

The Lived Experiences of Filipino Teachers in Alaska: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

This study explored the cultural, educational, environmental, emotional and social adaptation of Filipino teachers in remote Alaskan schools. It described how these teachers construct meaning, respond to adversity, and sustain professional growth in some of the most challenging educational settings in Alaska. Using Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology and Seidman's interview model, data were gathered through ethically conducted semi-structured interviews supported by pilot testing, informed consent, pseudonyms, member-checking, and expert review. Findings showed that participants shared strong personal values of resilience, faith, and responsibility, along with professional backgrounds that included advanced training and experience in diverse classrooms. Their daily lived experiences involved cultural learning, adapting to student-centered and multigrade instruction, and adjusting to harsh weather, isolation, and high living costs. Teachers managed layered challenges related to cultural differences, instructional demands, emotional strain, and environmental hardship, yet also experienced opportunities for mentorship, community belonging, and professional development. Their teaching practices evolved through culturally responsive strategies, differentiated grouping, and strengthened collaboration with families and school staff. They influenced cultural and interpersonal dynamics by sharing Filipino traditions and building trust, becoming cultural bridges in their communities. Filipino teachers in rural Alaska developed resilience, adaptability, confidence, and self-understanding through coping strategies rooted in faith, reflection, collaboration, and flexible problem-solving. They navigated emotional, instructional, and environmental challenges, growing through continuous cultural, professional, and identity adaptation. The findings underscore the need for policies and training that address multigrade teaching, intercultural communication, and teacher well-being.

Keywords: adaptation, instructional practice, identity development, educator resilience, meaning-making