit a communal mindset. Typically, individuals in China tend to articulate their opinions and refrain from allowing external perspectives or beliefs to dictate their conduct. China's diplomacy reflects the embodiment of various Chinese traditional cultural values, including harmony, benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom, honesty, loyalty, and filial piety. Among these values, harmony holds particular significance as the foremost Chinese traditional value. The cultural practices in the Philippines frequently prioritize the involvement and contribution of family members in the day-to-day decision-making processes and engagements. Chinese are generally characterized by a high level of tolerance. Filipinos generally conform to conventional ideals and considered learning the cultures of China a must. The aforementioned observations are representative of the perspectives shared by the participants involved in the study.

They further shared their insights by mentioning the following statements:

Cultural awareness, learn new skills, learn their language and values as well.

(P3)

Keep myself be open-minded and honest in working, be versatile in performing my works since these are also the values I learned from

Chinese people. (P4)

I should do away with our crab mentality and work as a group to lift each other up. I realized that Chinese values are valuable for Filipino teachers like me in order to live in harmony with others. (P5)

The participants of this study had given their respective insights as to how they felt about all their experiences abroad. Developing cultural awareness involves acquiring new skills and gaining knowledge of the language and values of a particular culture. Participants 3 to 5 shared the same learning. They strive to maintain an open-minded and honest approach to their work, while also cultivating versatility in their performance. These values align with the principles they have gleaned from Chinese culture. It was imperative to eliminate the presence of crab mentality within their collective and instead foster a collaborative environment that promotes mutual support and advancement. It had come to their attention that the incorporation of Chinese values can be of great significance for Filipino educators, in fostering harmonious relationships with others.

These results are consistent with the notions of Medved et al. (2013) that instructors should remember that the purpose of education is to provide high-quality learning and experience. In this regard, instructors should consider cultural differences when interacting with students. International experience not only helps teachers acquire cultural comprehension, allowing them to form strong relationships with students from a variety of backgrounds, but it also enables instructors to develop effective teaching strategies (Altun, 2015). In fact, the greatest benefit of foreign experience is learning about different cultures and the lives of people from various nations, which enables you to be well-aware of the needs of students from diverse cultures and to effectively educate them by educating them with these needs in mind. (De Villar & Jiang, 2012) Teachers must comprehend the values and beliefs of pupils from diverse cultures in order to educate them effectively. Clearly, requiring students to adhere to the same curriculum and instructional methods will appeal to a variety of individuals. With this, internationally trained teachers gained cultural sensitivity and learn to be considerate of individuals from diverse cultures.

*Survival and Adaptation.* One should anticipate unforeseen circumstances. This recommendation represents the most optimal guidance for individuals seeking to relocate to a foreign country. Teachers make

thorough preparations, particularly when embarking on international teaching assignments. It is possible that the individual has acquired proficiency in the indigenous language and obtained certification in Teaching as a Foreign teacher; however, there are often additional factors that warrant consideration beyond initial observations. Navigating a foreign classroom environment can be an intriguing experience, particularly when one encounters unexpected and subtle challenges. However, rest assured that learning valuable lessons while surviving and adapting are emphasized by the participants in this study. Change is a manifestation of growth. Our lives are punctuated by periods of transition. Despite the fact that many individuals dread change, embracing new chances and maintaining a positive outlook can result in tremendous achievement. Filipino educators have experienced a great deal of change and difficulties. These significant life changes for the participants may have been overwhelming, but they opted to embrace the new opportunities and seize the chance to survive and adapt.

The participants mentioned survival and adaptation as an important lessons by sharing their specific narratives in the following:

To be more flexible and understanding as sometimes things don't go as planned. We just have to be adaptable to survive. (P6)

When I work abroad you represent your whole country so I have to be at my best all the time. Be the best for you to be successful as a teacher. (P8)

Learned to pick up battles, stand your ground but willing to accept changes and corrections from your senior for the development personally and professionally. (P10)

Participant 6 explained that in order to enhance adaptability and empathy, it is important to acknowledge that unforeseen circumstances may arise, leading to deviations from initial expectations. In order to ensure our survival, it is imperative that we possess the ability to adapt. P8 shared that when engaging in work activities overseas, individuals assume the role of representing their entire nation, necessitating the maintenance of a consistently high level of performance. In order to achieve success as a teacher, it is imperative that one strives to be the best version of oneself. P10 added that one has acquired the ability to engage in conflicts judiciously, maintaining one's position while remaining open to modifications and feedback from superiors, in order to foster personal and professional growth.

The result is related to the grounded theory of goal-attitude-adaptation which may be considered a key to the survival of Filipino teachers overseas, as it supports the principle that "adaptation and survival require a set of goals and a positive attitude." The study's findings highlighted the narrative of millennial educators as they undertake the challenge of teaching overseas to achieve personal and professional growth. Change may be unavoidable, but its significance must be understood; hence, numerous teaching and learning concepts are essential today. In their 2006 study, de Mesa and de Guzman proposed that teachers must be re-socialized on their respective new duties in order to give students with more active roles in teaching-learning activities.

Further, certain deficits in life that result from deprivation are thought to encourage individuals when they go unsatisfied. In actuality, people have the drive to realize their full potential in any circumstance, and the motivation to fulfill such requirements increases as the duration of denial lengthens; for example, the longer a person goes without food, the hungrier he becomes. Individuals, according to Maslow (1943 in McLeod, 2018), must satisfy lower-level deficit needs before moving on to higher-level growth needs, however he later stressed that the satisfying of man's wants is not a "all-or-nothing" occurrence. His prior words may have provided "the mistaken impression that a need must be completely satisfied before the emergence of man's next desire." Individuals have growth needs not because they lack anything, but because they want to develop as individuals. If these growth demands are adequately met, a person may attain the maximum level of self-actualization

(McLeod, 2018). In truth, going abroad facilitates self-awareness, development, and progress toward survival and adaptation. Those who have traveled abroad also have a deeper awareness of politics and social interactions, as well as a stronger capacity for personal growth, than those who have not (Serin, 2017).

*The value of self-improvement.* The initial stage in becoming a better educator and the best version of oneself involves engaging in self-improvement. The significance of self-improvement for teachers lies in their role as facilitators of the transmission of self-improvement principles and personality development to students, leveraging their influential impact. It is imperative that they execute the task with a high level of effectiveness. In order to possess these qualities, individuals must cultivate a strong sense of self-esteem and develop persuasive and polished skills that are unparalleled. Such attributes can only be acquired through personal growth and self-improvement. In the study, the participant learned that teaching in China made them value self-improvement. They expressed the notion that while errors are inherent to human nature, the act of acquiring the bravery to derive knowledge from these missteps and subsequently refrain from repeating them is commonly referred to as progress. However, despite its apparent simplicity, implementing this in practical situations poses a significant challenge. The concept of self-improvement enables individuals to observe personal growth and advancement through the process of learning from errors and overcoming weaknesses. The process of self-improvement not only enhances one's professional development but also facilitates personal growth for individuals.

These were further emphasized by the participants in the following:

I personally learned how to be hard working as an employee, to be more flexible, and to value self-improvement for effectiveness. (P1)

It is a need to value our own continuous improvement. Teachers must always work from the heart and in the future, you will see the fruits of all your hardship and dedication. As long as we continuously give our best and grow personally, we will be able to appreciate the things we sacrifice as foreign teachers. (P7)

P1 shared that she personally gained the ability to put in a lot of effort as an employee, to be more flexible, and to place a high emphasis on self-improvement in order to be more productive. It is necessary for us to place value on our own ongoing progress. P7 explained that the job that teachers do should always come from the heart, and someday you will be able to appreciate all of the toil and effort that you have put in. As long as teachers never stop doing their very best and make progress in their own lives, they will be able to appreciate the things that they have to give up in order to be where they are now. Indeed, teachers should value their self-improvement more and more.

This finding is related to different notions. Workers in the Philippines continue to pursue self-improvement in order to remain competitive in their chosen industries and enhance their quality of life through income, livelihood, and job security. Acquiring a higher education, accreditations, and recognition from the sending and receiving countries are considered capital investments; consequently, Filipino teachers work harder in schools where professional development is highly esteemed in the academic community, despite being pressured to improve their teaching methods. They also look for ways to improve their work performance so that their contracts will be renewed for another term. For example, for Filipino teachers working in Thailand, it has been acknowledged that Thai culture is hierarchical and authoritative, and that culture and language are connected and influence students' relationships with teachers in the classroom. Teachers are viewed as informed individuals with high moral standards, and students must believe what they say. This instructor authority is more likely to encourage teacher-centered classrooms, making it difficult for pupils to articulate their thoughts (Novio, 2015). To underline, education is always viewed as the foundation of a nation's economic growth; consequently, the government must invest in the education of all citizens. It is a fact that education helps give the vital knowledge and skills that make community members functional individuals. It is also true that



education is an investment for every individual (Abulencia, 2015) and is viewed as a tool to eliminate poverty and enhance the lives of people. Several individuals have escaped poverty by completing their education, securing employment, and earning sufficient income to meet their requirements, as well as by establishing their own investments.

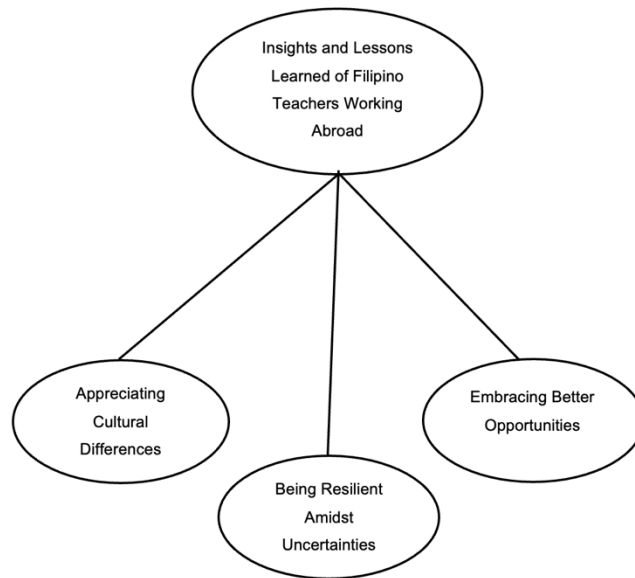


Figure 5. Educational management insights drawn from the experiences and challenges of Filipino teachers working in China

#### IV. Implications and Future Directions

##### *Findings*

Based on the results of thematic analysis of the responses from the Filipino teachers working in China, the following themes were revealed.

The work-life experiences of Filipino teachers working abroad showed the following themes: aiming for financial security, professional growth and development, experiencing a sense of fulfillment, benefiting from the Chinese Influences and hurdling personal and professional challenges. There were three (3) subthemes that emerged on the challenges experienced by the participants. These are poor collegial relationships, language barriers and unmotivated learners. The coping mechanisms of Filipino teachers on the challenges they experienced were: continuous self-improvement and learning to be resilient. The educational management insights drawn from the participants were: the beauty of cultural differences, survival and adaptation and the value of self-improvement.

### *Implications*

The results of my analysis revealed the following significant findings.

Filipino educators are consistently presented with prospects in China that are accompanied by obstacles they must surmount. Individuals choose to teach in international schools overseas in order to attain financial freedom or financial stability. Individuals seek better opportunities in foreign countries, driven by the perception that the remuneration they receive in the host nation surpasses their monthly earnings in the Philippines. In addition to the monetary compensation, individuals also take into account the advantages they can accrue by being employed in an international environment. The individuals exhibit a strong inclination towards professional progression and personal development, with a goal of attaining a sense of fulfillment and achievement, all while being positively influenced by Chinese cultural values. An experience that was not

When individuals seek to venture beyond their comfort zone and explore new horizons, they inevitably encounter various challenges and problems. The participants encountered and embraced feelings of suboptimal collegial relationships where creating a harmonious collaboration with Chinese colleagues was considered difficult. Learners in terms of interest towards the subjects taught also gave stress to the Filipino teachers. They considered most of the learners have lacking motivation where they need to double their pedagogical efforts to engage learners in their academic responsibilities. In addition, they encountered challenges pertaining to communication difficulties and or linguistic barriers specifically in interactions with their peers and students knowing that Chinese people are non-English-speaking citizens.

In order to address the gaps experienced, the coping strategies employed by Filipino educators encompass two key elements: ongoing self-improvement and the cultivation of resilience. It was beneficial to provide teachers with trainings that are specifically tailored to the challenges they encounter. Due to language barriers, specifically among peers and students. Adapting to a novel work environment often presents challenges, encompassing both personal and professional obstacles for educators in question. Filipino educators are required to acclimate themselves to the variances and challenges associated with assimilating into their respective host nations' cultures and environments. The participants hold the belief that engaging in professional endeavors within an international context facilitates ongoing personal development. Their objective is to acquire knowledge continuously. Despite facing external pressures, individuals are able to achieve a harmonious equilibrium between the demands of life and the pursuit of personal enjoyment through the demonstration of resilience in their everyday endeavors.

The participants in the field of educational management provided valuable insights that revolved around three main themes: the recognition and value placed on cultural diversity, the crucial role of resilience and adaptability, and the significance of personal growth and development. It is imperative to possess an understanding of cultural differences. The presence of diverse multicultural education settings and associated work situations enhances the potential for a more profound comprehension of various cultures and fosters the principle of equality. This context advocates for the voluntary self-improvement of Filipino educators, while also promoting their increased tolerance towards the diverse factors that encompass their professional environment. Irrespective of the disparity in compensation between their previous and current occupations, their foremost concern remains the ability to provide financial support for their families. They consistently take into account salary considerations as a factor in their self-motivation and pursuit of professional growth. There are several justifications for their ongoing embrace of improved opportunities. Despite encountering numerous challenges, the individuals in question gained a deeper understanding of the importance of resilience in the face of uncertainties. The presence of environmental stress among Filipino educators has been acknowledged. This alleviates the situation, nonetheless, when employees are capable of uncovering purpose and significance in their vocation.

The findings of this study shed light on the various experiences of Filipino educators working in international settings. The study looked into the educators' actions and reactions. These experiences, acquired through systematic interviews, can help other educators interested in working abroad, as well as other scholars

pursuing comparable lines of study. Participants' coping techniques can be used as a resource for those who find themselves in a similar position.

#### *Future directions*

Based on the findings of the study, it is important that the findings are properly relayed and used by the significant people whom this research was intended for.

Aspiring educators in the Philippines who are contemplating a career transition to teach overseas may find it beneficial to reconsider or proceed with their plans by drawing insights from the firsthand experiences of Filipino teachers currently affiliated with international educational institutions. Individuals may contemplate the potential difficulties they could encounter when operating outside their familiar environments, as well as the prospect of separating from their family in pursuit of improved prospects and a more favorable situation.

The educational institutions where Filipino teachers may be employed may assign experienced senior teachers who can offer essential support networks for newly hired Filipino teachers. This support can be provided through various means such as training programs or mentorships, which encompass academically, culturally, and institutionally specific information. Educators may also be advised to cultivate positive relationships with their peers and members of the local community, encompassing both their immediate school community and individuals they encounter outside of their educational institution. Educators who engage with a novel culture in a receptive and inquisitive manner possess the opportunity to effectively exemplify intercultural attitudes and foster a positive perception of the cultures from which they originate. Not only do they have the potential to derive personal benefits, but they also have the capacity to contribute to the betterment of their educational institution and the global communities within which they function. The individual's capacity for cultural adaptability is evident in various facets of their experiences in foreign environments. The aforementioned factors have a significant influence on individuals' emotional well-being, sense of inclusion, and sense of meaning, as well as their ongoing commitment to improving the field of education on a global scale and the well-being of the individuals they collaborate with.

The administrators and heads of the Department of Education (DepEd) have the capacity to develop programs, training initiatives, or seminars aimed at fostering a sense of job satisfaction among Filipino teachers within the Philippines, thereby mitigating the exodus of highly skilled educators seeking employment opportunities overseas. In addition, individuals may also seek to identify other factors that are associated with the reasons behind the departure of highly skilled educators from educational institutions, while also engaging in introspection regarding their own leadership methodologies.

The policy makers, particularly those vested with the authority to establish educational mandates, policy actions, and orders, should prioritize the development of guidelines aimed at preserving and enhancing the number of highly skilled teachers in Philippine schools. This is particularly important given that a significant portion of the participants in this study were exceptional teachers employed in public schools under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education. Alternatively, they can develop initiatives aimed at mitigating the difficulties or obstacles encountered by overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) or Filipino educators employed overseas.

The future researchers may embark on the same research with different participants, place and school. Other avenues not scrutinized in this research may also be explored.

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