



Invisible Expertise: How Filipino Special Education Teachers Leverage Philippine Training to meet United States of America Inclusive Education Demands

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.23064082

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Abstract

This study explored how Filipino Special Education (SPED) teachers used expertise developed through Philippine training to meet the demands of inclusive education in public schools in the United States of America. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, the study involved nine (9) Filipino Special Education teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. Before data collection, experts in qualitative research, special education, and inclusive education reviewed the interview guide for clarity, relevance, comprehensiveness, and alignment with the study objectives. Their recommendations were incorporated, and the guide was pilot tested to assess the clarity, sequence, and appropriateness of its questions. Five forms of Philippine-developed expertise emerged: differentiated instruction, behavior management, resourcefulness, learner-centeredness, and professional growth. Participants described adapting these strengths as they learned school procedures, Individualized Education Program (IEP) documentation, data-based practices, and professional expectations. Some experienced initial under recognition of their expertise, followed by greater recognition through demonstrated competence. Philippine training continued to shape their professional identity and confidence. Participants also described multidisciplinary collaboration and identified orientation, mentorship, and professional development as useful transition supports. The output of the study was a proposed action plan for Filipino Special Education teachers entering inclusive public schools in the United States of America. It outlines activities for recognizing Philippine-developed expertise, learning district procedures, strengthening professional confidence, supporting multidisciplinary collaboration, and providing sustained orientation, mentorship, and professional development. The plan includes suggested responsibilities, time frames, and ways to monitor implementation.

Keywords: *Filipino Special Education teachers; Philippine training, invisible expertise, professional identity, qualitative phenomenological design, United States of America*

Introduction

Inclusive education emphasizes meaningful educational opportunities for learners with diverse needs, including learners with disabilities. In practice, it calls for teachers to plan instruction that allows students to participate, respond to individual learning needs, and collaborate with other professionals (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Pozas & Letzel-Alt, 2023). As education systems work toward wider access, the preparation and availability of qualified teachers remain important concerns. The Global Report on Teachers estimated that 44 million additional primary and secondary teachers would be needed worldwide by 2030 to achieve universal education (UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024).

Filipino Special Education teachers are among the internationally trained educators working with learners with disabilities in the United States of America. Abueg (2024) studied Filipino teachers working with children with disabilities in United States of America schools, while Gamez-Catiis (2024) examined the experiences of Filipino special education exchange program teachers. Their studies establish the relevance of examining what these teachers bring from their Philippine preparation and how they work within a different educational system.



Philippine teacher preparation takes place within policies and standards that address inclusive education and special needs education. DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2009, identifies inclusive education as a strategy for increasing the participation of children with special needs, while CHED Memorandum Order No. 77, s. 2017, sets policies and standards for the Bachelor of Special Needs Education program (Commission on Higher Education, 2017; Department of Education, 2009). In a comparison of Special Education teacher preparation in the Philippines and the United States of America, Macapaz (2026) reported complementary strengths: Philippine programs were rated more highly for cultural and linguistic responsiveness, family collaboration, and community-based practices, while United States of America programs were rated more highly for legal and policy preparation, assessment and progress monitoring, assistive technology, and structured mentorship. This comparison helps explain why Filipino Special Education teachers may bring valuable practices to United States of America classrooms while also needing to learn the requirements of the United States of America system.

Moving from the Philippine educational system to a United States of America public school requires teachers to learn new policies, procedures, and workplace expectations. Studies of migrant and internationally trained teachers have described the challenges of entering unfamiliar professional settings and negotiating one's position and identity within them (Ennsner-Kananen & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2023; Yip et al., 2024). For Special Education teachers, the transition also involves responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including work related to Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and collaboration with the people involved in a student's education (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

In this study, invisible expertise refers to the knowledge, skills, professional judgment, and culturally grounded practices that Filipino Special Education teachers developed through Philippine training and applied in United States of America inclusive classrooms but experienced as overlooked or undervalued. This focus allowed the study to examine teachers' contributions alongside the adjustments they made. It also provided a way to explore how recognition of their expertise related to their professional identity and sense of competence (Beijaard et al., 2004; Yip et al., 2024).

Previous studies have examined Filipino special education teachers' experiences in the United States, including their professional transitions and experiential gains (Abueg, 2024; Gamez-Catiis, 2024). Other research has addressed how migrant teachers negotiate professional identity in a new educational setting (Ennsner-Kananen & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2023; Yip et al., 2024). Building on this literature, the present study focused on the forms of expertise Filipino Special Education attributed to their Philippine training, how they adapted and applied that expertise, and which aspects they perceived as invisible or undervalued in United States of America schools.

Therefore, this study explored how Filipino Special Education teachers leveraged their Philippine training to meet the demands of inclusive education in United States of America public schools. Specifically, it examined the expertise they brought from their preparation, how they adapted and applied it, and how these experiences shaped their professional identity, confidence, and sense of competence. The findings served as the basis for a proposed action plan to support Filipino Special Education teachers transitioning into United States of America inclusive education settings.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the lived experiences of Filipino Special Education (SPED) teachers working in public schools in the United States of America as they used their Philippine training to meet the demands of inclusive education. It examined the expertise they brought from their Philippine training, how they adapted and applied it, which aspects of their preparation became invisible or undervalued, and how these experiences shaped their professional identity, confidence, and sense of competence. Based on the findings, the study developed a proposed action plan to support Filipino Special Education teachers working in inclusive education settings in the United States of America.

- 1. What forms of expertise did Filipino Special Education teachers bring from their Philippine training to inclusive classrooms in the United States of America?*
- 2. How did Filipino Special Education teachers adapt and apply their expertise to meet inclusive education requirements in the United States of America?*



3. Which aspects of their Philippine training became invisible or undervalued in schools in the United States of America?
4. How did Philippine training shape their professional identity, confidence, and sense of competence as Filipino Special Education teachers working in public schools in the United States of America?
5. How did Filipino Special Education teachers collaborate with multidisciplinary teams in inclusive classrooms in the United States of America?
6. What supports did Filipino Special Education teachers receive during their transition into inclusive education in the United States of America?

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1977, 1986) explains that human learning and behavior are shaped through the reciprocal interaction of personal factors, behavioral patterns, and environmental influences, a concept known as reciprocal determinism. Rather than viewing learning as solely the result of environmental stimuli, the theory emphasizes that individuals actively influence and are influenced by their environment through observation, experience, and self-reflection. A central concept of the theory is self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their capability to organize and execute the actions necessary to achieve desired outcomes. Individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to approach challenges with confidence, demonstrate resilience when faced with difficulties, adapt to unfamiliar situations, and persist despite obstacles. Within educational settings, teachers with strong self-efficacy are more confident in implementing instructional strategies, managing diverse classrooms, solving instructional problems, and supporting learners with varying educational needs.

In the context of this study, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how Filipino Special Education teachers utilize their Philippine training while adapting to the demands of United States of America inclusive education. Their previous educational preparation, teaching experiences, and professional accomplishments contribute to the development of self-efficacy, enabling them to apply instructional knowledge, classroom management skills, and inclusive teaching practices within unfamiliar educational environments. Despite differences in educational policies, legal requirements, workplace culture, and instructional expectations, Filipino Special Education teachers continue to demonstrate confidence, resilience, adaptability, and commitment to supporting learners with disabilities. Their ability to draw upon prior professional experiences while developing new competencies reflects the reciprocal interaction between personal beliefs, professional behaviors, and environmental influences described in Bandura's theory.

Furthermore, the concept of self-efficacy provides a theoretical explanation for the invisible expertise demonstrated by Filipino Special Education teachers. Their confidence in applying culturally grounded teaching practices, solving instructional challenges, collaborating with multidisciplinary teams, and maintaining inclusive classroom environments illustrates how professional competence extends beyond formal credentials. Through continuous interaction with their new educational context, Filipino Special Education teachers strengthen their professional capabilities while preserving the instructional values and competencies developed through Philippine teacher education. Consequently, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory supports this study by explaining how Filipino Special Education teachers leverage their existing professional expertise to successfully adapt to and contribute within United States of America inclusive education settings.

Inclusive Pedagogy Theory

Inclusive Pedagogy Theory, developed by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), is founded on the principle that all learners, regardless of disability, cultural background, language, or individual learning differences, have the right to participate meaningfully in quality educational experiences. Unlike traditional approaches that separate learners according to their perceived abilities, inclusive pedagogy advocates for teaching practices that recognize learner diversity as a normal and valuable characteristic of every classroom. The theory encourages teachers to design flexible



learning environments, implement differentiated instructional strategies, promote collaborative learning, and provide equitable opportunities that enable all learners to actively participate and succeed. Rather than asking whether a learner belongs in an inclusive classroom, inclusive pedagogy focuses on how teaching practices can be adapted to ensure meaningful participation for every student.

The principles of Inclusive Pedagogy Theory closely align with the preparation of Filipino Special Education teachers in the Philippines. Teacher education institutions emphasize learner-centered instruction, differentiated teaching strategies, collaboration with families and multidisciplinary professionals, classroom inclusion, reflective practice, and values-based education. These professional competencies prepare Filipino Special Education teachers to address diverse learner needs while fostering equitable and supportive learning environments. Through supervised practicum experiences and classroom teaching, Filipino Special Education teachers develop the instructional flexibility, patience, resilience, and collaborative skills necessary for implementing inclusive educational practices.

As Filipino Special Education teachers transition to United States of America public schools, they continue to apply many of the inclusive teaching principles acquired through their Philippine teacher education while adapting to different educational policies, instructional expectations, and legal requirements. Their ability to differentiate instruction, establish meaningful relationships with learners, collaborate with colleagues and families, and create inclusive classroom environments demonstrates the continued influence of their Philippine training. These professional practices reflect the concept of invisible expertise, as many of the competencies developed through their previous educational experiences remain valuable but are not always explicitly recognized within their host educational settings. Therefore, Inclusive Pedagogy Theory provides an appropriate theoretical lens for understanding how Filipino Special Education teachers leverage their Philippine preparation to promote equitable and meaningful participation for learners with disabilities within United States of America inclusive education settings.

Transnational Teacher Identity Theory

Transnational Teacher Identity Theory explains how teachers construct, negotiate, and continuously reconstruct their professional identity as they move across different national, cultural, and educational contexts. Professional identity is shaped not only by teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and experiences but also by the social, cultural, institutional, and policy environments in which they work. As internationally-trained teachers transition into new educational systems, they encounter differences in curriculum standards, instructional practices, educational policies, communication styles, workplace expectations, and cultural norms. These experiences require them to reinterpret their roles as educators while integrating their previous professional knowledge with the expectations of their new educational environment.

For Filipino Special Education teachers working in the United States, professional identity is shaped by both their Philippine teacher education and their experiences within the United States of America inclusive education system. The learner-centered philosophy, inclusive teaching practices, resilience, compassion, and collaborative values cultivated through Philippine teacher preparation continue to influence their professional practice even as they adapt to different legal requirements, educational policies, instructional expectations, and workplace cultures. Through this continuous process of adaptation, Filipino Special Education teachers preserve many of the professional values and competencies acquired in the Philippines while simultaneously developing new knowledge and skills that enable them to respond effectively to the demands of United States of America inclusive education.

This process of professional identity reconstruction also provides a meaningful explanation for the concept of invisible expertise. As Filipino Special Education teachers integrate their previous experiences with new professional expectations, they continue to demonstrate valuable instructional competence, cultural responsiveness, resilience, and professional judgment that may not always be immediately recognized within their host educational settings. These often-overlooked competencies become evident through their everyday teaching practices, collaborative relationships, and commitment to inclusive education. Therefore, Transnational Teacher Identity Theory provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for understanding how Filipino Special Education teachers leverage their Philippine training, negotiate their professional identity, and demonstrate invisible expertise while adapting to United States of America public schools. Together with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Inclusive Pedagogy Theory, Transnational Teacher Identity Theory offers a comprehensive explanation of how Filipino Special Education teachers develop



confidence, implement inclusive instructional practices, and successfully adapt to new educational environments while maintaining the professional strengths developed through their Philippine training.

Legal Bases

In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 10533 institutionalized the K to 12 Basic Education Program and strengthened the delivery of learner-centered, competency-based, and developmentally appropriate education that responds to the diverse needs, interests, and abilities of learners. Complementing this law, DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2009 promotes inclusive education by encouraging schools to provide equitable learning opportunities for all learners, including those with disabilities and other special educational needs, within supportive and inclusive classroom environments whenever appropriate. Together, these legal foundations emphasize differentiated instruction, collaboration with families and multidisciplinary professionals, learner-centered teaching, and the development of educational environments that recognize learner diversity as a valuable aspect of the teaching and learning process. These policies also reinforce the importance of preparing teachers who possess the professional knowledge, instructional competencies, and ethical commitment necessary to implement inclusive education effectively.

In the United States, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) serves as the principal legal foundation for special education and inclusive educational practice. IDEA guarantees that learners with disabilities receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) within the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) while benefiting from services designed to meet their individual educational needs through an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The law emphasizes collaboration among special education teachers, general education teachers, related service providers, school administrators, and families in planning and implementing educational programs that support both academic achievement and meaningful participation in school. Consequently, IDEA establishes the legal responsibilities and professional expectations that guide the instructional practices of Special Education teachers working within United States of America public schools.

Although the Philippine and United States educational systems operate under different legal and institutional frameworks, both promote the fundamental principles of inclusive education, equitable access to quality learning opportunities, collaboration among educational stakeholders, and respect for learner diversity. These shared principles emphasize the importance of preparing educators who are capable of addressing the academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs of learners with disabilities through learner-centered, evidence-informed, and collaborative educational practices. While Philippine policies provide the foundation for developing these competencies during teacher preparation, IDEA establishes the legal expectations governing their implementation within United States of America public schools. Together, these legal frameworks demonstrate that inclusive education is supported not only by instructional competence but also by policies that uphold the educational rights of all learners.

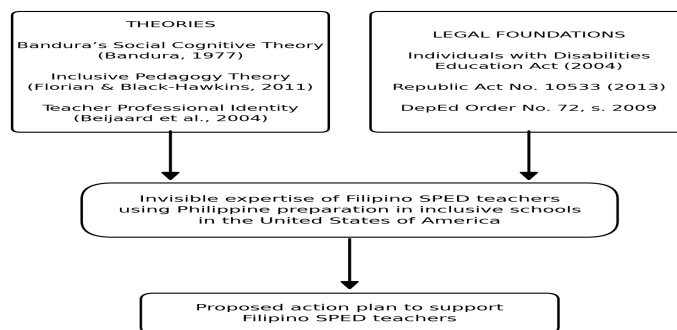


Figure 1
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of the Study

Related Literature



Teacher preparation plays a critical role in equipping Special Education (SPED) teachers with the knowledge, instructional competencies, professional values, and practical experiences necessary to support learners with diverse educational needs. In the Philippine context, teacher education institutions prepare future Special Education teachers through a comprehensive curriculum that integrates educational theories, inclusive pedagogical approaches, supervised practicum experiences, classroom management, differentiated instruction, assessment strategies, and collaboration with families and multidisciplinary professionals. This preparation emphasizes not only academic competence but also the development of reflective practice, cultural sensitivity, ethical responsibility, and learner-centered instruction, enabling graduates to respond effectively to the diverse needs of learners with disabilities.

Inclusive education in the United States is founded on the principle that all learners, regardless of disability or educational needs, have the right to equitable access to quality education within the least restrictive environment. Guided primarily by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), inclusive education promotes the participation of learners with disabilities in general education classrooms while ensuring that individualized support services, accommodations, and specialized instruction are provided to address their unique learning needs. The implementation of inclusive education requires collaboration among special education teachers, general education teachers, related service providers, school administrators, and families to develop educational programs that promote both academic achievement and social participation.

The increasing globalization of education has contributed to the growing movement of teachers across national borders, resulting in a significant number of internationally trained educators working in countries experiencing teacher shortages. International teacher mobility has become an important strategy for addressing workforce demands, particularly in specialized fields such as Special Education, where many educational systems continue to face persistent shortages of qualified professionals. As internationally trained teachers enter new educational environments, they contribute diverse pedagogical knowledge, cultural perspectives, and professional experiences that enrich teaching and learning while responding to the increasing demand for qualified educators.

Filipino teachers have long been recognized as valuable contributors to the global education workforce because of their strong academic preparation, English language proficiency, adaptability, resilience, and commitment to learner-centered education. The increasing international demand for qualified educators has created opportunities for Filipino teachers to work in countries experiencing teacher shortages, including the United States, where internationally trained teachers help address workforce needs in both general and special education. Their migration reflects the growing globalization of the teaching profession and highlights the important role Filipino educators play in supporting quality education across diverse cultural and educational settings.

Educational research has increasingly recognized that teachers possess forms of professional knowledge and expertise that extend beyond formal qualifications, certifications, and observable instructional practices. These forms of knowledge, often described as tacit knowledge, experiential knowledge, or professional capital, are developed through years of teaching experience, reflective practice, collaboration, and continuous interaction with diverse learners. Unlike technical competencies that can be easily measured through professional evaluations, tacit knowledge is demonstrated through teachers' instructional decision-making, classroom interactions, problem-solving abilities, and professional judgment in responding to complex educational situations. Such expertise often remains implicit, making it difficult to recognize despite its significant contribution to effective teaching and learning.

Professional identity refers to the way teachers understand themselves as educators based on their knowledge, beliefs, values, experiences, and professional responsibilities. It is not a fixed characteristic but a dynamic process that continuously develops through teaching experiences, professional interactions, and changing educational contexts. Research suggests that teachers' professional identity influences their instructional decisions, classroom practices, relationships with learners, and commitment to professional growth. As educators encounter new teaching environments and responsibilities, they continually negotiate and reconstruct their professional identity while maintaining the core values that define their teaching practice.

The reviewed empirical studies, theoretical perspectives, and legal foundations collectively provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how Filipino Special Education teachers leverage their Philippine training to meet the demands of inclusive education in United States of America public schools. The empirical literature demonstrates that



Philippine teacher education develops professional competencies in inclusive pedagogy, differentiated instruction, classroom management, collaboration, and culturally responsive teaching that remain relevant across diverse educational contexts. Likewise, previous studies highlight the expectations of inclusive education in the United States, the experiences of internationally-trained teachers, the professional contributions of Filipino educators working abroad, the importance of professional identity, and the value of often-overlooked forms of professional expertise. Collectively, these studies establish the scholarly foundation of the present investigation while identifying the limited attention given to the invisible expertise demonstrated by Filipino Special Education teachers within United States of America inclusive education settings.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of Filipino Special Education teachers working in United States of America public schools. Phenomenology focuses on understanding and interpreting how individuals experience a particular phenomenon based on their personal perspectives, meanings, and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design was appropriate for the study because it aimed to examine how Filipino Special Education teachers leverage their Philippine training, adapt to United States of America inclusive education settings, and demonstrate invisible expertise within their professional practice.

Qualitative phenomenological research allows the researcher to gather rich and in-depth descriptions of participants' experiences, perceptions, challenges, and adaptation processes. Through this approach, the study sought to understand the meanings Filipino Special Education teachers attach to their professional experiences in United States of America inclusive classrooms. The phenomenological approach was appropriate because the study sought to understand the essence of participants' lived experiences as they leveraged their Philippine training, adapted to United States of America inclusive education, and constructed their professional identity while working in a different educational and cultural context.

Flow of the Study

The flow of the study followed the Input–Process–Output (IPO) Model, which served as the framework for illustrating how the study was conducted. The model presented the relationship among the study's inputs, the research processes undertaken, and the expected output. It provided a systematic guide for examining how Filipino Special Education (SPED) teachers leveraged their Philippine training to meet the demands of inclusive education in United States of America public schools.

Input. The inputs of the study consisted of the key concepts that guided the inquiry, namely the Philippine training of Filipino Special Education teachers, their invisible expertise, and their adaptation experiences in United States of America inclusive education settings. These broader areas included participants' professional identity, confidence, and sense of professional competence, which represented the knowledge, competencies, experiences, and professional attributes they brought as they transitioned into the United States of America educational system. These inputs served as the foundation for exploring how Philippine teacher preparation influenced their instructional practices and professional experiences within inclusive education.

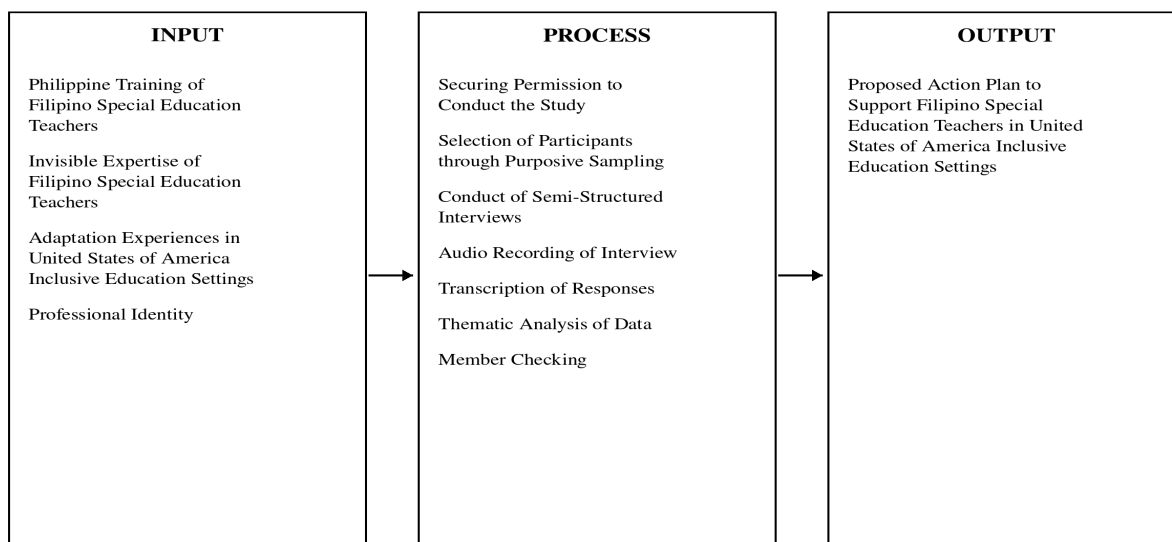
Process. The process involved the systematic implementation of the research methodology. It began with securing the necessary permissions and ethical approvals to conduct the study, followed by the selection of qualified participants through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a validated semi-structured interview guide, with interviews conducted either face-to-face or through an online platform, depending on the participants' availability. The interview responses were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, member checking and other qualitative validation strategies were also employed.

Output. The primary output of the study was the development of a proposed action plan to support Filipino Special Education teachers working in United States of America inclusive education settings. In addition, the study generated a deeper understanding of how Filipino Special Education teachers leveraged their Philippine training, demonstrated



invisible expertise, and adapted their professional practice to meet the demands of United States of America inclusive education. These findings contributed to teacher education, inclusive educational practice, and policies supporting internationally trained teachers.

Figure 2
Input Process Output Model of the Study



Research Environment

The study was conducted among Filipino Special Education teachers employed in selected public schools across different states in the United States of America that implemented inclusive education programs. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling from selected public-school districts in states such as Washington, Florida, Texas, Hawaii, Michigan, New Mexico, and other states where Filipino Special Education teachers were employed, provided they met the study's inclusion criteria and voluntarily agreed to participate. The study was not intended to compare state-specific educational policies or practices; rather, it sought to explore the shared lived experiences of Filipino Special Education teachers across diverse United States of America public school settings. Therefore, recruiting participants from different states provided broader perspectives while remaining consistent with the phenomenological design of the study.

The study was not limited to one state or school district because Filipino Special Education teachers were geographically dispersed across the United States of America. A broader research environment allowed the study to capture shared lived experiences across diverse inclusive education settings rather than focusing on district-specific policies or practices. This approach was consistent with the phenomenological design of the study, which sought to understand the common essence of the participants' lived experiences regardless of their specific geographic location.

The United States served as an appropriate research environment because it continued to experience a shortage of qualified Special Education teachers, leading many school districts to recruit internationally trained educators, including Filipino teachers. As a result, Filipino Special Education teachers became part of diverse educational communities where they collaborated with general education teachers, administrators, related service providers, students, and families to support inclusive educational practices. Conducting the study across multiple public schools enabled the researcher to obtain a richer understanding of how Philippine teacher preparation, invisible expertise, and professional adaptation were demonstrated within various inclusive education settings.

Participants



This study involved Filipino Special Education (SPED) teachers who were employed in United States of America public schools implementing inclusive education programs. The participants were considered the most appropriate sources of information because they possessed firsthand experience in applying their Philippine Special Education training within the United States of America educational system. Their lived experiences provided rich and meaningful insights into how they leveraged their Philippine training, demonstrated invisible expertise, and adapted to the demands of inclusive education United States of America public schools.

The participants were selected through purposive sampling based on the following inclusion criteria:

- They were Filipino teachers who completed their teacher education in the Philippines.
- They possessed academic preparation or professional training in Special Education (SPED) obtained in the Philippines, which qualified them to teach learners with disabilities.
- They were employed as Special Education teachers United States of America public schools implementing inclusive education programs.
- They had teaching experience in Special Education in either the Philippines, the United States of America, or both, and had firsthand experience working with learners with disabilities in inclusive classroom settings.
- They voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and provided informed consent.
- The following individuals were excluded from the study:
 - Individuals employed solely as paraeducators, instructional assistants, teacher aides, or general education teachers without Special Education teaching responsibilities.
 - Filipino teachers who were not employed as Special Education teachers in United States of America public schools.
 - These individuals were excluded because their professional experiences did not align directly with the focus of the present study.

The study included nine (9) participants. This sample size was appropriate for phenomenological research because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of the participants' lived experiences while providing sufficient data to identify recurring themes and the essence of the phenomenon under investigation. Participant recruitment and interviews continued until data saturation was achieved, at which point no new themes or meaningful insights emerged from subsequent interviews.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument of this study was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide. A semi-structured interview was considered appropriate for this phenomenological study because it allowed participants to freely describe their lived experiences while enabling the researcher to ask follow-up and probing questions that encouraged deeper reflection and more comprehensive descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation. This flexible interview format allowed the researcher to explore the participants' experiences while ensuring that the discussion remained aligned with the objectives of the study.

The interview guide was developed based on the research objectives, Statement of the Problem, and the theoretical framework of the study. It consisted of six main open-ended interview questions accompanied by possible probing questions designed to explore the participants' Philippine Special Education training, invisible expertise, adaptation to United States of America inclusive education, and professional identity. To obtain richer and more detailed responses, the researcher used the probing questions whenever necessary. These probes encouraged participants to elaborate on their instructional practices, implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), collaboration with general education teachers and multidisciplinary teams, communication with parents and guardians, management of student behavior, documentation of student progress, compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), negotiation of their professional identity, recognition of their professional expertise, and navigation of cultural and professional differences within United States of America public schools.

To ensure the quality of the instrument, the interview guide underwent expert validation prior to data collection. It was reviewed by experts in qualitative research, Special Education, and inclusive education to evaluate the clarity,



relevance, comprehensiveness, and alignment of the interview questions with the objectives of the study. Their comments and recommendations were carefully considered and incorporated into the final version of the interview guide to ensure that the instrument effectively explored the phenomenon under investigation.

Following expert validation, the interview guide underwent pilot testing through a pilot interview with one or two Filipino Special Education teachers who possessed characteristics similar to those of the target participants but who were not included in the actual study. The purpose of the pilot interview was to determine the clarity, sequencing, comprehensibility, and appropriateness of the interview questions, estimate the duration of the interview, and identify areas that required improvement. Feedback gathered during the pilot interview was used to refine the interview guide before the conduct of the actual data collection.

With the participants' informed consent, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data. The recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the resulting interview transcripts served as the primary source of qualitative data for thematic analysis.

Data Collection

Prior to data collection, the researcher secured approval from the University's Graduate School and obtained the necessary permissions from the appropriate school administrators or authorities of the selected United States of America public schools. The researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide underwent expert validation by specialists in qualitative research, Special Education, and inclusive education. Following expert validation, a pilot interview was conducted with one or two Filipino Special Education teachers who possessed characteristics similar to those of the target participants but who were not included in the actual study. The results of the pilot interview were used to refine the interview guide before the formal conduct of the study. After the interview guide was finalized, the researcher identified qualified participants through purposive sampling based on the established inclusion criteria.

After securing all necessary permissions and obtaining informed consent from the participants, the researcher scheduled individual semi-structured interviews at a mutually convenient time. Depending on the participants' availability and location, interviews were conducted either face-to-face or through secure online platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet. With the participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data. During the interview, the researcher asked the prepared open-ended questions and used probing questions, when necessary, to encourage participants to elaborate on their experiences regarding Philippine Special Education training, invisible expertise, professional adaptation, inclusive instructional practices, collaboration, and other relevant experiences in United States of America public schools. Field notes were also recorded to capture significant observations and contextual information that supported data analysis.

Following each interview, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and reviewed for accuracy. Participants were given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts through member checking to verify the accuracy of their responses and clarify any statements when necessary. After the transcripts had been finalized, the researcher analyzed the data using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, categories, and themes relevant to the research questions. All interview recordings, transcripts, and related research documents were stored securely and were treated with strict confidentiality. Upon completion of the data analysis, the findings of the study served as the basis for developing the proposed action plan to support Filipino Special Education teachers working in United States of America inclusive education settings.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method that systematically identifies, organizes, and interprets recurring patterns or themes within the participants' narratives. Thematic analysis was appropriate for this phenomenological study because it enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Filipino Special Education (SPED) teachers as they leveraged their Philippine training to meet the demands of inclusive education in United States of America public schools.



Following the completion of the interviews, all audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. The researcher read and reviewed the transcripts repeatedly to become familiar with the data and ensure the accuracy of the recorded responses. Significant statements, meaningful ideas, and relevant experiences related to the research questions were identified and assigned initial codes.

After the coding process, similar codes were grouped into broader categories from which emerging themes were developed. The researcher carefully examined the relationships among these themes to ensure that they accurately represented the participants' lived experiences and addressed the objectives of the study. The identified themes were then interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework and relevant literature to generate meaningful insights regarding Philippine Special Education training, invisible expertise, professional adaptation, and professional identity within United States of America inclusive education settings.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, the researcher conducted member checking by allowing participants to review the accuracy of their interview transcripts and clarify their responses when necessary. The final themes and interpretations served as the basis for answering the research questions and developing the proposed action plan to support Filipino Special Education teachers working in United States of America inclusive education settings.

Ethical Considerations and Data Privacy

This study received ethical approval from the Cebu Technological University Graduate School and the appropriate research authorities prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after the researcher clearly explained the purpose of the study, the interview procedures, the voluntary nature of participation, and the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process through the use of participant codes instead of names. Only information relevant to the objectives of the study was reported, and all participants were treated with respect, fairness, and dignity. The researcher observed ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice throughout the conduct of the study.

To ensure ethical conduct and compliance with Philippine data privacy laws, this study adhered to the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) and the guidelines of the National Privacy Commission. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews were conducted. Participants' identities were protected through the use of participant codes, and all personally identifiable information was removed from the interview transcripts. Audio recordings, transcripts, consent forms, and other research documents were stored securely in password-protected electronic files and kept confidential throughout the study. The data were presented only in aggregate or coded form to prevent the identification of individual participants and were used solely for the purposes of this research.

Findings

THEMES ON THE FORMS OF EXPERTISE FILIPINO SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS BRING FROM THEIR PHILIPPINE TRAINING TO UNITED STATES OF AMERICA INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

When the participants were asked about the forms of expertise they developed through their Philippine Special Education (SPED) training, five (5) themes emerged: (1) Differentiated Instruction, (2) Behavior Management, (3) Resourcefulness, (4) Learner-Centeredness, and (5) Professional Growth. The detailed presentation and analysis of these themes are discussed below.

Theme 1: Differentiated Instruction

One of the prominent forms of expertise identified by the participants was differentiated instruction. Participants described their Philippine Special Education training and teaching experiences as preparing them to recognize differences in learners' abilities, needs, strengths, and learning characteristics. This understanding enabled them to modify lessons and adjust instructional strategies according to individual learner needs.

"I was able to modify activities... simplify my activities that was given to them."

(Participant 3)



Participants 4, 8, and 9 similarly described differentiated instruction, individualized teaching, accommodations, and lesson modification as competencies developed through their Philippine preparation and applied in classrooms in the United States of America.

Theme 2: Behavior Management

Another form of expertise identified by the participants was behavior management. Participants described their Philippine Special Education preparation as providing knowledge and experiences that helped them understand student behavior, recognize individual needs, and respond through appropriate strategies.

“The specific skill that I often use... is behavior management.”

(Participant 4)

Participants 2 and 7 similarly described understanding student behavior, individual needs, and different disabilities as competencies developed through their Philippine Special Education training.

Theme 3: Resourcefulness

The third theme that emerged was resourcefulness. Participants associated this competency with their experiences teaching in Philippine schools, particularly when working with diverse learners and limited instructional resources.

Participants 5, 8, and 9 described resourcefulness, creativity, and flexibility as competencies developed through their Philippine teaching experiences. Participant 7 similarly described how working with diverse learners, multiple disabilities, and limited resources required Filipino Special Education teachers to become creative, adaptable, and solution-oriented.

Theme 4: Learner-Centeredness

The fourth theme that emerged was learner-centeredness. Beyond technical teaching competencies, participants described patience, respect, compassion, commitment, relationship-building, and individualized support as important aspects of the expertise developed through their Philippine Special Education preparation and teaching experiences.

Participants 4, 8, and 9 emphasized positive relationships, patience, respect, individualized support, cultural sensitivity, resilience, and commitment to learners. Participant 3 similarly connected Philippine preparation with a strong sense of responsibility toward learners and the importance of helping them reach their potential.

Theme 5: Professional Growth

The fifth theme that emerged was professional growth. Participants described their Philippine preparation as contributing to perseverance, dedication, adaptability, and a willingness to continue learning when confronted with unfamiliar educational practices.

Participants 3, 5, 7, and 9 described work ethic, professional development, resilience, dedication, and continuous learning as qualities developed through their Philippine experiences.

THEMES ON THE ADAPTATION AND APPLICATION OF FILIPINO SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN MEETING UNITED STATES OF AMERICA INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

When the participants were asked how they adapted and applied their Philippine Special Education training and professional expertise to meet the requirements of inclusive education in public schools in the United States of America, four (4) themes emerged: (1) System Adaptation, (2) IEP and Documentation, (3) Data-Driven Practice, and (4) Professional Integration. The detailed presentation and analysis of these themes are discussed below.

Theme 1: System Adaptation

The first theme that emerged was system adaptation. Participants described their transition to inclusive education in the United States of America as a process of learning a different educational system while retaining and modifying the knowledge and skills they developed in the Philippines.

Participant 8 explained that her Philippine training provided an instructional foundation for supporting students with disabilities, but she needed to learn specific to the policies in the United States of America and procedures, including IDEA, IEP implementation, documentation, and data collection. Participant 7 similarly described adjusting to legal and procedural requirements in the United States of America while continuing to apply knowledge of individualized instruction, accommodations, behavior support, and family collaboration. Another participant described initially observing classroom routines and expectations before adapting her Philippine practices to the new environment.



Theme 2: IEP and Documentation

The second theme that emerged was IEP and documentation. Participants identified learning the Individualized Education Program in the United States of America (IEP) process, documentation requirements, accommodations, and legal procedures as important aspects of their professional transition.

Participant 9 described learning IDEA, Section 504, IEP procedures, measurable goals, accommodations, progress monitoring, and multidisciplinary collaboration. Participant 8 similarly identified IDEA, IEP implementation, documentation, and data collection as major adjustments when beginning work in the United States of America. Another participant explained that Philippine training provided familiarity with the basic concepts of IEPs, while practice in the United States of America required learning the specific procedures of the local district.

Theme 3: Data-Driven Practice

The third theme that emerged was data-driven practice. Participants described learning to use systematic progress monitoring and documentation to guide instructional decisions and demonstrate student progress.

Participant 7 explained that progress-monitoring data were collected consistently and used to guide instructional decisions and support IEP goals. Participants 8 and 9 similarly identified data collection and regular documentation of student progress as important expectations in the United States of America.

Theme 4: Professional Integration

The fourth theme was professional integration. Participants described learning to function within professional structures in the United States of America, including collaboration with general education teachers, specialists, administrators, and other members of multidisciplinary teams.

Participant 8 identified multidisciplinary collaboration as an important adjustment, while Participant 9 described learning evidence-based practices, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), co-teaching, and multidisciplinary collaboration. Another participant described observing classroom routines and receiving administrative feedback before adapting her own practices.

THEMES ON THE INVISIBLE OR UNDERVALUED ASPECTS OF TRAINING AMONG FILIPINO SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN UNITED STATE OF AMERICA SCHOOL SETTINGS

When the participants were asked to describe experiences in which their professional expertise, knowledge, or skills were not immediately recognized or fully appreciated in their schools in the United States of America, three (3) themes emerged: (1) Initial Under recognition, (2) Demonstrated Competence, and (3) Professional Recognition. The detailed presentation and analysis of these themes are discussed below.

Theme 1: Initial Underrecognition

The first theme that emerged was initial underrecognition. Participants described experiences in which their previous education, professional experience, and Special Education preparation in the Philippines were not always immediately understood or recognized when they entered educational setting in the United States of America.

Participant 8 explained that, as an internationally trained teacher, colleagues were sometimes unfamiliar with the quality of Special Education teacher preparation in the Philippines. Participant 7 similarly described situations in which previous professional experience was initially underestimated because the participant was new to the educational system of the United States of America.

Theme 2: Demonstrated Competence

The second theme that emerged was demonstrated competence. Participants explained that when their previous expertise was not immediately recognized, they demonstrated their abilities through classroom practice, collaboration, problem-solving, student relationships, and consistent professional performance.

Participant 8 described building positive relationships, demonstrating professionalism, collaborating with colleagues, and consistently supporting students. Participant 7 similarly described demonstrating competence through effective instruction, collaboration, data collection, and positive student outcomes.



Theme 3: Professional Recognition

The third theme that emerged was professional recognition. Participants described how continued demonstration of their abilities eventually contributed to greater acknowledgment and appreciation of their expertise by colleagues and other professionals.

Participant 8 explained that coworkers became more familiar with the participant's teaching, problem-solving abilities, and dedication over time. Participant 7 similarly reported that colleagues recognized the participant's expertise after observing consistent teaching practices, data collection, collaboration, and relationships with students. Another participant described developing professional credibility through classroom performance, patience, resilience, organization, and effective responses to behavioral situations.

THEMES ON HOW PHILIPPINE TRAINING SHAPE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY, CONFIDENCE, AND SENSE OF COMPETENCE AMONG FILIPINO SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS WORKING IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

When the participants were asked how their Philippine Special Education training influenced their professional identity, confidence, and sense of competence as Special Education teachers in the United States of America, three (3) themes emerged: (1) Professional Identity, (2) Growing Confidence, and (3) Identity Integration. The detailed presentation and analysis of these themes are discussed below.

Theme 1: Professional Identity

The first theme that emerged was professional identity. Participants described their Philippine Special Education training as an important foundation in shaping how they understood themselves as educators, particularly their commitment to supporting learners with diverse needs.

Participant 7 described Philippine Special Education training as shaping the participant's identity as a compassionate, hardworking, and student-centered teacher. The participant emphasized that the training developed patience, flexibility, and commitment when working with learners. Participant 8 similarly explained that Philippine training influenced the belief that every child can learn when provided with appropriate support. Participant 9 described maintaining an identity as both a Filipino-trained Special Education teacher and an international educator, explaining that experience in the United States of America expanded the knowledge developed in the Philippines.

“My Philippine Special Education training shaped my identity as a compassionate, hardworking, and student-centered teacher. It taught me to remain patient, flexible, and committed even when facing challenges.”
(Participant 7)

Theme 2: Growing Confidence

The second theme that emerged was growing confidence. Participants described their confidence as increasing as they gained experience with educational procedures in the United States of America, collaborated with colleagues, and recognized the continued value of their Philippine-developed knowledge and skills.

“Instead of replacing my previous training, my experience in the United States of America has expanded it.”
(Participant 7)

Participant 8 similarly described developing greater confidence through professional development, collaboration, and experience with inclusive education practices.

Theme 3: Identity Integration

The third theme that emerged was identity integration. Participants described developing a professional identity that incorporated their Philippine educational background with their experiences in the educational system of the United States of America.

“Today, I see myself as both a Filipino Special Education teacher and an international educator who combines the strengths of two educational systems.”
(Participant 7)

Participants 8 and 9 similarly explained that their Philippine instructional foundation remained valuable while their experiences in the United States of America expanded their knowledge of compliance, collaboration, inclusive practices, and professional expectations.



THEMES ON COLLABORATION WITH MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS

This section addressed Research Question 5: How did Filipino Special Education teachers collaborate with multidisciplinary teams in inclusive classrooms in the United States of America? When participants described their work with general education teachers, therapists, administrators, parents, and other professionals, three themes emerged: (1) Collaboration, (2) Communication, and (3) Shared Responsibility. The themes and supporting accounts are discussed below.

Theme 1: Collaboration

The first theme that emerged was collaboration. Participants described collaboration with general education teachers, related-service providers, administrators, families, and other professionals as an important part of supporting learners with disabilities in inclusive education settings in the United States of America.

“Collaboration is one of the most important aspects of my work in an inclusive classroom.”

(Participant 1)

The participant explained that collaboration involved communicating with general education teachers regarding accommodations, instructional modifications, classroom expectations, and student progress, while also working with speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, school psychologists, administrators, and families. Participant 2 similarly described collaboration with general education teachers and related-service providers as an important part of the Special Education teacher’s role.

Theme 2: Communication

The second theme that emerged was communication. Participants emphasized that effective communication with teachers, specialists, administrators, and families was necessary for coordinating student support and maintaining consistency in educational services.

“I believe that maintaining open, respectful, and consistent communication helps establish trust and encourages families to become active partners in their child’s education.”

(Participant 1)

Participant 2 similarly identified open communication and mutual respect as important factors in successful collaboration. The participants described communicating about accommodations, instructional strategies, student progress, and learner needs as essential to coordinating professional support.

Theme 3: Shared Responsibility

The third theme that emerged was shared responsibility. Participants described multidisciplinary collaboration as a process in which professionals with different areas of expertise work toward the common goal of supporting student success.

Participant 1 explained that general education teachers, related-service providers, administrators, and families each contribute different forms of expertise when making decisions for students. Participant 2 similarly described co-planning with general education teachers and sharing responsibility for modifying assignments and supporting learner needs.

THEMES ON SUPPORT FOR FILIPINO SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TRANSITIONING INTO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

This section addressed Research Question 6: What supports did Filipino Special Education teachers receive as they transitioned into inclusive education in the United States of America? Participants also identified supports they considered helpful during this transition. Three themes emerged: (1) Orientation, (2) Mentorship, and (3) Professional Development. The themes and supporting accounts are discussed below.

Theme 1: Orientation

The first theme that emerged was orientation. Participants emphasized the importance of becoming familiar with the educational system of the United States of America, particularly its special education laws, IEP procedures, documentation requirements, instructional practices, and professional expectations.



“Filipino Special Education teachers would benefit from structured orientation programs before they begin teaching in United States of America schools.”

(Participant 1)

Participant 2 similarly recommended orientation addressing special education in the United States of America laws, the IEP process, compliance requirements, and inclusive instructional practices.

Theme 2: Mentorship

The second theme that emerged was mentorship. Participants identified guidance from experienced teachers and professionals as an important form of support during the transition into schools in the United States of America.

Participant 1 recommended having an experienced mentor during the first year, while Participant 2 similarly recommended mentorship involving experienced Special Education teachers to help Filipino educators become familiar with special education practice in the United States of America.

Theme 3: Professional Development

The third theme that emerged was professional development. Participants emphasized the importance of continuous learning after entering the educational system of the United States of America, particularly in areas that differ from Philippine practice.

“Professional development should focus not only on legal requirements but also on cultural adaptation and collaboration within multidisciplinary teams.”

(Participant 2)

Participant 1 similarly encouraged Filipino Special Education teachers to remain open to continuous learning while maintaining confidence in the knowledge and skills developed in the Philippines. Participant 9 also emphasized continued learning, professional relationships, and confidently sharing expertise developed through Philippine preparation.

6. Transition Support (Research Question 6). Three themes emerged: Orientation, Mentorship, and Professional Development. Participants identified these as forms of support that could help Filipino Special Education teachers transition into inclusive education in the United States of America. Their accounts described the value of such support, but the reported themes did not establish that every participant had received each form of support.

Output of the Study

Participants identified differentiated instruction, behavior management, resourcefulness, learner-centeredness, and professional growth as strengths developed through Philippine preparation. They also described learning school-system procedures, Individualized Education Program (IEP) documentation, data-based instructional practices, and professional expectations in their new settings. Some initially experienced under recognition of their expertise, although their contributions became more visible through teaching and collaboration. Their accounts further emphasized professional identity, teamwork, and the value of orientation, mentorship, and professional development. These qualitative findings provide the basis for an induction plan that recognizes existing competence while addressing the requirements of each employing school district. The study did not assess the effectiveness of the proposed plan.

This section presents a proposed action plan based on the experiences of nine Filipino Special Education (SPED) teachers. It translates the study’s six reported areas of findings into practical support for teachers entering inclusive public schools in the United States of America. The plan addresses the use and recognition of expertise developed in the Philippines, adaptation to local special education requirements, multidisciplinary collaboration, and continuing transition support. The proposed plan may be submitted to participating public-school districts or school administrators for review and adaptation to local policies, employment arrangements, and available resources. If adopted, a school administrator or Special Education coordinator would assign a mentor and agree with the incoming teacher on an initial learning plan. The first month would focus on orientation and identifying prior strengths; the following months would include guided practice, team collaboration, and targeted professional learning. A midyear review and an end-of-year review would use teacher feedback and work samples to adjust the support provided. Administrators would use approved school procedures when handling student records and IEP materials. Funding amounts are not specified because the study did not collect cost data and involved teachers across different states and school districts. Each district would determine costs and funding sources during review.



Discussion

The findings revealed that the expertise Filipino Special Education developed through their Philippine training was multidimensional, encompassing both technical competencies and professional dispositions. The five themes—Differentiated Instruction, Behavior Management, Resourcefulness, Learner-Centeredness, and Professional Growth—reflect the knowledge, skills, values, and professional qualities participants brought into inclusive education settings in the United States of America.

Participants entered classrooms in the United States of America with established knowledge of individualized instruction, accommodations, behavior support, and learner needs, while learning the specific systems through which these practices were implemented in the United States of America. Their experiences show that adaptation extended beyond instructional practices to include legal requirements, documentation, progress monitoring, and collaboration with multidisciplinary professionals.

Overall, the findings revealed a progression from underrecognition to demonstrated competence and eventually professional recognition. Participants entered schools in the United States of America with Philippine-developed knowledge and competencies that were not always immediately understood by others. Through classroom practice, collaboration, problem-solving, and continued professional engagement, they were able to demonstrate their abilities and make their expertise increasingly visible.

The findings indicated that Philippine training provided participants with a professional identity grounded in patience, compassion, learner-centeredness, adaptability, and commitment to students. Their confidence developed through continued experience and successful professional performance, while their professional identity expanded through the integration of Philippine and educational experiences in the United States of America.

Overall, the findings indicated that collaboration provided participants with opportunities to apply their Philippine-developed Special Education while learning from other professionals. Communication supported the exchange of information and coordination of services, while shared responsibility reflected the collective nature of inclusive education.

Overall, the findings suggested that effective transition support should begin with orientation, continue through mentorship, and be reinforced through professional development. Such support should recognize the expertise internationally trained teachers already possess while helping them understand the legal, procedural, cultural, and professional expectations of schools in the United States of America.

To School Administrators. School administrators may provide structured orientation and mentorship for internationally trained Special Education teachers, particularly during their initial transition. Guidance may address Individualized Education Program (IEP) procedures, documentation, data collection, and multidisciplinary collaboration.

To School Districts and Special Education Programs in the United States of America. School districts may develop transition programs that address special education requirements while recognizing and building on the competencies that internationally trained teachers already possess.

To Filipino Special Education Teachers. Filipino Special Education teachers may continue developing their knowledge of special education laws and IEP procedures in the United States of America, along with documentation, data-based practices, and collaboration, while drawing on expertise developed in the Philippines.

To Teacher Education Institutions. Philippine teacher education institutions may strengthen preparation in professional adaptability, inclusive education, collaboration, and awareness of international educational contexts.

To Professional Organizations and Policymakers. Professional organizations and policymakers may provide mentoring, professional-development opportunities, and resources for internationally trained Special Education teachers while promoting recognition of their previous professional preparation.



To Future Researchers. Future researchers may examine the experiences of Filipino Special Education teachers across different states, school districts, and Special Education roles. Future studies may also include the perspectives of administrators, colleagues, and other professionals who work with internationally trained teachers.

Conclusion

The findings showed that Filipino Special Education teachers brought knowledge, skills, professional values, and experiences developed through Philippine training and teaching. They identified differentiated instruction, behavior management, resourcefulness, learner-centeredness, and professional growth as important forms of expertise.

Participants adapted this expertise to the educational system of the United States of America as they learned new procedures, documentation requirements, data-based practices, and collaborative approaches.

Some participants reported that their expertise was not immediately recognized in their new schools. Through continued teaching, collaboration, and demonstrated competence, they described gaining greater professional recognition. They also described how multidisciplinary collaboration helped them contribute to shared decisions about support for learners with disabilities.

The study concluded that Philippine Special Education training provided a professional foundation that participants continued to use and develop in inclusive schools in the United States of America. Their transition involved adapting this expertise to new requirements and integrating it with subsequent professional learning. Participants identified orientation, mentorship, and professional development as useful forms of transition support.

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