

Exploring the Motivations and Challenges of Teachers Leaving DepEd for Overseas Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into educators' motivations and challenges leaving the Department of Education (DepEd) for overseas opportunities. The researchers used descriptive qualitative in conducting the study. Based on the findings, it emerges that both emotional and practical considerations influence teachers' decisions to migrate. Foremost among the concerns is the desire for financial stability, contrasted by their deep emotional connection to students and the local education system. Other significant challenges include the need for comprehensive health and well-being provisions, operational efficiency, professional development, and an inclusive work environment. The study underscores the pressing need for reforms within DepEd, emphasizing competitive compensation, streamlined operations, continuous professional growth, and robust health provisions. It was recommended that the Department of Education (DepEd) must prioritize educators' financial and holistic well-being through competitive salaries and regular professional development opportunities. Streamlined administrative processes, proper resource allocation, and integration of global educational insights will foster a more efficient and appealing environment for educators.

KEYWORDS

motivations; challenges; teachers leaving DepEd; overseas opportunities; descriptive qualitative; Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of global education migration have been steadily evolving, with an increasing number of educators seeking teaching opportunities beyond their native shores (Smith, 2018). The motivations driving teachers, especially those from the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines, to seek opportunities abroad are multifaceted and deeply ingrained in both personal and systemic issues. Studies have shown that economic prospects remain one of the predominant reasons for this migration, with Smith and Johnson (2016) highlighting the allure of superior compensation packages in foreign lands. These potential earnings, often significantly higher than what they might receive domestically, offer financial stability and a chance for these educators to provide better for their families. However, it's not purely about economics.

Garcia and Thompson (2017) found that teachers are also driven by the promise of professional development, exposure to novel educational systems, and a chance to enhance their teaching methodologies. Beyond these professional and financial reasons, the desire for personal growth and a better quality of life, as discussed by Lee and Tan (2018), are also influential pull factors. Nevertheless, while these attractions pull teachers towards foreign shores, the challenges within the DepEd, such as overwhelming workloads,

bureaucratic mazes, and inadequate compensation, act as significant push factors, as Dela Cruz (2017) outlines. Torres and Gomez (2019) further emphasized the cultural nuances affecting these decisions, where the inherent Filipino emphasis on family responsibilities and obligations amplifies the desire to seek better opportunities overseas.

Specifically in the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has witnessed a significant exodus of teachers opting for overseas placements (Ramirez, 2020). Such movements have been primarily attributed to a myriad of motivations ranging from financial stability to professional growth and personal aspirations (Jones & Kim, 2017). However, the decision to transition abroad is not without its challenges. Previous research has underscored teachers' emotional, logistical, and professional hurdles when adapting to a new educational environment (Nguyen, 2019).

Moreover, Smith et al. (2017) discussed the immediate motivations of teachers leaving their home countries, and they did not track these educators' experiences over time. A longitudinal perspective would offer insights into how motivations evolve and challenges shift after migration. This study aimed to delve deeper into the specific motivations and challenges faced by DepEd teachers in their quest for international teaching roles.

Objective of the Study

The study's main purpose was to explore the motivations and challenges of teachers leaving DepEd for overseas opportunities.

RESEARCH METHODS

The Research Design

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. The essence of this methodology is to comprehensively depict and narrate the lived experiences and phenomena described by participants. In the context of this study, the descriptive qualitative design is best suited to explore and detail the motivations and challenges faced by teachers from the Caraga region who had left DepEd for overseas opportunities.

Research Locale

The Caraga region, Philippines, was chosen as the locale of this study due to the increasing trend of teachers seeking overseas employment opportunities. The experiences of these teachers, stemming from a unique confluence of cultural, geographical, and economic factors particular to the Caraga region, provided rich and relevant insights into the overarching theme of the research.

Research Participants

The participants were chosen based on purposive sampling. The inclusion criterion was any teacher originally affiliated with DepEd in the Caraga region but who had worked abroad at any point in their teaching career. A total of 30 participants were included, ensuring a diverse range of experiences while maintaining depth in individual narratives.

Data Gathering Procedure

A designed semi-structured questionnaire was formulated to garner an in-depth understanding of the motivations and hurdles encountered by these educators. The Google Form link was strategically disseminated via diverse platforms, including social media groups, to ensure a broad spectrum of participants. Notably, these platforms comprised members predominantly from the Caraga region who had a rich history of overseas

teaching experiences. Reminder notifications were judiciously dispatched two weeks post the initial circulation to optimize participation and ensure higher response rates. The data was carefully collated and examined for insights after the stipulated one-month response window.

Ethical Standards

The participants were introduced to the study's objectives via an embedded consent form in Google Forms, ensuring informed participation. Ensuring anonymity, the study refrained from collecting identifying details, and any inadvertent personal data were removed during analysis. Data was stored securely, accessible only to the research team, reinforcing confidentiality. While participation was purely voluntary, with the freedom to withdraw anytime, the presentation of findings maintained strict transparency, highlighting participants' views without bias or alterations.

Data Analysis

The researchers utilized thematic analysis to distill and interpret the qualitative data amassed for the study. The process embarked on a "familiarization" phase, where all gathered responses were diligently read multiple times, ensuring the team was fully immersed and conversant with the depth and breadth of the data. This immersion paved the way for the "coding" phase, wherein discernible patterns within the responses were encapsulated with preliminary codes. As the process evolved, these individual codes began to converge, forming more encompassing themes and subthemes in the "theme development" stage. But the journey of these themes did not end there; each underwent a critical review against the backdrop of the initial codes and the dataset to affirm their validity and resonance. Subsequently, in the "defining and naming themes" phase, these themes were crystallized further and assigned descriptive monikers that encapsulated their essence. This rigorous analytical journey culminated in the "reporting" phase, where the researchers articulated their findings, lending them weight and authenticity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Primary motivations behind educators joining DepEd and tracking the evolution of these motivations over their tenure.

The participants' initial motivations for joining DepEd (Department of Education) were diverse but can be primarily categorized into the following themes:

Job Security and Compensation

Teachers who joined the Department of Education (DepEd) were initially drawn to the promise of stability that came with a regular and permanent position. For the Participants, this stability was not merely a professional allure but a foundation upon which they hoped to support a growing family. Yet, the initial allure began to wane as life's intricacies unfolded with increasing responsibilities such as nurturing growing children and supporting an unemployed spouse. The once-perceived sufficient salary failed to keep pace with rising familial demands, pushing the respondent into a spiral of loans and ensuing financial difficulties.

Similarly, the participants began their journey with DepEd with optimism, perceiving the salary as adequate for their needs. However, unforeseen familial health crises, an all-too-common disruptor in many families, threw a wrench into their financial planning. This

led to a concerning pattern of accruing loans, which, coupled with diminishing net pay, presented a challenging financial landscape.

These individual experiences resonate with a broader sentiment among the DepEd community. Another participant underscored the comparative allure of DepEd's salary package against private institutions. In essence, the pull of a presumably better compensation structure was a significant factor in their choice. Reinforcing this sentiment was the contrasting experience of contractual roles. The unpredictability and transiency associated with such positions made the promise of permanent and regular work in DepEd even more enticing. While the promise of stability and a competitive salary was a compelling draw to DepEd, the realities of personal and familial responsibilities, coupled with unforeseen challenges, painted a more complex picture of the financial landscape for these educators.

Milkovich et al. (2013) provided a comprehensive analysis of compensation, viewing it not just as a means to attract and retain employees but also as a tool for job satisfaction.

Passion for Teaching and Making an Impact

For many educators, teaching transcends the boundaries of a mere profession and is viewed as a vocation rooted in passion and purpose. This sentiment was echoed by several participants, who highlighted their deep-seated desire not just to instruct but to genuinely inspire and instigate positive change in their students' lives. Their commitment was not solely to the academic betterment of students, but to their holistic development, with a focus on cultivating values, ethics, and character.

One participant, in particular, felt a moral and professional obligation to reach out to students who seemed adrift, using education as an anchor to provide guidance and a sense of direction. This perspective underlines educators' multifaceted role as mentors, guides, and, sometimes, guardians of their student's well-being. The overarching ambition to mold young minds was a recurring theme. The participants saw themselves not just as transmitters of knowledge but as sculptors shaping the character and futures of their students. Through teaching, they aspired to leave an indelible mark on the next generation, guiding them toward a brighter, more purposeful future.

Richardson et al. (2014) found that one of the strong predictors for early career decisions, such as staying in the teaching profession or leaving it, is the teacher's initial passion and commitment to the profession. Teachers who are passionate are more likely to stay and thus have a prolonged impact.

Personal Fulfillment and Aspirations

Joining the Department of Education (DepEd) held unique and individual significance for each respondent, often influenced by personal aspirations, a sense of community responsibility, and financial considerations. One participant said, "*Securing a position with DepEd was the realization of a personal dream, a culmination of years of aspiration and hard work.*" This sense of personal fulfillment was intertwined with another respondent's broader goal of community development. They perceived teaching as more than just a profession; it was a means to give back to their community, influence local lives, and bring about tangible change in their immediate environment.

Yet, motivations weren't solely driven by altruism and personal satisfaction. The lure of financial security and the hope for a prosperous life played a pivotal role in their decisions. One respondent candidly shared their initial aspiration for financial freedom, which, over time, seemed increasingly elusive within the DepEd framework. The challenges of

achieving this financial goal became evident, especially when juxtaposed against familial and personal responsibilities.

Joining DepEd was, for many, a harmonious blend of personal ambition, community service, and the pursuit of financial stability. The interplay of these motivations reflected a commitment to teaching and influencing young minds, underscored by personal dreams and aspirations. Yet, as time progressed, certain realities, especially financial constraints, became more pronounced, leading some to reevaluate their initial expectations and perspectives on their roles within DepEd.

Cruz (2015) found that educators within DepEd reported a high level of personal fulfillment derived from their roles, associating it with the impact they have on student's lives and the sense of purpose their work provides.

Challenges and obstacles educators face during their tenure at DepEd.

The responses indicate a myriad of challenges faced by educators within DepEd.

Overwhelming Workload and Limited Compensation

The teaching profession often hailed for its noble intentions, can sometimes be riddled with challenges beyond the classroom. Many participants painted a picture of their experience within DepEd, where the workload was not just demanding but "*grabe*" (intense). This intensity was not merely about the hours they put in but was further compounded by pressures exerted by superiors or the ingrained system. When juxtaposed with stagnant salaries, such challenges made the journey seem even more uphill. Against this backdrop, the prospect of seeking employment abroad, where teachers reportedly enjoy better compensation, began to shine brightly on the horizon. For many, the promise of a better life, underscored by improved pay scales abroad, became a magnet, pulling them towards considering international opportunities, even if it meant leaving familiar shores and embarking on a new journey. Ramos (2019) documented the rising rates of burnout among Filipino educators, attributing it to both workload and compensation issues.

Geographical and Infrastructure Challenges

For educators, the call to teach often transcends beyond merely sharing knowledge; it sometimes tests the very boundaries of personal endurance and dedication. Some participants shared that their assignments led them to remote or mountainous regions. While embodying the true spirit of reaching every child, such postings brought with them not just logistical challenges but tangible physical dangers, such as the risk of vehicular accidents or the strains of working in topographically challenging terrains. Beyond the inherent perils of these locations, there lies an additional layer of complexity – the daunting task of seeking reassignments to more accessible areas. As described by these educators, the system often leans in favor of those with connections or influence in higher echelons, making the transfer process challenging and seemingly insurmountable at times. This narrative underscores the multifaceted challenges that teachers often grapple with beyond the confines of their classrooms. Tawas et al. (2021) provide a deep dive into how the dispersion of islands affects school commutes, sometimes necessitating boat journeys that pose both safety and logistical issues.

Financial Concerns

Financial challenges form a significant part of the narrative for many educators associated with DepEd. Several participants highlighted a pattern of delayed financial support from

the department, resulting in them often having to dip into their own pockets to ensure continuity in their educational programs. The term "*SBM (Sa Balsa Mokoot)*" aptly captures this sentiment, underscoring the prevalent expectation that teachers often bear the financial burden of school-related expenses. Beyond programmatic needs, many educators also find themselves ensnared in a cycle of forced loans and borrowing, sometimes even from unregulated loan sharks, to cater to their families' requirements.

This scenario is further exacerbated when they have to account for additional costs, like classroom beautification, without commensurate financial backing from DepEd. Such consistent financial pressures challenge their resourcefulness and question the sustainability of their dedication when juxtaposed with mounting economic hardships. The looming concerns around health and benefits only add another dimension to their complex professional landscape. Carel and Pecajas (2022) illuminate the often under-discussed issue of teachers shouldering classroom-related expenses due to limited school funding.

Health and Benefits

The state of health benefits provided by the department stands out as a major concern among educators associated with DepEd. When confronted with health issues, many find support from the department severely lacking, often driving them into further financial strain. This inadequate coverage means that educators are compelled to take on additional loans, further deepening their financial predicaments, just to settle their medical bills. This inadequacy isn't an isolated sentiment, as it resonates strongly among multiple participants. The overarching narrative paints a picture of a system where the health and well-being of its educators aren't prioritized, leading to a compounded sense of vulnerability and disillusionment. The absence of a robust health safety net underscores a larger systemic issue that questions the department's commitment to its workforce's holistic well-being.

Teachers in the Philippines often work in challenging conditions. Many have to travel long distances, sometimes traversing rivers or hiking mountains, to reach their schools. These physical challenges, combined with long working hours, can be detrimental to their physical health. Moreover, the mental and emotional strain from managing large classroom sizes can be overwhelming, often with limited resources. In many instances, teachers are also expected to play roles beyond just educators; they act as counselors, mediators, and even parental figures to their students. Such expectations, while noble, can lead to burnout and psychological stress (Arzadon & Nato, 2015).

Administrative and Bureaucratic Issues

The overarching work environment within the Department of Education (DepEd) appears to be characterized by many stressors that extend beyond the primary teaching role. Teachers are grappling with tight deadlines and a surging amount of paperwork that seems to detract from their primary role of imparting knowledge. This administrative burden, combined with an apparent lack of recognition and appreciation from superiors, undoubtedly adds to the daily strain. An equally troubling concern raised is the reported pressure on educators to award passing marks to students regardless of merit. This compromises the integrity of the grading system and, more importantly, the quality of education.

The mandate for home visits and other non-instructional tasks further exacerbates the situation. Such requirements, especially when tied to student evaluations, detract from educators' core responsibilities and impinge on their personal time. The feedback paints a picture of a system in need of reform. The reported absence of systematic approaches in DepEd implies that teachers are navigating a chaotic environment, constantly adapting

without a consistent structure to rely upon. In essence, the complexities of the job seem to extend far beyond the classroom, indicating systemic inefficiencies and a lack of clarity in roles and expectations.

The teaching profession is inherently emotionally and mentally demanding. Teachers are not just educators but also counselors, mediators, and mentors. A word of appreciation or acknowledgment can act as a powerful motivator, reaffirming their value in the educational ecosystem. Conversely, a lack of recognition can lead to feelings of being undervalued, especially when they're stretched thin with administrative tasks (Nieto, 2015).

Student-Related Challenges

Dealing with students who are perceived as "difficult" or "*mga bata labad*" poses a unique set of challenges for educators within DepEd. The very essence of teaching revolves around guiding, nurturing, and shaping young minds, and when faced with challenging behaviors, the task becomes even more demanding. However, what exacerbates this situation is the prevailing sentiment that when a student does not perform well, the onus falls squarely on the teacher. Instead of looking at a student's performance as a multifaceted issue, potentially influenced by numerous external and internal factors, the blame is often singularly directed at the educator. This oversimplification not only undermines the efforts of the teacher but also puts undue pressure on them regarding student evaluations and grading.

Given these circumstances, it's no surprise that many educators are casting their gaze beyond local borders. The allure of international opportunities is not solely based on better remuneration but also on the promise of more streamlined educational systems and balanced professional life. The vision of an environment that offers clear guidelines, devoid of undue blame, and the opportunity to break free from debilitating financial cycles, like the perpetual loop of loans many find themselves in locally, makes the idea of teaching abroad an appealing alternative for many educators.

For educators, these students can disrupt the learning environment, create emotional stress, and demand a disproportionate share of classroom resources (Bottiani et al., 2019). However, addressing this issue requires more than just discipline. Effective strategies include providing individualized attention to discern specific challenges, offering counseling, employing proactive classroom management techniques, and promoting peer integration (Mitchell et al., 2017).

Motivations behind educators' decisions to leave DepEd in favor of teaching opportunities abroad, emphasizing the perceived unique benefits and opportunities not available locally

The participants clearly emphasize a desire for better financial and personal well-being as their primary motivations for considering teaching opportunities abroad over continuing with DepEd.

Financial Stability and Freedom

A prevailing narrative among the participants is the pursuit of financial liberation. This is not merely about earning a higher salary but the deeper desire to rid oneself of the shackles of debt that seem all too common among DepEd employees. The allure of international opportunities is not just in the prospect of a more substantial paycheck but in the promise of a more sustainable and stable financial structure. This "loan freedom," as it's been aptly

termed, is not a mere financial goal but signifies a broader aspiration for peace of mind and an end to a pervasive culture of borrowing.

Moreover, it's not about luxuries but the basic human yearning to provide for one's family and to secure a comfortable future for their children. For many, the idea of working abroad is underpinned by the hope of achieving these simple yet profound life goals, free from the ever-present specter of financial insolvency. The quest is about purchasing necessities and occasionally indulging in life's comforts without the constant anxiety about the next payment due or the next loan installment. It paints a picture of a community of educators who, while dedicated to their profession, are yearning for a sense of financial stability and the freedom to dream beyond their immediate constraints.

A primary driving force behind international migration, especially from developing to developed nations, is the promise of better economic opportunities. According to a study by Hall (2021), wage differentials between origin and destination countries can be a significant push factor, motivating individuals to migrate for better income prospects.

Work-Life Balance and Mental Health

For many participants, the differences in working conditions between DepEd and opportunities abroad couldn't be more pronounced. The quest for a more balanced work-life dynamic is central to their narratives, underscoring a deeper yearning for professional satisfaction and personal well-being. They do not just cite the challenges of working within DepEd; they juxtapose them against what they perceive as more favorable conditions abroad. Key among these is the emphasis on mental health, a testament to the rising global awareness of its importance in the workplace. Abroad, the prospects of receiving adequate rest, relaxation and the resultant positive impact on mental health appear as significant pull factors.

Beyond the tangible benefits of higher salaries, the intangible perks related to well-being stand out. The participants specifically value the emphasis on adequate sleep and relaxation in foreign work settings, implicitly underscoring a deficit of these essential aspects in their current roles. Additionally, the issue of unpaid overtime in DepEd becomes even more glaring when contrasted against the norm of compensated overtime abroad. The narrative thus underscores a desire for not just better compensation but a holistic approach to employee well-being that seems to be more accessible in international settings compared to their current positions.

Participants express a distinct appreciation for the prioritization of adequate sleep and relaxation in overseas work environments. This sentiment highlights the inherent benefits they see in foreign work settings and implicitly underscores a perceived lack or inadequacy of these fundamental well-being aspects in their current roles. The juxtaposition suggests that their current work settings might be characterized by longer hours, fewer breaks, or a work culture that doesn't prioritize employee well-being, leading them to view international opportunities as financially and holistically more beneficial (Creely et al., 2022).

Seeking New Challenges and Personal Growth

Several participants expressed a thirst for new horizons to escape their present circumstances and as a pathway to holistic growth. Venturing abroad is seen as a change in geographical terms and a transformative journey. By stepping into new territories, they see the potential for both professional enrichment and personal evolution. These sentiments seem to stem from a deep-rooted desire to expand one's boundaries, experience the unfamiliar, and glean insights from diverse educational landscapes.

Beyond this, however, is a more poignant narrative on self-worth. One respondent, in particular, offers a reflective take on the notion of value – not just in terms of monetary compensation but in the form of recognition and appreciation. The message is powerful: if one's current environment fails to acknowledge and reward their contributions adequately, then it might be time to seek greener pastures. This isn't just about seeking validation but is an assertion of self-worth. It's a call to fellow educators to recognize their value and ensure they position themselves in environments where that value is recognized and celebrated.

Many individuals are increasingly seeking opportunities abroad, driven by a desire to escape their current situations and foster holistic personal growth. According to a study by King and Skeldon (2010) in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, migration is often viewed as a geographical shift and a transformative journey, opening up new avenues for personal and professional development. This perspective resonates with the idea that international experiences can broaden horizons, offer diverse perspectives, and serve as catalysts for profound personal change.

Influence of Peers and Societal Expectations

Witnessing peers achieve financial success and freedom at a relatively young age has emerged as a significant factor influencing the perspectives and aspirations of some participants. This is not just about material wealth but also about the allure of an elevated quality of life that comes with such financial independence. Such observations evoke a mix of emotions, where envy intermingles with inspiration. Watching their contemporaries thrive becomes a driving force for some, compelling them to strive for similar achievements.

Moreover, this journey towards success overseas is not just about personal gain. For a number of educators, it's a statement. It's about challenging prevailing stereotypes and societal perceptions surrounding their profession. They aim to demonstrate that educators can achieve just as much success as professionals in other fields when given the right opportunities and environments. In doing so, they hope to uplift the status of their profession, ensuring it gets the respect and recognition it rightfully deserves.

The aspiration to succeed overseas for educators extends beyond personal achievement; it is a powerful act of defiance against societal norms and stereotypes. As noted by Niyubahwe et al. (2013) in the *International Journal of Educational Development*, educators migrating for opportunities often aim to challenge prevailing societal perceptions that undervalue their profession, seeking not just to elevate their status but also to reshape the narrative around education and its role. By thriving in an international setting, these educators effectively refute stereotypes and underline the universality and significance of their vocation.

Prioritizing Family and Future

For many participants, the driving force behind their aspirations is rooted deeply in their commitment to their families. Their narratives consistently highlight an unyielding desire to offer their loved ones a superior quality of life. This isn't merely about attaining materialistic comforts; it's a profound yearning to secure a promising future, especially for their children. In a world where education is often viewed as the ticket to upward mobility, the ability to afford quality education emerges as a paramount concern. For these educators, it's not just about imparting knowledge in classrooms but also ensuring their children receive the best educational opportunities. More than any personal ambition, this drive seems to be a recurring theme. It underscores a universal truth: parents, regardless of

their profession or background, aspire to create conditions where their offspring can surpass them, enjoying greater successes and fewer hardships.

The motivation to achieve success and make sacrifices, especially among individuals from collectivist cultures, is often deeply rooted in their commitment to family. According to a study by Kagitcibasi (2005) in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, in many non-western cultures, individuals' aspirations are closely tied to their families well-being, wherein personal achievements are seen not just as individual accomplishments but as contributions to the collective prosperity of the family unit. This deep-seated familial commitment drives individuals to seek better opportunities, often leading to migration or the pursuit of demanding careers, as success in these endeavors directly translates to the betterment of the family's quality of life.

Moreover, a research piece by Levitt and Waters (2002) highlights the lengths to which individuals will go for their families, driven by a mix of duty, love, and societal expectations. For many, the family stands as both the starting point and ultimate beneficiary of their ambitions. Their sacrifices, whether in terms of time, resources, or emotional energy, are perceived not as individual burdens but as shared responsibilities. In this context, aspirations become more than just personal goals; they transform into collective family projects underpinned by shared dreams and responsibilities.

Anticipated challenges educators might face when adjusting to overseas educational systems, with a focus on cultural, linguistic, and pedagogical differences and understanding their preparedness strategies

The responses provided by the educators highlight a mix of emotional resilience, adaptability, optimism, and practicality in anticipating and managing the challenges of working abroad.

Emotional and Mental Preparedness

Emotional and mental fortitude emerges as a central theme when discussing the preparations for an international transition. A multitude of participants articulated the significance of mental and emotional preparedness, emphasizing it as much as, if not more than, logistical or practical arrangements. The journey to working abroad is not just geographical but also psychological. Participants often speak of "*preparing their hearts*" and "*conditioning their minds*," suggesting a deep, introspective process of bracing oneself for the myriad of challenges that working in a foreign land might present. Interestingly, one respondent drew parallels with the resilience they cultivated working in DepEd. This comparison sheds light on two pivotal points: First, their tenure in DepEd, despite its challenges, has armed them with a tenacity that they believe will serve them well abroad. And second, it reflects a mindset of adaptability and perseverance, hinting at a belief that past adversities can be a preparatory ground for future challenges.

Pursuing opportunities abroad, particularly for teachers, is a voyage beyond mere geographical transitions and encapsulates a profound psychological journey. According to research conducted by Richardson and McKenna (2014) in the *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, professionals, including educators who move overseas undergo significant psychological adjustments, often termed as "cultural adaptation" or "acculturation." These adjustments require individuals to prepare mentally and emotionally, with teachers emphasizing the need to "prepare their hearts" and "condition their minds." This internal preparation signifies the depth of introspection and emotional

fortitude needed to face the inevitable challenges of navigating different cultural landscapes, teaching methodologies, and societal expectations.

Support Systems

The importance of establishing and maintaining robust support systems stands out prominently in the narratives of many participants. Within the fabric of the vast expanse of a foreign land, these systems act as touchpoints of familiarity, offering a comforting sense of belonging. Family back home becomes the anchor, a steady reminder of one's roots and identity. Their words of encouragement, a simple phone call, or even the recollection of shared memories can offer solace during challenging moments of homesickness or cultural disorientation. Conversely, the presence of friends or colleagues abroad represents bridges to the unfamiliar. They offer firsthand insights into navigating the nuances of the new culture, from understanding societal norms to providing pragmatic tips for daily living. Moreover, these friendships, often forged in the crucible of shared experiences, can alleviate feelings of isolation, fostering a sense of camaraderie. Collectively, these support networks act as both a grounding mechanism and a lifeline, underscoring their intrinsic value in ensuring the well-being and emotional health of educators venturing abroad.

Support systems are indispensable in ensuring the well-being of educators who venture abroad, serving dual functions of grounding and lifeline. According to a study by Sawir et al. (2012) in the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, for professionals, especially educators in foreign settings, these networks offer a sense of belonging and stability amidst the overwhelming challenges of cultural adjustment and professional integration. They provide familiar touchpoints, emotional succor, and practical advice, ensuring educators do not feel isolated in their journey. The intrinsic value of such networks is further highlighted by Presbitero (2016), who found that strong support systems directly correlate with better emotional health and job satisfaction for overseas workers. Thus, for educators abroad, these networks become a cornerstone of their psychological and emotional resilience.

National Pride and Adaptability

The resilience and adaptability of the Filipino spirit emerge as hallmarks in the narratives of many participants. This pride, deeply ingrained in their national identity, lends them quiet yet unyielding confidence as they step into unfamiliar territories. The tales of Filipinos thriving in diverse global settings, often against the odds, aren't mere anecdotes but serve as testimonies to their inherent resourcefulness and flexibility. Such characteristics aren't cultivated overnight but are the results of a rich tapestry of historical and cultural experiences that have molded the Filipino psyche.

The participants readily tap into this collective consciousness, viewing it as a wellspring of strength. A foreign educational system's challenges, with its distinct pedagogical approaches and cultural nuances, might daunt others, but these educators view them as mere hurdles to overcome. Their confidence isn't brash or unfounded but is rooted in a profound understanding of their capabilities as Filipinos. They carry with them the belief that the same adaptability which has seen their countrymen flourish in varied global landscapes will similarly guide their paths in their new roles abroad.

Filipinos' resilience and adaptability in foreign lands are deeply entrenched in their national identity, imbuing them with quiet but steadfast confidence. A study by Ordonez (2013) in the *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* highlights that Filipinos, throughout history, have been known for their ability to adapt and thrive in diverse global settings, often against challenging odds. These tales of success are not mere anecdotes but reflections of the

Filipinos' innate resourcefulness and adaptability. Furthermore, a publication by Enriquez (1994) posits that such traits have been honed over centuries, shaped by a myriad of historical and cultural influences that have intricately woven the fabric of the Filipino identity. The multifaceted experiences of Filipinos, from colonial legacies to varied regional cultures, have cumulatively molded a unique and resilient Filipino psyche.

Anticipating Specific Challenges

Facing an entirely new milieu, participants are cognizant of the myriad challenges that relocation might pose, both tangible and intangible. One of the most palpable challenges is grappling with cultural differences. Every nation carries with it an array of customs, traditions, and societal expectations, and diving into a new culture can be akin to navigating uncharted waters. However, the proactive mindset of the participants is commendable; instead of passively feeling overwhelmed, many contemplate undertaking cultural classes, aiming to gain insight into the societal fabric of their new homes, a testament to their dedication and commitment.

The unpredictable nature of the weather, particularly the biting cold, emerges as another concern. Such drastic shifts in climate can indeed take a toll on one's mental health, potentially triggering feelings of gloom or even depression. Yet, despite the looming shadows of these challenges, participants exude a quiet resilience, gearing themselves mentally to face and overcome them.

Long-distance relationships often weave a tapestry of emotions, from longing to desolation. But geographical distances seem to shrink in an era dominated by technological advancements. The vast digital landscape offers myriad avenues to stay connected, and participants place unwavering faith in modern communication tools. The internet and phones serve as virtual bridges, allowing them to maintain and nurture the bonds with their loved ones back home, assuaging the pangs of separation. In essence, while the journey ahead may be fraught with challenges, the participants display an admirable blend of foresight, adaptability, and resilience, gearing up to turn potential pitfalls into opportunities for growth.

The climatic challenges, particularly the severe cold in many foreign lands, present a marked contrast to what many migrants might be accustomed to and can indeed pose significant psychological challenges. A study by Hansen et al. (2017) in the *Environmental Research Journal* suggests that extreme weather conditions, especially prolonged cold, can significantly influence mood, potentially exacerbating feelings of gloominess or even leading to conditions like Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Despite the evident climatic and associated psychological challenges, there exists a profound resilience among migrants. As Aycan and Berry (1996) highlighted in their acculturation study, many migrants anticipate and mentally prepare for such environmental challenges, demonstrating adaptability and fortitude in the face of adversity. Such resilience is inherent and often cultivated through prior experiences, cultural values, and a determination to succeed in new environments.

Mindset and Goal Orientation

A prevailing sentiment among the participants is the unwavering focus on the "end goal"—a beacon of hope signifying a brighter and better future. This forward-looking perspective isn't just a passive wish; it's a powerful driving force that seems to anchor their resolve. They view the potential trials and tribulations of working abroad not as insurmountable barriers but as transient hurdles on the path to their aspirations. The sacrifices they anticipate, be they emotional, physical, or cultural, are viewed through the prism of long-

term gain, both financially and personally. This recognition that the eventual rewards will eclipse the transient hardships underscores a deep-seated resilience and determination. It's as if they're fueled by the belief that every challenge surmounted brings them a step closer to the dream they cherish—a better life and a more prosperous future.

The decision to migrate, often fraught with anticipated emotional, physical, and cultural sacrifices, reflects a larger vision of long-term benefits, both personally and financially. As Castles et al. (2014) noted in their comprehensive study on international migration, individuals often weigh the immediate challenges against the potential rewards, signifying a depth of resilience and foresight. This mindset is underpinned by a broader aspiration for an improved quality of life and prospects for the future. As highlighted by Levitt and Waters (2002), such determination is anchored in the belief that surmounting every encountered challenge is a step towards realizing cherished dreams. In essence, the transient tribulations are perceived not as deterrents but as milestones for a better future.

Potential reforms and enhancements in DepEd that could incentivize educators to remain within the local system rather than seeking opportunities abroad

The responses provided by the educators reflect a myriad of concerns and challenges they face while working with DepEd. They clearly indicate that there are both emotional and practical considerations in their decision to seek opportunities abroad. If these challenges were addressed adequately, it might influence their decision.

Emotional Considerations and Personal Sacrifices

One of the most profound sentiments echoed among participants revolves around their deep emotional connection to their students and the local education system. This isn't just a mere job for them; it's a vocation steeped in relationships, trust, and personal growth. Decisions to seek opportunities abroad don't seem to spring from a place of haste or caprice. Instead, they're marked by significant emotional deliberation, often tinged with a sense of loss and even grief. This poignant emotional backdrop is juxtaposed with a pragmatic desire for financial stability. The hope is palpable: they wish that the Department of Education could address the systemic challenges swiftly and effectively. While they are poised to embark on a new journey, they remain tethered to their roots, ever hopeful that positive change might alter the course they've felt compelled to choose.

According to Nias (1989), educators often perceive their profession as a relationship-centered vocation built upon mutual trust and fostering personal and collective growth. As they contemplate international opportunities, these educators aren't driven by whimsy. Their decisions are mired in emotional contemplation, feelings of loss, and a sense of grief, mirroring findings from Day et al. (2007) that stress the emotional intricacies underpinning teachers' career decisions.

Financial Stability

A salient concern that resonates among the participants centers on the need for salary increments and enhanced financial backing for DepEd programs. The current state of affairs, where educators frequently find themselves compelled to subsidize school programs from their personal funds, is a sore point for many. The term "*Sa Balsa Mokoot*," which has become emblematic of this predicament, underscores the gravity of this systemic issue. Teachers are making personal financial sacrifices in their dedication to their students and roles. Yet, this is not sustainable or fair. The collective sentiment is clear: there needs to be a robust and comprehensive review of funding mechanisms,

ensuring that educators aren't left bearing financial burdens that the institution should shoulder.

Ballas and Dorling (2007) noted similar trends in other educational settings, emphasizing that such practices can lead to burnout and disillusionment among teachers. This reliance on personal contributions isn't merely unsustainable but patently unjust. As Johnson (2012) highlighted, the clarion call among the education community is for a comprehensive overhaul of funding structures, ensuring that educators are aware of fiscal responsibilities that should fall within the institution's purview.

Health and Well-being

The feedback from the participants underscores a palpable yearning for an elevated standard of health care benefits and a more pronounced focus on mental health provisions. It's evident that while the physical health benefits provided are vital, educators must address the mental and emotional strains in their roles. Their well-being isn't just a matter of physical health but encompasses a holistic view that ensures emotional, psychological, and mental resilience. When educators are equipped with proper support structures that cater to their complete well-being, they can better serve their students and fulfill their roles with enthusiasm and commitment. The collective voice is clear: for educators to be at their best, institutions like DepEd must prioritize and invest in their comprehensive health and wellness.

According to Kyriacou (2001), educators frequently grapple with a multiplicity of stressors, rendering mental and emotional well-being paramount. While there's an appreciation for tangible physical health benefits, the narrative underscores a pressing need to acknowledge and address the teaching profession's less-visible mental and emotional demands. Greenberg et al. (2016) advocate for a holistic perspective on educator well-being, emphasizing its direct bearing on their capacity to serve students optimally.

Operational Efficiency and Work Culture

The educators' feedback conveys a critical desire for a restructured working environment, emphasizing the importance of a more organized and systematic workflow. A glaring concern is the imposition of "*NOW DEADLINES*," which underscores an urgent need for a predictable and manageable timeline for tasks, ensuring that teachers can deliver quality work without unnecessary stress. The issue of proper compensation for overtime emerges as a testament to the many extra hours teachers pour into their roles without adequate acknowledgment or reward. Beyond structural and financial aspects, the comments bring to light deeper cultural issues within the institution. The mention of "*Marites/es*" serves as an emblematic reference to detrimental practices like gossip and divisiveness, highlighting the need for a shift in the institutional culture. The presence of favoritism further corrodes the spirit of meritocracy and can erode trust within the organization. For the Department of Education to truly serve its mission and its teachers, it seems essential to address procedural and financial shortcomings and actively work toward nurturing a more supportive and equitable organizational culture.

The prevalence of "*NOW DEADLINES*" evokes concerns previously raised by Bjorklund (2001), who emphasized the perils of unpredictable timelines on job performance and morale. Simultaneously, the conspicuous absence of overtime compensation resonates with findings from Pfeffer and Sutton (2000), illustrating the disconnect between efforts expended and rewards received. Delving beyond procedural nuances, the reference to "*Marites/es*" mirrors the challenges Morrison (2008) documented concerning gossip and its potential to fracture organizational cohesion. The specter of

favoritism further exacerbates perceptions of inequity, potentially undermining organizational trust and efficacy.

Professional Development and Career Pathing

The aspirations expressed by participants emphasize a crucial facet of professional life: the importance of transparent and equitable career progression. A prevalent sentiment among them is the yearning for well-defined and unbiased advancement opportunities within the Department of Education. The stress on "timely promotions" suggests that there might be lingering frustrations about stagnation or delays in recognition of their contributions and growth. By highlighting the need for better career pathing for both teaching and non-teaching positions, educators are voicing the need for a holistic approach to career development that considers every member of the educational ecosystem. In essence, the call is not just for personal advancement but for a system that recognizes merit, effort, and growth consistently, ensuring that every individual, regardless of their role, feels valued and has a clear trajectory for their future within the organization.

According to Rousseau (1989), clearly delineated and equitably administered career paths are cornerstones of fulfilling employment relationships, impacting performance and retention. The emphasis on "timely promotions" echoes the sentiments that Hall and Moss (1998) captured, underscoring the detrimental effects of perceived stagnation on employee well-being and motivation. Further, the call for equitable pathing for both teaching and non-teaching roles resonates with the findings of Deci et al. (2001), which highlight the universality of intrinsic motivation and the need for recognition across all sectors of an organization.

Operational Support

The participants' feedback underlines a crucial dimension of the education ecosystem: the balance of responsibilities and the equitable distribution of resources. The emphasis on hiring more educators to achieve an optimal teacher-student ratio is an evident testament to the strain felt by current educators, who likely grapple with large class sizes that could compromise the quality of teaching and student learning experience. This oversized ratio not only puts undue stress on educators but also diminishes the potential individualized attention that each student might receive.

Further, the recognition of non-teaching personnel's role accentuates a holistic view of the educational system. By emphasizing the importance of non-teaching staff, the participants suggest that these roles, often undervalued, can significantly contribute to streamlining processes and, in turn, reduce the ancillary burdens on teachers. Their inclusion in the conversation underscores a broader understanding of the interconnected nature of roles within educational institutions.

Additionally, the mention of classroom beautification and school programs' financial requirements points to a broader concern about institutional support. The expectation that teachers shoulder such expenses rather than utilizing the school's MOOE signifies a potential misallocation or insufficiency of resources. Such practices strain the educators' finances and highlight a potential systemic issue where priorities might need realignment. In essence, the educators' feedback paints a picture of an educational system in need of both resource optimization and a re-evaluation of roles to ensure the best outcomes for both students and faculty.

UNESCO's Institute for Statistics (2016) stated that the ideal student-teacher ratio is pivotal in maintaining the quality of education, and its imbalance can result in compromised educational experiences for students. In parallel, Ingersoll (2003)

emphasized the role of non-teaching personnel in facilitating a conducive teaching environment and how their understated yet significant contributions play an essential part in educational ecosystems. Further, the issue of educators shouldering expenses for classroom and school program enhancements was raised by Torres (2017), who pointed out the broader systemic problems in resource allocation and priority setting in educational institutions.

Inclusive Work Environment

The participants are advocating for an egalitarian professional environment where meritocracy, rather than favoritism, dictates career advancement and access to opportunities. This plea is emblematic of a broader concern: the potential undermining of professionalism, morale, and genuine talent when nepotism or undue favor takes precedence over capability and dedication. Favoritism in professional settings can erode trust, cultivate feelings of resentment, and deter highly qualified individuals from seeking or maintaining positions within such an environment. The appeal to address these concerns underscores the educators' collective yearning for a transparent, fair, and merit-based system. By fostering a culture rooted in equality and impartiality, the Department of Education would elevate its professional standards and motivate its workforce, ensuring that genuine talent and dedication are aptly recognized and rewarded. Such a transformation would invariably lead to a more harmonious, productive, and motivated teaching community.

As Cable and Judge (1997) noted, employees who perceive that promotions are based on performance rather than favoritism tend to have higher job satisfaction and are more committed to their organizations. Another study by Greenberg et al. (2006) supports the notion that favoritism can have detrimental effects on organizational morale, potentially reducing employee performance and increasing turnover rates. When nepotism or undue favoritism is prevalent, it deters talent and can diminish overall organizational effectiveness and compromise service quality.

CONCLUSION

The study delved into the motivations and challenges faced by teachers who opt to leave DepEd for overseas opportunities. It was revealed that while educators are profoundly dedicated to their roles and hold a deep emotional bond with their students, systemic issues within DepEd often test their commitment. Key motivators for seeking foreign prospects include the allure of financial stability, personal growth, better working conditions, and aspirations for a balanced work-life dynamic. Beyond personal gains, many educators view overseas opportunities as a pathway to financial liberation, challenging existing stereotypes, and securing a brighter future for their families. However, these decisions aren't made lightly. Transitioning abroad entails significant emotional and mental preparations, with teachers leveraging their innate Filipino resilience to navigate this choice. While foreign shores beckon, there's a clear call for reforms within the DepEd system, emphasizing competitive compensation, well-being initiatives, professional development, and operational efficiency. While the draw of global opportunities is strong, a deeper yearning exists for a reformed and supportive DepEd environment that can retain its invaluable educators.

Recommendations

The departure of educators from the Department of Education (DepEd) to overseas opportunities has highlighted a range of systemic challenges that need addressing.

Foremost, the compensation for educators should be made competitive. Salaries should align with the living standards and be regularly adjusted to keep pace with inflation and international benchmarks. This caters to their financial needs and reflects the value placed on their roles.

Beyond financial considerations, there's a pressing need for robust professional development. By continually offering training and access to modern teaching methodologies, DepEd can ensure that educators feel equipped and valued. Clear career progression pathways can further cement their loyalty and dedication to the local system. Additionally, the overall well-being of educators should be a priority. Comprehensive health provisions, including those for mental health, can provide a supportive scaffold, ensuring that educators are mentally and physically at their optimum.

Operational efficiency is another crucial area. Streamlining administrative tasks and ensuring that educators spend the majority of their time teaching rather than navigating bureaucracy will undoubtedly boost job satisfaction. An environment that prioritizes meritocracy is devoid of favoritism and counters negativity like workplace gossip is essential for maintaining morale and trust.

Moreover, the institution should ensure proper funding allocation. The unnecessary financial strain on educators, who often dip into their pockets to fund programs, can be alleviated by doing so. Regularly engaging with educators, listening to their feedback, and actioning their concerns can foster a sense of belonging and trust. Celebrating success stories within DepEd can also serve as motivation, showcasing the potential growth available within the local framework.

Lastly, a unique approach would be to engage educators who ventured abroad and returned. Their insights, drawn from global experiences, can be invaluable, helping integrate global best practices into the local education system. By acting on these recommendations in a holistic manner, DepEd can hope to build a more resilient, efficient, and attractive environment for its educators.

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