Lived Experiences of the Filipino International Teachers in Fayetteville, North Carolina

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Abstract

Filipino teachers who pursue international teaching opportunities encounter cultural professional, social, and personal transitions that may influence their professional development and sense of belonging. This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of Filipino international teachers in Fayetteville, North Carolina, focusing on their adjustment to a new cultural and educational environment, the challenges and opportunities they encountered, and the ways these experiences shaped their professional and personal development. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design guided by Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological method, with reflexive bracketing used to minimize researcher bias. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory served as the organizing framework for examining the personal, interpersonal, institutional, cultural and temporal dimensions of participants' experiences. Data were analyzed through the identification and thematic examination of forty-two (42) significant statements. Findings revealed that participants initially experienced uncertainty, cultural adjustment challenges, and unfamiliarity with the educational and social environment. Over time, supportive relationships, professional adaptation, cultural exchange and workplace experiences contributed to increased confidence and adjustment. Participants developed greater professional flexibility, cultural responsiveness, and a stronger sense of belonging while maintaining meaningful connections to their Filipino identity and culture. The study concludes that international teaching is a transformative experience shaped interconnected by personal, social, institutional, cultural and temporal factors. To support Filipino international teachers, the study proposes the Filipino International Teacher Integration and Professional Advancement Program (FIT-IPAP), which includes orientation, mentoring, cultural integration, professional networking, and career development initiatives.

Keywords: Education and Teacher Development;Filipino International teachers, cultural adaptation, professional growth, belonging, cultural identity; phenomenology, Colizzi's method, reflexive bracketing, thematic analysis, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory; Fayetteville, North Carolina, United States of America