

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON THE EXPERIENTIAL GAINS OF FILIPINO
SPECIAL EDUCATION EXCHANGE PROGRAM TEACHERS

by

Madonna Catiis

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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Abstract

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of the experiences of Filipino special education teachers in California participating in the U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange program. Framed by human capital theory, the study aimed to answer the question: "What do Filipino special education teachers perceive as benefits of participating in the exchange program?" Data for this research were collected from 10 purposefully selected participants through in-depth interviews, letter writing, and organizational documents. In applying the modified Van Kaam method and the Hermeneutic cycle in the analysis, three overarching themes encapsulating the participants' multifaceted experiences were revealed. The findings of this research showed that participants derive personal, professional, and socio-cultural benefits from participating in the program, which underscores the pivotal role of the exchange experience in developing their human capital. These results offer practical implications for teacher exchange program sponsors, host schools, and Filipino special education teachers who are considering participating in international exchanges. Most importantly, in gaining an understanding that international exchanges can have a transformational impact that extends beyond the teacher, this study's findings also suggest strategies for the Philippines so that they may leverage their returning teachers' human capital gains as this holds promise in supporting the country's initiatives to improve the provision of services for Filipino students with disabilities.

Keywords: special education, teacher shortage, teacher exchange program, human capital theory, Filipino teachers, Philippines

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Dedication

Ang bunga ng aking pananaliksik ay iniaalay ko sa lahat ng mga gurong Pilipino na nagtuturo sa Estados Unidos. Ang pagiisantabi ninyo ng lahat ng inyong mga nakagisnan para lamang samantalain ang pagkakataong matupad ang isang pangarap ay tunay na marangal at kahanga-hanga. Ang pananaliksik na ito ay isang paglalahad ng inyong karanasan - isang pahayag ng mga biyayang inyong natamasa kapalit ng lahat ng inyong pagsisikap, at sagisag ng ipinamalas ninyong katatagan, . Higit pa sa dulot nitong kamalayan, isa rin itong malawig na katibayan ng inyong pagmamalasakit, ambag, at adhikain para sa larangan ng pagtuturo ng mga natatanging kabataan. Isang napakalaking karangalan ang pagpapaunlak at pagpapaubaya ninyo na isalaysay ko ang inyong kuwento. Hiraya manawari at nawa'y, lalo pa kayong pagpalain ng Poong Maykapal!

(I dedicate the fruits of my research to all Filipino special education teachers who teach in the United States. Your selflessness to set aside your own comfort to seize an opportunity to fulfill a dream is truly honorable and admirable. This study is a testament to your experiences - a statement of the blessings you have reaped in exchange for your hard work and a symbol of your resilience. Beyond merely bringing forth an awareness of your experiences, this resulting dissertation also serves as evidence of your commitment, contribution, and aspirations for educating students with disabilities. What an honor and privilege that you allowed me to tell your story. May the wishes of your heart be granted and I pray that God's favor be with you always!)

“That you are here- that life exists and identity,

That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.”

Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass

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“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” - Romans 8:28

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List of Abbreviations

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC)

Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO)

Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID 19)

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Full-time Employed (FTE)

Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT)

Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRC)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Mild to Moderate Disabilities (Mild-Mod)

Moderate to Severe Disabilities (Mod-Sev)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

National Education Association (NEA)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW)

Resource Specialist Program (RSP)

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

Special Day Class (SDC)

Special Education (SPED)

Teacher Exchange Program (TEP)

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Teacher shortages, estimated at 64,000 in the 2015-2016 school year, nearly doubled by the 2017-2018 school year, reaching 112,000 teachers. While 80% of states report staffing challenges for subjects such as math and science, data shows shortages are particularly acute in special education, where teacher insufficiencies were reported in 48 of 50 states (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Sutchter et al., 2019; US Department of Education, 2022). In 2022, 44% of school districts across the country reported vacancies, suggesting that every year, the insufficiencies in teacher supply continue to be a problem that school districts need to contend with. Federal, state, and local district-level initiatives have been implemented to address teacher shortages. However, despite these efforts, instability in special education staffing continues to pervade the field (Carver-Thomas et al., 2022; Darling-Hammond et al., 2018; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; NCES, 2022e). Some school districts resort to recruiting teachers beyond national borders to fill special education vacancies, more specifically, finding a solution to their human capital supply challenges via the U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange Program (Brown & Stevick, 2014; Seah, 2018). This study specifically explores the lived experiences of Filipino special education exchange teachers in California. This chapter begins with background information that contextualizes the research problem and purpose that framed the questions the study intended to answer. Furthermore, the empirical, theoretical, and practical significance of the study is also presented, then the chapter concludes with a definition of relevant terms and abbreviations.

Background

It is estimated that 47 million students will be enrolled in United States schools by 2030

(NCES, 2022d), but with data trends regarding the local teacher supply continuing to lag behind the projected need for future teachers, alongside this is a prediction that teacher shortages are going to be a persisting problem that school districts will need to contend with (Carver-Thomas et al., 2022; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; NCES, 2022e; Nguyen et al., 2022; Sutchter et al., 2019; US Department of Education, 2022). This being stated, the background of this study is described in this section through the presentation of the historical, social, and theoretical context regarding teacher shortages, their impact, and the exchange program being utilized as a resource for teachers

Historical Context

Studies suggest that special education has shown perennial shortages since the 1960s, while in general, inadequacies in teacher supply are reported to date back to the mid-1930s. Longitudinal studies on teacher supply shortages suggest that upticks in teacher demand have occurred in waves throughout the years (Crockett et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Sutchter et al., 2019). One such wave was the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001, which prompted greater accountability for states to improve student achievement and thus included a requirement for school districts to hire teachers that meet the criteria as Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT), shortly after, when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized in 2004, the HQT requirement was reinforced in the field of special education, necessitating districts to hire special education teachers that possess a special education certificate or license, in addition to earning a bachelor's degree and demonstrating subject-matter competency (Brown & Stevick, 2014; Mason-Williams et al., 2018; Myers et al., 2020; Sindelar et al., 2018). Already faced with an inadequate supply of special education teachers, the HQT mandate prompted the recruitment of teachers from outside

of the country, and with many school districts finding it more accessible to fill their critical vacancies and certifying overseas trained teachers as highly qualified than finding local teachers who meet the criteria, studies suggest that this period was the actual start of a significant global teacher labor market in the United States (Beesley et al., 2019; Brown & Stevick, 2014).

The overseas recruitment of teachers was initially intended to serve as a short-term solution until an adequate American teacher supply is rebuilt. However, successive waves of shortages have hindered efforts to rebuild the teacher workforce. For example, the Great Recession in the first decade of the new millennium led to deep cuts in the education budget. Consequently, these budget cuts made the teaching profession unattractive to many and even contributed to the already high attrition and turnover rates in the field (Benson & Brown, 2022; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019). More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic initiated another wave that further exacerbated the already compromised supply of the teacher workforce, where, due to the challenging working conditions that permeated at that time, an increase in teacher resignations, retirements, and vacancies were reported. In 2022, it was reported that 44% of public schools nationwide have full- or part-time teaching vacancies (Benson & Brown, 2022; California Teachers Association, 2022; Carver-Thomas et al., 2022; NCES, 2022e . With the field of special education already experiencing staffing challenges in pre-pandemic times, districts continue to turn to overseas hiring as a solution to meet their staffing needs (Craft, 2018; Holt, 2022; Lee, 2021; Longhi, 2022; Tadayon, 2022; Yan et al., 2019; H. Yang, 2022).

On a national scale, overseas-trained teachers represent a small portion of the teacher workforce. Still, they comprise a significant percentage of the local teacher labor market in rural and urban schools that serve a high rate of students from socio-economically disadvantaged and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2020). To fill the staffing needs in the critical shortage areas, overseas-trained teachers enter the country through temporary visa classifications such as the H1B or the J1. The U.S. government issues H1B visas

through the Department of Labor to temporarily employ workers in specialty occupation categories. In contrast, J1 visas are issued through the U.S. Department of State for cultural exchange purposes. With H1B visas being subject to stricter labor conditions, the J1 visitor exchange visa route provides more convenience for school districts to hire the number of teachers they need and get them into the country by the beginning of the school year (Terry, 2018). Since its establishment in the 1960s, the teacher exchange program has been a venue for foreign teachers to come to the United States to learn about American culture and the education system, and according to records maintained by the U.S. Department of State, around 23,000 exchange teachers have entered the country between 2016 to 2022, with North Carolina, Texas, California, South Carolina, and Arizona, topping the list of states that welcomed foreign teachers through exchange program routes within that period. Despite these numbers, however, studies regarding exchange teachers in the US are rare (Brown & Stevick, 2014; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2020; Terry, 2018; US Department of State, 2011; 2022).

Social Context

The rising demand for special education teachers is related to the increasing number of students eligible for special education services (Ondrasek et al., 2020; Sutchter et al., 2019). In the last decade, from the 2009–2010 to 2020–2021 school years, the number of students with disabilities needing special education services under IDEA increased from 6.5 million to 7.2 million, accounting for 15% of the total public school enrollment nationwide (NCES, 2022c). However, as the prevalence of students with disabilities increases, data trends related to building a future teacher supply suggest that program enrollment and program completion rates have been steadily declining in the last decade (Burstein et al., 2023; Peyton et al., 2021). Furthermore, an analysis of nationwide teacher shortage data also indicates that while states experience shortages

at varying degrees, issues on equity appear to exist since the data also suggests that shortages are more apparent in states that are substantially more diverse and have a higher population of students from low socio-economic backgrounds (Bettini et al., 2022; Burstein et al., 2023; NCES, 2022e; Peyton et al., 2021). To address teacher shortages, federal, state, and local district-level initiatives have been implemented, e.g., federal teacher loan forgiveness programs, alternate routes to certification, teacher education grants and scholarships, competitive wages, bonuses, and increased support (California Department of Education, 2022b; Carver-Thomas et al., 2022; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019). Despite these efforts, an instability in special education staffing continues to pervade the field, leaving many special education teacher positions vacant, if not filled by underprepared staff during the course of the school year, which compromises the provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), undermines the promise of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and consequently disadvantages the most vulnerable of student subgroups (California Department of Education, 2022b; Carver-Thomas et al., 2022; Crockett et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Mason-Williams et al., 2020; NCES, 2022b; Ondrasek et al., 2020; Peyton et al., 2021; Sutchter et al., 2019; US Department of Education, 2024; Will, 2022; Wong, 2019).

Theoretical Context

Since the enactment of the Mutual and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act, the U.S. Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program has aimed to promote mutual understanding between Americans and people worldwide. In advancing this mission, exchange opportunities are extended to foreign visitors in various categories, such as Au Pairs, Camp Counselors, College and University Students, Government Visitors, Interns, International Visitors, Physicians, Professors, Research Scholars, Secondary School Students,

Short-Term Scholars, Specialists, Summer Work Travel, Trainees, STEM Initiatives, and Teachers. With a focus on cultural exchanges via education, the teacher exchange category provides foreign teachers opportunities to participate in professional learning to sharpen their pedagogical knowledge and skills through work-based teaching opportunities in elementary and secondary schools across the United States (Department for Professional Employees, 2021b; US Department of State, 2021a; 2021b). Research on the overseas training experiences of foreign teachers in the United States, including that of exchange teachers, is sparse. However, in the few studies conducted on teacher exchanges in the United States and other countries, results point to the transformative potential and influence of the international teaching experience on foreign teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills (Brown & Stevick, 2014; Celik, 2017; Kaçar, 2021; Liu et al., 2019; Peng et al., 2023; Rapoport, 2008; Serin 2017; Shi & Jain, 2021; Velasquez-Hoyos & Martinez-Burgos, 2023; Whewell et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2020; Yuan & Huang, 2019; Zhang, 2019; Zhou et al., 2022). Thus, in referencing human capital theory as the theoretical framework that guided the focus of this research, results of teacher exchange program studies support how cross-cultural exchanges enhance a participating teacher's human capital.

Problem Statement

The problem is that data trends on teacher labor market shortages in critical subject areas, which includes special education, are predicted to continue and rise to 2025 (Sutcher et al., 2019). Faced with the ongoing teacher supply challenges, districts have expanded their recruitment efforts by outsourcing teachers beyond national borders to meet their present and urgent need for teachers (Brown & Stevick, 2014; Caravatti, 2015). A decade ago, it was reported that an estimated 15,000 foreign teachers were employed in U.S. schools, and five years later, these numbers have exponentially increased to approximately 90,000 foreign teachers from

various countries. Many foreign teachers enter the country through temporary visa routes, which include the J1 cultural exchange visa obtained via the U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange program (US Department of State, 2021a; 2021b). According to data maintained by the U.S. Department of State, between 2016 and 2022, an annual average of 3300 exchange teachers from countries worldwide were placed in schools across 50 states, including the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands. In the list of sending countries, the Philippines has consistently been among the top three countries of origin for exchange teachers since 2016 (Caravatti, 2015; US Department of State, 2022). However, while subject or specialization areas are not included in the U.S. Department of State reports, news from agencies and online articles indicate that J1 Filipino teachers fill many critical need positions. i.e., science, math, and special education in urban and rural school districts nationwide (Brown & Stevick, 2014; Caravatti, 2015; Khmara, 2019; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2020; Terry, 2018).

The program's main objective is to offer visiting teachers a chance to engage in cross-cultural exchanges and gain practical training while teaching in American schools for a short period (Department of Professional Employees, 2021b; Esquilona, 2022; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2020; Terry, 2018). Thus, the overseas recruitment of teachers through exchange programs was not explicitly designed to address the long-standing teacher shortage problem. However, the influx of exchange teachers suggests that the program has become a temporary solution for some states and school districts to address their staffing needs until a sufficient teacher supply is established to meet their teacher demand (Ball & Lynn, 2019; Brown & Stevick, 2014; Critchfield & Donovan, 2020; Cournoyer, 2017; Craft, 2018; Esquilona, 2022; Heubeck, 2022; Holt, 2022; Lee, 2021; Longhi, 2022; Matthews, 2021; Moolten, 2022; Phu & Beacon, 2022; Rankin, 2023; Yan et al., 2019; H. Yang, 2022). Despite the presence of exchange program

teachers in schools and the influx of Filipino teachers across the United States, studies conducted on teacher exchange programs and the experiences of exchange teachers are few. Even more silent in the review of the literature is the experiential gains of Filipino special education exchange teachers. In the studies on Filipino exchange teachers, and even foreign Filipino teachers in general, the focus has predominantly been on their motivations to seek overseas labor opportunities and their cultural transition challenges. While this research addresses that gap in the literature, an exploration into the professional learning outcomes of program participants in the US is much more warranted given the objectives of the teacher exchange program (Balgoa, 2019; Chua, 2021; Mizzi, 2017; Modesto, 2020; Reyes et al., 2020; Yeo & Yoo, 2019).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to uncover the human capital gains that were acquired by Filipino special education teachers in California as a result of their participation in the U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange program. At this stage in the research, the teacher exchange program is generally defined as opportunities for foreign teachers to teach in schools in the United States to increase their knowledge of the American educational system, sharpen their professional skills, and participate in cross-cultural activities in schools and communities (US Department of State, 2021). Aligned with the objective of the teacher exchange program, the theory that guided this study is Gary Becker's human capital theory as it highlights the central role that education plays in developing human capital (Becker, 1962; Deming, 2022; Ehrlich & Pei, 2020). Thus stated, this study intended to identify the perceived gains in knowledge, skills, and competencies of Filipino special education teachers through their participation in international on-the-job training experiences in the United States (Becker, 1962; Cegolon, 2022; Celik, 2017; Christ, 2020; Paine, 2019; Serin, 2017).

Significance of the Study

Studies on special education teacher shortages have been analyzed based on data related to teacher supply and demand. While measures aimed at building a future workforce in special education have been implemented, these strategies appear only to be somewhat successful, as data on teacher vacancies suggest that the nationwide supply continues to be inadequate (Mason-Williams et al., 2019; Peyton et al., 2020; Sutchter et al., 2019). Books, journals, news agencies, and online articles report that hiring teachers via teacher exchange program routes has been one of the ways that many states, such as Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Georgia, New Jersey, North Carolina, Maryland, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah, are filling their high staffing need areas, with the Philippines cited as a primary source for exchange teachers (Ball & Lynn, 2019; Brown & Stevick, 2014; Critchfield & Donovan, 2020; Esquilona, 2022; Heubeck, 2022; Holt, 2022; Khmara, 2019; Lee, 2021; Longhi, 2022; Matthews, 2021; Moolten, 2022; Rankin, 2023; Yan et al., 2019; H. Yang, 2022). As such, in seeking to explore the lived experiences of Filipino special education teachers as participants in the U.S. Department of State's teacher exchange program, the significance of this research can be viewed from the following empirical, theoretical, and practical perspectives.

Empirical Significance

In 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022, the Philippines was ranked number one among countries that have teachers come to the United States as exchange teachers (US Department of State, 2022). While there is currently no formal data available that provides information regarding the specialization or subject area that is filled by exchange teachers, reports from news agencies and online news articles have indicated that exchange teachers fill positions that experience the most

significant shortages, namely, science, math, and special education (Craft, 2018; Holt, 2022; Khmara, 2019; Lee, 2021; Longhi, 2022; Tadayon, 2022; Yan et al, 2019; H. Yang, 2022). However, other than knowing that teachers from the Philippines are filling high-demand and high-turnover positions, studies that pertain to the Filipino teacher workforce in the United States are rare. While this study can contribute to extant research on special education teacher shortages, its empirical significance lends itself more to filling a gap in the literature by giving voice and representation to the Filipino subgroup of the teacher workforce in the United States and, more specifically, provide insights on the exchange program outcomes from the perspective of participating Filipino exchange teachers.

Theoretical Significance

The U.S. Department of State's teacher exchange program was established to improve and strengthen U.S. international relations by fostering mutual understanding between Americans and people worldwide through education and cultural exchange (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2024; Department of Professional Employees, 2021b; US Department of State 2016; 2021a). Teacher exchange programs are an opportunity to build and prepare a local teacher workforce that keeps pace with the thrust for globalization, paving the way for a nationwide reshaping of how we think, talk, and do education (Brown & Stevick, 2014; Celik, 2017; Paine, 2019). In referencing this narrative, exchange programs provide non-U.S. citizen teachers opportunities to train and work overseas to support a global initiative of education reform via an alignment of educational systems worldwide with what is seen globally as best practice (Celik, 2017; Paine, 2019; Serin 2017). As such, this research intended to provide insight into the exchanges in capital, i.e., as the foreign teachers invest their overseas acquired training in the host schools, they gain awareness of the U.S. educational system and concurrently

enhance their professional skills and knowledge (Bhugra et al., 2021; Ospina & Medina, 2020; Paine, 2019; US Department of State, 2021b). Derived from Becker's human capital theory, the theoretical significance of this research was focused on providing insight into the human capital gains of-Filipino special education exchange teachers, where human capital is defined as the embodied knowledge, skills, and competencies possessed by individuals (Becker, 1962; Kuzminov et al., 2019).

Practical Significance

There have been reports that many districts have utilized the teacher exchange program as a solution to meet their human capital supply challenges, especially in special education (Caravatti, 2015; Terry, 2018). However, while the U.S. Department of State guidelines require that school districts hire J1 teachers to provide them with experiences that align with the exchange program goals (Terry, 2018), studies that seek to uncover such are lacking. Thus, this study can provide school districts in the United States a better understanding of the intentions of the teacher exchange program so they could make better decisions on not only utilizing it as an alternative resource to meet the special education staffing needs but also assisting in designing professional learning opportunities that build the efficacy of their exchange teachers, and create workplaces that support the cultural exchange aspect. More importantly, the results of this phenomenological study can also have practical applications that can play a pivotal role in improving the overall provision of special education services in the Philippine context, which ultimately benefits Filipino students with disabilities (Gita-Carlos, 2022; Magsambol, 2022; A. Yang, 2022).

Research Questions

Through the work-based opportunities afforded by the exchange teacher program, foreign teachers get to learn about educational practices outside of the context of what has been familiar to them in their home country. In return, the participating teachers are provided an opportunity to enhance their cultural awareness and skill set when they return to their home country at the conclusion of the exchange program (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2024; US Department of State, 2021b). In seeking to understand the experience of the Filipino subgroup among special education teachers in the United States, the following research questions were developed to guide the exploration of their unique experience as participants in the teacher exchange program (also see Appendix D).

Central Research Question

What do Filipino special education teachers perceive as benefits of participating in the exchange program?

A touted benefit of the exchange program is that through participation in cross-cultural activities in international schools and communities, program participants can sharpen their professional skills so that after the exchange, participating teachers can share their experience and increased knowledge of the United States and its educational system (US Department of State, 2021). Thus, this central question aimed to illuminate the gains acquired by Filipino special education teachers via their participation in the teacher exchange program.

Sub-Question One

What opportunities do Filipino special education exchange teachers perceive were provided that allowed them to share their teaching practices and culture?

Exchange Program teachers are foreign teachers who are granted access to enter the United States for cultural exchange. With this in mind, sub-question one sought to uncover opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges provided to Filipino special education exchange teachers by their host school or district (Brown & Stevick, 2014; Terry, 2018; US Department of State, 2021b).

Sub-Question Two

What types of support do Filipino special education exchange teachers perceive has helped them adjust and build their efficacy in teaching American students with disabilities?

In addition to cross-cultural exchanges, teacher exchange programs also provide foreign teachers with opportunities to further their education and training through temporary teaching experiences in U.S. schools. Thus, in alignment with this aspect of the teacher exchange program, this question sought to uncover whether districts provided their special education exchange teachers from the Philippines with professional development opportunities that supported their assimilation to teach in American schools and build their human capital as special education service providers for the organization (Maravillas, 2020; Yan, 2021).

Sub-Question Three

What special education practices do Filipino special education exchange teachers intend to implement upon their return to support students with disabilities in their home country?

One of the ways that guest workers enter the United States is through nonimmigrant visas such as the J1 cultural exchange program visa. J1 visas allow international students, researchers, teachers, and other professionals to participate in further education and/or training in the U.S. while they work for a short time (Esquilona, 2022; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2020; Terry, 2018). The duration of participation in the teacher exchange program can range from one to three years, with

an option to extend participation for a fourth or fifth year. At the end of the program, participating teachers are subject to a two-year physical presence requirement in their home country (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2024; US Department of State, 2011; 2016; 2021b). Since special education teachers are part of the category of workers with specialized knowledge and skills deemed as necessary human capital in the Philippines, most Filipino special education teachers are required to fulfill this requirement (Esquilona, 2022; Terry, 2018; US Department of State, 2009a; 2009b). Thus stated, the human capital gains acquired by the Filipino special education exchange teachers in the United States are critical in shedding light on fulfilling this responsibility to reinvest their increased knowledge of the U.S. educational system back into the Philippine setting. For this reason, sub-question three intended to uncover which practices Filipino special education exchange teachers gained can be implemented upon their return to their home country.

Definitions

The terms and definitions listed below are pertinent to this proposed study.

1. *Exchange Teacher*: A teacher who is participating in the U.S. Department of State's exchange visitor program for the purpose of cross-cultural exchanges (US Department of State, 2021a; 2021b).
2. *Filipino Teacher*: Teachers who were born and received their higher education and initial teacher certification in the Philippines (Maravillas, 2020).
3. *Human Capital*: The embodied knowledge, skills, and competencies possessed by individuals, which can be used as an agent that can create income and other valuable benefits for the person himself, their employer, and/or their community (Becker, 1962; Kuzminov et al., 2019).

4. *J1 Visa*: A non-immigrant visa issued to foreign nationals for cultural exchange. J1 visas grant foreign students, researchers, teachers, and other professionals, entry into the United States to access opportunities to participate in further education and training (Esquilona, 2022; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2020; Terry, 2018).
5. *Special Education Teachers*: Teachers who are knowledgeable about curriculum and are specially trained in identifying and implementing research-based alternative intervention techniques that meet the unique learning and behavior needs of students with disabilities, and facilitate their equitable access to learning (O'Brien & Beattie, 2019).
6. *Special Education Teacher Shortage*: The insufficient supply of teachers in the field of special education, which includes inadequacies in the workforce as indicated by high attrition rates among special education teachers (Peyton et al., 2021)
7. *Teacher Exchange Program*: The teacher exchange program is generally defined as opportunities for foreign teachers to teach in schools in the United States to increase their knowledge and experience of the U.S. educational system and sharpen their professional skills through participation in cross-cultural activities in American schools and communities (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2024; US Department of State, 2021).
8. *Teacher Shortage*: The insufficient number of teachers who are qualified and willing to provide their services, which results in discrepancies in teacher supply and demand, i.e., the number of teachers available versus the number of teachers needed (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Sutchter et al., 2019).
9. *Teacher Workforce Instability*: Teacher workforce instability is characterized by factors related to teacher turnover, i.e., the cycle of hiring to staff vacancies and attrition, or what

is the rate of teachers leaving the profession either through retirement or choice (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Sutcher et al., 2019).

Summary

The problem is that special education teacher shortages are a persisting problem that impacts school districts nationwide, and while strategies aimed at attracting, retaining, and building a future workforce in special education have been implemented, the local teacher supply continues to lag behind the demand (Carver-Thomas, 2022; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Peyton, et.al., 2020). To staff teacher vacancies, news agencies and online articles have reported that many school districts have expanded their recruitment efforts across national borders, hiring foreign teachers via teacher exchange program routes (Ball & Lynn, 2019; Cournoyer, 2017; Craft, 2018; Critchfield & Donovan, 2019; Esquilona, 2022; Heubeck, 2022; Holt, 2022; Khmara, 2019; Lee, 2021; Longhi, 2022; Matthews, 2021; Moolten, 2022; Phu, 2022; Rankin, 2023; Tadayon, 2022; Yan et al, 2019; H. Yang, 2022). Managed by the U.S. Department of State, teacher exchange programs provide non-U.S. citizen teachers temporary legal access to be in the U.S. to participate in cross-cultural activities and work-based training, and from this experience, exchange participants are provided the opportunity to enhance their cultural awareness and skill set as teachers when they return to their home country after their program participation (Terry 2018; US Department of State, 2021a; 2021b). In reviewing information regarding predominant countries of origin for exchange program teachers, it was reported that, from 2016 to 2022, the Philippines was among the top sending countries for J1 visa exchange teachers, providing visibility and representation of the Filipino minority as part of the teaching staff in several schools across the country, and inadvertently contributing to the growing diaspora of Filipinos in the U.S (US Department of State, 2022). Despite the influx of Filipino

exchange teachers in the last decade, the numbers tell us little about their exchange teaching experience in U.S. schools. Thus, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain insight into the experiential gains of Filipino special education exchange teachers in California, specifically highlighting the human capital gains they had acquired as a result of their participation in the U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange Program.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Overseas recruitment of exchange teachers has been a strategy used by several school districts and states to meet their need for teachers, especially for subjects such as math, science, and special education. According to data from the U.S. Department of State, 6,700 Filipino teachers entered the United States through the teacher exchange program between 2016 and 2022 (US Department of State, 2022). However, while Filipino teachers have been present in many classrooms nationwide (Ball & Lynn, 2019; Cournoyer, 2017; Craft, 2018; Esquilona, 2022; Heubeck, 2022; Holt, 2022; Lee, 2021; Matthews, 2021; Moolten, 2022; Phu, 2022; Rankin, 2023; Tadayon, 2022; Terry, 2018; Yan et al., 2019; H. Yang, 2022), their experiences are only marginally represented in literature. This study intended to examine the lived experiences of Filipino special education exchange teachers working in California to fill this gap in the existing literature. A systematic review of the literature related to this topic of study was conducted. In the theoretical framework section, assumptions from human capital theory are presented to provide context regarding the focus of the research. This section is followed by a review of recent literature regarding the nationwide teacher shortages, the teacher exchange program, the Filipino diaspora of immigrant workers, and the context of special education in the Philippines.

Theoretical Framework

Gaining a better understanding of the lived experience of Filipino special education exchange teachers is the central topic that was explored for this research. This research followed a phenomenological research design to understand the participants' perspectives regarding their experience. The phenomenological approach allows for gaining a better understanding of the experience of a phenomenon through participant accounts or stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

With this stated, it was assumed that the phenomenological research process would assist with finding the answer to the central question: *What do Filipino special education teachers perceive as benefits of participating in the exchange program?* Furthermore, given that theoretical frameworks influence a researcher's focus of study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Collins & Stockton, 2018), human capital theory was referenced as the framework that guided the focus, design, and assumptions for this qualitative research that aimed to uncover the experiential gains by Filipino special education teachers as a result of their participation in the teacher exchange program.

Human Capital Theory

Capital is the sum total of an individual's assets, i.e., financial, personal values, and/or goods (Bhugra et al., 2021). It is "any form of accumulated wealth that allows for a surplus to be obtained, or in any case, such as to promise an enjoyment, a profit, [or] the means helping to produce more and better" (Cegolon, 2022, p. 65). By this definition, capital is typically understood as any asset that can provide a net gain. As such, it reinforces a tendency to view capital as something tangible, e.g., physical or financial assets, that can be exchanged to yield income (Cegolon, 2022; Ehrlich & Pei, 2020). However, it was argued by economist Gary Becker (1962) that within the economic system, the embodied knowledge, skills, and competencies possessed by individuals, i.e., human capital, can also be used as an agent that can create income and other useful benefits for the person himself, their employer, and/or their community (Becker, 1962; Kuzminov et al., 2019). It posits that capital includes more than just physical or financial assets and asserts that as an enterprise, humans can provide their personal resources for a gain, e.g., their time, skills, labor, or service, as goods for the organization in exchange for wages (Becker, 1962; Deming, 2022; Ehrlich & Pei, 2020). It also suggests that, whereas physical assets or resources are tangible, human capital is an inherent observable quality. Therefore,

human capital cannot be separated from the individual. This intrinsic nature of human capital as an economic entity means that, while it cannot be sold for a gain as a personal asset, it is portable, transferable, and can be developed through an investment in one's learning, i.e., through acquiring information, schooling or on-the-job training (Becker, 1962; Deming, 2022; Ehrlich & Pei, 2020). Human capital gains offered through schooling involve a cost or utilization of resources, e.g., time, money, and/or personal effort. In contrast, while involving the same cost, an individual can access on-the-job training through opportunities extended by an employer to teach, coach, share information and/or provide resources. Since the investment in human capital comes with a cost, this theory assumes that one's personal motivation to invest in developing oneself as capital is more predicated on personal utility rather than productivity (Becker, 1962; Ehrlich & Pei, 2020). Given this perspective, the pull for foreign workers to seek overseas working opportunities illustrates an investment to improve one's capacity, i.e., human capital assets, that is motivated by the potential advancement of personal interests, better prospects for wages, more opportunities for employment, career advancement, and/or the probability of higher future earnings (Becker, 1962; Deming, 2022; Ehrlich & Pei, 2020; Wright & Constantin, 2021). When juxtaposed with the push for school districts in the United States, as well as in other countries in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, to hire teachers from overseas as a response to the human capital supply challenges in the needed qualifications, skills and experience required to perform the job of teaching, the international mobility of teachers, has consequently increased (Caravatti, 2015; Janusch, 2015; Koster & Benda, 2020; Wright & Constantin, 2021).

Related Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to provide an analysis and synthesis of research relevant to the topic of Filipino immigrant workers in the United States, develop a solid

understanding of the teacher exchange program, and determine where gaps exist in the literature as it pertains to the recruitment of foreign teachers to fill critical shortages in the field of special education. Though much research has been conducted on teacher shortages, literature on foreign teachers in the United States, specifically Filipino teachers, is scant or outdated. Additionally, in the limited studies available that are specific to exchange teachers, the focus has predominantly been on the foreign teachers' motivations to seek overseas labor opportunities, pre-departure preparations, cultural adjustment, transition challenges, and/or assimilation experience (Chua, 2021; Mizzi, 2017; Modesto, 2020; Reyes et al., 2020). To fill this gap in the literature, this literature review sets the context for this study by providing a synthesis of related topics regarding the teacher shortages, foreign-born teachers in the United States, and how the U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange Program has been a panacea to address the teacher shortage in several states, to gain perspective on the Filipino minority as a teacher in the United States.

Nationwide Teacher Shortage

Teacher shortage is defined as the insufficient number of qualified teachers willing to provide their services, which causes an imbalance between the need for and availability of qualified teachers (Nguyen et al., 2022; US Department of Education, 2022). In the 2012-2013 school year, reports indicated a shortage of 20,000 teachers, which tripled to 64,000 in the 2015-2016 school year, increased to 110,000 teachers in the 2017-2018 school year, and is predicted to reach 200,000 by the 2025-2026 school year. These numbers were corroborated by a report made by the National Education Association (NEA), where the reported ratio of hires versus vacancies illustrates how teacher job vacancies have outpaced teacher recruitment in the last five years, i.e., in 2017, the ratio of hires versus openings was specified to be below one, or 0.98 hires for every

one vacancy, and dropped further to a ratio 0.55 hires for every one opening in 2022 (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Pelika, 2022). Furthermore, according to the U.S. Department of Education, 41 states nationwide, including Washington D.C., report shortages. In a 2022 press release from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 44% of public schools across the United States continue to report teacher vacancies, highlighting that the teacher shortage has been an ongoing problem that several states have had to contend with as they usher in each school year (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; NCES, 2022b; Nguyen et al., 2022; Sutchter et al., 2019; US Department of Education, 2022). Studies conducted on national teacher shortages have been analyzed to understand the gravity of the issue. These studies carried out this analysis by looking at labor market trends, particularly examining the supply and demand of teachers, i.e., having a sufficient number of adequate teachers to meet the demand brought by the increasing population of school-aged students. These labor market trends are analyzed alongside data and factors that influence teacher turnover and attrition, as well as subject areas that are severely impacted by disparities in teacher supply and demand (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; NCES, 2022b; Nguyen et al., 2022; Pelika, 2022; Sutchter et al., 2019; Will, 2022; Wong, 2019).

Teacher Demand

Teacher demand is described as the number of teachers needed to fill vacancies or the total number of full-time employed (FTE) teachers required as dictated by student-teacher ratios and student enrollment (Sutchter et al., 2019). Annual student enrollment projections are related to school-age population increases, and according to an analysis of census data conducted by the NCES, an estimated 47 million students will be enrolled across schools in the United States by 2030. With the expectation of a steady increase in the population of school-aged children over the next decade, data trends on teacher demand are also forecasted to continue to rise, projecting

a nationwide need of 200,000 teachers by 2025 (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; NCES, 2022e). However, it is important to note that making accurate projections of the actual teacher demand has been a challenge for many researchers since there are no standard criteria for what qualifies as a shortage (Nguyen et al., 2022). In reporting shortages, many states consider quantity-related factors or identify shortages based on the number of vacancies that must be filled to meet the demand. In contrast, others would include in their reporting a count for the number of classes over class-size limits because of an unfilled vacancy, the number of positions filled with substitutes, or those inappropriately credentialed. As such, teacher shortage projections were inconsistent with the numbers specified in a 2022 study conducted by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University, where a conservative nationwide estimate of 36,000 vacancies to a high estimate of 52,800 unfilled teacher positions have been reported. Since not all states define their teacher shortages the same way, the researchers at Brown University do not make claims that the numbers they have reported are illustrative of the entire magnitude of the nationwide teacher shortage, and in addition, argued that quality-related factors also be included in the reporting of data to better determine the degree and context that states across the country are experiencing shortages (Nguyen et al., 2022).

Teacher Supply

Teacher supply is the number of certified teachers willing to teach. To meet the growing demand for future teachers, studies on teacher shortages have examined data related to the teacher supply pipeline, i.e., new teacher supply (Sutcher et al., 2019). Reports indicate that teacher enrollment rates have been steadily declining in the last decade and that between 2009 and 2014, there was a 35% decrease in teacher program enrollment. These percentages were validated by a report released by the NEA, which stated that from the 2008-2009 school year to

the 2011-2012 school year, enrollment in teacher programs averaged around 660,000 students. However, from the 2012-13 to 2019-2020 school years, the average enrollment declined to about 430,000 aspiring teachers (Pelika, 2022). Moreover, according to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, one out of five institutions reported an 11% decline in enrollment (Benson & Brown, 2022; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Mason-Williams et al., 2020; Peyton et al., 2021; Sutchter et al., 2019; Will, 2022). To further understand teacher supply, program completion rates are another factor to consider. According to studies, discrepancies are not only reserved for the number of teacher program enrollees since a decline in program completion rates was also noted to coexist with declining enrollment. To illustrate, the NEA reported an average of 210,000 students completing the teacher program between the 2008-2009 and 2011–2012 school years. However, between the school years of 2013-2014 to 2019-2020, the number of students completing the program averaged 160,000, which translates to a 23% average decline in completion rates out of the total enrollment of students between 2009 and 2014 (Benson & Brown, 2022; Pelika, 2022; Sutchter et al., 2019; Will, 2022).

Amidst declining enrollment and completion rates, there is projected to be a supply of 100,000 teachers in 2024. However, it is unlikely that the teacher supply will be sufficient to meet the need for teachers since labor market trends project a demand for approximately 200,000 new teachers nationwide by 2025 (Garcia & Weiss, 2025). Faced with the dwindling supply of teachers, many school districts resorted to filling their vacancies with teachers who are not fully certified. According to reviews on teacher workforce data, of the teachers placed in positions to teach in classrooms for the 2017 to 2018 school year, approximately 100,000 teachers were not appropriately credentialed. Five years later, according to the 2022 study conducted at Brown University, approximately 163,000 teachers fill positions that they are not qualified for (Crockett

et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2022; Sutchter et al., 2019). This imbalance in the teacher labor market supply has posed a concern for teacher quality since school districts are required to staff each classroom with appropriately credentialed teachers and may only hire candidates with an intern credential or emergency permit if there are no other candidates that meet requirements (Myers et al., 2020).

Teacher Turnover and Attrition

Another factor that districts need to contend with when attempting to fill their teacher vacancies is teacher turnover and attrition (Sutchter et al., 2020). With the continuous cycle of staffing teacher vacancies due to staff leaving to work in other districts, studies suggest that working conditions, concerns about pay, high stress, a lack of support, and dwindling resources to address student needs have led to the unrest and increasing teacher turnover rates in schools (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Ondrasek et al., 2020; Will, 2022). While teacher shortages vary by location and subject area, studies have also suggested that school districts, both rural and urban, with a high number of low socio-economic and/or minority students, typically have fewer resources to address their growing population of students. These school districts have been reported to have higher teacher turnover rates and vacancies (Burstein et al., 2023; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Sutchter et al., 2019).

Attrition is described as teachers leaving the profession, which can be analyzed into two categories: retirement and pre-retirement (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). According to studies, attrition by retirement has been at a steady rate of 8%. However, while this rate has been consistent in the last decade, the demand for qualified teachers is still expected to increase since, as in-service teachers are aging closer to retirement each year, the teacher pipeline is producing a declining supply of a younger teacher workforce (Sutchter et al., 2019). The second category of teacher

attrition, pre-retirement, is that of teachers leaving the profession by choice, which can either be influenced by non-teaching related factors, such as medical-related or maternity leaves, or teaching-related, i.e., low pay, stressful working conditions, or lack of support, which leads to feelings of burn-out. With the teacher workforce composed predominantly of women, i.e., pegged at 76% in the 2017-2018 school year, attrition by choice that is influenced by non-teaching related factors may be temporary or long-term. e.g., maternity leaves, baby bonding leaves, or to become stay-at-home parents (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; NCES, 2022a; Wong, 2019).

Teacher attrition by choice, influenced by teaching-related factors, is estimated to contribute to shortages that can amount to 100,000 teachers annually. Citing low levels of job satisfaction as the number one reason for leaving, a 2022 survey conducted by the California Teachers Association reported that four out of ten teachers are considering leaving the profession, while one out of five have thought of leaving within the next three years. As teacher dissatisfaction rates increase, a dormant supply pool of teachers, male or female, who have left the profession to pursue a whole different career post-teaching appears to also be on the rise (California Teachers Association, 2022; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Will, 2022).

Teacher Shortage in Specific Subject Areas

According to 2017 data compiled by the U.S. Department of Education Office, 80% of United States report teacher shortages in specific subject areas, with science and math being the most impacted subject areas, while special education was reported to experience the most severe shortage (US Department of Education, 2022). This report is consistent with another survey conducted in the same year on 200 school districts across the country, which reported a total teacher staffing shortage of 75%. Of the reported shortages, 60% were in science and math,

while 90% of shortages were in special education (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Sutcher et al., 2019). The data analysis from 2005 to 2017 not only consistently showed continued shortages in science, math, and special education, but it also shows trends that the shortages are predicted to continue and rise to 2025. Furthermore, studies on understanding factors that contribute to the demand for science and math teachers point to programmatic needs that were influenced by the raising of high school standards, whereas the increasing number of students eligible for special education services, which causes an expansion of services, as contributing to the need for more special education teachers (Sutcher et al., 2019).

The Special Education Teacher Shortage

Students with disabilities average about 15% of the total public school enrollment nationwide, and in school year 2020 to 2021, this percentage amounted to a reported 7.2 million students with disabilities needing special education services under IDEA (NCES, 2022c; 2022d). As the prevalence of students with disabilities increases each year, the demand for special education teachers is also expected to rise. However, according to the U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education, special education is the field most impacted by teacher shortages (US Department of Education, 2022). Special education teacher shortage refers to the insufficient supply of teachers in the field (Peyton et al., 2021). In 2005, it was recorded that there was a pool of 420,000 qualified special education teachers. However, a decade later, these numbers dropped by 20%, or roughly to about 340,000 teachers in 2015 (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Peyton et al., 2021; Sutcher et al., 2019).

The inadequacies in the special education teacher workforce are a pervasive problem for both urban and rural school districts nationwide and reports that aim to illustrate the gravity of special education teacher shortages across states to point to variables related to school location

and/or the demographic of the student population served (Sutcher et al., 2019; Peyton et al., 2021). According to studies conducted between high and low-shortage states, on average, the degree of shortages is higher in states, districts, or schools that serve a significant population of students from low socio-economic backgrounds and are substantially more diverse (Burstein et al., 2023; Crockett et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2022; Peyton et al., 2021). In consideration of these factors, some news articles report that the top three states with the highest shortages are Florida, Oregon, and California, while in others, it was stated that California has the highest shortages, followed by Nevada then Washington (Coakley, 2022; Harris, 2023; Ward, 2022; York, 2020).

Special Education Teacher Shortages in California

California has a student population of six million students; of this total student population, 12.5% are identified with a disability (California Department of Education, 2021). In the 2017 to 2018 school year, 87% of California school principals reported hiring challenges, and according to a state-wide survey, eight out of 10 schools are looking to hire special education teachers. The state has instituted grants to build its teacher supply pipeline to address this hiring challenge. Five years later, however, it was reported that California continues to have a dire need for teachers, that in transitioning to the 2022-2023 school year, the teacher-to-student population ratio is at 7.48 teachers for every 1000 students, and a shortage of 50,000 teachers was reported (Benson & Brown, 2022; Ondrasek et al., 2020; Ward, 2022).

In the state of California, a fully credentialed special education teacher has obtained a bachelor's degree, passed a credentialing test, and completed a teacher preparation program in special education specialty areas such as teaching students with mild/moderate disabilities, moderate/severe disabilities, early childhood special education, etc (California Commission on

Teacher Credentialing, 2021). Despite the credentialing standards, many California school districts have resorted to filling their vacancies with teachers on emergency permits or provisional intern status, which are only allowed after considerable efforts have been made to hire credentialed personnel. Emergency permits are issued to teachers with no special education teaching credentials. In contrast, provisional intern credentials are issued to individuals who have obtained a bachelor's degree in another field, have passed a basic skills test, and/or show an intent to enroll or proof of being currently enrolled in a teacher preparation program (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021; Lambert, 2020; Lambert et al., 2022).

It has been reported that the majority of first-year special education teachers are employed without an appropriate credential, and according to records from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), from the school years 2016-2017 to 2020-2021, an average of 13,000 emergency permits, intern credentials, and waivers were issued annually, and that of these numbers, two-thirds are for teaching students with disabilities, it also appears to be most staffed with underprepared or unqualified teachers (Benson & Brown, 2022; Burstein et al., 2023; Carver-Thomas et al., 2022; Darling-Hamond et al., 2018; Lambert, 2020; Peyton et al., 2021; Sutcher et al., 2019). While California highlights the special education teacher shortage of just one of the 50 states, it is unarguable that in any state, it benefits students to have fully qualified teachers.

Addressing Special Education Teacher Shortages

In order to strategically address the insufficient supply of special education teachers, studies on teacher shortages have comprehensively reviewed national databases to better understand what factors influence teacher supply and demand, i.e., data on teacher education program enrollment, teacher education program persistence rates, and teacher turnover rates. In

the analysis of these supply-demand factors, initiatives to address teacher shortages have been aimed at building the special education teacher supply, attracting special education teachers, and retaining the current special education teachers already on staff (Ondrasek et al., 2020; Sutchter et al., 2019).

Building The Special Education Teacher Supply. To build a future special education teacher workforce, efforts to make teacher preparation programs more accessible via higher amounts that can be applied towards teacher loan forgiveness are currently in place at the federal level. At the state level, funds have been channeled towards grants and scholarships for aspiring teachers. At the same time, financial support has been provided for school districts to specifically allocate for providing their teachers training (California Department of Education, 2022b; Carver-Thomas, 2022; Hong, 2022; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Lambert et al., 2022; Mason-Williams et al., 2020; Ondrasek et al., 2020; Will, 2022). In addition, some states have also developed alternate pathways to teacher certification, and this approach to building the teacher supply, although not identified to be specific to special education, has shown some promise, as indicated by an 18% increase in the number of teachers earning their license via alternative credentialing routes in school year 2015-2016 (Myers, et a., 2020; NCES, 2022b). Meanwhile, initiatives to build the teacher supply that are executed at the district level often include a focus on growing their talent by engaging in partnerships with universities and offering incentives for current teaching staff to pursue a special education credential (Beesley et al., 2019; Burstein et al., 2023; Carver-Thomas et al., 2022; Hong, 2022; Ondrasek et al., 2020; Will, 2022).

Attracting Special Education Teachers. States, districts, and schools deal with special education teacher shortages at varying degrees. According to studies, the degree of shortages

varies depending on the location and demographic of the student population served, with shortages appearing to be more pronounced in schools, districts, and states that have a higher percentage of students from low-income families and/or serve a significant number of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Burstein et al., 2023; Crockett et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2022; Peyton et al., 2021). Many would offer competitive wages, signing bonuses, housing incentives, stipends, and differential pay to attract special education teachers to work in rural, suburban, or urban school districts that are impacted by shortages. However, while these initiatives to attract special education teachers are prevalent across states, and despite expediting the hiring process for special education teachers, filling staffing vacancies continues to be a challenge since school districts are competing with each other from an already thin supply of teachers (Beesley et al., 2019; Carver-Thomas et al., 2022; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Jones, 2022; Mason-Williams et al., 2020; Sutchter et al., 2019).

Retention of Special Education Teachers. Special education teacher turnover is predicated by teaching-related factors such as low salaries, poor working conditions, stress, etc (Furuya et al., 2019; Peyton et al., 2021). Thus, in addition to efforts to build the teacher supply and recruitment initiatives aimed to attract teachers, districts have also worked on identifying root causes that can be linked to their local teacher turnover rates. In the appraisal of their special education teacher retention efforts, many school districts have scaled up their initiatives through the provision of sufficient resources that will support teaching and learning, offer induction and mentoring programs, provide coaching and collaboration opportunities, as well as administrative training and school leadership support, with research suggesting that these strategies have shown to be effective in reducing turnover in schools by as much as 17% (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Mason-Williams et al., 2020; Ondrasek et al., 2020; Sutchter et al., 2019).

The Special Education Teacher Shortage Crisis

Monetary incentives, grants, alternative pathways to certification, and retention strategies appear to be sound solutions to building, maintaining, and attracting special education teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2018; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019). However, with declining enrollment in special education teacher preparation programs, the number of students with disabilities receiving special education services within the school system is already at 7.2 million, and 45% of school districts across the country report at least one special education teacher vacancy. It is not only clear that the special education teacher supply lags behind the demand for special education teachers, but it also justifies reports from studies that cite special education as the field that experiences the most pronounced shortages (Burstein et al., 2023; Crockett et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Mason-Williams et al., 2020; NCES, 2022e; Peyton et al., 2021; Sutchter et al., 2019).

Teacher shortages are costly, not just from a financial perspective, e.g., costs related to cyclical hiring and training of novice teachers or recruitment investments that yield little returns. Rather, its larger impact is a cost that the students bear as it disrupts the effective provision of educational services, slows program improvement efforts, and, even more importantly, poses a threat to student learning and achievement (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). This stated, filling a special education teacher vacancy goes beyond finding a person willing to teach because in order to effectively respond to the needs of a student with a disability, special education teachers need sophisticated knowledge and skills to be able to teach a range of content areas, implement evidence-based instructional and assessment practices, and assist students in developing non-academic skills such as socialization, self-advocacy, and emotional regulation (Crockett et al, 2019). Additionally, the efficient and effective carrying out of the complex responsibilities of a

special education teacher is predicated by a strong foundation of teacher preparation (Bettini et al., 2022; Lambert et al., 2022). As such, it should also be a cause for concern that, while some special education classrooms may be staffed, students with disabilities are being taught by an increasing number of underprepared or unqualified teachers, i.e., special education teachers with limited permits, such as provisional internships, short-term staff waivers, variable term-waivers, and/or substitute permits (Benson & Brown, 2022; Bettini et al., 2022; Burstein et al., 2023; Carver-Thomas et al., 2022; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Crockett et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2018; Lambert et al., 2022; Ondrasek et al., 2020; Sutchter et al., 2019).

The special education teacher shortage warrants special attention because the lack of special education teachers in both quantity and quality compromises the effective facilitation of the specialized services that students with disabilities need, consequently, stifling their sufficient access to FAPE (Ondrasek et al., 2020; Peyton et al., 2021). While efforts to address the pervasive issue of special education teacher shortages are underway, many special education teacher positions are unfilled at the start of each school, if not left vacant during the year (Benson & Brown, 2022; Carver-Thomas et al., 2022; Crockett et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2018; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Mason-Williams et al., 2020; NCES, 2022e; Peyton et al., 2021; Sutchter et al., 2019). As such, it is not only doubtful that the teacher supply will outpace the demand, it is apparent that efforts to build and stabilize a future special education teacher workforce will also need more time. As the nation waits for the teacher supply to catch up with the demand, school districts still need to contend with their present and urgent need for special education teachers, prompting some to implement more innovative teacher recruitment strategies, such as the outsourcing of teachers from other countries to fulfill their staffing needs (Caravatti, 2015; Wright & Constantin, 2021).

Foreign-Born Teachers in the United States

The general lack of public interest to pursue educational careers, high attrition, and high turnover rates have impacted the nationwide teacher supply, consequently making it challenging for many school districts to fulfill the demand for their growing population of students. Despite starting their recruitment efforts early and casting a wide net across states, many schools are still left to start the school year with unfilled vacancies or have to settle with inappropriately credentialed individuals to staff their classrooms (Benson & Brown, 2022; Carver-Thomas et al., 2022; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2018; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Lambert et al., 2022; Sutchter et al., 2019). Faced with a dwindling teacher supply, school districts across the country are compelled to expand their recruitment beyond local borders, outsourcing the hiring of teachers from other countries to fill their critical staffing needs (Caravatti, 2015). Viewed from a human capital perspective, this outsourcing of teachers is a response to the human capital supply challenges in the needed qualifications, skills, and experience required to perform a job in positions that Americans will not take, and as more foreign teachers are recruited, the international mobility of foreign teachers is consequently also triggered (Brown & Stevick, 2014; Caravatti, 2015; Seah, 2018; Wright & Constantin, 2021).

In a report released by the Institute for Immigration Research, foreign-born teachers constitute 11% of the total make-up of teachers nationwide. Out of the total immigrant teacher population in the United States, 14% work in K to 12 school settings, while another 6% work in the field of special education. Moreover, survey records also indicate that Mexico is the top country of origin, making up 15% of non-post-secondary foreign-born teachers, while India and the Philippines, both come in second, each making up 5%. This reported percentage translates to about 850,000 foreign-born teachers out of the 8.1 million teachers nationwide who are either

naturalized citizens, legal permanent residents, or working in U.S. schools with temporary work visas (Furuya et al., 2019; New American Economy, 2021). In the 2002-2003 school year, it was estimated that 15,000 international teachers were employed in states such as Texas, California, Illinois, New York, Georgia, New Jersey, Maryland, Ohio, and Florida. Then in 2008, it was reported that approximately 90,000 teachers had come from the Philippines, India, and other countries, to provide relief for school districts that have traditionally struggled to attract, retain and/or fill their critical vacancies, with many, according to news agencies and articles, reported to have gained access to teach in the country through the U.S. Department of State's teacher exchange program (Ball & Lynn, 2019; Critchfield & Donovan, 2020; Esquilona, 2022; Heubeck, 2022; Holt, 2022; Lee, 2021; Longhi, 2022; Matthews, 2021; Moolten, 2022; Phu, 2022; Rankin, 2023; Yan et al., 2019; H. Yang, 2022).

The U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange Program

The teacher exchange program is one of the categories under the U.S. Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2024; US Department of State, 2021b). Established in the 1960s, following the enactment of the Mutual and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act, the program's main rationale is that of improving and strengthening U.S. international relations by promoting better mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people around the world through education and cultural exchanges (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2024; Department for Professional Employees, 2021b; US Department of State, 2016). Thus, as stated and built from an assumption that international experiences can spark local reform via an alignment of educational systems worldwide with what is seen globally as best practice, the teacher exchange program is essentially a global initiative for education reform. Through cultural exchanges,

teachers from other countries are provided an opportunity to build and prepare a local teacher workforce that keeps pace with the thrust of globalization. At the same time, it supports the need for the students of today to develop global awareness and understanding, i.e., the knowledge of other countries and seeing connections between the internal and external context. Moreover, in continued reference to this worldwide narrative, mutual exchanges that occur between cultures also foster a diversity in ideas which can initiate cultural shifts that can reshape how we think, talk, and do education (Atay, 2022; Brown & Stevick, 2014; Department of Professional Employees, 2021b; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2020; Paine, 2019; Serin, 2017; Terry, 2018; Velasquez-Hoyos & Martinez-Burgos, 2023).

Exchange Teachers as Skilled Workers

Both education and experience are considered benchmark measures for immigrant workers to be classified as “skilled.” The term “skilled workers” is used to describe individuals who have completed a formal two-year college degree or more, while “highly skilled” workers are used to describe immigrant professionals who both have the education and experience in the field where those educational qualifications are required (Farivar et al., 2022). Prior to having foreign teachers enter the United States as an exchange teacher, exchange visitor program sponsors screen their applicants for certain eligibility criteria that must be satisfied, among which include having the necessary qualifications to be a teacher in their home country, at least two years of full-time teaching experience, a degree in education or related field that is equivalent to a U.S. bachelor’s degree and can demonstrate sufficient proficiency in the English language (US Department of State; 2021b). Given the exchange teacher participant screening process, exchange teachers who enter the United States are all educated, experienced, and have the same qualifications that are required of teachers that the country has an insufficient supply of (Christ,

2020; Hassan Gallardo, & Batalova, 2020; Olsen-Medina & Batalova, 2020; Sutchter et al., 2019).

Despite their comparable skills on paper, critics argue that foreign teachers are underprepared, ineffective, less skilled, and have significant problems connecting to the culture of American students, and as such, can result in wasted efforts. However, this perception of under-preparedness may be attributable to the challenges immigrant workers face when they first arrive in a new country because they lack country-specific knowledge and/or skills (Caravatti, 2015; Farivar et al., 2022; Lambert, 2020; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2020; Ospina & Medina, 2020; Seah, 2018; Torres-Casierra, 2020; Yeo & Yoo, 2019). Studies on immigrant assimilation suggest that, over time, practical knowledge improves as the individual accumulates more skills through employer training and learning by doing so within the context of the new environment. It is assumed that, very much similar to the support being extended or made accessible to their local, native-born teachers, school districts who utilize teacher exchange programs as a resource to meet their staffing needs are also providing on-the-job learning or training opportunities to their foreign exchange teachers to support, not just the development of their efficacy, satisfaction, and productivity. Rather, the job also facilitates the exchange teachers' transition into their host schools, fosters professional integration, and/or develops their intercultural competence (Abdulla, 2020; Becker, 1962; Bengtsson & Mickwitz, 2022; Bhugra et al., 2021; Christ, 2020; Ju & Li, 2019; Ospina & Medina, 2020; Yu et al., 2022; Sowell, 2022; Zhou et al., 2024).

Reported Benefits of Teacher Exchange Programs

Teacher exchange program guidelines specify cultural exchange as the primary program goal and even highlight reciprocity as the key characteristic of a true exchange program (Paine, 2019).

With this in mind, as exchange teachers immerse into the foreign setting, they are given the opportunity to observe new ways of teaching, examine an array of teaching strategies, reflect on their teaching practices, and compare how the education system operates, which in return enhances their personal and professional skills, as well as advance their cultural and world views (Celik, 2017; Gonzalez-Carriedo et al., 2021; Kacar, 2021; Serin, 2017; Sowell, 2022; Velasquez-Hoyos & Martinez-Burgos, 2023). However, research on foreign teacher experiences in the United States is few and far between. While some studies have been conducted, the focus has predominantly been on foreign language teachers, and/or higher education faculty or researchers. Moreover, the predominant topic that is being explored is that of the foreign teachers' transition and assimilation experience into the new culture and educational system, where results indicate challenges in communication, socio-cultural adjustment, and integration into the school community, i.e., culture shock, cultural dissonance, discrimination and/or stereotypes (Atay, 2022; Brown & Stevick, 2014; Lally, 2022; Milian & Yousuf Zai, 2020; Mizzi, 2017; Ospina & Medina, 2020; Seah, 2018; Smith, 2018; Sowell, 2022; Torres-Casierra, 2021; Velasquez-Hoyos & Martinez-Burgos, 2023; Zhou et al., 2024).

Studies conducted on exchange teachers are rare, and while a few studies would suggest concerns with the transfer of skills or professional integration of foreign teachers, there are more, from the few that are available, that would suggest otherwise. For example, in some studies that were conducted on small subsets of foreign teachers, which includes pre-service foreign teachers and visiting higher education faculty who engaged in teaching abroad programs in the United States, Canada, Australia, and several countries in Europe, Asia, and South America, results highlight the transformational potential of international experiences through the professional skill exchanges between teachers, such as gaining knowledge beyond practice, enhancement of

professional skills, enrichment in the teacher's repertoire of teaching strategies, increased global awareness, an appreciation of cultural differences, and a better understanding of themselves and the uniqueness of their own culture. (Brown & Stevick, 2014; Kaçar, 2021; Lally, 2022; Liddy & Tormey, 2023; Moorhouse & Harfitt; Ospina & Medina, 2020; Paine, 2019; Rapoport, 2008; Shi & Jain, 2021; Sowell, 2022; Velasquez-Hoyos & Martinez-Burgos, 2023; Whewell et al., 2020; Yan, 2021; Yuan & Huang, 2019; Zhang, 2019; Zhou et al., 2022).

Exchange Teacher Studies in the United States. The experiences of exchange teachers in the United States are also under researched, however in the few that are available, results have consistently pointed to how the exchanges in teaching practices and perspectives, as well as the interactions with other cultures, has fostered the development of the foreign teachers' personal growth, professional skills, and intercultural awareness (Gonzalez-Carriedo et al., 2021; Ospina & Medina, 2020; Velasquez-Hoyos & Martinez-Burgos, 2023). For example, in a 2008 study on 26 civics teachers from Russia who came to the United States indicated that the exchange experience provided the participating teachers with opportunities to observe and learn instructional strategies that are carried out in American classrooms, which, upon their return to their home country, resulted to a redevelopment of curriculum, and as such allowed them to fulfill a local need for a change in their approach to general and civic education (Rapoport, 2008). Additionally, a 2014 case study conducted on 19 foreign teachers from Romania who temporarily taught in South Carolina schools reported that the overseas experience resulted in new pedagogical insights and approaches to classroom management (Brown & Stevick, 2014). Meanwhile, in a 2020 case study conducted on 22 foreign language teachers from various countries, such as Colombia, Mexico, Argentina, Romania, Chile, Costa Rica, Australia, Jamaica; all participants, despite the cultural assimilation and professional integration challenges

they had experienced at the beginning, reported positive personal and professional outcomes as a result of their experience in teaching abroad (Ospina & Medina, 2020). Furthermore, a 2022 study conducted on eight foreign teachers from various countries, who participated in a six-week, exchange program in US secondary schools also indicated positive outcomes for participating teachers. Albeit short-term, the teachers in the study all reported that through the opportunities to observe and co-teach in American classrooms, they were able to enhance their teaching repertoire (Zhou et al., 2024).

Exchange Teacher Studies in the Other Countries. Studies conducted on in-service and pre-service teacher exchanges that are facilitated in other countries also reported similar results. According to these studies, when teachers were provided an opportunity to observe, exchange ideas, collaborate, and network with colleagues in the host country, the participating teachers were exposed to diverse educational experiences which resulted in a shift to more student-centered perspectives and pedagogical approaches. Additionally, the teachers also reported gaining a better understanding of other cultures as well as their own cultural identities, which fostered the development of their intercultural competence (Atay, 2022; Bengtsson & Mickwitz, 2022; Liddy & Tormey, 2023; Kaçar, 2021; Moorhouse & Harfitt, 2021; Peng et al, 2023; Shi & Jain, 2021; Yu et al., 2022; Yuan & Huang, 2019). To further illustrate, results of a study conducted on six Chinese teachers who participated in a short-term exchange teaching program in Finland, indicated that teachers gained new insights in teaching and learning through comparing pedagogical practices and predominant learner perspectives in Finnish schools (Peng et al., 2023). Additionally, findings in a study on teacher exchanges between China and England, called the Mathematics Teacher Exchange program, indicate that the English teachers learned new knowledge concepts in the teaching of math which consequently led to significant changes

in the practice of mathematics education in England, as a result of the practical knowledge that they have gained from the Chinese teachers that conducted classroom teaching demonstrations and seminars (Shi & Jain, 2021; Yuan & Huang, 2019).

Qualitative studies on the experience of pre-service teachers also show promising results. For example, a group of 44 preservice teachers in Germany and England, who participated in a two-year exchange program have reported that participants gained a range of approaches that will support their teaching of foreign languages back in their home country (Milian & Yousuf Zai, 2020; Whewell et al., 2020). Furthermore, findings of another study conducted on pre-service teachers in Canada and China, who participated in either short-term or long-term, i.e., three-months or two-years; student exchange program called the Reciprocal Learning Program, state that the program had provided the Chinese preservice teachers an opportunity to learn about Western pedagogy, student-centered strategies, and curriculum implementation (Liu et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2022); while another group who explored teaching and learning practices that incorporated information and communication technologies reported that the program allowed them to expand their pedagogical skills by using technology to enhance teaching and learning (Zhang, 2019).

Leveraging the Teacher Exchange Program to Address Teacher Shortages

Teacher exchange programs are intended to facilitate cultural exchange and reciprocity (Paine, 2019; US Department of State, 2021b). Thus, inviting exchange teachers into schools can foster reciprocal learning for both the organization and the exchange teacher. To illustrate, as the exchange teachers are provided opportunities for cross-cultural learning at the host school, reciprocal learning occurs for both the local and foreign teachers because they learn about education beyond the context of what has been familiar to them. In addition, when viewed from

the lens of human capital theory, as the foreign teacher invests their time to provide temporary labor for the organization, the organization, in exchange, provides the foreign teacher with on-the-job professional learning opportunities. Consequently, as the exchange teacher acquires new skills through their participation in the teacher exchange program, their human capital is enhanced, and global education reform initiatives are also advanced when the acquired human capital assets are reinvested upon their return to their home country (Brown & Stevick, 2014; Paine, 2019; US Department of State, 2021b). These assumptions are supported by the cited studies conducted on teacher exchange programs facilitated in the United States and other countries, where results support the notion that international exchanges can facilitate impactful professional learning experiences (Celik, 2017; Paine, 2019; Serin, 2017). Reports indicate that both public and private sectors across the country have utilized the teacher exchange program to hire foreign teachers. Gaining access to enter the United States through temporary or guest worker visas, it was reported that states, such as Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Nevada, North and South Carolina, Texas, and Utah, have been reported to have tapped into teacher exchange program routes as a resource to meet their staffing needs (Ball & Lynn, 2019; Brown & Stevick, 2014; Caravatti, 2015; Craft, 2018; Critchfield & Donovan, 2020; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Department of Professional Employees, 2021b; Esquilona, 2022; Heubeck, 2022; Holt, 2022; Lee, 2021; Longhi, 2022; Maravillas, 2020; Mason-Williams et al., 2020; Matthews, 2021; Moolten, 2022; Peyton et.al., 2020; Phu, 2022; Rankin, 2023; Sutchter et al., 2019; Tadayon, 2022; Terry, 2018; Yan et al., 2019; H. Yang, 2022).

Temporary Worker Visas

The United States is a destination of choice for many travelers and foreign nationals

seeking higher-paying jobs, professional training, or education. However, access to enter the United States is subject to specific visa requirements (Christ, 2020). In 2021, a total of 2.8 million non-immigrant visas, i.e., tourist and temporary-worker visas, were issued to foreign nationals for travel and leisure, education and training, or temporary work opportunities, with industries such as caregiving, agriculture, education, and nursing reported to have resorted to the international recruitment of workers due to local labor shortages (Esterline & Batalova, 2022; Terry, 2018). Guest workers, i.e., temporary workers, enter the United States through nonimmigrant visas such as the H1B, L1, H2, and J1 visa categories. The H-1B visas are reserved for specialty occupations, i.e., occupations that require a bachelor's degree, and for this type of non-immigrant visa, the visa is held by the petitioner or the employer, not the employee. Similar to the H1B, L1 visas are typically used by multinational corporations petitioning a foreign employee to gain access to work in company branches in the United States. Meanwhile, H2 visas are typically granted for temporary workers on a seasonal or intermittent basis, such as foreign workers in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. Whereas the J1 is a cultural exchange visitor program visa that allows foreign students, researchers, teachers, and other professionals to participate in further education and/or training in the United States while they work for a short time (Department of Professional Employees, 2021a; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2020; Terry, 2018).

The J1 Visa

J-1 visas have provided exchange visitors worldwide an opportunity to immerse themselves in U.S. culture and society. Conversely, it also paved the way for organizations to leverage the experience and skills of foreign individuals. It encompasses 16 exchange visitor categories, i.e., Au Pairs, Camp Counselors, College and University Students, Government

Visitors, Interns, International Visitors, Physicians, Professors, Research Scholars, Secondary School Students, Short-Term Scholars, Specialists, Summer Work Travel, Trainees, STEM Initiatives which range from a continuum of skill categories. For example, au pairs and camp counselors are considered to belong in the lesser-skilled worker categories, while teachers and doctors are classified as high-skilled (US Department of State, 2021 a). Depending on the skill category, the validity of J1 visas ranges from a period of several months to several years, and specific for foreign teachers who wish to participate in a teacher exchange, program duration can range from one to three years, with an option for some to extend participation for another one to two years. Furthermore, there is a two-year home-country physical presence requirement for exchange visitors from fields of specialized knowledge and skills deemed necessary human capital for the exchange visitor's home country. As such, program participants that come from fields specified in the U.S. Department of State's exchange visitor skills list, e.g., communication technologies, medical research, health services, education, business administration, etc. would then be subjected to return and reinvest their gains in human capital back to the home country after exhausting the validity of their J1 visa (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2020; US Department of State, 2009; 2011; 2016; 2021).

Exchange visitor programs provide a large number of temporary foreign workers access to the United States. In 2018, the J1, or exchange visitor visa, accounted for 17% of non-immigrant visas issued. In the analysis of annual visa issuance data, it was reported that, from 2006 to 2018, issuances averaged close to 330,000 visas (Esterline & Batalova, 2022). Reports also indicate that temporary workers hired via J1 visa program routes pose lower costs and quicker turnaround since the J1 is not subjected to a statutory cap in the number of visas that can be issued annually, nor the stricter recruitment rules imposed for H1B visas, i.e., labor

certification process with the U.S. Department of Labor which requires employers to provide a rationale for hiring a foreign worker by demonstrating a labor shortage and certifying that they have attempted to hire U.S. citizen workers first (Furuya et al., 2019; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2020; Terry, 2018). Of the many countries with teachers participating in the J1 teacher exchange program, the Philippines has consistently been on the list of the top 3 countries of origin since 2016. In 2022, records indicate that out of the almost 23,000 foreign visitors that were brought into the country as exchange teachers, 28%, or 6300 exchange teachers come from the Philippines, thus contributing to the growing diaspora of Filipinos in the United States (Christ, 2020; Tuason & Crutchfield, 2024; US Department of State, 2022).

Table 1

Philippine Ranking on Exchange Teachers

Rank	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
1st	664 Spain	551 Spain	786 Philippines	932 Philippines	102 France	1521 Philippines	2194 Philippines
2nd	378 China	474 Philippines	523 Spain	531 Spain	101 Spain	616 Jamaica	791 Jamaica
3rd	318 Philippines	390 China	386 Jamaica	385 Jamaica	84 Philippines	564 Spain	545 Spain

Filipino Diaspora in the United States

Immigrant workers tend to cluster in certain states, with the majority being concentrated in immigrant-receiving states such as California, New York, Florida, and New Jersey, where one out of five professionals are foreign workers. However, compared to the total labor workforce, immigrant labor only represents a minority percentage of 17.1% of the total labor force (Farivar et al., 2022). According to data drawn from the Migration Policy Institute and the U.S. Census

Bureau, about 45 million immigrants live in the United States, ranking Mexico as the number one country of origin for immigrants. The second largest immigrant group is from Asian countries, with China ranking under Mexico, India ranking third, and the Philippines placing 4th on the 2019 list of the top countries of origin. As the fourth-largest immigrant group in the United States, records indicate that Filipinos account for 4.5% of the country's total immigrant population, growing from a population of 500,000 in the 1980s to 1.5 million in the year 2000 to 2 million by 2018 (Esterline & Batalova, 2022; Hanna & Batalova, 2021; Hassan Gallardo, & Batalova, 2020). The largest concentration of Filipino immigrants is in California, accounting for 43% of the total Filipino immigrant population in the country, then is distantly followed by Hawaii, Texas, Illinois, New York, and Nevada, accounting for a collective 25% of the Filipino immigrant population. The migration of Filipinos to the United States is influenced by a history of U.S. colonization and a political initiative to improve the Philippine economy through labor export. This stated, a growing diaspora of Filipino workers can be found not just in the United States but also across the globe (Caballero et al., 2021; Christ, 2020; Esterline & Batalova, 2022; Francisco-Menchavez, 2023; Hanna & Batalova, 2021; Hassan Gallardo, & Batalova, 2020; Markkula, 2021; Olsen-Medina & Batalova, 2020; Rother, 2022; Tuason & Crutchfield, 2024).

History of Filipino Migration in the United States

As a result of the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Philippines was once a U.S. territory. While not having access to citizenship, Filipino nationals could enter and exit the United States freely, with the movement of Filipinos at that time considered internal migration. The history of Filipino migration in the United States dates back to the 1900s, with the first wave of Filipino immigrant workers arriving in Hawaii to work in sugarcane and pineapple plantations. From there, the Filipino agricultural labor force expanded to the intercontinental

United States, particularly on the West Coast, i.e., California, Oregon, and Washington, then eventually extended to work in salmon canneries in Alaska. In addition, a wave of Filipino immigrants was also reported to have worked, until the late 1930s, as employees in the merchant marine (Caballero et al., 2021; Hassan Gallardo, & Batalova, 2020; Markkula, 2021; Rother, 2022; Wells, 2019). However, when the Tydings-McDuffie Act was signed in 1934, which paved the way for the country's eventual complete independence in 1946, Filipinos became subject to immigration quotas and constraints when entering the United States. While the ease in Filipino migration slowed down since gaining independence, some channels did remain open for a few, primarily through fiancé visas or marriage to American soldiers that were stationed in U.S. bases in the Philippines, up until the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces in the country in the early 1990s. Despite the entry constraints and visa requirements that need to be satisfied, Filipinos continue to come to the United States, with records indicating that a large share of Filipino immigrants, or approximately 56% of the total Filipino immigrant population, arrived before the year 2000. Another 24% reported coming to the United States a decade later, and the other 20% of Filipinos reported having arrived after 2010 (Wells, 2019).

Philippine Labor Export

As a result of a political strategy to counter unemployment rates and budget deficits in the 1970s, the Philippines is considered a major source of workers and talent for the global market. In 1975, it was reported that 36,000 Filipinos were hired abroad, and this number grew to one million at the turn of the 21st century, then grew even further to a reported 10.2 million in 2013. Having engaged in international labor migration for more than 50 years, the Philippines has since developed a sophisticated labor export model, bringing the country to the top list of exporters of labor among countries in Asia (Christ, 2020, Markkula, 2021; Rother, 2022; Tuason

& Crutchfield, 2021). While the intent was to only temporarily export labor until the country recovers from its economic problems, the general lack of opportunities has made the culture of migration so pervasive in Philippine culture, where working abroad is common, the associated opportunity cost of leaving families behind to work abroad is acceptable, and seeking employment outside national borders is desired by many (Abdulla, 2020; Caballero et al., 2021; Christ, 2020; Francisco-Menchavez, 2023; Kujawa, 2022; Tuason & Crutchfield, 2024; Ulla, 2018).

The number of Filipino immigrant workers continues to grow in a variety of industries, that countries, such as Australia, Bahrain, Cambodia, Canada, England, France, Germany, Guam, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Laos, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Scotland, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Taiwan, Thailand, the Netherlands, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States, have turned to foreign Philippine labor to meet their human capital needs and/or fill labor shortages in industries such as domestic help, manufacturing, engineering, caregiving, seafaring, construction, vocational trades, food services, sales, healthcare, and education (Balgoa, 2019; Christ, 2020; Markkula, 2021; Francisco-Menchavez, 2023; Tuason & Crutchfield, 2021; Ulla, 2018). This continuous demand for workers has positioned the Philippines as a prime supplier of workers, and with the ongoing export of human capital, the term “Overseas Filipino Workers” (OFW) was then coined to describe the large pool of contracted or short-term Filipino migrant laborers worldwide (Christ, 2020; Rother, 2022; Tuason & Crutchfield, 2024). This export of human capital has brought economic returns to the Philippines through remittances being sent by OFWs from all over the world, with records indicating that the contribution of OFWs to the Philippine economy averages 10% of the country’s gross domestic product and reports stating that remittances

reached a total of 33.5 billion USD in 2019. As such, many developing countries are trying to emulate the Philippine labor export model in order to provide their citizens access to similar international employment opportunities, while at the same time reaping comparable economic benefits brought by global labor mobility (Caballero et al., 2021; Christ, 2020; Rother, 2022; Tuason & Crutchfield, 2024).

Filipino Immigrant Workers

Filipinos continue to be attracted to overseas work opportunities for economic gain and social mobility, and workers with specialized skills, e.g., information technology, teaching, and nursing, often migrate to Western countries. Among the countries in the West, Filipinos regard the United States as being at the top of the hierarchy of desired destinations, with this dream to migrate to America influenced by a history of decades-long colonization and driven by long-standing political, military and educational ties between the Philippines and the United States (Christ, 2020; Hassan Gallardo & Batalova, 2020; Kujawa, 2022). Both national census and immigration data reports indicate that the Philippines is in the top ten list of countries of origin for individuals with non-immigrant U.S. visas, specifically temporary worker visas. In 2018, it was reported that 33% of temporary visas were issued to Filipinos (Blizzard & Batalova, 2019; Esterline & Batalova, 2022). Furthermore, reports indicate that immigrant workers in the United States fill 17% of positions in occupations that require a college degree (Olsen-Medina & Batalova, 2020). This works to the advantage of Filipinos since, culturally, they place high esteem on education, as it is believed that earning a college degree is a path towards increased economic capital and a gateway for accessing overseas labor opportunities. Ranking third in the list of countries of origin for all college-educated immigrants, with China being the second and India ranking at the top, Filipinos in the United States are more likely to be educated and have

strong English skills, making the Filipino minority a great fit for highly skilled worker categories such as management, information technology, math, healthcare, business and finance, as well as education (Christ, 2020; Dela Fuente, 2021; Hassan Gallardo & Batalova, 2020; Olsen-Medina & Batalova, 2020).

Filipino Exchange Teachers in the United States

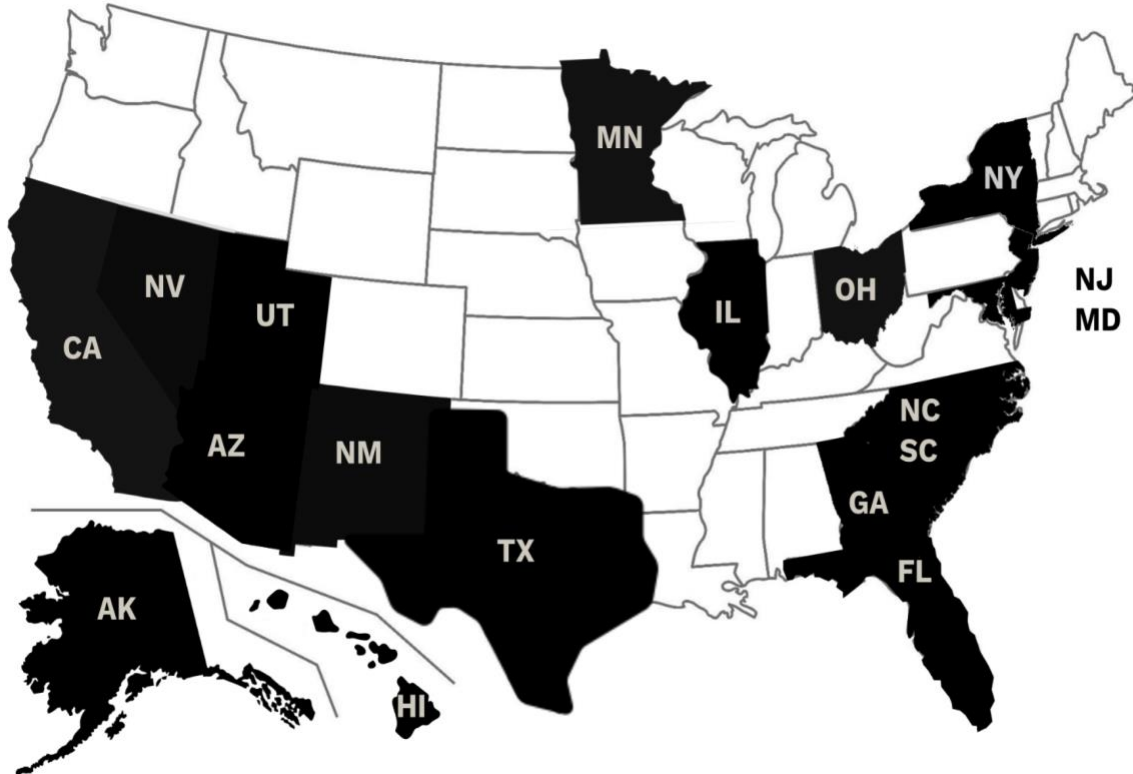
According to a survey conducted on immigrant teachers in the United States and teacher demographic data from the California Department of Education, one in five workers in California K to 12 schools are immigrants, and 1.53% of public school teachers in California are Filipino (California Department of Education, 2022a; New American Economy, 2021). While not indicative of the total number of Filipino exchange teachers in the state, it is assumed that a fraction of this percentage is filled by Filipino exchange teachers, based on (1) records from the U.S. Department of State, which indicated that the state of California has welcomed an average of 240 exchange teachers annually from 2016 to 2022, (2) that the Philippines has consistently been on the list of the top three countries of origin for exchange teachers in the last 6 years, and (3) that about 6,300 Filipino teachers have entered the United States through teacher exchange program routes between 2016 to 2022, with 35% of that total number arriving in 2022 alone (Maravillas, 2020; US Department of State, 2022).

On the Philippine side, data is also maintained by the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), a designated agency of the Philippine government that acts as a support network for Filipinos who have emigrated or pursued temporary work outside the country (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2016). According to their compounded data from 2014 to 2020, nearly 3,000 Filipino teachers have participated in the U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange Program (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2023). While no formal data provides more specific

information regarding the specialization or subject area currently filled by Filipino exchange teachers, news agencies and online articles from 2017 to 2023 have covered many stories on how Filipino teachers are pervading many American school systems. They cited that exchange program teachers as a resource that helps districts in states, as shown in Figure 1, such as Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Georgia, New Jersey, North Carolina, Maryland, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah, to meet their staffing needs in critical shortage areas, which includes special education (Ball & Lynn, 2019; Cournoyer, 2017; Craft, 2018; Critchfield & Donovan, 2020; Esquilona, 2022; Heubeck, 2022; Holt, 2022; Khmara, 2019; Lee, 2021; Longhi, 2022; Matthews, 2021; Moolten, 2022; Phu, 2022; Rankin, 2023; Tadayon, 2022; Yan et al., 2019; H. Yang, 2022).

Figure 1

States Reported to Have Filipino Exchange Teachers



Filipino Special Education Exchange Teachers

Filipino special education exchange teachers enter the country through a cultural exchange visa called the J1 visa. With no visa issuance caps nor the need to go through the petition process, the J1 visa has fewer restrictions compared to the H1B temporary worker visa. While it provides more flexibility and convenience for school districts to hire the number of teachers they need and get them into the country by the beginning of the school year, it also comes with a caveat that, after the program, participants are to return to their home country to fulfill a two-year home-country physical presence requirement (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2024; US Department of State, 2011; 2016). This requisite is imposed on exchange program participants from fields of specialized knowledge and skills deemed as necessary human capital for the exchange visitor's home country. With special education teachers specified under the skills list for the Philippines, Filipino special education teachers are then required to return to their home country at the end of the validity of their J1 visa status to share their experiences and increased knowledge of the United States, the U.S. educational system, and the teaching of students with disabilities in America (US Department of State, 2009, 2011; 2016).

The U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange Program provides overseas-trained teachers an opportunity to learn about practices in the United States while they work for a short time. However, while the program can assist school districts in finding temporary labor for their critical need subject areas, the recruitment of teachers via teacher exchange program routes to assist with addressing human capital supply challenges is more a tangential function of the program. Given its emphasis on foreign affairs, school districts hiring foreign teachers through J1 routes are required to provide them with experiences that align with the cultural exchange program goals. However, it has been reported that many districts regard overseas-trained

teachers as transient migrant labor and that employers merely utilize exchange visitors primarily as a temporary labor solution (Caravatti, 2015; Department of Professional Employees, 2021b; Terry, 2018; US Department of State, 2016). With few studies conducted on Filipino special education exchange teachers, it is unknown if this claim is illustrative of their experience. However, in exchange for their human capital investment to the organization in the form of labor, it is assumed that much like professional development opportunities are being offered to local or native-born teachers, on-the-job learning or training opportunities are also being provided to Filipino special education exchange teachers by their host school districts. These assumed professional skill gains, acquired by the Filipino special education teachers through their participation in the teacher exchange program, serve as critical human capital that can be reinvested upon their return to improve services for Filipino students with disabilities and support local initiatives that aim to advance the overall quality of the provision of special education services in the Philippines (Christ, 2020).

Special Education in the Philippines

The right of Filipino students with disabilities to education is protected by the Philippine Constitution, the Philippine Education Act of 1982, and in order to further reinforce these rights, the Philippine government also enacted Republic Act 7277, otherwise known as the Magna Carta for the Disabled. Signed into law in 1992, the Magna Carta for the Disabled upholds the rights of individuals with disabilities to full participation and integration in society via instituting requirements for educational institutions to develop educational policies, programs, and special requirements for persons with disabilities. At the same time, as specified in Republic Act 344, also known as the Accessibility Law of 1982, reinforces the establishment of accessible facilities and installation of devices that enhance the mobility of persons with disabilities (Dela Fuente,

2021; Inciong & Quijano, 2004; Jocson & Buenrostro, 2022; Toquero, 2020). Two years after the Magna Carta for the Disabled was signed, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) released a statement called the Salamanca statement, which states that “all children, should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have” (UNESCO, 1994, p. 11), however, while the Philippines affirms its commitment to UNESCO’s “Education for All” initiative, at the time of its release, an assessment of the state of the provision of education services for students with disabilities in the Philippines revealed that 99.4% of school-aged students with special needs are either unidentified or out of school, and as such, are not gaining access to the education that they need. Thus, to ensure that Philippine disability education policies are in line with the global agenda for inclusion, the Philippine Department of Education released a series of orders, i.e., Department of Education Order 26 series of 1997 (Inciong & Quijano, 2004; Jocson & Buenrostro, 2022; Raguindin et al., 2021)

The Department of Education Order 26 series of 1997 is a series of orders that prompted the establishment of special education centers within regular schools across the country. The series of orders includes a requirement for school divisions to designate at least one special education center, also known as the Resource Center for Inclusion, to oversee the provision of special education services within a specified locale (Inciong & Quijano, 2004; Jocson & Buenrostro, 2022; Sagun-Ongtangco et al., 2021). Guided by the inclusion rationale of increasing access to learning and participation of students with disabilities through the maximization of expert human resources, consolidation of program support, facilitation of administrative functions, and advancement through research, special education centers serve as the primary resource that provides support for students with disabilities in regular education settings. These

supports include ongoing assessments, staff training, guidance counseling, parent education, production of teacher and student materials, planning instruction, and opportunities for collaboration with regular education teachers (Lee et al., 2024; Inciong & Quijano, 2004). Furthermore, the resource centers also provide a range of services for students whose disability impacts them at varying degrees, e.g., for students who are fully integrated or partially mainstreamed in general education class settings, the center provides resource room teaching, itinerant teaching, or cooperative classes. Whereas the provision of specialized, individualized instruction in self-contained special classes or through itinerant home-based settings is being provided for students whose needs cannot be met within the general education setting. Adopting a “school within a school” model, the establishment of special education centers paved the way for expanding services and increasing schools' capacity to accommodate students with disabilities (Inciong & Quijano, 2004). However, despite the establishment of 648 special education centers across the country and having regular schools offer special education programs, many Filipino students with disabilities are still underserved, with reports even indicating that 97% of Filipino students with disabilities are yet to be reached and granted access to participate in the public school system. In taking action to address this concern, the Philippine Department of Education released an order in 2009, i.e., Department of Education Order No. 72, which mandated schools to include students with special needs in general education classes (Faragher et al., 2021; Jocson & Buenrostro, 2022; Lee et al., 2024; Muega, 2016; Raguindin et al., 2021).

Inclusive Education Initiatives in the Philippines

Inclusive education is “an approach that safeguards opportunities for students with disabilities to have a shared learning experience alongside their non-disabled peers in the general

education classrooms” (Sagun-Ongtangco et al., 2021, p. 623). In implementing inclusive education in the Philippines, the Philippine Department of Education specifies three program placement options, i.e., full inclusion, partial inclusion, and self-contained (Inciong & Quijano, 2004). Furthermore, according to a study on inclusive education practices in Asia, the provision of inclusive education in the Philippines is implemented by creating programs where students are categorized according to their disability (Faragher et al., 2021). To illustrate, students with hearing impairments are typically enrolled in regular education classes; students with visual impairment, through an assessment process, are considered for placement in regular settings as appropriate; students with autism are first placed in self-contained classes where the focus is on basic readiness and social skills training; while students with intellectual disabilities are enrolled in self-contained classes organized in grade spans, i.e., Pre Elementary, Lower Primary, Upper Primary and Intermediate (Faragher et al., 2021; Inciong & Quijano, 2004).

To support students with disabilities within the continuum of placement options, Department Order No. 72 instituted a requirement that schools develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The IEP is a written document developed by a team that constitutes the provision of FAPE, i.e., specially designed instruction to meet the needs of a student with a disability at no cost to the parents (Sagun-Ongtangco et al., 2021; O’Brien, & Beattie, 2019; Muega, 2016). The contents of an IEP are typically based on assessments that are carried out by developmental pediatricians in the Philippines, and while these assessment reports do not follow a standard Philippine protocol, the themes derived from the report, e.g., student profile, present level of condition, clinical impressions, developmental age, diagnosis, and recommendations, are used by staff to develop an actionable IEP for the student with a disability (Jocson & Buenrostro, 2022). Tailored to meet the specific needs of the student, the IEP functions as the central

document that spells out exactly what special education services the student with a disability will receive and why they are needed (Hickman, 2020; Muega, 2016; O'Brien & Beattie, 2019).

Despite the inclusive education mandates specified in Department of Education Order No. 72, studies indicate implementation gaps such as insufficiencies in materials or resources, inadequacies in the facilities, and a lack of standard procedures or clear guidelines for developing and implementing IEPs. This stated, many general education teachers feel unprepared to support students with disabilities in their classrooms, and a need for quality training has been expressed by both teachers and administrators (Dela Fuente, 2021; Faragher et al., 2021; Jocson & Buenrostro, 2022; Muega, 2016; Raguindin et al., 2021; Sagun-Ongtangco et al., 2021). To reap the benefits of inclusive education, proper support needs to be in place. While the Philippine Department of Education policies for the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes are well intended, the establishment of an effective inclusive educational practice for Filipino students with disabilities requires clearer guidelines and more thoughtful implementation (Muega, 2016).

Philippine Republic Act 11650 of 2022

While more than a decade has passed since Order 72 was released by the Philippine Department of Education, a need for clearer guidance on implementing inclusive education continues to persist in the practice of special education in the Philippines. Prompted by this need, in March 2022, the Philippine government signed Republic Act 11650 into law to specify guidelines and policies for regional offices, school divisions, and districts to refer to in order to ensure equitable access to quality education for every learner with a disability in both public and private educational institutions (Garcia, 2023; Gita-Carlos, 2022; Magsambol, 2022; A. Yang, 2022). Also known as the “Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with

Disabilities in Support of the Inclusive Education Act,” this law intends to reinforce the protection of the rights of learners with disabilities to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), by ensuring that appropriate steps are taken to make education accessible through the provision of appropriate support and services, establish the development of Individualized Education Plans (IEP) as a legal requirement, and include provisions regarding facilities, infrastructures, assistive devices, and other reasonable accommodations that can support access for students with disabilities. Furthermore, the law also mandated the establishment of Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRC), wherein, through a multi-year roadmap, a goal was set to establish and maintain at least one center in all 146 cities and 1488 municipalities in the country, which includes the renaming of all already established SPED centers as an ILRC (CNN Philippines, 2022; Gita-Carlos, 2022; Magsambol, 2022; Republic of the Philippines Department of Education, 2022; A. Yang, 2022).

The ILRC is a physical or virtual center where free support and services for students with disabilities will be delivered, along with consultation, counseling, technical assistance, and training for general education teachers, school administrators, parents, and other caregivers (Gita-Carlos, 2022; Republic of the Philippines Department of Education, 2022). Furthermore, ILRCs will also be staffed with a multidisciplinary team whose role is to conduct education assessments and diagnoses, determine appropriate services and placement options, and develop IEPs. This multidisciplinary team is composed of an educational psychologist, guidance counselor, psychometrician, developmental pediatrician, neurological psychiatrist, physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech and language pathologist, reading specialist, braille specialist, Filipino sign language specialist and interpreter, visual specialist, special education teacher, and the ILRC supervisor. In addition, part of the responsibilities of the multidisciplinary

teams in the ILRCs is also taking the lead in implementing a Child Find System, which will ensure that all learners with disabilities are identified, located, and evaluated (Gita-Carlos, 2022; Republic of the Philippines Department of Education, 2022; A. Yang, 2022). With all these recent developments, the system of special education in the Philippines is closely reflecting the more thorough and systematic special education systems and procedures that are established in the United States (Jocson & Buenrostro, 2022; Muega, 2016), and while still in its infancy, the successful attainment of the goals of inclusive education will need a teacher workforce that is familiar with these systems. As such, through their experience and understanding of a more robust and established structure in the provision of special education, returning Filipino special education teachers may pave the way in advancing the goals of inclusive education in the Philippines through the reinvestment of the human capital gains they had acquired via their participation in the teacher exchange program in the United States.

Summary

The context of the teacher shortages was examined in this literature review through the lens of labor market supply and demand variables, which revealed that the national teacher shortage is a result of a constellation of factors, i.e., a decline in teacher preparation program enrollment, decreasing teacher education program completion rates, teacher attrition, and teacher turnover (Sutcher et al., 2019; Peyton et al., 2021). The literature also highlighted how certain subject areas are more heavily impacted by teacher shortages, such as science and math, and illuminated how special education is the most significantly affected field (Peyton et al., 2021). While efforts to address the teacher shortage, as mentioned in the literature, have been funneled towards building the teacher workforce through attracting teachers to pursue a special education teaching career, along with incentives to stabilize the teacher workforce, it is doubtful that

teacher supply will be able to keep up with the increasing rates of students needing special education services anytime soon (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Mason-Williams et al., 2020; Sutchter et al., 2019). Thus, in addition to the literature review covering strategies that have been implemented to attract and retain teachers and strengthen the teacher supply pipeline, a synthesis of available literature was also conducted to illustrate how states have expanded their search beyond national borders by recruiting foreign teachers via the U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange Program, and how part of the growing Filipino diaspora in the United States is that of Filipino exchange program teachers (Brown & Stevick, 2014; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2020; Paine, 2019; Terry, 2018).

The Philippines has consistently been in the top three countries since 2016, with teachers coming to the United States to participate in the teacher exchange program (US Department of State, 2022). Thus, it should come as no surprise that many school districts nationwide have the Filipino minority as part of their staff. However, while the related topic of the Filipino diaspora of immigrants was also explored in the literature review, it appears that, despite the influx of Filipino exchange teachers in the last decade, there is hardly any literature that represents and highlights the experience and voice of this subgroup of the teacher workforce in the United States. With the number of Filipino exchange teachers entering the United States only expected to grow, an exploration of this topic is important because gaining an understanding of the experience of Filipino special education teachers teaching in U.S. schools provides insight into their exchange experience and whether or not the goals of the teacher exchange program are consistent with their personal experiences. In finding out the answer to the central question investigated in this phenomenological study, “What do Filipino special education teachers perceive as benefits of participating in the exchange program?” Assumptions that are centered

around human capital theory were also presented, along with information about the provision of special education in the Philippines to provide additional context for the study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the human capital gains acquired by Filipino special education teachers in California through their participation in the U.S. Department of State's teacher exchange program. To achieve this aim, a hermeneutic phenomenological approach was applied. This methodology section provides a comprehensive description of the research design, focus questions, setting, and procedures implemented for recruiting and selecting participants. Additionally, it offers an overview of the interpretive framework and philosophical assumptions guiding the phenomenological inquiry, along with an outline of the procedures for collecting and analyzing the data. Considerations taken by the researcher to ensure that this study was carried out within ethical parameters are also discussed, followed by a summary that concludes the chapter's key points.

Research Design

Qualitative research approaches allow insight into this complex world of the human experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A method that is specifically poised to yield detailed information on the constructed and/or attached meanings that an individual or groups of individuals have on a lived experience is phenomenology. Phenomenology seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon, i.e., an occurrence, event, or experience (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2017). The purpose of engaging in phenomenological research is to discover and illuminate how participants holistically experience a phenomenon from the consciousness or perspective of those who have lived it (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Farrell, 2020; Moustakas, 1994; Neubauer et al., 2019; Patton, 2015; Patton & Broward, 2023; Stolz, 2020; Van Manen, 2014; 2016). As the chosen approach for this qualitative inquiry, this research sought to uncover

the essence or meaning of the experiences of Filipino special education teachers through thoughtful prompting of first-person perspectives on their experiences as participants in the U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange Program. There are several approaches to phenomenology, and while each approach has its distinct philosophical basis, any approach has a common focus, i.e., “how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (Patton, 2015, p. 115).

Phenomenology provides a theoretical guideline for researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of phenomena related to the subjective reality of human experience (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen; 2014). The classic approach to phenomenology, which formed the philosophical basis for the other phenomenological approaches, is transcendental phenomenology (Patton, 2015). This approach is termed transcendental because it proposes maintaining an objective stance in the pursuit of understanding the subjective consciousness of one's experience and, as such, asserts a phenomenological attitude that requires exercising *epoché* (Moustakas, 1994). Also referred to interchangeably in other phenomenological studies as bracketing, *epoché* is the conscious effort of the researcher to suspend biases, e.g., values, judgments, preconceived notions, or experience, to allow for neutral insights to emerge (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Farrell, 2020; Moustakas, 1994). However, while this phenomenology approach set a foundation for an objective approach to the subjective human experience, it can be argued that human consciousness and the world are one. Thus, studying a phenomenon cannot be identified solely from the persons who lived it, nor can it be identified merely from the researcher, who may have preconceived ideas of the phenomenon that prompted the researcher's interest and/or may have had a related experience. As such, completely bracketing out a researcher's presuppositions and beliefs, while idyllic, is impossible because the subjective

interconnection of the participant's and the researcher's perspectives is always in coexistence (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leigh-Osroosh, 2021; Moustakas, 1994; Neubauer et al., 2019; Patton & Broward, 2023; Van Manen, 2014). Given that the researcher for this study is also Filipino and has a special education background (see Appendix J), a hermeneutic or interpretive versus a transcendental phenomenological approach was deemed to be more appropriate, as it acknowledges the experience of the researcher as part of the inquiry process.

Proposed by German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889 -1976), the hermeneutic perspective on how experience is to be explored asserts a position that understanding human experience necessitates a reference to the person's background and contends that every encounter entails interpretation that is rooted in the person's prior knowledge or beliefs (Farrell, 2020; Neubauer et al., 2019). Oriented towards hermeneutics, or what are the "texts of life," Heidegger's phenomenological approach emphasizes immersion in the phenomenon rather than detachment, advocating that the researchers' intrinsic awareness is fundamental to gaining a deeper understanding of participants' experiences. From a heuristic perspective, this approach to phenomenology acknowledges that knowledge or meaning is a co-constructed endeavor, where the researcher's prior knowledge about a phenomenon can be leveraged and that, as a result of critical analysis and reflection, new information merges with prior conceptions which can lead to new insights or understandings via an integration of the participants' descriptions with the researcher's interpretation of meaning, i.e., fusion of horizons (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton & Broward, 2023). Thus, the hermeneutic approach views the phenomenological inquiry as neither objective nor subjective, rather intersubjective, as it relies on the unification of the participant's description of their experience and the researcher's interpretation in constructing meaning (Stolz, 2020). Through this phenomenological lens, it is thus recognized that the researcher's

consciousness offers specific structures that serve as gateways that provide more depth and meaning and, as such, enrich the inquiry into uncovering the subjective layers of the experience of the Filipino special education exchange teachers (Aguas, 2022; Farrell, 2020; Neubauer et al., 2019; Van Manen, 2016).

Research Questions

Through the work-based opportunities provided by the teacher exchange program, foreign teachers get to learn about educational practices outside the context of their home country, which in turn can enhance their cultural awareness and expand their skill set when they return to their home country after their participation in the exchange program (US Department of State, 2021). In capturing the essence of the experience of the Filipino subgroup among special education teachers and reiterating the purpose of the phenomenological inquiry, the central research question and the sub-questions that guided the exploration of their experiences are the following (see Appendix D):

Central Research Question

What do Filipino special education teachers perceive as benefits of participating in the exchange program?

Sub-Question One

What opportunities do Filipino special education exchange teachers perceive were provided that allowed them to share their teaching practices and culture?

Sub-Question Two

What types of support do Filipino special education exchange teachers perceive has helped them adjust and build their efficacy to teach American students with disabilities?

Sub-Question Three

What special education practices do the Filipino special education exchange teachers intend to implement upon their return to support students with disabilities in their home country?

Setting and Participants

The essence of an experience as an outcome of the phenomenological inquiry is derived from the participants' input in the study (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, to uncover the textural and structural descriptions needed to describe the essence of the exchange teacher experience, the researcher thoughtfully considered the setting and selection of participants for this study. This section describes the rationale for the choice of setting, as well as how participants were recruited and selected.

Setting

Staffing special education teacher vacancies is a persistent challenge for many states nationwide. In a study conducted on analyzing special education teacher shortages between states, it was noted that states that serve a higher population of students from low socio-economic backgrounds and have more culturally and linguistically diverse students comparatively experience more shortages (Burstein et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2022; Peyton et al., 2020). Considering these factors, the setting for this research is the state of California, which, according to reports, is more racially diverse than other populous states such as Texas, New York, Florida, and Pennsylvania (World Population Review, 2022). Demographically, the state has a student population of six million students, 80% of whom are classified as students of color and 60% coming from low socio-economic backgrounds. Of the total student population, 12.5% are identified with a disability, with the racial composition of students with disabilities mirroring the entire state student population (California Department of Education, 2021).

Participants

Qualitative study approaches facilitate a deeper understanding of real-life phenomena and the individuals experiencing them. Consequently, participants in qualitative studies are purposefully selected to ensure that the gathered information aligns with the research objectives and focus (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the exchange teacher experience, the participants for this study were purposefully selected based on specific criteria, i.e., (1) they are Filipino special education teachers who are (2) teaching in a California school district, and, (3) at the least already in their second year of participation in the U.S. Department of State's Exchange Teacher Program. Participants must meet the specified time-based criteria as this requirement enhances the likelihood that the teachers have acclimated to the host schools and have had opportunities to either share their culture or undergo work-based training.

In phenomenological studies, data are typically gathered from a participant pool ranging from five to 25 individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Liberty University, 2019; Patton, 2015). Therefore, to ensure an adequate sample size to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of the Filipino exchange teachers, the researcher aimed to recruit between 10 to 15 Filipino special education exchange teachers. It was assumed that within this range, data saturation would be reached, indicating the point at which no new insights, dimensions, or categories are identified, which then signals the endpoint for data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Liberty University, 2019; Patton, 2015). For this study, data was collected from 10 exchange teachers who all met the specified criteria for participation.

Recruitment Plan

In order to develop an understanding of a phenomenon, phenomenological researchers conduct their studies among a group of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This being stated, the selection of Filipino exchange teachers for this study was influenced by (1) the influx of Filipino exchange teachers in the United States, which, according to U.S. Department of State records, has increased to almost 200% between 2018 to 2022, i.e., 786 to 2194 Filipino exchange teachers; (2) the exchange teacher data from the U.S. Department of State where it indicated that California has ranked among the top 10 states that have welcomed exchange teachers from 2016 to 2022, ranking in the top five from 2016 to 2020, and ranking 7th in 2021 and 2022; and (3) the demographic composition of teachers in the state of California, where 1.53% of the state's public school teachers are Filipino (California Department of Education, 2022a; US Department of State, 2022). Despite these statistics, the exact recruitment pool for Filipino special education teachers in California is unknown to the researcher at the time of the study. Nonetheless, a review of records maintained by the U.S. Department of State was conducted to get an idea of the number of Filipino exchange teachers in the state. According to these records, between 2018 to 2022, 1,122 participating teachers from various countries worldwide have been placed in schools and educational institutions across California. The records also revealed that, while not aggregated to indicate the exact number of exchange teachers of Philippine origin, 5,517 Filipino teachers entered the country within that same period (US Department of State, 2022). Furthermore, while no formal data was available that provides information regarding the specialization or subject area that the Filipino exchange teachers currently fill during the time that this research was conducted, news agencies and online articles have indicated that exchange teachers from the Philippines fill many of the critical need

positions, which includes special education, in school districts across the country (Ball & Lynn, 2019; Craft, 2018; Critchfield & Donovan, 2020; Esquilona, 2022; Heubeck, 2022; Holt, 2022; Khmara, 2019; Lee, 2021; Longhi, 2022; Matthews, 2021; Moolten, 2022; Phu, 2022; Rankin, 2023; Tadayon, 2022; Yan et al., 2019; H. Yang, 2022).

Participant recruitment commenced after obtaining approval from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A). Participants were purposefully recruited from the undetermined pool of Filipino special education exchange teachers using criterion and snowball sampling methods. Criterion sampling facilitated the collection of data exclusively from individuals best suited to provide information about the explored phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Since the target participants for this study constituted a small subgroup of teachers scattered across the state, the recruitment process initially employed convenience sampling, where the recruitment of participants began by reaching out to Filipino special education exchange teachers in the locale where the researcher lives and works. Subsequently, snowball or chain sampling methods were also applied to broaden the scope of data collection. In this manner, participants were able to assist the researcher by making recommendations regarding other Filipino special education exchange teachers who teach in other regions in the state of California (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Liberty University, 2019; Patton, 2015).

In carrying out this phenomenological study, the researcher sent out a study participation invitation (see Appendix B) through email, text, and social media messaging platforms. Through these outreach methods, the researcher connected with a total of 32 potential participants. From this pool of potential participants, four declined to participate, seven were ineligible, and six were unresponsive to the invite (see Appendix G Recruitment and Data Collection Audit Trail). A total of 15 teachers who met the criteria expressed interest in participating in this study. From

this group, an initial pool of 10 Filipino special education teachers was selected for maximum variation purposes.

All selected participants work in school districts in California, half of which are located in the San Francisco Bay Area. In contrast, the other half is located in the Central Coast region of the state. Moreover, a third of the participants are teaching at the high school level, two at a middle school level, four are teaching in the elementary grades, while one works as a special day class teacher at a special school for middle school to adult-aged students with disabilities. To allow for maximum variation, the selected teachers work in 10 different school sites, in nine different districts, across four counties. Additionally, the selected teachers are also assigned as special education teachers in a variety of special programs across grade levels. Table 2 provides a summary of the maximum variation sampling for the participants in this study.

Table 2

Maximum Variation Sampling

Region	Number of Participants/ Level Taught	Program
5 Participants Bay Area Region	1 Participant, Elementary Level 2 Participants, Middle School Level 2 Participants, High School Level	2 RSP (Mild/Mod) 1 Special Day Class (Mild/Mod) 2 Special Day Class (Mod/Sev)
5 Participants Central Coast Region	3 Participants, Elementary Level 1 Participant High School Level 1 Participant Special School	1 RSP (Mild/Mod) 1 SDC (Mild/Mod) 3 Mod/Sev SDC

Note. RSP: Resource Specialist Program

SDC: Special Day Class

Mild/Mod: Mild to Moderate

Mod/Sev: Moderate to Severe

Participants in this study are all Filipino special education exchange teachers who teach in California. Seven out of the 10 participants are already in their last year of participation in the teacher exchange program, while the other three are either in their second year, third year, or

fourth year of participation. All selected participants are licensed to teach in the Philippines, and their years of teaching experience, prior to participation in the teacher exchange program, span from four to 28 years. Additionally, eight participants are still working towards complete satisfaction with the state licensure requirements, while two have already cleared their education specialist credentials. Table 3 provides the demographic information of the selected participants, where, in order to avoid revealing their true identities, participant names were replaced with pseudonyms, and their ages are reported in 5-year ranges.

Table 3

Filipino Special Education Exchange Teacher Participants

Teacher*	Age Range Gender	Years Taught Prior to TEP Participation	Highest Degree Earned	Current Credential Status	Years into TEP Participation
Amihan	36 to 40 Female	4 years	Bachelors	Preliminary Mod/Sev	4th Year
Datu	26 to 30 Male	6 years	Double Masters	Preliminary Mod/Sev	3rd Year
Diwata	31 to 35 LGBTQ	6 years	Bachelors	Cleared, Mild/Mod	5th year
Hiyas	50 to 55 Female	28 years	Masters	Preliminary Mod/Sev	2nd Year
Ina	31 to 35 Female	8 years	Bachelors	Preliminary Mild/Mod	5th Year
Kaya	41 to 45 Female	16 years	Double Masters	Preliminary Mod/Sev	5th Year
Malaya	46 to 50 Female	14 years	Masters	Preliminary Mod/Sev	5th Year
Mutya	41 to 45 Female	15 years	Bachelors	Preliminary Mod/Sev	5th Year
Tala	36 to 40 Female	10 years	Masters	Cleared, Mild/Mod	5th Year
Yumi	41 to 45	13 years	Masters	Preliminary	5th Year

Female

Mild/Mod

Note. *Pseudonyms

TEP: Teacher Exchange Program

All selected individuals demonstrated an understanding of the study's specified purpose, time commitment, data collection procedures, risks, voluntary nature, and confidentiality safeguards. After consent forms were signed (see Appendix C), which included consent to record the interview, all 10 teachers engaged with the researcher to share their experience through in-depth interviews, organizational documents, and letter writing. While the researcher intended to recruit 10 to 15 participants, no additional teachers were recruited beyond the tenth person as data saturation was reached by the seventh interview (see Appendix H). However, to satisfy the minimum number of participants required, data collection continued onto the tenth participant (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Liberty University, 2019; Patton, 2015).

Researcher Positionality

Interpretive frameworks in qualitative research assisted with the design, process, and assumptions for the current study (Collins & Stockton, 2018). Given that the focus of this research was to uncover the experiential gains of Filipino special education exchange teachers, selecting a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to conducting this proposed inquiry was interpreted through a Social Constructivist lens. This section presents the study's interpretive framework and the researcher's philosophical stance that guided the study.

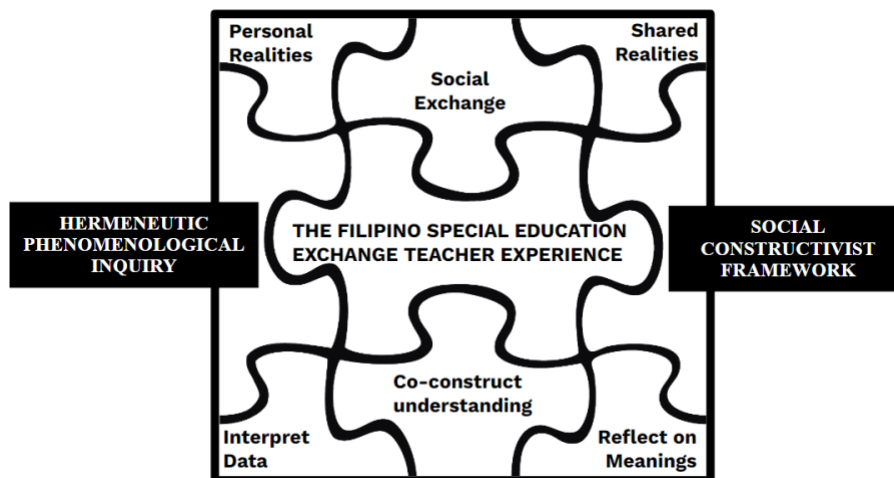
Interpretive Framework

Social constructivism is the interpretive lens guiding the design and direction of this hermeneutic phenomenological research. To elaborate, constructivism asserts that knowledge and learning are constructed within the individual, and as such, constructivists would argue a position that the perceived realities of an individual are a reflection of their acquired mental

constructs, i.e., the meanings attached to an experience (Schunk, 2020). Thus, from a social constructivist standpoint, it is claimed that social interactions influence these realities, and as such, also shown in Figure 2, meaning construction becomes an active and constant process, rather than a stagnant one. In utilizing this framework, the co-researcher dynamic within the hermeneutic inquiry process is highlighted, emphasizing not only the socio-interactive process in understanding the participants' perspectives on an experience but also acknowledging how their backgrounds will have an influence on their perceptions of the exchange teacher participation phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Figure 2

Hermeneutic Phenomenological Inquiry and the Social Constructivist Framework



Social Constructivism

The social constructivist framework, primarily used in qualitative research, finds its theoretical roots in social learning theory. First introduced by Lev Vygotsky, who posited the idea that cognition is a product of social interaction, it was proposed that what was acquired through such interaction becomes integrated into the individual's mind (Vygotsky, 1978). The concept of social constructionism is closely aligned with the social constructivist framework,

which promotes the idea that knowledge construction occurs and is sustained through social interaction. Thus, pointing to the social constructivist paradigm being at the nexus of social learning and social constructionism, the social constructivism framework embraces the notion that individuals seek an understanding of their world, with their interpretations or meanings derived from experiences being termed as “constructions” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 24). Furthermore, this framework assumes that social, cultural, historical, and individual factors iteratively influence the development of constructs, uncovering reflections of what the individual would perceive as reality. Consequently, given this argument, it can be postulated that constructs built from experience can vary from person to person (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 24; Nickerson, 2021; Schunk, 2020). Considering all of these aspects, the adoption of a social constructivist framework for this study on Filipino special education exchange teachers facilitated the exploration of the degree of similarities and differences in how participants understand their experiences. This framework also aided in identifying constructs or meanings that the Filipino teachers attributed to their realities and, subsequently, through the hermeneutic phenomenological reduction process, assisted with the integration of these constructs to determine the collective reality or composite whole of their exchange program experience.

Philosophical Assumptions

Phenomenology research is focused on providing a better understanding of the phenomenon's essence, i.e., essential truths of the lived experience. From a philosophical standpoint, it posits that knowledge and understanding are embedded in our everyday world, and truths about the experience emerge from the perspectives of the people who lived it. In the pursuit of these truths, i.e., the “what” and “how” a phenomenon is experienced, this hermeneutic phenomenological study on the experiential gains of Filipino special education

exchange teachers was influenced by specific ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Farrell, 2020).

Ontological Assumptions

Ontological assumptions are fundamental beliefs concerning aspects of reality and can be understood as beliefs about one's perception of truth (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Within a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, ontology supports the idea that reality, or the meaning people derive from their experiences, is both internal, meaning resides in the consciousness of the individual and is influenced by the external world they inhabit, such as language and social relationships (Neubauer et al., 2019; Seidman, 2019). Given the hermeneutic perspective on the intersubjectivity of human experience, where meaning is seen as a co-constructed process, hermeneutic phenomenological researchers would thus argue that individuals cannot experience a phenomenon without reference to their background and understanding, rendering knowledge relatively subjective. Consequently, the same situation can be perceived by individuals in multiple ways, and, as such, highlights the diversity in meaning that can be attributed to a shared phenomenon (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Neubauer et al., 2019). With this in mind, the inquiry into the experience of Filipino special education teachers involved collecting data from multiple participants using various methods to capture the individual values that participants attributed to their exchange program experience. Subsequently, the extracted meaning from each individual experience was then utilized to inform the development of the composite descriptions of their collective experience.

Epistemological Assumptions

Epistemological assumptions, which pertain to specific beliefs about aspects of knowledge, play a crucial role in shaping how knowledge is constructed in the research process

(Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). In the pursuit of uncovering the essence of a phenomenon through phenomenology, the epistemological assumption was that the conceptualization of reality is co-constructed within the social context, stemming from listening to participant stories and occurring within the exchange of questions and answers (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton & Broward, 2023). From this epistemological perspective, as well as from a social constructivist standpoint, it was assumed that the mental constructs uncovered in the data collection and analysis process are an outcome of the reciprocal and relational interaction between the researcher and the participants (Neubauer et al., 2019). Moreover, epistemological assumptions are inherently linked to because knowledge is derived from interpretation and understanding (Patton & Broward, 2023). Thus, within the co-researcher dynamic, the researcher occupied a unique position as an insider and an outsider in the research study. As an insider, the researcher was deeply involved in the research process, directly engaging with participants and becoming immersed in the context under study. Simultaneously, as an outsider, the researcher maintained a degree of objectivity and distance necessary for rigorous analysis and interpretation. These preconceptions and prior understandings that the researcher brought into the study are an integral part of this dynamic, as these shaped the researcher's perspective and influenced how the data collected was interpreted (Neubauer et al., 2019). However, within the framework of applying a hermeneutic pursuit to phenomenology, it is crucial for the researcher also to acknowledge and critically reflect on these preconceptions to mitigate bias and ensure that the findings are firmly grounded in the participants' experiences rather than solely from researcher interpretations. By embracing this dual role, the researcher could effectively navigate the co-researcher dynamic, contributing to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study while still maintaining the phenomenological focus on what can be understood or learned from engaging with

participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Farrell, 2020; Neubauer et al., 2019). This focus made it possible to facilitate a research process that served as a platform that gave voice to the Filipino special education exchange teacher's perspectives of their experience.

Axiological Assumptions

Since this phenomenological research derives its findings from the texts gathered from participants, it was critical that the selected data collection methods not only align with the research questions but it was also beneficial to the research process that the researcher first establish a relationship with each participant in order to create an environment that is conducive for an open sharing of experiences (Alase, 2017). Additionally, the researcher also needed to acknowledge that these uncovered insights are value-laden (Van Manen, 2014), which meant that specific axiological assumptions would have an influence on the construction of meaning and/or knowledge and, as such, would have an impact on the co-structor dynamic between the researcher and the participants. From this perspective, the implication of axiological assumptions in the hermeneutic research process relates to the degree of bias the researcher brings into the research, particularly since the researcher's values coalesce with the results during the construction of generalizations (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Stolz, 2020; Van Manen, 2014).

While the researcher's shared background as a Filipino special education teacher was an asset in interpreting meaning, the researcher still needed to conscientiously maintain the inquiry's focus on the participants' experiences. To this aim, member checking was embedded in the data collection and analysis process to ensure that the identified essences resonated with and were attuned to the participants' experience. Through member checks, the researcher made an active and conscious effort to create a forum, where the experiences of Filipino special education

exchange teachers were not only represented and amplified but also remained in the foreground (Aguas, 2022; Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Neubauer et al., 2019; Schwandt, 2015; Van Manen, 2014).

Researcher's Role

Researchers play a pivotal role in qualitative research approaches. In the context of phenomenological investigation, the researcher aims to discern the meaningful patterns and themes within the collective experiences of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, to unveil the thematic aspects or structures of the participants' experiences, the researcher engaged in reflexivity to interpret what lay beneath the surface of their narratives. By adopting an interpretive stance guided by reflection, the inquiry process gained more depth, encompassing an understanding of the meaningful aspects of the experience, i.e., the "how" rather than solely describing the "what" was experienced (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Farrell, 2020; Moustakas, 1994; Neubauer et al., 2019; Patton, 2015; Seidman, 2019; Van Manen, 2016).

As the primary investigator, phenomenological researchers serve as a key human instrument in the inquiry process. As such, it was essential for the researcher to recognize that their preconceptions and biases will influence data interpretation (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Neubauer et al, 2019). Since the researcher's interpretive stance for this research on Filipino special education exchange teachers was informed by certain fore-structures or fore-conceptions of the topic, i.e., theoretical frameworks, literature reviews, education, and personal experiences, adopting a hermeneutic phenomenological mindset involved an acknowledgment and awareness on how these could impact the degree that the researcher was able to regulate the shifts in thinking and understanding that are simultaneously occurring during the interpretation process. It was vital that the researcher played an active role in the dynamic process of interpretation. Thus,

rather than completely bracketing researcher perspectives, critical reflection was exercised, i.e., researcher reflexivity, on both the themes of the participants' experiences and the researcher's preconceptions, in order to not just facilitate the regulation of biases but also promote an iterative cycle of knowledge construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Neubauer et al., 2019; Patton & Broward, 2023). In pursuing such an endeavor, the researcher thus assumed a position of curiosity about the participants' stories, actively listened to their responses, and remained attentive to the details, including non-verbal cues. Furthermore, rapport with participants was also established before data collection began, and in taking this preparatory step prior to the actual participant-researcher engagement, a foundation for an environment where participants felt comfortable to disclose detailed accounts of their experience was created, which allowed for the full picture or form of the phenomenon's essence to emerge (Alase, 2017; Seidman, 2019; Sundler et al., 2019).

Procedures

Hermeneutic phenomenological research aims to uncover the structural and composite descriptions of an experience as narrated by participants. To understand the human experience effectively, the researcher strategically planned the research design, which included preparation and planning for how the necessary permissions would be secured, how participants would be recruited and selected, and how rigor in data collection and analysis would be ensured (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Moustakas, 1994; Neubauer et al., 2019). Before recruiting participants, approval was sought from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Upon receiving IRB approval (see Appendix A), the recruitment of Filipino special education exchange teachers commenced.

Participants, also referred to as co-researchers, were purposefully sampled based on specific criteria outlined in the recruitment invitation (see Appendix B). This invitation, which detailed the research purpose, process, benefits, and voluntary nature of participation, was disseminated via email and/or social media messaging platforms such as Facebook Messenger. Co-researchers were initially recruited through convenience sampling, then followed by snowball or chain sampling methods. With these methods, the recruitment of participants expanded to other parts of the state. After securing IRB approval and recruiting participants, obtaining consent from selected individuals was the next step. At this stage, transparent communication regarding the purpose, time investment, benefits, and risks of participation was provided to enable informed decision-making. Consent forms (see Appendix C) included statements ensuring participants' right to privacy and confidentiality, measures to secure their information, and reassurance of voluntary participation without fear of negative consequences for opting out. Upon obtaining informed consent, collecting data from participants through in-depth interviews, organizational documents, and letter writing began.

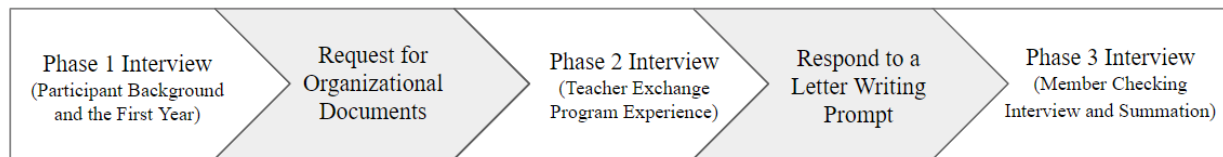
Data Collection Plan

When planning to conduct phenomenological research, the interrelated steps of participant selection, types of information needed, and the design of instruments and protocols for collecting data should be carefully and strategically planned by the researcher so that they best align with the purpose of the research (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Patton, 2015). To ensure that adequate data collection took place and that the implemented methods adequately and appropriately addressed the purpose of the study, it was essential to keep in mind that the central question to be investigated was aligned with all aspects of the

data collection process and that the data collection protocols that were developed also addressed the research's sub-questions (Patton, 2015). Thus, to yield findings that satisfy the research questions, data for this study was collected through three-phased in-depth interviews, organizational documents, and letter writing. These data collection procedures, along with a strategically planned sequence, followed the logic of replication, wherein the procedures were replicated for each participating teacher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Figure 3 illustrates the implemented sequence for data collection, and the rationale for this sequence is described within each of the following sections.

Figure 3

Sequence of Data Collection



Individual Interviews

Phenomenological inquiry lends itself to discovering meaning in the experience of participants. This type of research relies heavily on the input of the selected participants. A common means for gathering data in qualitative research is interviewing (Grossoehme, 2014; Patton, 2015). As a mode of inquiry, individual interviews can provide insights into the thoughts, feelings, and opinions surrounding an individual's experience. Conducting in-depth interviews involves a process that solicits information from the interviewees through a series of questions the researcher asks, which participants respond to using their own words (Colombo-Dougovito, 2019; Grossoehme, 2014; Patton, 2015; Seidman, 2019; Van Manen, 2016; 2017). Through this data collection method, an opportunity to deeply explore the participants' individual experiences was presented, enabling the researcher to find answers that gave rise to meanings each person

ascribed to their exchange program experience. In utilizing interviews to collect data for this research, the researcher was in control of selecting the interview approach, the types of questions asked, and the response situation or scheduling interview sessions with participants at a mutually agreeable time and place. Furthermore, to gather detailed first-hand accounts from participants, it was important for the researcher to first focus on building rapport and creating an atmosphere where participants felt safe and relaxed to share their stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2019). Thus, the interviews were conducted informally, akin to a dialogue or social conversation, allowing participants to respond more openly, honestly, and comprehensively.

The interview process was an integral aspect of the phenomenological inquiry. This stated, the phenomenological interview process was also thoughtfully designed to gather in-depth and detailed responses for when participants were asked to reconstruct their experience. To this aim, a semi-structured interview approach was followed, Seidman's (2019) interview structure was applied, and the interview protocol used as a guide to facilitate the interviews was composed of open-ended questions. In this manner, not only were the participants given a platform that allowed them to share details about their experiences and perspectives, but it also fostered fluidity in the inquiry process and granted the researcher some flexibility to probe or look deeper into a response to a question when it was needed (Alase, 2017; Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Leigh-Osroosh, 2021; Liberty University, 2020; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015; Seidman, 2019). Furthermore, in order to provide participants an opportunity to share detailed disclosures of their experience, how questions were structured and timed was also of critical importance. This stated, without the pressure of running out of time and/or for the researcher to be able to sustain participant engagement, Seidman's (2019) structure for in-depth phenomenological interviewing

was implemented. According to this interview structure, the interview process was carried out in phases, where general background questions were asked at the beginning stages, prior to moving into more specific questions. The rationale for a phased approach was to allow each phase in the interview to set the context of the phenomenological inquiry and lay the foundation for what will be covered in the next session. Additionally, the phased interview structure provided participants with an opportunity to reconstruct and reflect on their experience in a more story-like manner, i.e., having a beginning, middle, and end (Aguas, 2022; Seidman, 2019).

Each interview session was conducted one-on-one, virtually and online, with a 40- to 60-minute window allotted for each session. Prior to beginning each interview session, the researcher provided the participants with an interview guide (see Appendix E). The researcher also reiterated the purpose, procedures, time commitment, and measures to maintain the security of the data that will be collected. Then, the researcher reconfirmed the participant's continued interest and consent to participate in the study. This was then followed by open-ended questions that were framed using the lens of the human capital theory framework, and designed to elicit participant responses that supported the central research question: "What do Filipino special education teachers perceive as benefits of participating in the exchange program?"

It was anticipated that the interviews would yield a significant amount of data. Therefore, participants were asked for consent to record the interviews. In the event that participants decline video recording, consent to audio record the interview will be solicited by disabling the camera feature. However, should participants continue to decline, the researcher would then resort to taking notes. Fortunately, all participants in this study agreed to have the virtual interviews recorded, which then provided the researcher a reference to check for any non-verbal behaviors that might have been overlooked during the initial virtual interaction and allow for confirmation

of the researcher's notes taken. More importantly, the video files also assisted with transcribing the interviews, where the Turbo Scribe software, with the translation feature enabled, was utilized (see Appendices K, L, and M for sample interview transcripts).

Table 4

Interview Questions Phase One: Participant Background and The First Year

1. What is your name and please describe your educational or professional background (e.g., degree, years of teaching, current credential status, your official job title, grade level(s)/subject(s) you are currently teaching, the special education program you are currently in charge of, name/location of the school, etc.)? (CRQ)
2. When did you arrive? (CRQ)
3. How did you find out about the exchange program for teachers? (CRQ)
4. What made you decide to participate/teach in the United States? (CRQ)
5. What was your first day, first week, or first month of teaching like? (CRQ)
6. What were your initial thoughts about teaching special education in the United States? (CRQ)
7. What does teaching special education look like in the Philippines? (RQ3)
8. How does teaching American students with disabilities compare to teaching Filipino students with disabilities? (RQ3)
9. What approaches/strategies that you had used teaching in the Philippines helped you during your initial transition to teaching in the United States? (RQ1)
10. Working as a special education teacher in America, what adjustments, if any, did you have to make in your teaching style, methodology, and/or strategies? (RQ1)

11. What professional support did you receive from your sponsor and host school during your first year of teaching students with disabilities in the United States? (RQ2)
12. What support or professional preparations did you wish you had? (RQ2)
13. Overall, how would you describe your first year of teaching in the United States (RQ2)

For this proposed phenomenological study, phase one of the interview began with an open-ended query into the professional and educational background of the participants, then built up to questions that prompted a sharing of in-depth descriptions of the introductory stages of their teaching in the United States, e.g., questions two to six. These questions were intended to set the context for gathering information covered in the next set of questions, questions seven to 10, which focused on uncovering how participants applied the experience and skills they have, i.e., initial human capital, that supported their ingress into American classrooms. Then the questions segued to 11 and 12, which sought to elicit a recollection of support they received that helped build their efficacy during those early years of teaching in the United States. Afterward, the interview closed with question 13, which prompted a recollection and reflection of their initial year as a foreign teacher in the new culture and context. At the conclusion of the first phase, an explanation of the types of questions that will be covered in the second phase was provided to the participants, then a request for organizational documents was made by the researcher so that clarifying questions may be asked when the second interview engagement occurs.

Table 5

Interview Questions Phase Two: The Teacher Exchange Program Experience

1. Who is your program sponsor? (RQ2)

2. What is your program sponsor's role and responsibility to you as an exchange teacher?
(RQ2)
3. What are your roles and responsibilities to your sponsor as an exchange teacher? (RQ1)
4. How did you get placed at your host school? (RQ2)
5. What is the role and responsibility of your host school/district to you as an exchange teacher? (RQ2)
6. What are your roles and responsibilities to your host school/district as an exchange teacher? (RQ1)
7. What opportunities have you had to share your culture, knowledge, and practices with others at your school? (RQ1)
8. Please describe your impact or how you have enriched your school community as a Filipino special education exchange teacher. (CRQ)
9. To your knowledge, what practices or approaches will you leave behind with your school community (colleagues, students with disabilities, parents)? (RQ1)
10. Now that you are midway/nearing the conclusion of your participation in the teacher exchange program, what would you say are your key learnings from this experience as a special education exchange teacher? (CRQ)
11. From the special education practices learned from the exchange teacher experience, what are you most excited to share with your special education teacher colleagues back in the Philippines? (RQ3)
12. What special education practices do you intend to continue when you return? (RQ3)
13. Why did you choose those? (RQ3)

14. What advice would you give to your fellow Filipino special education teachers who are still in the Philippines, but aspire to one day become an exchange program teacher in the U.S.? (CRQ)

Much like the first phase, phase two of the interview process began with a reconfirmation of the participant's intent to continue to participate in the research, then transitioned into gathering more specific details regarding their present lived experience and the meaning or value aspects of the experience (Seidman, 2019). The second phase initially prompted the participants to share their knowledge or perceptions of the role and responsibility of the sponsor and host school, as well as their role and responsibility as an exchange teacher, questions one to six. Questions seven to nine invite participants to share details regarding opportunities that allowed them to share the human capital they bring in as overseas-trained teachers. Then, questions 10 to 14 prompted participants to reflect and elaborate on the human capital they have acquired through the experience.

During the second phase, any clarification questions regarding the organizational documents were also asked. In closing the second interview phase, an explanation of the third and final interview engagement was provided to the participants, and following this explanation, the letter writing prompt was presented. While left unstated by the researcher, the letter-writing process provided the participants the opportunity to reflect on the entirety of their experience, which could mentally prepare them for the summation question that will be asked in the final interview engagement.

Table 6

Interview Questions Phase Three: Member Checking Interview and Summation

1. How would you sum up your experience as a Filipino special education exchange teacher? (CRQ)

Phase three was initiated after reconfirming the continued interest of participants in the study. In the third phase, a more unstructured protocol was implemented, with the majority of the time allotted for the interview used to engage the participant in a review of their responses, solicit their feedback on the accuracy of the researcher's translation of their statements, verify any notes taken, to ensure that the information gathered from the prior interviews are representative of what was meant or intended, i.e., member checking (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Grossoehme, 2014; Liberty University, 2020; Seidman, 2019). After participant responses were validated, the summation question was asked, which provided participants final ownership of the interview via a prompting of a general statement that encapsulated their exchange program experience.

Organizational Documents

Documents are another data source that can be collected when conducting qualitative research studies. Documents are written materials that consist of organizational, clinical, or program records, either available publicly or privately, in digital and/or printed format, that can be obtained from participants. They can be personal, such as individually produced emails or blogs; popular culture, such as publicly accessible photos and magazine articles; or official, e.g., organizationally produced documents, such as reports or handbooks. This source of information saved the researcher time because these documents did not need to go through a process of transcription, and more importantly, it provided supplemental information that added more

context to the experienced phenomenon (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Specific to this study, documents that were requested are any records maintained by the teachers that provide supplementary information regarding their roles and responsibilities as an exchange teacher, opportunities they had for cross-cultural exchanges, professional development, and/or support, e.g., documents from sponsoring agencies that detail the roles of the sponsor and the participating teacher, documents submitted to the sponsoring agencies that detail their cultural exchange experiences, training certificates; emails, letters or notes received from American colleagues, their mentor, or site admin, etc. Including such documents provided exchange program experience-related content that was used to corroborate and/or augment information shared during the interviews. This stated, as this relates to the teacher exchange experience, copies of these documents were requested at the conclusion of the first phase of the interview, so that additional questions may be developed, as needed, prior to beginning the second phase (see Appendix R for a list of Organizational Documents received from each participant).

Letter Writing

In maintaining the orientation of this phenomenological study on capturing the essence of an experience from the perspective of individuals who experienced it (Moustakas, 1994), data for phenomenological research was also collected through a written account of the experience. Thus, letter-writing was used as a secondary method for data collection (Englander et al., 2012). As an alternative to journal prompts, letter writing enriched the descriptions collected from participants because it gave them time to dwell and ponder on their experience, which supplemented and/or reinforced the descriptions collected during the interview. The advantage of incorporating letter writing into the data collection process was that it provided participants with the opportunity to

express their personal interpretations of their experiences without feeling pressured to respond immediately, such as in an interview. By reducing participant inhibitions and allowing for greater focus, letter writing added more dimension to the descriptions of their experiences (Englander et al., 2012; Liberty University, 2020). Thus stated, each participant was presented with a writing prompt (see Appendix F) that aligned with the central question, i.e., “Look back to that time when you first started, and then think about where you are now. Write a letter addressed to yourself from __ years ago when you first entered the United States, and tell him/her about how the teacher exchange program experience made you grow as a special education teacher.”

The researcher intentionally planned that the letter writing be initiated after the second phase of the interview process. This plan was because it was assumed that the writing process would allow the participants to reflect on their experiences. Consequently, the participants would be mentally prepared for the final interview phase, where the summation question that will be asked prompts them to provide a statement that conveys their perceived entirety of the exchange program experience (Also see Appendices N, O, P, and Q for sample participant letters).

Data Analysis

The phenomenological research approach is committed to uncovering the essence of human experience. This essence is derived from the input of the participants, as such, the responsibility of providing a framework that would allow participants to describe their experiences with detail and depth, along with the task of creating the textural and structural descriptions that would yield an in-depth understanding of the experience of the target participants, rested with the researcher (Moustakas, 1994; Patton 2015). In keeping the central research question and sub-questions at the foreground of the phenomenological inquiry,

systematic steps were taken by the researcher in the data winnowing process to identify the textural and structural descriptions that served as the foundation for the composite descriptions that represented the essence of the experiences of the Filipino special education teacher exchange experience as a whole.

The primary source of rich data for this study was generated from the in-depth interviews, and as such, the researcher extensively engaged with each participant's interview responses. This engagement began with transcribing each recorded interview and reading each individual transcript line by line. Then, in having a structured approach to analyzing the large amount of data that was collected, the modified Van Kaam method was applied in the analysis. A data analysis method that is derived from human science research investigations, the modified Van Kaam method is characterized by these seven steps, (1) horizontalization, (2) reduction and elimination; (3) clustering or categorization and thematization, (4) application and validation, (5) construction of the individual textural descriptions, (6) construction of the individual structural description, and (7) composite description (Moustakas, 1994).

The researcher manually coded all the data for this research. In demonstrating how the researcher, as a key instrument in the analysis, applied these steps, the process began with a cursory analysis of the participant responses, where each interview transcript was first coded to identify units of meaning. Coding is a process where the researcher assigns a conceptual label, i.e., a code, to the statements made by the participants. From there, the preliminary coded units then went through sub-processes referred to as horizontalization, reduction, and elimination, which involved lifting or highlighting just the textural descriptions or coded statements that were relevant or aligned to the research questions (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Moustakas, 1994; Liberty University, 2019; Saldaña, 2021; Seidman, 2019). After relevant codes were identified, a

secondary coding process then followed. Also known as axial coding, this next stage involves pattern analysis. Patterns are recurring aspects, i.e., similarities, predictable differences or sequences, and causations, found in the data, emerging more than twice within and across all the interview transcripts (Liberty University, 2019; Patton, 2015; Saldaña, 2021). This recognition of patterns, also known as thematic analysis, involved a closer look at the coded data to aggregate into categories, which eventually led to the elucidation of the structural descriptions or emergent themes that highlighted the essential aspects of the experience (Also see Appendices T, U, and V for Sample Textural and Structural Descriptions).

In addition to participant interviews, organizational documents, and letter writing were also utilized as secondary data sources. Letter writing was included to draw attention to the growth or gain aspects of the participant's experience. At the same time, organizational documents provided the researcher with more supplementary information about the conditions associated with exchange program participation, i.e., the roles of the exchange program sponsoring agency, the responsibilities of the exchange teachers, and other exchange program experience-related content. In including letter writing as a data collection method, it was anticipated that the letter responses that would be reviewed would not follow a standard structure or format. As such, an inductive content analysis approach, which is complementary to the modified Van Kaam method, was applied to identify patterns, themes, and concepts. This process began with scrupulously reading each individually written statement, then progressed to identifying key ideas or phrases, assigning codes or units of meaning, and then clustering or organizing codes into categories.. Following this process, a cross-comparative method was then applied, and the letter responses were compared to any related interview responses to support the interview descriptions (Colombo-Dougovito, 2019). Meanwhile, the submitted organizational

documents were analyzed for what they could contribute to answering the research questions, lifting meaning from the provided documents as they contributed to the inquiry. This process entailed reviewing the organizational documents to analyze for keywords. Then, using the constant comparative method, keywords were cross-referenced with the meanings and themes explicated from the spoken and written statements, i.e., interviews and letters (Colombo-Dougovito, 2019). Finally, after textural and structural descriptions were identified, the researcher re-engaged with the participants to verify the representativeness of the identified textural and structural descriptions, i.e., member checking (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Neubauer et al., 2019; Van Manen, 2014). After descriptions were validated, the analysis then transitioned to developing the composite description of the Filipino special education exchange teacher experience.

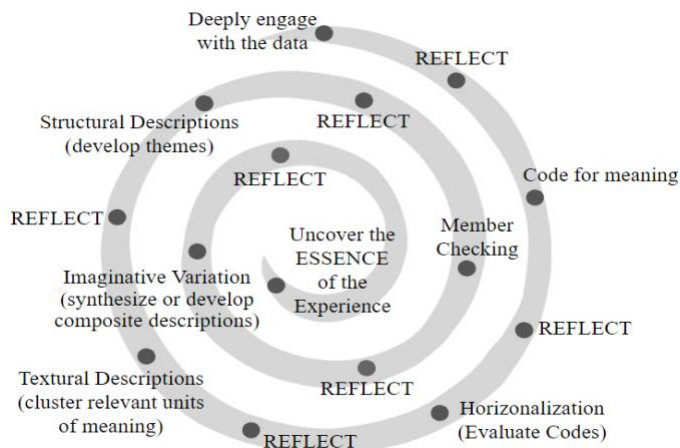
The Hermeneutic Cycle

To generate insights into the structures of the Filipino special education exchange teacher experience, the hermeneutic cycle was integrated into all the stages of the analysis. This cycle was characterized by key steps in the modified Van Kaam Method and involved an iterative cycle of phenomenological reflection, phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological reduction refers to the methodical process applied in phenomenological inquiry to explicate the wholeness of a described experience. At the same time, imaginative variation is akin to an inductive process of extracting themes from the parts, lifting units of meaning to extract themes from individual participant input, i.e., textural descriptions of the experiences from individual data collected, then across data sources, and participants (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015).

As illustrated in Figure 4, the process of phenomenological reduction began with the researcher profoundly engaging with the data, i.e., reading and rereading transcripts of the interview and the written letters, then reviewing the organizational documents. The reduction process then transitioned to coding the data to identify units of meaning. From these coded units, a sub-process referred to as horizontalization was then applied, which involved lifting just the coded statements that were relevant or aligned with the research questions and then seeking feedback from participants to validate the articulated descriptions, i.e., member checking (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). From here, the researcher then analyzed for themes that can be drawn together from all data sources in a coherent and meaningful way and then developed a holistic depiction of the phenomenon, i.e., the synthesis of composite textural and composite structural descriptions of the experience. These processes continued as the researcher engaged with the data and made constant comparisons until the point of saturation was reached, i.e., when no new insights, dimensions, or categories were identified (Alhazmi & Kaufmann; 2022; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Liberty University, 2019; Moustakas, 1994).

Figure 4

The Modified Van Kaam Method and the Hermeneutic Cycle



Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is related to the degree to which the researcher demonstrates competence in applying research methods (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). In this regard, the onus for establishing the trustworthiness of a study was on the researcher. In the pursuit of meeting guidelines for trustworthiness, this phenomenological study on Filipino special education exchange teachers utilized the trustworthiness criteria developed by Lincoln and Guba, i.e., credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability; along with methods that assisted in ensuring that the conducted research was carried out within ethical parameters (Liberty University, 2020; Shenton, 2004).

Credibility

To enhance the overall quality of a study, researchers should accurately portray participant perspectives and experiences, as this enhances the degree of credibility in the inferences made from the evidence that was collected. This stated, researchers need to ensure that their study measures what it intended to, so that they can report findings congruent with the reality depicted in the data collected from their participants. To assist with this task, phenomenological researchers need to conduct their studies using credible methodologies so that the essences that will be reported are well-supported by the data collected (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Grosseohme, 2014). Thus, in order to promote confidence in this phenomenological study, the planned research design was aligned with Moustakas' phenomenological research design, and credible methodologies in the data collection and analysis were integrated, i.e., Seidman's interview structure for in-depth interviewing, and the modified Van Kaam method in analyzing data (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2019).

Moreover, since the aim of hermeneutic phenomenology is to develop shared understanding by presenting a true picture of the phenomenon under study, credibility was also established by using multiple sets of data and triangulating the findings from each method in the analysis phase. Thus, for this study, accounts of participant experiences were collected through interviews and letter writing, whereas document analysis in the data collection methods was also included to corroborate the verbal and written information that was gathered from the participants. Furthermore, the credibility of a study can also be enhanced through prolonged engagement or by spending time in the field with participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Liberty University, 2020; Seidman, 2019; Shenton, 2004). To this aim, prolonged engagement was exercised by the researcher by building rapport and establishing a trusting relationship with participants even before initiating the data collection process. Meanwhile, during the data collection process, prolonged engagement was also implemented by applying Seidman's (2019) interview structure and conducting member checks. Member checking is when the researcher provides the participants an opportunity to provide their feedback on the accuracy of the researcher's translation of their statements and verify any notes taken, to ensure that the information gathered from the prior interviews is representative of what they had meant or intended. In this manner, participants were able to validate the accuracy of the written accounts. They supported the researcher in the determination of whether the findings were representative of the essence of their experience of the phenomenon under study, thus strengthening the credibility of the conducted research (Alase, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Grossoehme, 2014; Liberty University, 2020; Schwandt, 2015; Seidman, 2019).

Dependability

Dependability is another critical criterion for trustworthiness, as this establishes whether the findings are consistent and repeatable. In this regard, dependability is analogous to reliability, with reliability about the replicability of a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Liberty University, 2020). To achieve this, researchers need to present the methods they used thoroughly and transparently to their readers using descriptive language in their narratives. Thus, the inclusion of thick descriptions of what was investigated, the context that surrounds it, how the study was planned and implemented, and demonstrating reflexivity in evaluating the effectiveness of the processes employed would enable readers to develop a thorough understanding of the design and methods used to collect, analyze and synthesize data, which in turn can assist with the study's replicability. In addition, providing thick descriptions of the phenomenon could also give readers a proper understanding of the topic of inquiry, and thus allow them to validate it in their current situations (Shenton, 2004; Sundler et al., 2019; Van Manen, 2017). This stated, in detailing the methodologies used to gather the individual accounts to be able to represent the Filipino special education exchange teacher's collective narrative, the researcher allows readers to determine the stability of the constructs derived from their findings, which in return enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the conducted research (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, to assist the researcher in safeguarding the dependability and reliability of the research, the researcher also actively collaborated with the dissertation committee. The dissertation committee, in their role to oversee the doctoral candidate's research process, offered the researcher constructive feedback that guided and ensured that the study and its methodologies were implemented with fidelity.

Confirmability

The degree to which a study is dependable can influence the confirmability of the study's findings or that which pertains to the objectivity of the results derived from the inquiry.

Indicators for confirmability were addressed by the researcher by demonstrating that the findings of the study were representative of, resonated with, and were attuned to the participants' experience (Liberty University, 2020; Schwandt, 2015; Shenton, 2004). This is closely related to using multiple sources of data, and for this phenomenological study on the experiences of Filipino special education teachers, data was collected using interviews, letter writing, and document analysis. Through the use of these different methods, the limitations of each individual data collection approach were compensated by the other methods, thus allowing the researcher to reap the accumulated benefits of the varied approaches in the analysis of the findings. In this regard, the systematic application of finding common and repeating patterns of coded meanings across the various data sources used in tandem allowed for the further contextualization of the collected information and paved the way for richer descriptions of participant experiences to emerge. Also known as triangulation, having the oral accounts collected during the interviews cross-checked with the written accounts provided by the participants in the letter writing and obtaining supporting data from the document analysis placed safeguards against having findings be based on a single source (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In synthesizing descriptions obtained from multiple sources and participants, the researcher also benefited from maintaining a chain of evidence. Maintaining a chain of evidence involved the systematic recording and organizing of the meaning units and themes derived from the collected data and then using it not only to assist with triangulation but also in the synthesis (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Such practice assisted with the efficient

cross-checking of themes uncovered from oral and written accounts and the validated statements derived from the documents, made way to more effectively draw together the shared constructs in a coherent and meaningful way, and supported the development of a more holistic depiction of the phenomenon under study (Grossoehme, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). This maintained chain of evidence was then used for the purpose of having a data-oriented audit trail (Appendix I). Thus, for this phenomenological study, the researcher made sure to systematically record and organize the data collected by linking the questions asked with the information collected throughout the data collection and analysis phase of the research. Then, by maintaining systematic notes, the researcher was able to better trace the employed processes and decisions made during data collection and analysis, which then placed safeguards that supported the confirmability of the inquiry (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Transferability

In qualitative studies, participants are typically purposefully selected. While it can be argued that participants are a subset of a broader group, the small number of participants or settings from which the results of the study were derived can pose challenges to the transferability of findings (Shenton, 2004). This stated, solid claims for transferability are not the intent of this research on the Filipino special education exchange teacher experience. However, readers are urged to consider the prospect of its transferability, at the least within the context of the individuals, program, and/or the geographical setting for which it was carried out. In order to allow for the findings of this current research to be justifiably applied in a different setting, the transferability criterion for trustworthiness was addressed by providing readers with thick descriptions of the research design and context of the methodologies undertaken in the fieldwork,

i.e., the methods employed to select participants, collect information, and analyze data (Liberty University, 2020; Shenton, 2004).

Ethical Considerations

The involvement of human subjects is inevitable in carrying out this research on the experiences of Filipino special education exchange teachers. This stated, ethical considerations were at the forefront at any stage of the research process, and thus, the fundamentals of ethical research, i.e., respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice; were considered not just during the process of data collection, but also prior to beginning the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Peter, 2018). To this aim, respect for the participants of the study involved a recognition of and respect for the autonomy of the participants. A concern for their welfare was demonstrated in how the researcher ensured that participants would be protected from any physical, social, and/or psychological harm while being transparent about the nature of the study provided participants an assurance that they were not deceived and/or coerced to participate, which safeguarded the fundamentals of justice in ethical research (Arifin, 2018; Seidman, 2019).

Permissions

To ensure that the proposed qualitative study operated within ethical guidelines, it was important that the qualitative research proposal underwent the Institutional Review Board (IRB) review process. The purpose of the IRB is to ensure that the proposed research is congruent with the institution's code of ethics, as such, the IRB review process acts as a system for checks and balances in safeguarding that the research goals, process, and design, are in alignment with fundamentals for ethical research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Peter, 2018). To ensure that the conducted study operated within ethical guidelines, the researcher obtained the approval of

Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A) before initiating this proposed research on Filipino special education exchange teachers. Once IRB approval was secured, the recruitment of participants began, informed consent forms (see Appendix C) were forwarded to the selected participants, and once completed, only then was the data collection process initiated by the researcher. It is important to note that since this study was conducted with individuals rather than their host schools or districts, consent was sought only from the individual participants. Thus, with no specific study sites engaged, no necessary permissions were needed from schools or districts.

Other Participant Protections

Ethical researchers should ensure that they are able to anticipate and handle ethical issues that may arise at any stage in the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Liberty University, 2020). This includes providing participants the assurance that they are free to decide on whether to participate or not, that they can choose the extent of what they wish to disclose, and that they will receive the maximum benefit and least amount of risk throughout the research process. This stated, participant consent was solicited prior to beginning the data collection process, and in giving the participants an opportunity to make an informed decision, the researcher was transparent and forthcoming about the purpose, process, and parameters of participation, e.g., how and what type of data will be collected, the time investment, benefits and risks that may be involved. In addition, emphasis was also made by the researcher regarding the voluntary nature of participation in the research, making participants aware that they can decline participation at any point without fear of negative consequences for opting out (Arifin, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Liberty University, 2020; Peter, 2018; Shenton, 2004).

Given that the critical components of the phenomenological inquiry were derived from the detailed aspects of the participant experience, it was also recognized that in the process of data collection, participants will be disclosing information that may be very personal or sensitive. Thus, the researcher also made sure to foster trust by establishing rapport with the participants at the onset, encouraging questions, and providing participants assurance that the participants have control over the degree of the details they feel comfortable sharing with the researcher. Furthermore, in order to preserve the participants' right to confidentiality, the researcher also ensured that the identities of participants would not be disclosed, and pseudonyms were used in place of the participants' real names (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Liberty University, 2020).

It is important also to note that ethical considerations did not end after data was collected or analyzed. This meant that a consideration for the continued protection of the participants also went into being conscientious about how the data would be stored. For this study, the researcher stored all the collected information, e.g., transcripts, letters, research notes, or memos, in a password-protected, personal laptop device, and any printed documents were kept in a locked file cabinet. When the dissertation process was completed, the researcher transferred all the electronic files to a password-protected external hard drive and stored that in a locked file cabinet. The external hard drive and all research related printed documents will be securely stored for a period of three years, and when it is no longer needed, the researcher will be mindful of maintaining security in the disposal of the data (Arifin, 2018; Liberty University, 2020). Other ethical considerations that were made by the researcher that are worth noting include being sensitive to the cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds of the participants and granting them flexibility in the interview process to

accommodate these differences, such as providing primary language support as needed (Arifin, 2018). This stated, with the researcher being fluent in Filipino, participants who felt more comfortable sharing their experience in their primary language were also encouraged to do so. In addition, it was also important for the researcher to acknowledge and diminish any power dynamic differences. Thus, to mitigate power struggles, the researcher also assured participants of her independent status as a researcher (Arifin, 2018; Liberty University, 2020; Peter, 2018).

Summary

Phenomenology offers an insightful means for understanding phenomena, and, as an approach to inquiry, it seeks to uncover the essence or meanings that humans ascribe to their personal experience of a phenomenon (Farrell, 2020; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015; Van Manen, 2017). To help focus this inquiry into the experience of Filipino special education exchange program teachers, this phenomenological study followed a hermeneutic or interpretive approach. In general, phenomenological studies are arranged into three categories: methods of preparation, methods of collecting data and gaining descriptions of the phenomenon, and methods of analysis and searching for meaning (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2017). Methods of preparation for this study included the development of research processes that aligned with the tenets of a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology and the philosophical roots that underlie it. To this aim, this chapter provided a description of the interpretive framework, i.e., social constructivism, and the specific ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions that aligned with the purpose, and informed the study's phenomenological design and implemented processes. Since phenomenological researchers rely heavily on the input and descriptions of people who lived the experience or phenomenon that will be investigated (Creswell & Poth,

2018; Farrell, 2020; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015), an explanation of how participants were selected and recruited, and how data was collected and analyzed were also specified. Then, to maintain phenomenological rigor in the analysis of the collected data, the hermeneutic cycle of inquiry guided the researcher through the application of the core iterative processes of phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of the composite textural and composite structural descriptions that constituted and represented the collective essence of the exchange teacher experience (Van Manen, 2017). Moreover, an explanation of the methodologies that advance the trustworthiness, dependability, and credibility of this research on the exchange program experience of Filipino special education teachers was also described in this chapter, along with how the researcher solicited or secured the needed permissions before initiating data collection, and the steps that were taken to ensure that this research was conducted within ethical parameters.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to gain insight into the experiential gains of Filipino special education teachers in California through their participation in the U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange program. This chapter begins with a portrayal of the participants who were selected via purposive sampling methods. Following this, the structural descriptions that highlight the essential aspects of the participants' experiences that were derived from data collected through interviews, organizational documents, and letter writing are presented. Subsequently, participant responses relevant to the central research question, "What do Filipino special education teachers perceive as benefits of participating in the exchange program?", along with sub-questions that guided this inquiry into their experiences, are discussed. Finally, a concise summary of the results is included at the conclusion of this chapter.

Participants

Data for this study were collected from 10 purposefully selected Filipino special education exchange teachers who all provided their consent to participate in this study. This next section provides a narrative portrait of each participant, which includes personal descriptions or selected comments extracted from the interviews and letters to provide insight into their individual experience as exchange teachers. As an additional precaution, pseudonyms were used and only a general description of their teaching program assignments was provided in order to protect the identities of the participants.

Amihan

Amihan is a Philippine-licensed teacher with a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a major in special education. Before participating in the teacher exchange program, she

taught in private school settings in the Philippines, where she gained experience teaching students with disabilities from kindergarten to sixth grade. She heard about the teacher exchange program through a special education teacher colleague who was already in Nevada as an exchange teacher. When asked about her motivations for coming to the United States, she stated that it was primarily for financial reasons. To gain access to the United States as an exchange teacher, Amihan contacted a recruitment agency, which organized an online recruitment fair. This interaction paved the way for her to get connected, be interviewed, and be hired on the spot by a California school district. However, while she received her job offer in December 2019, the pandemic slowed the processing of her visa papers, leading to a year of waiting before she stepped foot into the United States. She stated that when she finally arrived in the United States, she did not get to work right away since the processing of her fingerprints and social security number were also impacted by the pandemic. To add to the pressure, her sponsor also told her that if she did not get those things settled by March, they would have to terminate her visa. Luckily, in February, she was able to get her fingerprints cleared and acquired her social security number, which then finally allowed her to start working. When asked about the cost to participate, she said that she had to secure a loan to pay the incurred fees, which amounted to \$12,000, but also added that with the interest rates, her total debt amassed to a total of \$24,000.

Amihan shared that her host school district counted her years of experience in the Philippines when they placed her on the salary schedule. She currently holds a preliminary-level education specialist credential for students with moderate to severe disabilities. When asked to describe what her first year in the United States was like, she described the adjustment as “hellish” because her idea of teaching in the United States did not match her expectations. She also added that she needed to relearn how to be a special education teacher since the population

or disability category of the students she was assigned to teach was very different from the students she had experience working with in the Philippines, and that she wished the district was forthcoming in sharing with her the type of program she would be teaching so she could have been more prepared. Already in her fourth year of participation in the teacher exchange program, Amihan expressed that she feels stuck in her current program and knows this is where she will be until she maxes out her visa since her program sponsor has not honored her annual requests for a transfer to a different district. When asked what this experience has allowed her to gain, she shared that while it has made her grow as a person, it has not offered her much of the reciprocity in skill exchanges that she was expecting. She expressed that she wished she had asked the school district questions about the job assignment so she could be prepared. She added that, with many school districts hiring from the Philippines, the teachers do have options on where they could work and what type of program they would feel their experience would best be suited for so that they would be more successful as teachers in the United States.

Datu

Datu is a Philippine-licensed teacher with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, and two master's in Education degrees. Prior to participating in the teacher exchange program, he taught for six years in the Philippines, with the first two years spent in a private school setting and the latter four in a public school setting. He describes his teaching experience as primarily in general education, working with students from kindergarten to fourth grade, but stated that he provided support for students suspected of having specific learning disabilities, i.e., undiagnosed, that are included in his classroom. Datu heard about the teacher exchange program through special education teacher colleagues in California who were already participating in the program. When asked why he joined the teacher exchange, he stated that better opportunities and new

experiences are his primary motivations. To gain access to the United States as an exchange teacher, Datu reached out to a recruitment agency, which paved the way for him to get connected, be interviewed, and be hired by a school district in California. However, while the turnaround time was quick, from when he submitted his interest to the recruiter to the time he was interviewed and offered employment, due to the pandemic, it took a year for all the intake-related processes to be completed. When asked about the initial amount he had to pay to participate, he stated that the recruiter's fees, program sponsor-related fees, and airfare amounted to \$13,000, which he was able to pay for by securing a loan from a bank in the Philippines. Datu entered the United States in June of 2021, and his school district counted his years of experience and advanced coursework units when they placed him on the salary schedule. Additionally, his pay also included a master's degree stipend. When asked about his initial feelings, he shared that hearing stories about how teachers are getting sued in America scared him. So, in order to know how to protect himself, some of the first things he made sure to learn about were education-related laws in the United States.

Datu is currently teaching a group of secondary-level students with disabilities. In terms of credentialing requirements, he shared that he has passed all his licensure-related exams (e.g., CBEST, CSDT, CTEL, and RICA), and only needs to complete one course. When asked to recall what his first year of teaching in the United States was like, he described it to be very experiential, which helped him move forward into his second year with more confidence. Datu is now completing his third year as an exchange teacher, with the process to extend his participation for the next two years already underway and paid for by the school district. When prompted to reflect on key takeaways from his participation experience thus far, he shared that participating in the exchange program has brought him happiness and a sense of worth, as this

made him realize that: “You can be in a foreign country, knowing no one, knowing nothing about the culture and still be you . . . you don't have to change the totality of you as a teacher, because you are bringing something to the table.”

Diwata

Diwata is a Philippine-licensed teacher who, before she participated in the teacher exchange program, accumulated six years of experience as a special education teacher, with the first year of teaching spent in the Philippines and the latter 5 years teaching in Singapore. She shared that her experience was primarily in a clinical or center-type setting, providing early intervention support for preschool to kindergarten-aged students who have a diagnosis of autism. Diwata heard about the teacher exchange program through colleagues who are also currently participating in the program and teaching in special education program settings in various school districts in California. When asked about her motivations for coming to the United States, she shared that, knowing that the standards of practice in the United States are high, she got curious to try it because she wanted to test the limits of her capacity as a special education teacher. To gain access to the United States as an exchange teacher, Diwata reached out to a recruitment agency, which organized a recruitment fair where she interviewed and got hired by a school district located in California. From the date of her interview in January, it took her five months to get all the necessary paperwork and preliminary processes accomplished before she stepped foot in the United States in June 2019. This process involved securing the necessary funds to pay the agency and processing fees, program sponsor fees, and plane fare, which she stated amounted to \$13,500. Diwata has a bachelor's degree in elementary education with a major in special education, which she earned in the Philippines. She shared that her years of experience outside the United States counted when she was placed on the district's salary schedule. She currently

holds a cleared education specialist credential for students with mild to moderate disabilities and teaches students with disabilities at the middle school level. Diwata described her first year of teaching in the United States as a tough time. However, now in her fifth year of teaching, she says that the cultural exchange program has instilled in her a sense of resilience and adaptability; it expanded her cultural horizons, and as a teacher, the overall experience has been a catalyst for her professional development.

Hiyas

Hiyas is a Philippine-licensed teacher with a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, a Master's in Special Education, and graduate-level units for a Ph.D. in education. Prior to participating in the teacher exchange program, she accumulated 28 years of work experience working with students with disabilities in private school settings and also teaching college-level courses at a state university. In addition to her teaching at the institution, she also owns a nonprofit center, where she provides education services to students with or without disabilities. When asked why she decided to participate in the teacher exchange program, she shared that her reasons are primarily financial because her center needs repairs. She added that she is also hoping to expand her center so that she will be able to serve more students.

Hiyas first heard about the exchange program through teacher colleagues in California who had participated in the program but have since become immigrants in the United States. She shared that, in 2009, she was interviewed and offered a job by a school district in New York, but due to life circumstances, she decided to delay her participation, which led to her declining the job offer. In 2022, Hiya revisited that interest and reconnected with a recruitment agency, who organized a recruitment fair, where, at first, she was scheduled to be interviewed by a school district in Arizona. In expressing a preference to be placed in California, the recruiter then

arranged for her to be interviewed by an elementary school district. From the time she was interviewed in May 2022, she shared that the intake process went by quickly, as she was already in the United States by August of the same year. When asked about the initial cost she had to pay to participate, she stated that she needed \$13,000 for the recruitment agency placement fees, visa processing fees, program sponsor fees, and her plane fare. She also shared that the district considered all her continuing education units when they placed her on the salary schedule and that her pay included a master's degree stipend. However, her salary schedule was capped at 10 years of experience, as this was the maximum years allowed specified in the agreements between the district and the teacher's union for a newly hired teacher.

Hiyas currently has a preliminary moderate to severe education specialist credential and teaches students with moderate to severe disabilities in the upper elementary grades. When asked to describe her initial thoughts and feelings when she transitioned into the United States, she said that she was unable to give her 100%, because she was, in addition to the cultural adjustment, still learning. Already in her second year, when prompted to ponder on this experience thus far, Hiyas described her feelings about coming to the United States, where she shared: "I have very high expectations for the practice in the U.S. since all books that we use in our teacher preparation programs are all from what is based here. I was very excited to see the students, the services provided to them, and excited to know the system and how things operate." However, when asked about her current experience in relation to those expectations, she had expressed that she has not quite maximized her participation in the teacher exchange program and so those expectations are yet to be met.

Ina

Ina is a Philippine-licensed teacher with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a special education major. Prior to participating in the teacher exchange program, she had experience teaching kindergarten to fourth-grade students with disabilities and worked for eight years in a private school setting, more specifically in an international school located in the Philippines. Ina heard about the teacher exchange program through a friend, also a special education teacher, who was already participating in the program and teaching in a school district in Nevada. When asked why she decided to teach in the United States, she stated that her primary motivation was to be independent, gain experience, and grow as a teacher while also reaping the financial benefits.

Ina's interest in the teacher exchange program began in 2018 when the support of a recruitment agency paved the way for her to get connected and be interviewed by a school district in Texas. However, despite being offered employment, she shared that she had put off participating in the program that year due to personal reasons. In 2019, she revisited that interest. After being interviewed by an elementary school district located in California, she was immediately offered a job, with her placement in the salary schedule accounting for her years of experience in the Philippines. Ina stated that the intake process from the time she was interviewed to the time she arrived in the States was very quick, i.e., from August 2019 to October 2019. She shared that in that short amount of time, she had to come up with the money to pay the recruiter, exchange program sponsor, visa processing fees, and plane ticket. Thus, to afford the participation-related costs, she borrowed \$13,000 from a loaning company, including the cost of her flight, and \$2000 as her initial pocket money. She shared that per the loan terms

and conditions, she had to pay it off within a year. However, while she was able to successfully pay off the loan, her total debt, with interests included, amounted to \$18,000.

Ina currently has a preliminary mild to moderate education specialist credential and teaches at an elementary school district. She recalls her initial transition into the United States as a hard time when she felt lost. She also felt very isolated because she was hired as a solo teacher, compared to the other Filipino teachers in their district who were hired as a group. She did add that through the support of the other Filipino special education teachers who came ahead of her, she was able to better ease into the “newness of everything.” Now that her participation in the exchange program is nearly coming to a close, she shared that this has been an eye-opening experience for her because it made her not only notice differences in the system but also highlighted gaps in the practice of special education in the Philippines.

Kaya

Kaya is a Philippine-licensed teacher with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, two master's degrees, and doctoral-level courses in progress for an Ed.D. Prior to teaching in the United States, she accumulated 16 years of teaching experience in the Philippines. She shared that she only taught for one year at a private school setting, which made a great majority of her teaching years spent at a public school. In the public school setting, she taught a regular education class for three years, and then for the succeeding 12 years, she was a teacher in the public school's special education center. She shared that as a special education teacher, she was assigned to teach both a self-contained homogenous group of students, e.g., just students with intellectual disabilities or hearing impairment, while also supporting students who are in the mainstream.

Kaya heard about the teacher exchange program through a colleague already participating in the program and teaching as a special education exchange teacher in Colorado. When asked about her motivations for coming to the United States as a teacher, she stated that, while there is the prospect of better wages, she also wanted to expand her teaching skills. To gain access to the United States as an exchange teacher, Kaya reached out to a recruitment agency, which then organized a recruitment event. This initial contact paved the way for her to be interviewed by a school district in California. From the date of her interview in January, it took her six months to get all the necessary paperwork and preliminary processes accomplished before she stepped foot in the United States in July 2019. This process involved securing \$17,000 to pay the agency fees, visa sponsor fees, and airfare. She also shared that this amount included fees for a set of agency-required preparatory courses, housing assistance, and \$2,000 for her pocket money. When asked how she was able to secure this amount, she stated that she opted for the financing option that was extended by the agency, and then added that with interest rates included, her total debt amounted to \$30,000.

Kaya describes her first year as a very unpredictable time. She shared that, three months into her first teaching assignment, she was released because she was filling an excess position for the district. To maintain her visa status, she was informed by her program sponsor that she needed to find another host school. Worried about the debt she incurred, she was open to working for any school district, and through the assistance of the same agency recruiter, she received a second job offer, got placed into a new school district located in a different county, and relocated. At her second school, she taught a class that she shared that the previous teacher had walked out from, and while the class was challenging, she said that she was “in it to conquer the challenge.” However, despite trying her best, Kaya shared that during the last quarter of the

school year, she was notified that she would be released without cause, i.e., non-re-elected. Thus, she took it upon herself to participate in multiple job fairs and was eventually offered a job at a nearby school district which allowed her to maintain her status as an exchange teacher. When asked about her initial salary placement, she shared that all the districts she was with did consider her continuing education units, gave her access to a master's degree stipend, and placed her, per union agreements, on the maximum allowable step for beginning teachers.

Kaya holds a preliminary moderate to severe disabilities education specialist credential, is still working in the same district, and even described her second year of teaching as her first real year of teaching in the United States. Fast forward to the present time, when asked how she would sum up the entire experience, she says that, at the personal level, this experience has made her a much stronger, disciplined, and self-reliant individual, and that it opened horizons for her and gave her a broader perspective on cultural differences. As for its professional impact, she feels very fulfilled as this experience made her feel more capable as a teacher, enough that she feels very confident to share and teach others about what she has learned about special education in the United States.

Malaya

Malaya is a Philippine-licensed teacher who has a bachelor's degree in Physical Therapy, a master's degree in Education with a major in Special Education, and has doctoral-level units for an Ed.D. Prior to participating in the teacher exchange program, she had 14 years of experience, primarily in private school settings, where she was a general education teacher, a mainstream support teacher, and a self-contained class teacher. Her teaching experience spans a wide range of students, e.g., from kindergarten-aged to adults; some she states to have a diagnosis, e.g., orthopedic impairment, intellectual disabilities, autism, multiple disabilities, while others do not,

e.g., suspected specific learning disabilities. She also adds that in addition to teaching in the Philippines, her years of experience also included working in Singapore for one year as a curriculum developer.

Malaya heard about the teacher exchange program through family members who are already residing in the United States. When asked about her motivations for participating in the teacher exchange program, she stated that she wanted to have a better life for her family, wanted to share her skills as a Filipino teacher, and was curious about the training she could acquire in the United States.

To gain access to the United States as an exchange teacher, Malaya connected with a recruitment agency, which then assisted with setting her up to get interviewed by school districts in the United States. She shared that at that time, she was set up to be interviewed by a school district in Virginia but had expressed to the recruiter a preference to be interviewed for California. Malaya was then interviewed by a district looking to find a special education teacher for students with disabilities at the secondary level, got offered a position, and was placed at a commensurate salary schedule as that of local teachers, i.e., years of experience, continuing education units, and stipends. From the date of her interview in May, it took her three months to complete all the necessary paperwork and preliminary processes before she stepped foot in the United States in August 2019. This process involved securing the necessary funds to be able to pay the agency and other program related fees, which amounted to \$12,000.

Malaya currently holds a preliminary moderate to severe disabilities education specialist credential and is already at the end of her participation in the exchange program. When asked to recall how her first year was, she said that it was a combination of highs and lows. She described the experience of a new culture, travel, food, and learning as the highs of the experience, while

the cultural adjustment, being away from her family, and missing home as the lows. In thinking about her experience at this present time, she said that participating in the exchange program made it possible for her to gain confidence in herself and unlocked her potential as a leader.

Mutya

Mutya is a Philippine-licensed teacher with a bachelor's degree in secondary education with a major in Special Education and a minor in mathematics. She also shared that she has some graduate degree units for a master's in teaching students with visual impairments. In the Philippines, she has experience teaching upper elementary to high school students in both public and private schools. During the interview, she described an 11-hour daily work schedule. She worked at a public elementary school from 6 am to 12 noon to teach both a self-contained classroom and assisted students with visual impairments who are in the mainstream, then transitioned to work at the private school setting to teach a self-contained class from 1 pm to 4 pm. From 4 pm to 5 pm, she provided small group math instruction to 10 students who were mainstreamed for most of their school day. She stated she needed to work in two places for financial reasons. She also mentioned that when her work day ended at five, she would, for the most part, also do private tutoring services. While she has experience teaching Filipino students with a variety of disabilities, e.g., autism, hearing impairments, etc., she shared that her teaching experience has predominantly been with students who have visual impairments.

Mutya heard about the teacher exchange program through a special education teacher colleague who is already in the United States with a J1 visa and working at a school district in Nevada. When asked about her motivations for coming to the United States to teach, she stated that while it was primarily financially driven, she also knew that this would advance her skills professionally. To gain access to the United States as an exchange teacher, Mutya sought the

support of a recruitment agency, which organized an online recruitment fair. At that virtual job fair, she had an opportunity to be interviewed by a California district and was hired on the spot. From the date of her interview in June, it took her three months to get all the necessary paperwork and preliminary processes accomplished before she stepped foot in the United States in September 2019. This process involved securing a loan from a bank so that she could afford to pay for the agency and sponsor fees, as well as her airfare, which amounted to a total of \$14,000. Despite the quick turnaround, from the time she was interviewed to the time she arrived in the United States, i.e., three months, Mutya shared that she did not start working right away because she had to wait for her social security number. Currently, Mutya holds a preliminary level moderate to severe disabilities education specialist credential, is assigned to teach a caseload of students with disabilities at the secondary level, and reports that she is the current head of the SPED department at her school site. When asked about her initial placement in the salary schedule, she shared that her continuing education units were considered, and she was placed at the 10th year step since, per the agreements with the teachers' union, that was the maximum years of experience credit for a starting teacher at their district. Mutya's spouse and children are all with her in the United States through a J2 visa, which she stated is a type of non-immigrant visa that she was able to arrange for her dependents, through her exchange program sponsor. Already in her fifth year of participation in the teacher exchange program, Mutya says that this experience showed her how, despite all the sacrifice, her hard work paid off. She stated that this experience has made her a stronger and more resilient person, and aside from personal growth, also allowed her to grow as a professional.

Tala

Tala is a Philippine-licensed teacher who, prior to her participation in the teacher exchange program, had a total teaching experience of 10 years. Her teaching experience for the first five years was spent in the Philippines, in both private and public school settings. The next half was at an international school with a special education program in Singapore. When she was still in the Philippines, she taught a gen-ed Kindergarten class of 35 students in the morning, then, in the afternoon, she taught a group of 10 students with intellectual disabilities at the sped center, i.e., self-contained. She shared that her work day was typically 12 hours long, where she started her day with teaching a kindergarten class from 6 am to 12 noon, did tutoring from 12 noon to 3 pm, then taught a class at the SPED center, from 3 pm to 6 pm. She added that, while her contracted time ended in the morning, she had to take on additional work so she could earn more, and for some days during the week, she even tutored students from 6 pm to 8 pm.

Tala first heard about the teacher exchange program through a special education colleague who was already participating in the teacher exchange program, and working in a school district in California. To gain access to the United States as an exchange teacher, she sought the support of a recruitment agency, which organized an in-person recruitment event in Manila, Philippines. At the recruitment fair, she was interviewed and was then offered a job to teach a group of elementary-grade students with disabilities. From the date of her interview in February, it took her seven months to get all the necessary paperwork and preliminary processes accomplished, before she stepped foot in the United States in September 2019. This process involved securing the necessary funds which amounted to a total of \$15,000, which she said included her airfare and pocket money. She stated that she was able to put together this amount by using all the money she had saved up from teaching in Singapore and borrowing money from

her family. When asked about her reasons for coming to the United States as a teacher, she stated that the prospect of new experiences was her primary motivation.

Tala has a bachelor's in Elementary Education with a specialization in Early Childhood, and a master's Degree in special education, both of which she earned in the Philippines. When asked about her placement in the salary schedule, she shared that her years of experience and advanced degree were both considered. She currently possesses a cleared mild to moderate education specialist credential, which she says took her three years to complete. Now in her fifth year in the teacher exchange program, she says that this experience not only opened her up to a bigger world of teaching but also enabled her to showcase Filipino culture to others. She also added that this experience made her grow as a professional, and with that acquired knowledge, is a feeling that she now has a greater responsibility to share what she has learned with other colleagues back in the Philippines.

Yumi

Yumi is a Philippine-licensed teacher with a bachelor's in Science with a major in Special Education, and a master's in Early Childhood education, both of which she earned in the Philippines. Prior to her participation in the teacher exchange program, she has accumulated 13 years of teaching experience in a private school setting. She has taught students from Kindergarten to eighth grade. While her primary teaching assignment was in a regular education classroom, she has worked with students with disabilities, e.g., diagnosed with mild attention deficit disorder, intellectual disabilities, and multiple disabilities, who were mainstreamed in her class. Yumi heard about the teacher exchange program through in-laws in the United States, who helped connect her to a recruiter from an established recruitment agency. The recruitment agency then organized an in-person recruitment event in Manila, Philippines. At the recruitment fair, she

was interviewed and received a job offer from a California school district. From the date of her interview in January, it took her six months to get all the necessary paperwork and preliminary processes accomplished before she stepped foot in the United States of America in July 2019. This process involved securing the necessary funds which amounted to a total of \$10,000, which included her airfare and pocket money. She stated that she was able to put together this amount, through the support of family who already immigrated to the United States. When asked about her reasons for coming to the United States as a teacher, she stated that it could bring better opportunities for her and her family.

Yumi is already in her fifth year as an exchange teacher and is working towards clearing her preliminary mild to moderate education specialist credential. She stated that while she had already completed all the preliminary-level coursework, she still needs to pass the California Subject Examination for Teachers (CSET). She added that the subtest she is struggling with the most is the one that includes social studies since she is not too familiar with American history. Throughout her time in the United States as an exchange teacher, she has had two host school districts. She stated that she was non-re-elected during her first year, prompting her to look for another employer to maintain her J1 visa status. When asked about the circumstances of her first district choosing not to re-elect her, she shared that a large group of Filipino exchange teachers were released that year and she was one of them. She said the district did not explain, but then, when the COVID school closures were taking longer than expected, the district rescinded the non-re-elections. However, she decided that she would rather work for another school district whom she felt she could trust. She has since spent the rest of her teaching at the second school district. In both school districts, she shared that her placement in the salary schedule took into consideration her years of experience and master's degree. When asked to recall what her initial

transition to the United States was like, Yumi said that her first year of teaching, while full of learning, was also an overwhelming time. Now that her period of participation is coming to a close, she shared that this experience offered her an opportunity to reinvent herself as a person, gave her a deeper love and passion for teaching, and escalated her commitment to making a difference in the lives of students with disabilities.

Results

The aim of this study was to shed light on the perceived benefits or experiential gains of Filipino special education teachers as a result of their involvement in the U.S. Department of State's teacher exchange program. For this hermeneutic study, data collection involved conducting in-depth interviews, examining organizational documents, and analyzing letters to address the central research question and three sub-questions that were developed to guide the exploration of participant experiences. Upon gathering data from the 10 participants, analysis was conducted using the modified Van Kaam method while adhering to the iterative cycle of knowledge construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction, also known as the Hermeneutic circle, to prevent researcher bias from influencing the reported results. To ensure consistency between the uncovered descriptions and participant responses, participants were also allowed to verify the accuracy of their experiences in the collected data, i.e., member checking. Through the researcher's thorough engagement with the interview transcripts, organizational documents, and written letters; axial codes and categories within the various data collection methods and across participants were synthesized, which then led to the emergence of three overarching themes (see Appendix I). Table 7 presents the themes uncovered in this research.

Table 7*Overarching, Superordinate and Subordinate Themes*

Overarching Themes	Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
Transposition	Arrival	Pre-Departure: Motivations and Preparations First Year: Feelings and Adjustments
	Survival	The New Context: Coping and Adjusting
Transition	Comparisons	Participant Perceptions of Special Education in the U.S. and Philippines
	Adaptation	First Steps: Taking Action, Applying What They Know, and Reconfiguring Approaches
	Integration	Special Education Learning Curve, Training and Support
Transformation	Impact of the Teacher Exchange Program	Perceived Personal, Professional and Socio-Cultural Benefits Giving Back: Teachers Training Teachers
	Contributions to the School Community	Perceived Impact of Cultural Exchange Activities Perceived Impact of the Exchange Teacher to their Host School

Transposition

The first overarching theme that emerged was Transposition, which refers to how the participants navigated the period of their ingress as foreign teachers in the United States. Under this theme, relevant codes that depict the myriad of emotions that participants felt from the time that they received confirmation that they were granted participation in the teacher exchange program and during the initial stages of their relocation to live and teach in the United States were linked to formulating an understanding of this aspect of their experience. Under this theme,

phrases such as “greener pastures,” “new experiences,” “a better life,” and “professional advancement,” captured their desires to participate in the teacher exchange program. Meanwhile, descriptors such as “amazing,” “excited,” “mixed emotions,” “anxious,” “hard,” “unsure,” and “overwhelming” describe the range of feelings that characterize the initial phases of their journey as exchange teachers, with Tala even likening the initial stages of her coming to the United States as a “roller coaster ride.” As participants continued on their journey of having been transposed as overseas trained teachers in the United States, participants shared that a mindset of acceptance and perseverance had been essential in their adjustment, which is exemplified in an excerpt from Ina’s letter that is shown in Figure 5 below. As participants recounted the transpositional aspects of their experiences, two subthemes, namely Arrival and Survival, emerged from the data, which further delineated key attributes of the participants’ experience as they are immersed in a new environment, American culture, and unfamiliar educational landscape.

Figure 5

Excerpt from Ina’s letter

Being independent was a huge challenge and so many unfamiliar things made you zone out and caused great distress. But you kept going until today. Do persevere and always find a reason to be grateful everyday and know that relearning and unlearning are not weaknesses, but rather a form of humility and a sign of wisdom to be admired.

Arrival

From the axial codes in the interview transcripts and letters, the first evident subtheme under Transposition is Arrival. This subtheme encompasses the diverse array of motivations and preparations the participants undertake in anticipation of their involvement in the teacher

exchange program. During the interviews, all participants expressed that the exchange program is going to provide them with better opportunities, where more than half expressed those opportunities to be financial in nature, and over a third expressed that this opportunity will allow them to gain advantage in the profession when they return. Additionally, all of the participants also wanted to gain overseas teaching experience. They were eager to take on the challenge of teaching in America, with many of them even adding that they were eager to see special education in action since all the books used in the teacher preparation programs in the Philippines are based on what is in the United States. As an example, Diwata shared, “I was thinking about the standards of practice in the US and wanted to test how far I can go. I wanted to test my capacity as a teacher.”. At the same time, another participant, Malaya, expressed, “I wanted to have a better life, be able to share my skills, and curious about the training I can acquire in the U.S.”

Upon learning that they were hired, most participants expressed a combination of feeling proud and excited about the idea of coming to America, and in anticipation of that, many of them engaged in preparations for the journey ahead. These preparations include attending a general orientation about living and teaching in America that was provided either through the recruitment agency, the exchange program sponsor, or the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO). Meanwhile, others stated that they engaged in some form of research by watching videos about the area they will be living in, what American classrooms and teaching look like, or doing research to become familiar with laws in the United States.

All participants associated positive feelings about the moment they arrived in the United States, with several participants expressing feelings of amazement at the new environment they will be living in. Other participants added that mixed with these feelings of excitement were also

feelings of anxiousness about whether their education and experience would measure up, or whether they would be experiencing discrimination. For example, Mutya had expressed, “I know I had the skill, and my extensive experience with students will serve me well. So I was more nervous about the idea of racism and being discriminated.”

Some participants, however, did express a quick anticlimax or a feeling of disappointment because their vision of America did not match the reality. To illustrate, this excerpt from Amihan’s interview described how she was not expecting to teach in a rural area:

When I got here, I was so happy. We landed in San Francisco and I remember feeling so amazed. As we drove, going out of San Francisco, . . . the area started becoming more grass and less neighborhood. I was unaware that I was going to be living in a very rural area where there was no public transportation! That was really disappointing for me!

Meanwhile, Kaya, on the other hand, recounted that:

I was excited to come to the U.S. It was my first time to travel, my first time on a plane! When I got here, the apartment complex that the sponsor had helped us find was really beautiful. There’s even a pool, a gym, and a laundry area! . . . But the more I started seeing the area, I realized that we were in an unsafe neighborhood. There’s a lot of police in our area, sometimes they even knock on our apartment to ask if we saw someone . . . even walking around does not feel safe. There’s people shouting or cussing at you. There was even a time that me and the group of Filipinos I came here with were harassed on the bus. The guy was yelling at us telling us to ‘Go back to your country!’ We got so scared that we got off even if that was not yet our stop.

Participants also expressed an awareness that they were dealing with a lot of new and different things when they arrived in the United States, with this even described by Datu as a

“different arena” during the interview. As the novelty of coming to America wore off, participants shared that these emotions were replaced with feelings of loneliness, of being scared, doubt, or a lack of confidence about being in the new setting, which was altogether expressed by Yumi, when she stated “I’m missing family and out of my comfort zone. The first week was challenging. I wanted to do well but I was unsure about the expectations.” These feelings were also exemplified in an excerpt from a letter by Amihan, as shown in Figure 6 below, which illustrates the thoughts and emotional attributes that are associated with seizing the opportunity to teach in the United States and adjusting to the new environment.

Figure 6

Excerpt from Amihan’s letter

I knew what I signed up for- It meant missing my family, missing milestones of my daughter, getting broke. I was anxious for the most part of it. Teaching here at that time was too undetermined. I often had to figure things out by myself. Remember the time when I had to walk 15 minutes back and forth, almost everyday from home to my workplace in the cold weather or the hot summer. I came here carless, but never complained. I could never complain. I wanted this. I only used to dream of America. I can never complain about the privilege given to me, knowing I only applied once and immediately got a job offer.

In addition to environmental adjustments, such as adapting to the weather and learning how to utilize public transportation, participants also shared that they needed to learn how to manage their finances better. For many, this involved understanding the cost of living in the United States and finding ways to allocate funds to support their families back in the Philippines while also affording to cover the monthly debt installments. Furthermore, some participants also expressed socio-linguistic challenges, as they became self-conscious about their accent when speaking English, requiring additional time to process spoken information and having to adjust to Americans' direct communication style, with many expressing that they interpreted as confrontational or disrespectful at first, which consequently made them feel intimidated. All in all, participants describe their first year as very challenging, with many describing it as a period

where they felt overwhelmed, not just by the things they had to learn, but also because of the pressure to meet the credentialing requirements.

Survival

The next subtheme under Transposition is Survival, which encapsulates a composite of the descriptions of how participants were able to cope with the post-arrival challenges. In reviewing the narratives that followed the environmental and social adjustments experienced by the participants, all emphasized the importance of embracing change and being open and accepting of their new circumstances. To elaborate, several participants stated that they could cope by relying on themselves and highlighted the need to persevere and be strong in facing the challenges. Whereas others expressed a focus on gratitude for being able to come to America, and found solace in traveling to explore and enjoy their new surroundings. All in all, these aspects highlight that survival is a second crucial experience related to transposition that is shared by the participants.

In this period of their participation in the program, it was evident that having a social network was also a critical element that helped the participants cope. Thus, in terms of support, more than half of the participants shared having their host family, other Filipinos, and/or good Samaritan colleagues as helpful in their initial adjustment, with this network of people supporting them so they can get to places to apply for their social security numbers, get fingerprinted, open a bank account, drop-off documents at the district office, and/or get groceries and supplies. In terms of adjusting to the new school and classroom, many of the participants shared that they were assigned a mentor, while half of the teachers shared that they were given time and opportunities by their school district administrators to meet their support staff, observe the students, set-up the classroom, and/or shadow a colleague; which they stated had allowed

them to better ease into the American classroom as a teacher. For example, Datu shared that, “I was given the opportunity to observe the summer class, with the students I would be absorbing and meet my support staff prior to the year starting.” While Malaya said, “When I arrived, I did not teach right away. I observed the classroom first, not just for a day, but for a week, so that gave me the opportunity to get to know my students, and them me, before taking over the class.” Consequently, while four of the participants shared positive feedback regarding the support they received from their school district and administrators during their period of adjustment, the rest stated that they felt unsupported or only somewhat supported, as illustrated by this excerpt from Hiyas’ interview:

I felt I lacked clear direction, and as much as I wanted to give my students my best, I was not able to give my 100% because I was, in addition to the cultural adjustment, still learning. So there's some form of regret. I feel that had I received support or been prepared better, my students that year would have had more productive learning time and learned more.

Transition

The second overarching theme identified from the data gathered from Filipino special education teachers is Transition. This theme emerged by linking elements from the details on how participants took action and described the types of support they received that assisted them the most in the transition to become more aligned with the special education teaching practices in America. In this phase of the participant’s experience, the Filipino special education teachers in this study continue to be well aware that they are experiencing something new and different. However, commonly used phrases like “problem-solving,” “establish self as the teacher,” “taking ownership of learning,” and “building relationships,” depict that they are in a period of transition

out of survival mode. To illustrate, Datu stated that the initial year was an experiential time and that it was full of learning, which helped him move more confidently in his second year as a teacher. As participants describe an eagerness to learn how special education is practiced to improve their sense of compatibility as teachers in the United States, three subthemes, Comparisons, Adaptation, and Integration, emerged, which provides a more in-depth understanding of the period of learning that is instrumental in the transitional aspects of the participants shared experience as exchange teachers.

Comparisons: Perceptions About Special Education in the United States and Philippines

The first subtheme under transition is Comparisons. This subtheme presents the shared perceived differences regarding the provision of special education services in the United States and the Philippines. When prompted to share their thoughts, participants were quick to describe the discrepancies in students' access to services and resources, and all of them expressed that access to services in the Philippines comes with a cost that is typically shouldered by the parents, with Tala even stating "In the Philippines, access to services and support for students with disabilities is a privilege afforded to the rich."

Furthermore, participants also referred to weak government support, that some Filipino students with disabilities are not being identified, and that there would be students who are turned away or end up dropping out of school because there are no services that are available to support the student. In addition to these perceived differences in access to services, participants also shared their perceptions on implementing special education practices in the United States, describing it to be more formal, organized, and that there is a standard set of procedures in practice. As an example, Malaya stated, "In the Philippines there is no government support and there are frequent policy changes . . . but here in America, there's IDEA, just one law that guides

the provision of special education services, practice is well implemented, structures are also clear.”

Interestingly, participants also mentioned a specific difference in their perception of parental support, with a good majority stating that Filipino parents seem to be more supportive of their child’s education. To illustrate, Hiyas expressed, “In the Philippines, I find it easier to get the support of the parents. I felt more empowered in letting parents know that we are partners and that we really have to work together.” while Diwata expressed a perception where she felt that:

In the U.S. there is a lack of support from families. I believe that special education is successful if reinforced across settings, but here parents seem to be busy and not have time. I was sadly shocked that there appears to be no effort coming from the family.

Adaptation

The second subtheme under Transition is Adaptation. This second subtheme emerged when, after recognizing the differences in the practice of special education in the United States, participants also described what had helped them pivot into the new education environment. In adapting to a different practice of special education, participants shared that they had to improvise, problem-solve, and take ownership of learning more about the practices here in the United States. In addition, over a third of the participants also expressed that they needed to keep pushing forward, while some shared that they needed to not be shy about seeking help nor be hesitant to ask questions, which, as described by Ina, was a cultural learning curve when she stated, “I don’t ask, like many Filipinos, we don’t ask, and we just accepted what was given. So I had to learn how to ask.” This sentiment was supported by what both Mutya and Malaya shared about having a conversation with their administrators about how Filipinos tend to be reserved

and shy and just say “yes.” So, both Mutya and Malaya were advised that it is okay to be assertive.

In recounting the first steps that the participants took as they transitioned as a teachers in an American classroom, participants shared that they began with classroom management, e.g., creating visual schedules, establishing routines, setting expectations, and arranging the classroom space so that they could manage the students’ access to supplies, facilitate student movement, and carry out whole and small group instruction, while a third added that they also established behavior systems. In taking those initial steps, the teachers also stated that they needed to establish their authority in the classroom, where several shared that they experienced challenges in engaging students and managing their behaviors. So a reconfiguration of their methods was necessary, such as laying low on the negative reinforcers and implementing more positive approaches. For example, Kaya shared:

The students did not want to do anything so I have to begin by rewarding them a lot at first to help them associate doing work with earning a reward . . . But then, of course I don’t want them to only do work because they will always get something out of it, so I had to slowly add more time on when students will be earning a token then gradually fade that out until they would just be ok with doing a good job as their reward.

Additionally, the teachers also shared that they needed to learn how to facilitate the support of the paraprofessionals, and in relation to that, most shared that they also had to focus a lot of their initial efforts on establishing relationships with the adults in their classroom in order to solicit their support in managing the classroom.

Integration

The third transition-related subtheme is Integration. This subtheme emerged from a composite of accounts shared by the participants that described how, in recognizing the differences in the practice of special education, and despite taking steps to establish themselves as the teacher, participants expressed an awareness of a steep learning curve. In referencing this, the participants shared that they needed to learn how to develop IEPs, utilize the online IEP system, and familiarize themselves with special education-related processes and practices such as compliance procedures, due dates, implementing accommodations, data collection, and progress monitoring. In addition, more than half of the participants shared that they need to learn how to integrate student equipment and materials in their day-to-day practice and routines, e.g., walkers, standers, Edtech Tools, AM/FM systems for students who are deaf and hard of hearing, AAC devices, and eye-gaze. The majority of the participants also shared that they needed to better exercise their role as the special education teacher when they collaborate with other members of the IEP team, whereas others shared that they had to learn how to facilitate IEP meetings. With this myriad of things that they expressed they had to gain familiarity or proficiency in, all participants did share that they received training from their school districts on IEP development, e.g., forms, writing, goal setting, assessment, using the online system, etc., while others also mentioned being provided training on legal compliance, disability-specific strategies, adult transition, safety care, curriculum, and EdTech Tools and Technology.

In relation to the training mentioned by the participants, most had expressed positive feedback about the training they had received at this stage in their participation in the program. However, when prompted to share about any training they wished they had, especially during the initial period of their transition as a special education teacher in America, only a few of the participants shared positive reviews of the support and training they received at the early stages

of their teaching in the United States. For instance, some participants shared that during their first year, training was just provided at the beginning and was fast-paced, and that these trainings were not provided to them at the onset of their transposition into the United States classroom, or that the training was provided late, i.e., in October or January. Some participants also shared that when they were trained on how to administer the academic assessments, they were shown just one time after school. In light of these perceptions, many of the participants hoped that they were provided orientation or training regarding what the expectations were, with Kaya even stating:

While I have years of experience, in this country I am a new teacher, and my success as a teacher is reliant on the amount of support and guidance that I will receive from them. It is important that they not only give me classroom supplies, or curriculum, I need support on how to utilize the curriculum or the apps. I need to know what their expectations are.

Furthermore, most participants also expressed that they would like to have received their training on laws and compliance procedures early on, while some expressed that they would like training on facilitating paraeducator support and collaborating with members of the IEP team, and several also stated that they wished they were provided information on credentialing requirements and/or test prep support. In addition to trainings, several participants also mentioned being provided a mentor, however, not all of them expressed satisfaction with the support they had received and stated that when they would reach out to their mentor, their mentor would be unresponsive or made it seem like they were being a bother so they eventually resorted to figuring things out on their own. This is depicted in a statement made by Hiyas, where she expressed that:

I was not able to maximize my mentor's support. Like what happened was, as the need arises, we could meet. But there were times I would call or email my mentor, but I will

receive no response. Then it somehow looked like I was the one not reaching out or asking for help.

Transformation

The third and final overarching theme that describes the experience of Filipino special education exchange teachers is Transformation. This theme emerged from the relevant codes from the interviews, letters, and exchange program-related documents that were linked to encapsulate the shared perceived value aspects of the participants' experiences. Under this major theme, the shared recognition of change in the participants' personal outlook and perceived knowledge and skills in teaching students with disabilities are elucidated, with words such as "growth," "confidence," "pride," and "belonging," as recurring descriptors, representing how they have crossed over to feeling more grounded in their practice and sense of self as a teacher in their school community. This transformational aspect is highlighted when Kaya stated that the exchange program experience has given her a "broader perspective as a teacher," when Mutya shared that the experience allowed her to excel in her professional life, and further exemplified in the excerpts from a letter written that Diwata wrote to her younger self, shown in Figure 7 below. To provide more detail regarding the transformational aspects of the participants' experiences, the two subthemes, Impact of the Teacher Exchange Program and Contributions to the School Community, that emerged from the data are also presented, further highlighting the perceived lasting legacy of the teachers' participation in the exchange program.

Figure 7

Excerpt From Diwata's Letter

The exchange program has been a catalyst for your professional development. The collaboration with fellow educators from different backgrounds has broadened your perspective on special education. The exchange of ideas, teaching methods, and strategies has enriched your toolbox as a teacher. The diverse range of students you've worked with during this program has taught you the value of individualized approaches and the importance of fostering an inclusive learning environment.

Impact of the Teacher Exchange Program

Impact of the Teacher Exchange Program is the first subtheme under transformation, where a composite of the perceived beneficial outcomes of the Filipino teachers' participation in the teacher exchange program is presented. This subtheme emerged from the details that were conveyed by the participants regarding the perceived personal and professional benefits and lasting effects of the teacher exchange program. As gleaned from data that was collected, participants reported that their involvement has brought them personal and/or practical benefits, with the majority sharing that this experience made them grow as a person, e.g., they became resilient, independent, disciplined, empathic, and confident, and Yumi even describing it as "an opportunity to reinvent myself." The Filipino special education teachers also shared that their participation in the exchange program has brought them financial benefits and that through having a J1 visa, they were able to bring their spouse and/or children with them, while over a third shared that coming to America to teach gave them an opportunity to experience new things, travel, meet people and make new friends, and that they became more appreciative and embracing of cultural differences.

Another significant area of impact identified was on the participants' perceptions of how the program has brought them professional advantages, where participants felt that this overseas

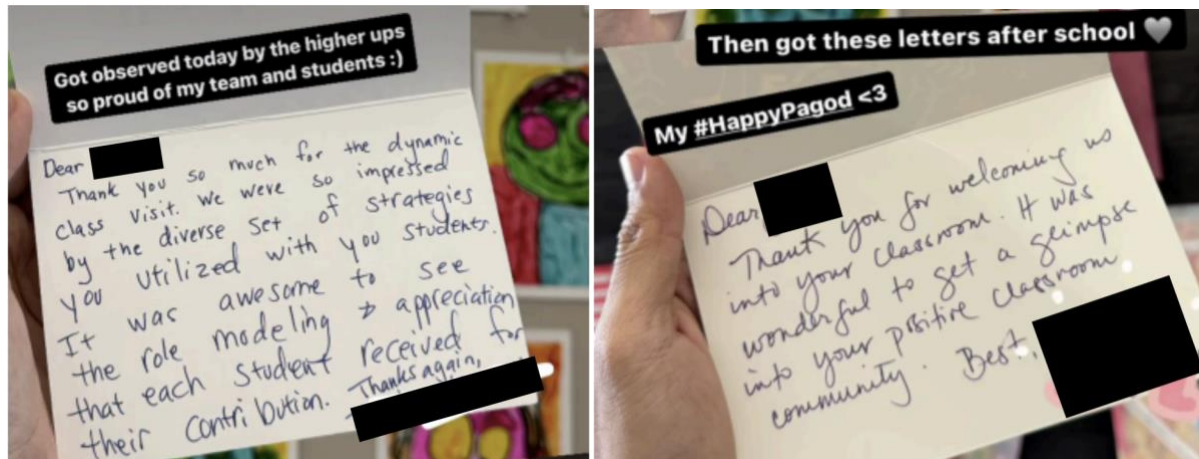
teaching experience would elevate their professional status, i.e., prestige, and marketability, which they feel would benefit them when they return to the Philippines. Additionally, participants also noted shifts in their perspectives, such as obtaining a more global outlook on education, a recognition of the value of individualization and having a student-centered lens, and an increased appreciation for the practice of collaboration with others as a means to learn more. This finding is validated by a statement made by Tala where she stated:

I would advise others to participate in the program. It will allow them to experience a different world. It will deepen their understanding of special education, and they will also have the edge to become a global teacher, more well-rounded in their craft. It is fun to be immersed in a place where you will have the opportunity to learn from others.

Furthermore, the Filipino teachers also shared feelings of validation as professionals, which is exemplified in statements where they shared feeling valued to be a resource for their colleagues at their school and noted in the emotions shared by Datu when he received cards from his school administrators (see Figure 8 below). In relation to this, several participants also added that this experience had allowed them to discover their untapped leadership potential, which as Malaya stated in her interview, “The U.S. experience made it possible for me to gain confidence in my ability, to develop and show my leadership skills.” Lastly, more than half of the participants also expressed that they felt accepted and proud that they were able to represent what being a Filipino is to their school community, as someone who works hard, and always displays a positive attitude.

Figure 8

Cards Datu Received from School Administrators



As participants continued to share about the beneficial aspects of the program participation experience, they also stated that this experience has afforded them several pedagogical skill gains as special education teachers. More specifically, all participants reported that through the course of their participation in the program, they were able to acquire knowledge about special education, accommodations, case management, and the IEP process. This is evident in the participant's responses, where a good majority shared that they feel confident about their ability to develop IEPs and facilitate meetings, while others expressed feeling more secure about their role and what they can contribute when collaborating with other members of the IEP team. With their enhanced knowledge and skills, participants expressed confidence in their practice as special education teachers. Malaya stated that she is confident that she can teach others about what she has learned, while Kaya expressed that she is eager to share her learnings and experiences with her colleagues back in the Philippines. In connection, all participants stated that this experience allowed them to acquire more tools for teaching which they wish to share with teachers in the Philippines, whether in the form of resources, strategies, or recommendations for practice. As an example, half of the participants expressed their intention

to share EdTech tools, curriculum programs, and online resources for teachers, e.g., News-2-You, websites to make PECS cards, Khan Academy, Kahoot, Prodigy, Freckle, ReadWorks, etc.; many expressed an aim to impart disability-specific strategies, understanding the function of behaviors, antecedent-behavior-consequence analysis, classroom management, differentiation, and accommodations. Subsequently, several participants indicated confidence in their capacity to facilitate training sessions on IEP development, documentation, goal setting, and progress monitoring. In contrast, others expressed readiness to present on pre-referral and intervention practices, as well as foster discussions on collaboration. In addition, some of the participants also stated some recommendations and proposed that the Philippines look into services and supports that can facilitate the transition of adults with disabilities into the community, e.g., vocational skills and travel training, job shadowing, etc., suggest that the Philippines explore the feasibility of creating a job classification or item for paraprofessionals in the public schools, and consider including mental health supports in the provision of services for students.

Contribution to the School Community

The second subtheme under Transformation is Contribution to the School Community. This subtheme emerged as participants continued to reflect on the beneficial aspects of their participation in the teacher exchange program that are outside of themselves. As gleaned from the interviews, letters, and documents, all the Filipino teachers perceive a variety of contributions they have as exchange teachers to their students and to the school community, where participants shared perceptions regarding their impact on students as that of being an advocate for their students' needs, being able to engage their students in unique and enjoyable activities, e.g., games, play, music, and annual class story books, establishing positive relationships with students, and creating a classroom community that embraces diversity. In terms of their impact

on staff, teachers expressed that they contributed to the overall identity, staffing stability, and organization of the special education program at their school sites, with most of the participants perceiving themselves as becoming a resource for their colleagues on understanding special education processes, supporting students with disabilities, being the bridge for collegial partnerships to form between the gen ed teachers, SPED department, and parents; with several of these aspects highlighted, in an excerpt from Mutya's letter, that is shown in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9

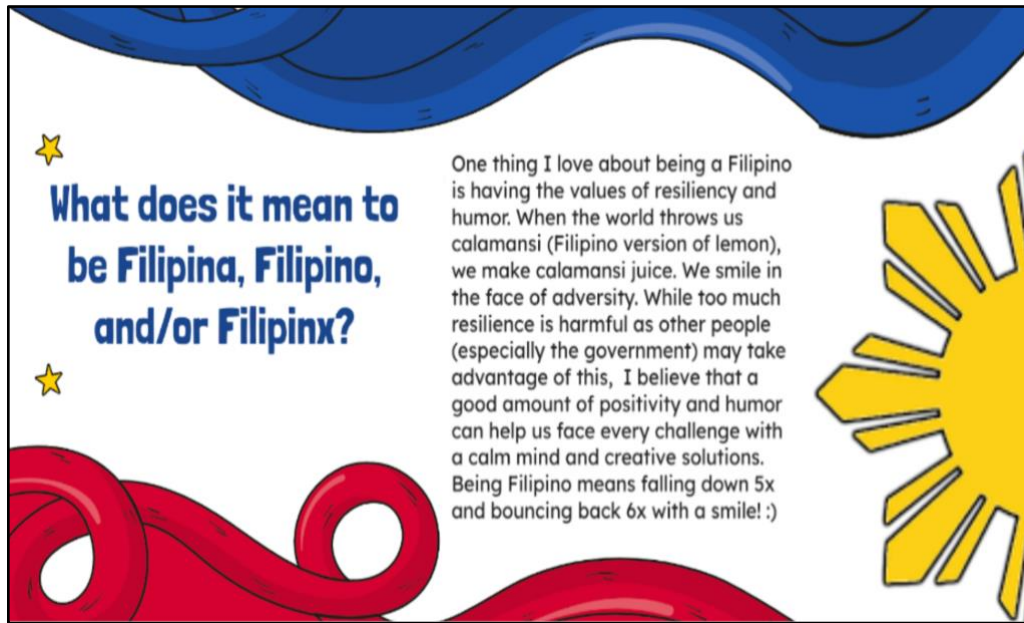
Excerpt from Mutya's Letter

As an exchange teacher, you excelled in sharing your own culture with your colleagues and the community, bridging gaps and fostering understanding among peers. Today, I am thrilled to share that you've grown into a stronger person and a compassionate special education teacher. Your dedication and hard work have been recognized, leading to your appointment as head of the department—a testament to your expertise and leadership.

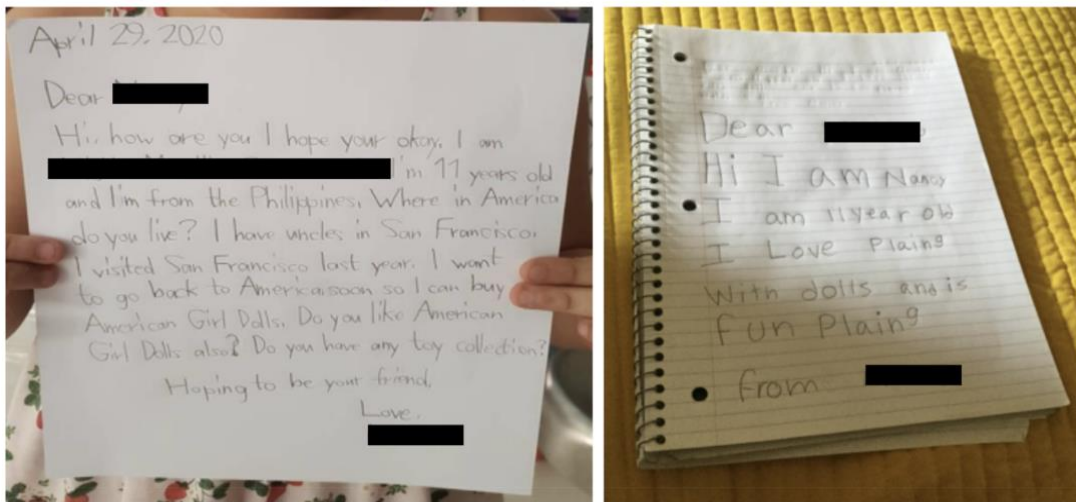
Participants also shared that as foreign teachers in the United States, they took every opportunity to share their culture with their American colleagues and students, where all of the participants had the opportunity to talk about and have students and staff try Filipino food, the majority shared that they were able to share about a variety of topics about the Philippines, and Teacher Datu even doing a quick presentation to their district staff on what it means to be a Filipino, as shown in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10

Photo of a Slide Shared by Datu with All District Staff



Furthermore, participants also stated that they could teach their students some Filipino words, songs, and games. They also talked about places in the Philippines and did some art. Participants stated that a discussion of these topics was facilitated during whole class activities, student-to-student dialogues, incorporated in the letter exchanges that they had arranged between students in the United States and students in the Philippines, or covered during compare and contrast discussions with their students. In analyzing the cultural exchange reports from the participants, a review of the narratives also showed recurring threads in the reported impact of these activities, which are promoting tourism and awareness of the Philippines, facilitating an appreciation of Filipino culture, forging friendships between Filipino and American students, and fostering the development of diverse perspectives and respect for differences. Figures 11 and 12 show excerpts from some of the submitted Cultural Exchange Reports (also see Appendix S to view samples of the cultural exchange activities that the teachers had implemented).

Figure 11*Cultural Exchange Report Excerpt: Letter Exchange Activity Between Students*

As a J1 Teacher, I want to let my students know that friendship can happen everywhere in any form of communication. I believe this activity not only teaches students how to write friendly letters, it also encourages students to be aware of how other cultures celebrate holidays, and meet new friends.

Figure 12*Cultural Exchange Report Excerpt: School Community Presentation*

Provide a general overview of this cross-cultural activity.

The *Raragsakan* was presented to our school community by a group of Filipino teachers, myself included. The *Raragsakan* is a dance to express merriment where the circular movements of the dance symbolize how the Kalinga women gather and prepare for a celebration of unity and harmony after a war or hunting success, as well as peace pacts between tribes.

What was the estimated impact of this cross-cultural activity?

Dancing with music is a way to express one's culture in the form of art. It can build identity and distinction from other cultures and sharing this dance gives others an awareness of the rich culture of the Filipinos. The specific cultural message we are sending to others through this dance is how we as a people always manage to stand up and wipe off the dust from our shoulders, that we are capable of staying composed despite struggles, and we always strive to maintain a positive outlook in life.

Outlier Data and Finding: Dynamics of the Teacher Exchange Program

In pursuing this inquiry on the experience of Filipino special education teachers, participants also shared their perceptions regarding the role of their sponsor, their host school,

and themselves as exchange visitors. In juxtaposing their responses with the contents of the organizational documents, this research also uncovered the outlier finding: Dynamics Of The Teacher Exchange Program. Specific to this outlier finding, participants provided the researcher with the Terms and Conditions documents from their program sponsors that they had signed and agreed to, and in reviewing the pathways to participation that participants had shared, there are four different agencies that sponsored the cultural exchange visa that granted the Filipino special education teachers access to enter the United States. In reviewing those documents, along with the publicly available information from the sponsor's websites and the participants' responses during the interview, the following other findings were uncovered: the Teacher Exchange Program Sponsor's Role and Responsibilities, the Host School's Role and Responsibilities, and The Filipino Special Education Exchange Teacher's Role and Responsibilities. These outlier findings are included in the reported results as this sheds light on the relational aspects between the program sponsor, host schools, and teacher exchange program participants. Derived from the contents of the organizational documents and the perception of roles gathered from the participant interviews, Table 8 below, while not intended to be an exhaustive list, summarizes the uncovered basic responsibilities of the program sponsor, host school, and participating teacher.

Table 8*Outlier Finding: Dynamics of the Teacher Exchange Program*

Outlier: Dynamics of the Teacher Exchange Program	Review of Organizational Documents and Sponsor Websites	Axial Codes from Interviews
Subtheme: Role and Responsibility of the Visa Sponsor	Purpose of the Teacher Exchange Program (4), Participant Eligibility (4), Sponsorship (4), Provide Information, i.e., Requirements, Fees, Cultural Exchange Requirements, Cost of Living and Sample Budget (4), Initial Medical and Travel Insurance (4), Monitor Stay (4), Maintain Updated Contact Information (4)	Visa Sponsorship (10), Initial Insurance (3), Ensure our Safety (5), Welcome Email, Information (3), Seminar/Orientation (4), Reminders on Terms and Conditions e.g., satisfying credentials, cultural exchange reports, program fees (4), Monthly Check-ins (4), Other (3), Perception: Active Sponsor Support, Not Much (10)
Subtheme: Role and Responsibility of the Host School	Accredited K to 12 school (4), Full-time teaching position (4), Commensurate wages (4), Medical Insurance (4), Support (4), Re Visa Sponsorship (4), Temporary stay of the teacher (4)	Employment and same pay (4), Recipient of the Cultural Exchange (3), Ensure Safety (4), Train, Develop (6), Received Training (10), Provided a Mentor (5), Positively supported by Admin (4)
Subtheme: Role and Responsibility of the Filipino Special Education teacher as a Teacher Exchange Program participant	Satisfy Credentialing Requirements (4), Maintain Insurance (4), Maintain Updated Contact Information (4), Implement Cultural Exchange Activities (4), Residency Requirement (4)	Comply with Terms and Conditions, e.g., abide by the laws of the US, travel notification, updated contact information, insurance, DS2019 information, work towards satisfying credential requirements (10); Pay Fees (3), Submit Cultural Reports (7), Learn and Return (3), To Teach (10), To help fill a staffing shortage (3), The Cultural Exchange Aspect is the difference (3), Implemented Cultural Exchange Activities at the school (10), Unaware that the teacher is an exchange teacher (4)

Teacher Exchange Program Sponsor Role and Responsibilities

According to a review of the documents and sponsor websites from the different sponsors, the primary objective of the Teacher Exchange Program is to enhance mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries. In stating this purpose, all sponsor documents indicated that their organization's primary role is that of providing experienced foreign teachers an opportunity to participate in cross-cultural activities, gain knowledge of the educational system, and sharpen their professional skills through short-term full-time teaching positions in schools across the United States, with this opportunity open to foreign teachers who meet the specified criteria, i.e., be a certified teacher in their home country, demonstrate English language proficiency, have, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree in the field that the teacher will be teaching in that is equivalent to a United States degree, and have acquired at least two years of teaching experience. Per the documents and website information, eligible participants gain access to enter the United States through their organization's support, specifically through an issuance of a DS2019 or a Certificate of Eligibility, which the participating teacher then brings to the U.S. Embassy so they can apply for a J1 Visa. In terms of support, all sponsor-related documents indicated that they provide their participating teachers information regarding program requirements, associated fees, cultural exchange expectations, cost of living in the United States, and a sample budget to aid in financial planning. Additionally, participants also receive medical and travel insurance coverage for the first 90 days to ensure their health and safety during their initial entry into the United States. Furthermore, all sponsor documents specified a requirement for their participants to maintain updated contact information and adherence to the program's guidelines, while also committing to monitoring the safety and well-being of their participating teachers throughout the program duration.

In reflecting on the participants' responses regarding their perceived role of their program sponsors, it was evident that they were aware that their program sponsor's primary role is that of J1 visa sponsorship, where half of the participants also added that this role encompasses facilitating their adjustment and ensuring their safety as visitors in the United States. From both the organizational documents and the participants' perspective, this included providing the exchange teachers initial insurance until they acquire coverage through their employer or host school. Additionally, some teachers stated that they received a welcome email containing information about their responsibilities and a checklist of reminders, e.g., notifying the sponsor of their arrival, providing contact information, applying for a social security number, and informing the sponsor of enrollment in district medical insurance.

In terms of communication, participants mentioned that their sponsors conduct monthly check-ins, where they are asked to reconfirm their contact information and employment status with the district. At the same time, some indicated scheduled sponsor-facilitated online events where, although attendance is optional, the Filipino teachers get an opportunity to meet other teacher exchange program participants from other countries. As for the participants' perceptions regarding support from their program sponsors, none of the participants mentioned any active support beyond visa sponsorship and ensuring compliance with terms and conditions, and the majority acknowledged that the responsibility of maintaining the legality of their stay in the United States rests on them, the exchange program participants.

Host School Role and Responsibilities

In reviewing all of the sponsors' website information, it was apparent that access to enter the United States is contingent upon securing employment from a host school, with a requirement for the host schools to be accredited K to 12 institutions. Additionally, the terms and

conditions documents outlined several key responsibilities as well, namely, providing exchange teachers with full-time teaching positions, offering commensurate wages, ensuring the teacher is enrolled in medical insurance, and offering support to facilitate a successful exchange program experience. Furthermore, the documents emphasize that host schools understand the sponsor's role as the participating teacher's J1 visa sponsor and acknowledge that the visa's purpose is cultural exchange. With regards to the host school's acknowledgment of the purpose of the visa and the role of the program sponsor, all of the terms and conditions documents also indicated that the schools and the participating teacher recognize the temporary nature of their stay and so schools are to refrain from providing them assistance with any visa status changes. Additionally, when participants shared their perceptions on the role of their host schools, the teachers highlighted that the school's responsibility is to provide them with opportunities to teach in the United States and receive equitable compensation, along with opportunities to implement the required cultural exchange activities. Participants also emphasized the importance of the host school's role in ensuring their safety, with Amihan suggesting that this includes providing a discrimination-free environment. Furthermore, participants also mentioned that the school also plays a role in providing them with training to develop their skills as exchange teachers. In connection to this role, a review of the interview responses did indicate that all participants were provided training, and more than half mentioned being assigned a mentor. However, only a third provided positive feedback regarding the support they received.

The Filipino Special Education Exchange Teacher's Role and Responsibilities

As for the roles of the exchange teacher participant, all of the program sponsor documents reviewed stated that the exchange teacher's responsibility is to satisfy the credentialing requirements, maintain health and travel insurance, make sure they provide their

program sponsors updated contact information, implement cultural exchange activities at their school, and to return to their home country upon the conclusion of their program participation to satisfy the program's residency requirement. In terms of the perceived role of the teachers to their program sponsor, they had stated that their involvement in the program entailed compliance with the terms and conditions, more explicitly highlighting the following: abide by the laws of the United States, maintain updated contact information and insurance, notify their sponsors if they are to travel outside the United States, work towards their credential, and maintain employment at the host school that matches what is in their DS2019 document. In addition, participants also mentioned that their responsibility as exchange teachers includes paying the annual program fees and submitting annual cultural exchange reports to their program sponsor, but most importantly, that they are here to learn so they have something to take back with them after their program participation.

In addition to the program sponsor, exchange teachers also have a responsibility to their host schools. According to the participants' statements, all of them recognize that their main responsibility is to teach, with some participants even adding that this responsibility is not that different from the other teachers at the school. Participants also recognize that a unique aspect of being an exchange teacher is that they need to implement cultural exchange activities, which all teachers stated that they were able to follow through on. Interestingly, almost half of the participants shared that their school administrators were unaware that they were in the teacher exchange program. As they explained the program to their admins, Datu shared that his principal had commented, "They should send more Datu's to our school!" which made him feel really proud, whereas, in Mutya's case, her principal was saddened when she let her know that she would not be returning the following year as this her fifth and last year in the program.

Research Question Responses

According to the information reflected in all the terms and conditions documents from the four different sponsors, including the information indicated on the sponsor websites, the purpose of the teacher exchange program is to foster mutual understanding between people in the United States and other countries. Additionally, the documents and website information also indicate that the main objective of the program is that of cultural exchanges, which, in partnership with host schools and through the assistance of the visa sponsor, foreign teachers gain access to enter and temporarily teach in accredited K to 12 schools across the country. Given this illuminated purpose of the program, this study aimed to uncover an understanding of the experiences of Filipino special education teachers as a result of their exchange program participation, and through data analysis, three main themes emerged, all of which reinforce the phenomenological inquiry undertaken to answer the research questions outlined in this section.

Central Research Question

What do Filipino special education teachers perceive as benefits of participating in the exchange program?

As illustrated in the transpositional phase of their journey, all participants experienced a critical period of adjustment as teachers in the United States. As they went through a period of transition, they felt more grounded in their practice as foreign teachers in the United States. The outcomes of this change process are highlighted in the transformational aspects of their experience, where a picture of the personal, professional, and socio-cultural benefits of their participation in the teacher exchange program was established. At a personal level, participants shared that their participation in the exchange program has been financially rewarding. Because the program also provided them an opportunity to bring their dependents into the United States,

it allowed them to share the experience of a new culture with their spouse and/or children and they even shared that they will treasure their memories of the new experiences and travel during their time in the United States. Additionally, participants also stated that this experience has given them socio-cultural benefits, where all made references to the friendships they have made. Almost half stated that immersion has provided them to acquire some American cultural norms, such as learning to be more direct and assertive, that have been instrumental in their growth as a person and as a teacher. Furthermore, as participants expressed that as they overcame the challenge of a steep learning curve in the practice of special education in the United States, they also acquired a higher level of confidence in their abilities as a teacher, with this transformational aspect exemplified in an excerpt from Datu's letter that is shown in Figure 13 below.

Figure 13

Excerpt from Datu's Letter

You expanded your knowledge in the field of Special Education. IDEA made a lot more sense now to you! The law that you were scared of before is now your guiding light in making sure that you provide the most appropriate and relevant education to your students. IDEA is your friend, not your enemy!

Writing IEPs is now a piece of cake for you. Learning the different IEP systems may have been a challenge in the beginning but it made you more efficient and effective in writing IEPs. Now you are jealous of it and hoping that the Philippines has its own IEP management to standardize its format and contents. You saw how legislative efforts make IEPs more comprehensive and inclusive. I hope the Philippines keep up on this and really enforce the law to protect the rights of learners with Special Needs.

Behavior management was one of your biggest concerns. While you had training in this area in the Philippines, you were still concerned due to the fact that cultural factors influence the behaviors of students; hence, a whole lot of modifications needed to be done. That fear turned into courage. Now you try to deliberately trigger students to provide them a safe space to practice their coping skills—preparing your students for the real world, a world that is not trigger-free.

In reviewing the transformational aspects of their journey, the teachers stated that because of the overseas teaching experience, they were able to acquire a changed outlook regarding teaching students with disabilities and that they felt more secure in their ability not just to teach students but also assist their colleagues in acquiring a better understanding of the practice of special education, underscoring the professional benefits of their participation in the teacher exchange program. Consequently, as participants were able to contribute and share their knowledge with others in their school community, they also expressed feelings of belonging and being valued, and they were able to develop their leadership skills because of this experience. Lastly, participants also shared that another perceived benefit of the overseas teaching experience is a belief that their professional status as teachers will become elevated when they return to the Philippines.

Sub-Question One

What opportunities do Filipino special education exchange teachers perceive were provided that allowed them to share their teaching practices and culture?

According to a review of information from the sponsor websites and documents that the participants submitted, the teacher exchange program sponsor's main role is to provide experienced foreign teachers with opportunities to engage in cross-cultural activities, gain insights into the educational system, and enhance their professional skills through short-term teaching positions in the United States, which are facilitated through partnerships with accredited K to 12 schools across the country. In connection to this role, participants mentioned that a key responsibility they had to follow through on as exchange teachers was that of submitting annual cultural exchange reports to their program sponsors. Thus stated, while the exchange teacher's primary duty for their host school is to teach, participants had also highlighted the unique aspect

of implementing cultural exchange activities as part of their duties as an exchange teacher. In relation to a reiteration of this role, sub-question one for this research aimed to uncover opportunities provided to the Filipino special education exchange teachers to share their culture, and in reviewing axial codes that fall under the contributions to the school community subtheme, all of the teachers stated that they took advantage of any opportunity presented to them that would allow them to share their culture. More specifically, the Filipino teachers shared that they were able to present a variety of topics that showcase Filipino culture to their students and host school, with the most popular being Filipino cuisine, followed by Filipino holiday traditions and customs, Philippine national symbols and facts, traditional clothing, and folk dance. Additionally, participants also shared that they were able to incorporate Filipino songs and music, integrated the use of Filipino games, and related notable American and Philippine places and people in their lessons. Participants also stated that activities around these topics were presented in their classroom during art, PE, and social studies and through class activities that involve comparing and contrasting. Figure 14 below shows a sample lesson plan that was carried out by Teacher Tala in her classroom.

Figure 14

Sample Compare and Contrast Lesson from Tala

Cultural Exchange Lesson Plan

Topic: Heroes “Comparing the Life of Dr. Jose Rizal and Martin Luther King Jr. “

Objective: At the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:

- Compare the life of Dr. Jose Rizal and Martin Luther King Jr. through a Venn Diagram
- Identify the interesting facts about the life of Dr. Jose Rizal and Martin Luther King Jr.
- Talk about the impact of the life of Dr. Jose Rizal and Martin Luther King Jr. in today’s society

Motivation: Show a picture of Dr. Jose Rizal and Martin Luther King Jr. Then show a Philippine flag and an American Flag. Ask the children to identify the nationality of the two heroes by matching their picture to their flag.

Main: Discuss the life of Dr. Jose Rizal and Martin Luther King Jr. through picture show and tell. Then use a Venn Diagram to show comparison between the two heroes. Ask the children to talk about the impact of the life of Dr. Jose Rizal and Martin Luther King Jr. in today’s society. What will happen if they did not stand up for our rights? If you were in a situation wherein you experience injustice, how will you respond?

Dr. Jose Rizal	Shared Characteristics	Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
-Filipino	-Heroes that shaped today's society	-American
-Born in Calamba, Laguna	-Fought in peaceful means	-Born in Atlanta, Georgia
-Studied Medicine and specialized in Ophthalmology	-Advocated freedom, peace and equality	-He is a Baptist minister and Civil Rights Advocate
-He wrote Noli Me Tangere and El Filibusterismo to awaken the Filipinos about the corruption and abusiveness of the Spaniards.		-He led the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott to protest against segregation and discrimination of Black Americans. He was known for his powerful speeches (e.g. I have a Dream).
-He was imprisoned and convicted of sedition.		-He was imprisoned due to his protests.
-He died as a martyr at the age of 35 executed by a firing squad.		-He died in assassination at the age of 39.

Sub-Question Two

What types of support do Filipino special education exchange teachers perceive have helped them adjust and build their efficacy to teach American students with disabilities?

This sub-research question delves into the types of support perceived by the Filipino special education exchange teachers as helpful that allowed them to better teach American students with disabilities. In relation to this sub-question, a review of the organizational documents for all four sponsors highlighted the pivotal role of the host school in supporting the success of exchange teachers in the program. At the same time, during interviews, over half of the participants expressed their perception of the host school's role as that of supporting their development as teachers by providing them with training. In reviewing the transposition and transition aspects of the teachers' experiences, all participants noted the substantial learning curve associated with adapting to the new systems and processes in the United States. Thus to address this sub-research question, participant responses that pertain to what they perceive to have facilitated their successful transition as special education teachers in the United States were carefully examined. In the analysis, all the participants of this study were provided support by their host schools. As an example, half of the participants reported having mentors and being afforded time to observe classes, shadow teachers, review caseloads, or set up their classrooms when they first arrived in the United States. Additionally, all participants were also provided support through the provision of training, on topics such as IEP development, legal compliance, safety care, curriculum, and educational technology tools.

Sub-Question Three

What special education practices do Filipino special education exchange teachers intend to implement upon their return to support students with disabilities in their home country?

The third sub-research question identifies the acquired special education practices that Filipino special education exchange teachers intend to implement upon their return. In answering this question, it is important to reference, as indicated in all sponsor websites and terms and conditions documents reviewed, that the teacher exchange program is intended to be a short-term overseas teaching opportunity where one of its objectives is that of foreign teachers to gain experience and training that they can take back with them when they return to their home country at the conclusion of their participation. This stated, a review of the participant responses under the transformation theme revealed that all participants expressed an intention to share what they have learned upon their return, mentioning plans to disseminate their newfound knowledge about IEP processes, teaching resources, teaching strategies, as well as practices related to collaboration and pre-referral interventions.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceived benefits or experiential gains of Filipino special education in California, as a result of their participation in the U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange program. Chapter Four began with a narrative profile for each of the selected participants for this study, which included a description of their pathway to participation in the teacher exchange program. After a description of the selected participants was provided, the chapter segued to a presentation of the results gleaned from the analysis of the data that was collected through in-depth interviews, organizational documents, and letter writing. In the presented outcomes, the three overarching themes of their experience that were uncovered in the process of analysis, namely, Transposition, Transition and Transformation, were described in detail, and also referenced in the presentation of the responses to the developed research questions that supported the inquiry. Then, in finding the answer to the main research question,

“What do Filipino special education teachers perceive as benefits of participating in the exchange program?”, the composite descriptions of the participants’ experiences indicated that the Filipino special education teachers perceive several personal, professional and socio-cultural benefits as a result of their participation in the exchange program.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological research endeavor was to explore the lived experiences of Filipino special education exchange teachers in California. Through the analysis of data gathered from the participants, three overarching themes that encapsulate the multifaceted experiences of the participants were revealed. Chapter Five begins by summarizing the themes derived from the study, followed by the subsequent researcher's interpretation of these findings. This is followed by a discussion of the study's implications for policy and practice, as well as the theoretical and empirical implications of the outcomes. Then, a presentation of the study's limitations and delimitations, recommendations for future research, and a summary brings this final chapter to its conclusion.

Discussion

This study explored the lived experiences of Filipino special education teachers, with a focus on their perceived gains as participants in the Teacher Exchange Program. This section begins by summarizing the uncovered themes that were presented in detail in the previous chapter and proceeds with the researcher's interpretation. The interpretation connects the phenomenological evidence with the reviewed literature, including human capital theory, which served as the theoretical framework that guided this inquiry into the multifaceted experience of Filipino special education teachers. This is then followed by a discussion of the study's political, practical, theoretical, and empirical implications and addresses the study's limitations and delimitations, and the researcher's recommendations for future research.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The previous chapter presented the structural descriptions of the experiences of Filipino special education exchange teachers through data collected from in-depth interviews, organizational documents, and letter writing. The analysis revealed three themes reflecting the intricacies of their experiences as foreign teachers in the United States. The first uncovered theme was transposition, which describes the participants' experiences during the period of their ingress and adjustment into the new culture and education landscape, where the two subthemes namely, arrival and survival, further illustrated their motivations to participate in the teacher exchange program, the preparations that were undertaken prior to their entry into the United States, and their experiences with coping into the new context. In reviewing participant responses, all participants expressed that participation in the program will provide them with better opportunities that were inaccessible to them or felt they had already maximized in their home country, i.e., economic or professional, and/or allow them to pursue their personal interests in novel experiences. As participants were transposed to live and work in the United States, their experiences were characterized by a complex set of emotions related to their adjustments to the environmental, social, and cultural aspects of being in a new setting. Predicated by their motivations, all participants were able to cope into their new environment by embracing change.

As the participants moved forward into their participation in the teacher exchange program, their responses unearthed a second thematic aspect of their acclimatization into the new educational context, Transition, where the subthemes of comparisons, adaptation and integration were identified. Under this overarching theme, participants shared the noticeable differences in the implementation of special education in the United States, and highlighted the more structured and resourced elements that are in place in comparison to the practice of special education in the

Philippines. Participants also shared the application of their baseline knowledge and skills as new teachers in the United States, where the dominant responses specified a focus on managing their classrooms and building relationships as a starting point that helped them establish themselves as a teacher. Additionally, this period of their experience was also characterized by a steep learning curve in their conceptual knowledge of and practical skills in teaching students with disabilities, which was supported by their host schools through the provision of training.

After eliciting the adjustments made by Filipino special education teachers and their journey towards integration into the new practice, they were better prepared to reflect on their current lived experiences in the teacher exchange program. This led to the emergence of the third major theme, transformation, which is characterized by two subthemes: the impact of the teacher exchange program and contributions to the school community. This aspect of their experience provided insights into the central research question that served as a fundamental guidepost for carrying out this research, where, as the researcher deeply engaged with the data gathered from the participants, it became evident that the teacher exchange program has brought several personal, professional, and socio-cultural benefits and added an expressed feeling of validation of their professional role and identity as a Filipino teacher. In connection to these perceived beneficial aspects, the participants also expressed a desire to share the knowledge and pedagogical skills that they had acquired, with their colleagues in the Philippines upon their return. Additionally, participants also reported on their perceived contributions to the school, which were highlighted in discussions related to the implementation of cultural exchange activities, along with their perceived impact to their school community in terms of providing stability in staffing, organization to the special education department, and facilitating an awareness about Filipino culture amongst their students and American colleagues.

As the participants shared their lived experiences from the beginning to the present time, an outlier finding was also identified, i.e., the dynamics of the teacher exchange program. Under this finding, the role of the program sponsor, host school, and participating teacher, as detailed in the organizational documents, alongside the participants' perceptions of these roles, were also presented. In establishing an understanding that one of the key purposes of the U.S. Department of State's teacher exchange program was that of providing foreign teachers an opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge about the education system and practice in the United States (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2024; US Department of State, 2016), a review of the documents and participant perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the program sponsor and host school acknowledged that the program sponsor primarily facilitates access for the Filipino teachers to enter the United States through J1 Cultural Exchange Visa sponsorship, while the host school's main role is that of being the participating teacher's training ground. Moreover, specific to the terms and conditions that participants need to comply with as exchange visitors in the United States, participants also shared that they had implemented cultural exchange activities during their stay. Participants also recognized their key responsibility to return to the Philippines to fulfill a residency requirement at the conclusion of their exchange program participation.

Interpretation of Findings

Upon having the Filipino special education teachers share their stories, from the beginning of their involvement in the teacher exchange program to the present time, three overarching themes were uncovered, namely Transposition, Transition, and Transformation. In discovering the multifaceted aspects of the Filipino special education exchange teachers' experience, this section now delves into the researcher's interpretation of the layers of meaning

that emerged from the socio-interactive elements and the researcher's philosophical assumptions that were at play while engaging with the participants and analyzing the results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These interpretations are presented in this section as they relate to the review of the literature that was presented in chapter two, along with human capital theory, which is the theoretical framework that underpinned this hermeneutic phenomenological study.

Overcoming Adversity to Gain an Advantage

The first interpretation of this study's findings is that the participant's perceived gains of participating in the teacher exchange program were an outcome of overcoming adversity to gain an advantage, both at the personal and professional level. Upon reflecting on the stories shared by the Filipino special education teachers, it was apparent that their experiences were laced with the typical undertones associated with immigrant assimilation. However, unique to the aspect of teaching, the transpositional aspects of their experience involved a two-tiered adjustment, i.e., the new environment and culture, as well as the new educational context. Thus stated, the resulting details regarding their transposition are indeed consistent with the results reported in the few available studies that have been conducted on Filipino teachers, other foreign teachers in the United States, or experiences of exchange program teachers in other countries, where their economic motivations for seeking opportunities to teach abroad, the myriad of difficulties they had encountered during the process of adjusting to the practical, professional, and socio-cultural differences and their natural tendency to compare systems are underscored as a common experience to being immersed into the new cultural setting and unfamiliar educational context (Bengtsson & Mickwitz, 2022; Brown & Stevick, 2014; Chua, 2021; Lally, 2022; Milian & Yousuf Zai, 2020; Mizzi, 2017; Ospina & Medina, 2020; Peng et al., 2023; Rapoport, 2008; Smith, 2018; Torres-Casierra, 2021; Yeo & Yoo, 2019).

Human capital theory asserts that the knowledge and skills that an individual possesses, as a form of capital, can be accumulated and/or enhanced via choices made by the individual to invest in it (Becker, 1962; Cegolon, 2022; Ehrlich & Pei, 2020). In line with this theoretical assumption, studies conducted with foreign teachers have suggested that the teachers themselves bear the costs related to migration, e.g., financial costs and opportunity costs (Bhugra et al., 2021). As reported, the Filipino special education teachers made significant sacrifices to partake in the teacher exchange program, which involved leaving behind the comforts of home, foregoing time spent in proximity with their families, and undertaking considerable financial commitments to facilitate their participation in the exchange program. Averaging \$13,500, a form of capital that the teachers did not have, the teachers reported bearing this expense independently by securing high-interest loans. This steep financial undertaking was paralleled alongside the common motivation for foreign workers to seek overseas employment (Brown & Stevick, 2014) as Filipino teachers had banked on this investment for its potential to outweigh the related financial and opportunity costs, projecting a return either in the form of better wages or the advancement of their personal interests. Consequently, the perceived benefits reported by the participants indicate that their involvement in the teacher exchange program yielded numerous personal, professional, and socio-cultural advantages, with these benefits preceded by the reported transitional aspects of their experiences, e.g., taking personal responsibility for their learning and taking advantage of the training and support provided by their host schools. As reflected in the results, the support the teachers received from their host schools helped facilitate circumventing their special education learning curve, which eventually led to the development of their efficacy as educators. All in all, the experiences of the Filipino special education teachers describe how, in surmounting the hardships of leaving the comforts of the familiar, having to

adapt to the new environment, and acquiring the practices that are compatible with the American educational context, they were able to obtain benefits that enhanced their human capital as teachers. Thus, the teacher exchange program was indeed a venue where the Filipino teachers' investment of their human capital in the form of teaching or labor for the organization was reciprocated with opportunities for human capital development.

Affirmation of the Filipino Teachers' Professional and Cultural Identity

The second interpretation of this study's findings is that participation in the teacher exchange program has affirmed the professional and cultural identities of the participating teachers. This conclusion was drawn from the transition and transformational aspects of the participants' experiences, a review of the participant demographics, alongside a review of the literature on skilled immigrant workers and the experiences of foreign-born teachers in the United States. To illustrate, a review of the backgrounds of the participants in this study reveal that all participants possess the required educational background as teachers, all selected participants were also vetted by their sponsors to have equivalent degrees, and more than half of the participants have been teaching for more than five years. These demographic-related factors suggest that the Filipino teachers are not just well experienced special educators prior to their coming to the United States, but that their education background also classifies them as highly skilled immigrant workers (Farivar et al., 2022). Furthermore, a review of the participant demographics also indicated that none of the teachers hold emergency or provisional intern status permits, and although a majority of the Filipino special education teachers included in this study are still in the process of clearing their credentials, they nevertheless meet the basic requirements for credentialing in the state of California. Despite having comparable skills on paper, there are critics who would argue that foreign teachers, which would include the

participants in this study, are less skilled, ineffective, and unable to establish relationships with U.S. students (Seah, 2018; Velasquez-Hoyos & Martinez-Burgos, 2023). However, while some participants did express feelings of doubt about their efficacy as teachers or experiencing challenges in establishing themselves in their role as a teacher upon their initial immersion into schools, the transitional aspects of their experience do not appear to support this claim as the results suggest that these challenges were transient. As the teachers recounted the transition to transformation phases of their exchange program experience, their responses described a progression where the participants eventually felt more grounded and aligned with the practices in the United States. Consistent with results uncovered on the assimilation experience of foreign teachers, as well as the small subset of studies conducted with exchange program teachers in other countries, this study's findings also reflected not only a sense of professional integration but also of intercultural competence among the Filipino teachers (Atay, 2022; Bhugra et al., 2021; Kaçar, 2021; Mizzi, 2017; Ospina & Medina, 2020; Peng et al., 2023; Sowell, 2022; Velasquez-Hoyos & Martinez-Burgos, 2023; Whewell et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2024). In reference to this, results of the study pointed to the Filipino teachers attaining broader perspectives as professionals, along with a better appreciation of the diversity of cultures beyond their own, and with that, they were able to better interact and more effectively navigate the landscape of their host schools. Furthermore, reflecting on the perceived impact of the teacher exchange program that the participants reported, their stated feelings of belonging and acceptance in their school communities suggest that they were not regarded as another. Instead, the shared feelings that their contributions to their colleagues and the school were of value and the pride they had expressed on how they were able to represent what being a Filipino is to their school community thus highlights how the teacher exchange program has affirmed their

professional and cultural identities, which is contrary to studies that criticize the effectiveness of overseas trained teachers.

Aspirations to Advance Special Education in the Philippines

A third interpretation of this study's findings is that Filipino teachers have aspirations to advance the provision of special education in the Philippines. This interpretation was an outcome of how, in the teacher's transition into the new educational landscape, they were unable to deny the glaring differences in the design of the provision of special education between the United States and the Philippines. For example, participants highlighted how special education in the United States is more formal and organized and that there are standards for IEP development, as opposed to the simplistic format of IEPs, the unstructured approach to implementation, and inequitable access to services for students with disabilities in their home country. These perceptions are consistent with research that assessed the state of the provision of education services in the Philippines, where studies revealed that Filipino students with disabilities do not gain access to the services they need, documents do not follow a standard protocol, and there is a persisting need for more precise guidelines. Additionally, local teachers feel unprepared to support students with disabilities, and as such, a need for quality training has been expressed by both teachers and administrators (Dela Fuente, 2021; Faragher et al., 2021; Garcia, 2023; Jocson & Buenrostro, 2022; Lee et al., 2024; Muega, 2016; Raguindin et al., 2021; Sagun-Ongtangco et al., 2021). In referencing these identified needs, along with the residency requirement for exchange program participants, the Filipino special education teachers had expressed their plans to take back the gains in human capital that they acquired as a result of this experience, with their ideas for training colleagues suggesting an expressed aim to improve their perceived areas of weaknesses in practice in the Philippine setting for the benefit of Filipino students with

disabilities.

The Filipino Special Education Exchange Teachers Fill a Staffing Need for Host Schools

A final interpretation that was gleaned from the findings of this study is that through teacher exchange program routes, the Filipino teachers were hired by their host school districts to fill a need for special education teachers. This interpretation was based on findings from studies on teacher shortages and findings from research on international teachers, where findings suggest that the United States, along with Canada, Australia and countries in the United Kingdom, have turned to the global labor market to address challenges in the supply of teachers (Caravatti, 2015; Janusch, 2015; Wright & Constantin, 2021). In addition, this interpretation was also a result of a review of the information detailed in each of the participants' individual portraits, their shared stories regarding their transposition to teach in the United States, and juxtaposing that with the participants' shared perceptions of bringing stability in staffing for their schools. To illustrate, in the participants' teacher exchange program pathway accounts, some participants shared that they were supposed to have been placed to teach in states such as Texas, Virginia, New York, or Arizona but preferred to teach in California instead. Additionally, much like what studies on overseas Filipino workers (OFW) have suggested, the majority of the participants have also tapped into their social networks to find opportunities to work abroad (Christ, 2020). In reviewing the participant responses regarding their pathway to participation, many have stated that they had learned about the teacher exchange program through special education colleagues who are already exchange teachers in California and other states, such as Nevada, and Colorado. Altogether, the participant's accounts mentioned a total of seven states that were hiring or have hired Filipino teachers through exchange program routes, where five have been mentioned in news and online articles as outsourcing their special education staffing needs through exchange

program routes (also see Figure 1), three, i.e., California, Texas, and Arizona, according to data maintained by the U.S. Department of State, are in the top five states that have welcomed foreign exchange teachers from 2016 to 2022, while two, California and Nevada, are in the top three list of states experiencing the most shortages (Ball & Lynn, 2019; Caravatti, 2015; Coakley, 2022; Cournoyer, 2017; Craft, 2018; Critchfield & Donovan, 2020; Esquilona, 2022; Holt, 2022; Khmara, 2019; Longhi, 2022; Tadayon, 2022; US Department of State, 2022; Ward, 2022; Yan et al., 2019; York, 2020).

Implications for Policy or Practice

This study aimed to explore the perceived benefits of Filipino special education teachers involved in the teacher exchange program, and the findings of this research suggest that all the participants reaped personal, professional, and socio-cultural advantages that enhanced their human capital through their participation in international exchange. Additionally, the results of this study also suggest consistency with the results of other studies that highlight the assimilation and professional integration experiences of foreign teachers, support the transformational outcomes that have been uncovered in other exchange teacher program studies, and provide anecdotal evidence regarding the recruitment of Filipino special education teachers. The subsequent discussion will delve into the implications of these findings for policy and practice, aiming to provide insight to stakeholders.

Implications for Policy

Teacher exchange programs facilitate cultural exchange and professional development among educators (US Department of State, 2021b). While these programs emphasize cultural immersion, they also offer participating teachers the opportunity to explore diverse teaching methodologies and educational systems. As such, these programs enrich their personal,

professional, and cultural perspectives. According to studies conducted on foreign teachers in the United States and other countries, international experiences have led to an enhancement in the professional competence of teachers, suggesting that overseas experiences have provided foreign pre-service and in-service teachers an opportunity to enhance their pedagogical skills in both content and methodology (Brown & Stevick, 2014; Gonzalez-Carriedo et al., 2021; Kaçar, 2021; Lally, 2022; Liu et al., 2019; Moorhouse & Harfitt, 2021; Ospina & Medina, 2020; Rapoport, 2008; Reyes et al, 2020; Shi & Jain, 2021; Sowell, 2022; Velasquez-Hoyos & Martinez-Burgos, 2023; Zhang, 2019; Zhou et al., 2022). Through their participation in the teacher exchange program, the participants of this study were able to develop conceptual and practical knowledge beyond their local training and practice that are crucial components of their professional development and are now embedded into their skillset, or human capital, as teachers. While these can be utilized to advance their careers, another notable aspect that was uncovered in the few studies conducted on teacher exchanges is how the experience also engenders educators to reinvest their learning back to their home country and pass this knowledge on to others (Milian & Yousuf Zai, 2020; Rapoport, 2008; Whewell et al., 2020).

One of the caveats for participating in the teacher exchange program is that of a requirement to fulfill a two-year home-country physical presence requirement. This requirement is imposed on exchange visitors who come from fields of specialized knowledge and skills deemed as necessary human capital for the exchange visitor's home country for the purpose of reinvesting their gains in human capital back to the home country (US Department of State, 2009a; 2009b; 2011; 2016). This thus suggests that the cycle of exchanges in capital does not end when the validity of the J1 cultural exchange visa of the participating teacher is exhausted. As special educators, the participating teachers in this study are slated to return soon. In fulfilling

this requirement, their experiential gains hold a significant potential for the Philippine context.

Accounts of the Filipino special education teachers who participated in this study have shown that their participation in the teacher exchange program has allowed them to acquire first-hand experience with a more structured and process-oriented system in implementing special education. In light of the recent legal developments in the Philippines which promote a vision for special education that closely mirrors the American design, along with the expressed needs of teachers in the Philippines for quality training (Dela Fuente, 2021; Faragher et al., 2021; Garcia, 2023; Gita-Carlos, 2022; Jocson & Buenrostro, 2022; Muega, 2016; Sagun-Ongtangco et al., 2021) the expressed intentions of the Filipino special education exchange teachers to reinvest their gains in human capital, can be leveraged to assist in addressing needs in practice within the Philippine educational landscape. In order to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and transfer of practices into the hands of local teachers, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), in tandem with the Philippine Department of Education, is urged to design pathways for the reinvestment of the enhanced human capital of returning teachers in order to capitalize on these benefits effectively. This stated, the researcher is suggesting (1) an online forum be established where local and overseas Filipino teachers can engage in an ongoing exchange of ideas regarding current concerns in practice; (2) a task force composed of the Department of Education officials, school administrators, local teachers, and returning special education exchange teachers be created to collaboratively develop a professional development plan for Philippine teachers; and (3) implement a teacher training teachers model so teachers can pass on their acquired knowledge and skills to their colleagues. These intentional pathways can support in advancing special education initiatives in the Philippines, where, through the pioneering contributions and efforts of current and returning exchange teachers, the provision of services for

Filipino students with disabilities is improved through a grassroots approach.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study also have several practical implications that can inform stakeholders involved in the teacher exchange program. First, the findings of this research may be of significance to Filipino special education teachers considering participating in the teacher exchange program in the future. Second, as the primary sponsor for the exchange visitor's cultural exchange visa, the results of this study can provide helpful insight for sponsoring agencies. Lastly, the outcomes of this research can also provide host school districts with information that will allow them to better understand how the teacher exchange program operates.

Future Filipino Exchange Program Teachers. The culture of migration is so pervasive in Philippine culture that working abroad is common, leaving families behind to work abroad is acceptable, and seeking employment outside national borders is desired by many. As such, the influx of Filipino teachers in American schools is only expected to continue (Christ, 2020; Francisco-Menchavez, 2023; Tuason & Crutchfield, 2024). This stated, the details regarding the participants' pathway to participation that are included in the individual participant portraits, along with the reported transpositional aspects of their experiences, can provide Filipino teachers who are considering participating in the teacher exchange program an idea of the cost, process turn-around time, and a foreshadowing of the myriad of emotions and possible challenges they would experience during the initial period of their transportation. Furthermore, the uncovered transitional aspects of the participants' experience along with their reported gains, can prepare future Filipino special education exchange teachers for the learning curve and projected experiential gains that lie ahead.

Teacher Exchange Program Sponsors. The findings of this study can also provide teacher exchange program sponsors insight that can be used not only to inform the attainment of their program goals but also to inform the efficient carrying out of their responsibilities to their participants. As the primary sponsor for the teacher's J1 visa, teacher exchange program sponsors play an instrumental role that goes beyond providing their teachers a pathway to gain access and training in the United States (Department of Professional Employees, 2021b; Terry, 2018; US Department of State, 2021b), as such, in fostering a successful exchange experience for their participating teachers, this study has implications in the design and development of a more robust mechanism to support and monitor their participants. More specifically, the transposition and transition aspects of the Filipino special education exchange teachers' experiences that were uncovered from this study can help identify areas for improvement in their practice to assist the foreign teachers' adjustment into the new setting and inform the improvement of their monitoring practices. It is suggested that the insights gleaned from the experiences of Filipino special education teachers in this study be used for the development of content in their pre-departure and/or arrival orientation presentations to facilitate a smoother adjustment for the foreign teacher into the new setting. Additionally, in their monitoring practices, sponsors are encouraged to solicit their exchange participants' feedback regarding their perceived satisfaction with the program, which should include their input regarding the support they are receiving from the host schools, not just in carrying out the required cultural exchange activities, but also in developing their human capital as teachers.

Host School Districts. Studies conducted on foreign teachers suggest that successful professional transition into the new educational context is not solely predicated on the participants' subject matter competency and/or years of teaching (Brown & Stevick, 2014;

Bengtsson & Mickwitz, 2022; Celik, 2017; Ospina & Medina, 2020; Serin, 2017). That stated, the degree to which teachers develop their efficacy to teach in the transnational context also hinges on the support and training that will be provided by their host schools. In highlighting the transpositional aspects of the experiences shared by the Filipino special education exchange teachers and the role that their host schools had in facilitating the transition of their skills to become more effective providers of special education services for American students with disabilities, the findings of this study also have significant practical implications for host schools. As the training ground for the foreign teacher coming from a differing educational context, host schools should provide their exchange program teachers access to support that assists them in navigating the new environment and, more importantly, facilitates their professional integration in the new setting. It is thus suggested that host schools develop orientation sessions that are more specific to their foreign teachers, which include content that discusses American culture and education systems and more targeted professional development. Host school districts are also urged to consider implementing a mentorship program where the assigned mentors are monitored and/or feedback regarding the support received is solicited from the Filipino exchange teachers. Moreover, if possible, host school districts are also encouraged to partner their new exchange teachers with Filipino special education teachers in their organization that came years ahead.

Empirical and Theoretical Implications

In addition to implications for policy and practice, this study also has implications for theory and research. The empirical and theoretical implications of this research are presented in the sections below as they relate to the conducted review of the literature and the theoretical framework that sets the context for this study. In integrating the findings of this study with key

literature on teacher shortages, the exchange teacher program, and the special education landscape in the Philippines, along with Becker's human capital theory, a more coherent narrative of the Filipino special education exchange teachers' experiences is presented, contextualizing these findings within broader scholarly discourse.

Empirical Implications

In carrying out this hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry into the experiences of Filipino exchange teachers, a review of the few existing research available on Filipino teachers overseas and teacher exchange programs was conducted. In reviewing the uncovered transposition and transition aspects of the participants' experiences, the results of this study indicate consistency with the current existing studies on Filipino teachers in America and other countries, which predominantly reported on the Filipino teachers' motivations to seek overseas labor opportunities, as well as their socio-cultural transition and/or professional integration challenges. While this study did uncover similar findings, a notable aspect of this study is that of providing a representation of their experience in the literature as a subgroup of teachers in the United States while also extending current existing research on Filipino teachers by highlighting the reported transformative impact of their participation in the U.S. Department of State's teacher exchange program (Balgoa, 2019; Chua, 2021; Mizzi, 2017; Modesto, 2020; Reyes et al., 2020; Yeo & Yoo, 2019).

The U.S. Department of State's exchange program is a cultural exchange program whose primary objective is to improve and strengthen U.S. international relations by promoting better mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people around the world. With a focus on cultural exchanges via education, one exchange visitor category is dedicated solely to teachers, providing foreign teachers opportunities to participate in professional learning

to sharpen their pedagogical knowledge and skills through work-based teaching opportunities in elementary and secondary schools across the United States (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2024; Department of Professional Employees, 2021b; Terry, 2018; US Department of State, 2016). Studies conducted on teacher exchange programs have suggested that international experiences can enhance the participating teachers' professional skills and pedagogical approaches, consistent with the reported experiential gains of the Filipino special education exchange teachers in this study. However, built from the assumption that international experiences can lead to local reform, the cited studies conducted on teacher exchange programs with other nationalities and in other countries have also suggested that the transformational aspects of teacher exchanges also go beyond the participating teacher (Celik, 2017; Kaçar, 2021; Rapoport, 2008; Serin, 2017; Shi & Jain, 2021; Whewell et al., 2020; Yuan & Huang, 2019; Zhang, 2019; Zhou et al., 2022). With regards to this aspect of teacher exchanges, accounts shared by the Filipino special education teachers in this study not only highlighted the connections they made between their home country and the external context but also sparked their ideas on reshaping special education in the Philippine setting.

In addition to reviewing existing studies on Filipino teachers and the teacher exchange program, teacher shortages were also covered in the review of literature related to the topic of study. In the presented literature, specifically on special education teacher shortages, studies have predominantly highlighted teacher labor market trends, an analysis of factors related to the teacher supply and demand, and initiatives to address shortages that are carried out at the national, state, and local levels (Brown & Stevick, 2014; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Peyton et al., 2021; Sutchter et al., 2019; Will, 2022).

Despite reports from online news agencies and articles citing the recruitment of teachers from the

Philippines through teacher program routes (Ball & Lynn, 2019; Craft, 2018; Critchfield & Donovan, 2020; Department of Professional Employees, 2021b; Esquilona, 2022; Heubeck, 2022; Holt, 2022; Lee, 2021; Longhi, 2022; Matthews, 2021; Moolten, 2022; Phu, 2022; Rankin, 2023; Tadayon, 2022; Yan et al., 2019; H. Yang, 2022), the utilization of the teacher exchange program as an alternative resource to alleviate special education teacher shortages, appears to be absent if not softly referenced in existing research. However, while this study provides anecdotal evidence that the teacher exchange program is being leveraged as an alternate resource for special education teachers, absent the existence of quantitative studies on exchange teachers filling shortages or how many of the existing special education staff at a school are currently filled with Filipino teachers on temporary work visas, this study is not making strong claims regarding this matter.

Theoretical Implications

Capital is the sum total of an individual's assets, i.e., financial, personal values, and/or goods; and by this definition, capital is typically understood as any asset that can provide a net gain (Bhugra et al., 2021; Cegolon, 2022). In reference to Human Capital Theory, however, which is the theoretical framework that guided the focus, design, and assumptions for this qualitative research, capital includes more than just physical or financial assets as the embodied knowledge, skills, and competencies possessed by individuals, i.e., human capital, can also be used as an agent that can create income and other useful benefits for the person himself, their employer, and/or their community. Additionally, this theory also posits that human capital is an inherent observable quality, and as such, it can be developed by the individual through an investment in learning or seeking training opportunities to advance their skill sets (Becker, 1962; Cegolon, 2022; Deming, 2022; Ehrlich & Pei, 2020; Kuzminov et al., 2019). This stated, the

accounts of the experiences of the Filipino special education teachers who participated in this study, along with resulting perceived personal, pedagogical, and socio-cultural benefits they had reported as a result of their participation in the teacher exchange program, highlights several of the theoretical framework's assumptions. First, the motivations of the Filipino teachers to participate in the program stemmed from personal utility, such as the prospect of better wages, new experiences, and professional advancement. Second, their investment in developing their human capital involved financial and opportunity costs, such as securing loans and leaving the familiar comforts of their home country, as well as being away from friends and family. Next, in highlighting how their participation in the teacher exchange program facilitated change in their professional practice, the results demonstrate how the Filipino teachers leveraged their skill sets and knowledge. As such they operated as their enterprise, investing their personal resources, such as time, skills, labor, or services, which resulted in returns. Lastly, as human capital is an inherent quality that grows with experience, the human capital gains they acquired through their participation in the program are now embedded in them. These acquired skills can be utilized to advance their careers or be reinvested to pursue other rewarding endeavors. In addition, the dynamics involved in the teacher exchange program also spotlight other elements of the human capital theory framework. To exemplify, the recruitment of Filipino teachers to assist districts in California in meeting the teacher supply challenges in special education highlighted how human capital is an inherent and portable asset. The recruitment of Filipino teachers in this manner also shows how their human capital investment in the form of labor to their host schools was reciprocated in the form of wages and skills development. In addition, the cultural exchange requirements of the teacher exchange program, from the perspective of this study's participants, also brought returns for the organization. All in all, in framing this study within Gary Becker's

human capital theory, the theoretical implications of the findings of this study are twofold: one, it contributed to the theoretical understanding that an individual's investment in developing their capacity can yield benefits, and two, it supported the narrative that international teacher exchange programs can result to a development of human capital (Abdulla, 2020; Becker, 1962; Cegolon, 2022; Deming, 2022; Ospina & Medina, 2020; Sowell, 2022; Torres-Casierra, 2021; Wright & Constantin, 2021; Zhou et al., 2024).

Limitations and Delimitations

Phenomenology seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon, and the purpose of engaging in this approach to conducting qualitative research is that of discovering and illuminating how a phenomenon is experienced from the perspectives of those who have lived it (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen; 2014; 2016). As the chosen approach to inquiry, the purpose of this research was to uncover the essence or meaning of the experiences of Filipino special education teachers through thoughtful prompting of first-person perspectives of their experiences as a participant in the U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange Program. Despite this study being able to provide rich descriptions of the what and how of the participants' experiences, there are limitations and delimitations that constrain the generalizability of the findings. As detailed in this section, these limitations and delimitations stem from this study's specific focus, along with some of the methodological decisions made by the researcher regarding sampling, geographical scope, and data collection.

Limitations

Phenomenology offers an insightful means for understanding phenomena, and in this study, the hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenological approach was applied to delve into the lived experiences of Filipino special education teachers (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015; Van

Manen, 2014). Invitation to participate in this research was open to any Filipino special education exchange teacher in California. Despite the maximum variation sampling attempt made by the researcher, all the Filipino teachers in this study were recruited through the same recruitment agency in the Philippines, and the geographical scope of recruitment only spanned two regions and four counties. Thus the resulting participant's perspectives should not be construed as being representative of the entire Filipino special education exchange teachers in the state. In applying phenomenological methods, the researcher was able to gather in-depth descriptions that highlighted how the participants made sense of their experiences within the context of their participation in the exchange program. However, while all data collection methods provided much detail that informed theme development, the broad scope of the request for organizational documents appeared to be vague for the participants. As phase two of the interviews began, all participants had referenced submitting cultural exchange reports. As such, the researcher circled back to some of the participants to request samples of these reports. Thus stated, researchers who wish to replicate this study may want to take this into consideration when requesting documentation. Moreover, while all participants reported benefits from participating in the program, not all teachers expressed a perception of satisfaction with the support they received from their sponsor or host school. Since this study did not aim to investigate the correlation of support with the teacher's perceived efficacy, it does not make any causality claims for their perceived gains vis a vis the lack of or expressed satisfaction with the support the teachers had received.

Delimitations

In order to develop an understanding of a phenomenon, phenomenological researchers conduct their studies among a group of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon

(Creswell & Poth, 2018), and for this study, which aimed to uncover the experiential gains of Filipino special education teachers, data was collected from individuals who met a specified criteria for participation, that (1) they are Filipino special education teachers in California, who (2) are participating in the U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange Program, and that, (3) at a minimum, into the second year of their exchange program contract. During the time of recruitment, seven participants who expressed interest were found ineligible to participate, e.g., two of the participants whom the researcher declined reported having an H1B or work visa. One shared that they were in their first year of participation in a teacher exchange, another was already in the Philippines fulfilling her residency requirement, while three were from a different state. Due to the limitations brought by the specified criteria for participation, the research results are only reserved within the scope of the demographics of Filipino teachers who took part in this research. Additionally, since this study only solicited the viewpoints of the teachers, the results of this study cannot be generalized across other stakeholders involved in teacher exchanges, as the scope of the research did not include gathering data from members of the host school community, the program sponsors, the recruitment agencies, nor representatives from the Philippine setting. Furthermore, despite data saturation being reached by the seventh participant and continuing to collect data from 10 participants to meet the university's minimum requirement, the relatively small sample pool from which the data was collected also poses delimitations for this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

In order to contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact, challenges, and opportunities associated with teacher exchange programs, based on the findings and limitations of this study, as well as gaps in the existing literature, the researcher has several

recommendations for future research. First, with the exact number of Filipino special education exchange teachers in the state or across the country being unknown, quantitative studies may be of interest to those who may want to determine the number of overseas-trained teachers who are filling critical need positions like special education. Next, a mixed-methods study to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of exchange teachers, where qualitative data from interviews or focus groups is combined with quantitative data from surveys or teacher efficacy scales, could provide richer insights regarding the professional integration experience and challenges of participating teachers. Similarly, a cross-sectional study may also be carried out where efficacy scales can be given to Filipino special education exchange teachers who are in their first year and compared to the results of efficacy scales administered to participants who are towards the end of their teacher exchange program participation. Third, as this research is only confined to Filipino special education exchange teachers, researchers interested in the experience of Filipino teachers may want to engage in studies that compare the results of this study with Filipino special education teachers who have an H1B or work visa, or Filipino special education exchange teachers who teach in the other states. Likewise, the results of this study may also be utilized by future researchers who are interested in the teacher exchange program experience by comparing its results with those of exchange teachers from other countries. These comparative studies could help identify similarities and differences in the challenges faced, support received, and outcomes achieved across different contexts. Fourth, as this study only solicited the perspectives of Filipino special education exchange teachers, future researchers may be interested in engaging in a case study where the viewpoints of the host schools with Filipino special education exchange teachers in their employ, the program sponsor, and even students, are elicited and triangulated. Fifth, longitudinal studies to track the long-term impacts of

participation in teacher exchange programs on the participating educators' professional development, teaching practices, and career trajectories may also be carried out as a potential future research topic, as this could provide insights into whether the perceived benefits of participants were sustained over time. Lastly, since the uncovered professional skill gains acquired by the Filipino special education teachers through their participation in the teacher exchange program serve as critical human capital that can be reinvested upon their return (Christ, 2020), research conducted with Filipino special education exchange teachers who have already returned may also be warranted as this can provide another perspective regarding the exchange teacher program phenomenon, such as determining the translatability of the outcomes uncovered in this research into the Philippine setting or extending this study's findings by conducting another phenomenological investigation regarding their reintegration experiences.

Conclusion

This hermeneutic phenomenological study aimed to provide insights into the experiential gains of Filipino special education teachers in California participating in the U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange program. The study selected 10 participants through purposive sampling methods and collected data through in-depth interviews, letter writing, and analysis of organizational documents. In the analysis, the study identified three overarching themes that capture the collective experience of the participants. Upon the researcher's reflection on the thematic aspects of the participants' accounts, four interpretations emerged, i.e., that their story is a story that describes how they overcame adversity and gained advantages, the transformational aspects of their exchange experience serve as an affirmation of their professional and cultural identities as foreign teachers in the United States; their intent to transpose their learning back to the Philippines is reflective of their aspirations to advance the provision of special education

services in their home country; and lastly, their shared pathways to participation and perceived school community impact provided anecdotal evidence on how some school districts have utilized the teacher exchange program as a resource for special education teachers.

The central research question that framed this research is: “What do Filipino special education teachers perceive as benefits of participating in the exchange program?” According to the participants’ accounts, their involvement in the teacher exchange program has brought them personal, professional, and socio-cultural benefits. As the outcome of this inquiry, these perceived benefits acquired through the teacher exchange program underscore the importance of how one can invest in training to maximize their human capital and draw attention to how an organization’s efforts to build the capacity of their employees is instrumental in human capital development. In closing, the results of this study point to some practical implications for Filipino special education teachers interested in participating in the exchange program, the teacher exchange program sponsors, and host schools looking into outsourcing special education teachers through cultural exchange visa routes. However, the most notable implication of the results of this study is more rooted on what is described in the presented literature in the practice of special education in the Philippines, where, if a strategic plan of action in the reinvestment of the skill gains of returning special education exchange teachers is in place, the pioneering efforts of returning special education teachers can serve as a catalyst for a grassroots movement to improving services for Filipino students with disabilities.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 31, 2024

Madonna Catiis
JoAnna Oster

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY23-24-999 A Phenomenological Research on the Experiential Gains of Filipino Special Education Exchange Program Teachers

Dear Madonna Catiis, JoAnna Oster,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: January 31, 2024. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. [45 CFR 46.101\(b\)\(2\)](#) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

For a PDF of your approval letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study Details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found on the same page under the Attachments tab. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Spring 2024

Dear Potential Participant,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research on the experiential gains of Filipino special education teachers to better understand their exchange teacher experience.

Participants for this study must be a Filipino Special Education Teacher who is teaching in a California school district under a J1 Visa, and at the minimum, already in their second year of participation in the US Department of State's Teacher Exchange Program.

To carry out this study, participants will be asked to participate in 3 virtual in-depth interviews with consent solicited for the interview to be video or audio-recorded (40 minutes to 1 hour per interview). Each interview session will take no more than one hour each, and this time will also include soliciting participant input to review the accuracy of the transcripts or coded statements. In addition to the interviews, participants will be also asked to respond to a letter writing prompt (1 hour) and submit organizational documents that provide supplementary information regarding your role and responsibilities as an exchange teacher, opportunities you had for cross-cultural exchanges, professional development, and/or receive support (1 hour). Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. A \$75 Amazon gift card will be sent to participants when all forms of data have been collected, i.e., the three-phased interview process is completed, and when letters and organizational documents have been received.

To participate, please email me at [REDACTED] or contact me at [REDACTED]. A consent document, which contains additional information about my research, will be emailed to you. If you choose to participate, a consent form will be sent to you a week before the first scheduled interview, which you will need to sign and return to me on or before we begin our interview session. Additionally, if you know of other individuals who may be interested in participating, please feel free to forward this invitation to them. I look forward to learning about you and your experience as an exchange teacher.

Sincerely,

Madonna Catiis
Doctoral Candidate
School of Education, Liberty University

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Consent

Title of the Project: A Phenomenological Research on the Experiential Gains of Filipino Special Education Exchange Program Teachers

Principal Investigator: Madonna Catiis, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study on the exchange experience of Filipino special education teachers. You were selected as a potential participant because you are a Filipino Special Education Teacher under a J1 Visa, teaching in a California school district, and, at least, already in the second year of participation in the U.S. Department of State's Teacher Exchange Program.

Your participation in this research opportunity is voluntary, so please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to describe the perceived benefits or experiential gains of the Filipino special education teachers as a result of their participation in the US Department of State's teacher exchange program.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in 3 in-depth interviews with the researcher. Each interview session will take 40 minutes to 1 hour and will take place at a mutually agreeable time and location. The interview will be conducted online, and your consent to video or audio-record the interview session will be solicited.
2. Respond to a letter-writing prompt that will be provided by the researcher (1 hour).
3. Provide the researcher a copy of organizational documents you maintain that can provide supplementary information regarding your role and responsibilities as an exchange teacher, opportunities you had for cross-cultural exchanges, professional development, and/or receive support, e.g., documents from sponsoring agencies that detail the roles of the sponsor and the participating teacher, documents submitted to the sponsoring agencies that detail their cultural exchange experiences, training certificates; emails, letters or notes received from American colleagues, their mentor, or site admin, etc. Any electronic copies you provide to the researcher will be downloaded and saved in a password-protected drive and laptop, while hard copies will be stored securely (1 hour).
4. Review and provide feedback to the researcher to ensure the accuracy of the information, with the time allotted for the third interview session already includes soliciting your input

to review the accuracy of the transcripts or coded statements.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Benefits: This research may increase the body of knowledge in the subject area of this study, such as contributing to extant research on special education teacher shortages, advancing awareness about the teacher exchange program, and filling a gap in the literature by giving voice and representation to the Filipino subgroup of the teacher workforce in the United States. While participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this research, participants may experience benefits in the form of gaining personal insight into how they have grown professionally as participants in the teacher exchange program.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

Risks: The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Participant responses will be kept confidential and all identifiable information will be removed. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant names will be replaced with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- All interview recordings, i.e., video and audio, will be stored in a password-locked drive and computer. Only the researcher has primary access to all recordings which will be used for review and transcription purposes.
- Any printed documentation of collected data will be stored in a locked drawer, while any electronically formatted data, e.g., audio or video recordings, downloaded, photographed or scanned documents, interview transcripts, and researcher memos will be stored in a password-protected drive and computer.
- Three years following the date of the study's completion, all electronic records will be deleted, and any printed documents will be shredded.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Compensation: Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. A \$75 Amazon gift card will be sent to participants when all forms of data have been collected, i.e., the three-phased interview process is completed, and when letters and organizational documents have been received.

Is study participation voluntary?

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you

decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Madonna Catiis. You may ask any questions you have now, and if you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED], and/or email her through [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Joanna Ruth Oster at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. The IRB's physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; their phone number is 434-592-5530, and their email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study, so please make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. The researcher will be keeping a copy of this document and you will be given a copy for your records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

- The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.
- The researcher has my permission to video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX D: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What do Filipino special education teachers perceive as benefits of participating in the exchange program?

Sub-Question One

What opportunities do Filipino special education exchange teachers perceive were provided that allowed them to share their teaching practices and culture?

Sub-Question Two

What types of support do Filipino special education exchange teachers perceive have helped them adjust and build their efficacy to teach American students with disabilities?

Sub-Question Three

What special education practices do Filipino special education exchange teachers intend to implement upon their return to support students with disabilities in their home country?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Semi-structured, Open-ended Interview Questions

Interview Questions Phase One: Participants' Background, and the Transition Experience

1. What is your name and please describe your educational or professional background (e.g., degree, years of teaching, current credential status, your official job title, grade level(s)/subject(s) you are currently teaching, the special education program you are currently in charge of, name/location of the school, etc.)? (CRQ)
2. When did you arrive? (CRQ)
3. How did you find out about the exchange program for teachers? (CRQ)
4. What made you decide to participate/teach in the United States? (CRQ)
5. What was your first day, first week, or first month of teaching like? (CRQ)
6. What were your initial thoughts about teaching special education in the United States? (CRQ)
7. What does teaching special education look like in the Philippines? (RQ3)
8. How does teaching American students with disabilities compare to teaching Filipino students with disabilities? (RQ3)
9. What approaches/strategies that you had used teaching in the Philippines helped you during your initial transition to teaching in the U.S.? (RQ1)
10. Working as a special education teacher in America, what adjustments, if any, did you have to make in your teaching style, methodology, and/or strategies? (RQ1)
11. What professional support did you receive from your sponsor and host school during your first year of teaching students with disabilities in the United States? (RQ2)
12. What support or professional preparations did you wish you had? (RQ2)

13. Overall, how would you describe your first year of teaching in the US? (RQ2)

Interview Questions Phase Two: The Exchange Teacher Program Experience

1. Who is your program sponsor? (RQ2)
2. What is your program sponsor's role and responsibility to you as an exchange teacher?
(RQ2)
3. What are your roles and responsibilities to your sponsor as an exchange teacher? (RQ1)
4. How did you get placed at your host school? (RQ2)
5. What is the role and responsibility of your host school/district to you as an exchange teacher? (RQ2)
6. What are your roles and responsibilities to your host school/district as an exchange teacher? (RQ1)
7. What opportunities have you had to share your culture, knowledge, and practices with others at your school? (RQ1)
8. Please describe your impact or how you have enriched your school community as a Filipino special education exchange teacher. (CRQ)
9. To your knowledge, what practices or approaches will you leave behind with your school community (colleagues, students with disabilities, parents)? (RQ1)
10. Now that you are midway/nearing the conclusion of your participation in the teacher exchange program, what would you say are your key learnings from this experience as a special education exchange teacher? (CRQ)
11. From the special education practices learned from the exchange teacher experience, what are you most excited to share with your special education teacher colleagues back in the Philippines? (RQ3)

12. What special education practices do you intend to continue when you return? (RQ3)
13. Why did you choose those? (RQ3)
14. What advice would you give to your fellow Filipino special education teachers who are still in the Philippines but aspire to one day become an exchange program teacher in the U.S.? (CRQ)

Interview Questions Phase Three: Member Checking Interview and Summation

1. How would you sum up your experience as a Filipino special education exchange teacher? (CRQ)

APPENDIX F: LETTER WRITING PROMPT**Letter Writing Prompt**

“Look back to that time when you first started, and then think about where you are now.

Write a letter addressed to yourself from __ years ago when you first entered the United States, and tell him/her about how the teacher exchange program experience made you grow as a special education teacher.”

APPENDIX G: RECRUITMENT AND DATA COLLECTION AUDIT TRAIL

Participant Recruitment and Data Collection Audit Trail

Date	Task	Notes	Recruitment Counts and Data Collection Counts
January 31, 2024	IRB Approval Participant recruitment began	Received approval email from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board Outreach to potential participants through email, text, and social media messaging platform	10 potential participants
February 1, 2024	Continue Recruitment	Outreach to potential participants through email, text, and social media messaging platform Received interest email. Sent regret response. Participant is not eligible to participate Received interest emails. Sent response emails with consent form	9 potential participants 1 ineligible 2 selected
February 2, 2024	Continue Recruitment	Social media Posting on personal account Received interest emails. Sent response emails with consent forms to eligible participants. Sent regret response to ineligible to participant	3 selected 1 ineligible
February 3, 2024	Continue Recruitment	Outreach to potential participants through email, text, and social media messaging platform Received signed consent form	6 potential participants Consent #1 received
February 4, 2024	Continue Recruitment	Received interest email. Sent response email with consent form	1 selected
February 5, 2024	Continue Recruitment	Social media Posting on a J1 Filipino Teachers in USA group page	

		<p>Sent follow-up emails.</p> <p>Outreach to potential participant through email, text, and social media messaging platform</p> <p>Received a decline response from a potential participant</p> <p>Received interest emails. Sent regret responses to ineligible to participants.</p> <p>Sent Phase 1 interview protocol for participant review</p> <p>Received signed consent forms</p>	<p>1 potential participant</p> <p>1 decline</p> <p>2 ineligible</p> <p>Consent #2, #3 and #4 received</p>
February 6, 2024	<p>Continue Recruitment</p> <p>Begin Data Collection</p> <p>Transcription Begins</p>	<p>Outreach to potential participant through email, text, and social media messaging platform</p> <p>Phase 1 interviews begin with participant x1</p> <p>Sent Phase 1 interview protocol for participant review</p> <p>Interview transcription begins</p>	<p>1 potential participant</p>
February 7, 2024	<p>Continue Recruitment</p> <p>Continue Data Collection</p>	<p>Sent follow-up emails.</p> <p>Received interest email. Sent regret responses. Participants were not eligible to participate</p> <p>Received interest email. Sent response email with consent form</p> <p>Received decline emails from potential participants</p> <p>Received signed consent form</p> <p>Phase 1 Interview with participant x1</p>	<p>3 ineligible</p> <p>1 selected</p> <p>2 declines</p> <p>Consent #5 received</p>

February 8, 2024	Continue Recruitment	<p>Received a decline response from a potential participant</p> <p>Sent a response email to interested participants and sent consent forms</p> <p>Received signed consent forms</p> <p>Sent Phase 1 interview protocol for participant review</p>	<p>1 decline</p> <p>3 selected</p> <p>Consent #6, #7 and #8 received</p>
February 9, 2024	<p>Continue Recruitment</p> <p>Continue Data Collection</p>	<p>Received signed consent form</p> <p>Phase 1 Interviews with participants x 2</p> <p>Sent Phase 1 interview protocol for participant review</p> <p>Received Organizational Documents</p>	Consent #9 received
February 10, 2024	<p>Initial 10 Participants selected</p> <p>Pausing Recruitment</p> <p>Continue Data Collection</p>	<p>Received signed consent form. All consents received from the initial 10 selected participants.</p> <p>Received interest emails. Sent standby response. Initial participants were already selected with signed consent forms received.</p> <p>Phase 1 Interviews with participants x2</p> <p>Sent Phase 1 interview protocol for participant review</p> <p>Received Organizational Documents</p>	<p>Consent #10 received</p> <p>3 potential participants</p>
February 11, 2024	<p>Paused Recruitment</p> <p>Continue Data Collection</p>	<p>Received interest emails. Sent standby response. Initial participants were already selected with signed consent forms received.</p> <p>Phase 1 Interviews with participants x2</p> <p>Sent Phase 2 interview protocol for</p>	<p>2 potential participants</p> <p>5 selected participants on standby</p>

		<p>participant review</p> <p>Received Organizational Documents</p>	
February 12, 2024	Continue Data Collection	<p>Phase 2 interviews begin with participants x2</p> <p>Sent Phase 2 interview protocol for participant review</p>	
February 13, 2024	Continue Data Collection	<p>Phase 2 Interviews with participants x2</p> <p>Sent Phase 2 interview protocol for participant review</p> <p>Received Organizational Documents</p> <p>Letter writing prompt response received x1</p>	
February 14, 2024	<p>Continue Data Collection</p> <p>Begin Member Checks</p>	<p>Phase 2 Interviews with participant x1</p> <p>Sent Phase 2 interview protocol for participant review</p> <p>Phase 3 Member Check interviews begin, with participant x1. Sent participant \$75 Amazon e-gift card.</p>	Completed data collection with 1 participant
February 15, 2024	Continue Data Collection	<p>Phase 2 Interviews with participant x2</p> <p>Sent Phase 2 interview protocol for participant review</p> <p>Letter writing prompt response received x1</p>	
February 16, 2024	<p>Continue Data Collection</p> <p>Continue</p>	<p>Phase 2 Interviews with participant x1</p> <p>Sent Phase 1 interview protocol for participant review</p> <p>Letter writing prompt response received x1</p> <p>Phase 3 Member Check interview with</p>	Total of 2 participants completed data collection

	Member Checking	participant x1. Sent participant \$75 Amazon e-gift card.	
February 17, 2024	Continue Data Collection	Phase 1 Interviews with Participants x2. All Phase 1 Interviews completed. Sent Phase 2 interview protocol for participant review. Received Organizational Documents. All participants have submitted organizational documents Letter writing prompt response received x1	
February 18, 2024	Continue Data Collection	Phase 2 Interviews with participants x2. All Phase 2 interviews completed. Follow-up email was sent, reminder for letter writing prompt responses Sent Phase 2 interview protocol for participant review Letter writing prompt response received x2	
February 19, 2024	Continue Data Collection Continue Member Checking	Letter writing prompt response received x1 Phase 3 Member Check interview with participants x2. Sent \$75 Amazon e-gift card to participants x2.	Total of 4 participants completed data collection
February 20, 2024	Continue Data Collection Continue Member Checking	Phase 3 Member Check Interview with Participant x1. Sent participant \$75 Amazon e-gift card.	Total of 5 participants completed data collection
February 21, 2024	Continue Data	Letter writing prompt response received x2	Total of 7 participants

	Collection Continue Member Checking	Phase 3 Member Check Interview with Participant x2. Sent participants \$75 Amazon e-gift card x 2	completed data collection
February 22, 2024	Continue Data Collection Continue Member Checking	Phase 3 Member Check Interview with Participant x2. Sent participants \$75 Amazon e-gift card x 2	Total of 9 participants completed data collection
February 23, 2024	Continue Data Collection Member Checking Complete	Letter writing prompt response received x1. All letter writing prompt responses received from participants Phase 3 Member Check Interview with Participant x1. Sent participants \$75 Amazon e-gift card x1. All Phase 3 Member check interviews completed	Total of 10 participants completed data collection
February 24, 2024	All Transcriptions Completed	Interview transcription, review of letters and organizational documents, coding and structuring continues. All transcriptions completed.	
February 25, 2024	Pause Data Collection Continue Analysis	Continue review of transcripts, letters and organizational documents, for coding and structuring purposes. Begin Determining Data Saturation	
February 26, 2024	Continue Analysis	Continue review of transcripts, letters and organizational documents, for coding and structuring purposes. Maintain reflexive notes. Continue determining data saturation	
February 27, 2024	Continue Analysis Data	Continue review of transcripts, letters and organizational documents, for coding and structuring purposes. Data saturation determined	

	Collection Completed		
February 28, 2024	Continue Analysis	Continue review of codes and categories. Determine Themes and Subthemes.	
February 29, 2024	Continue Analysis	Continue review of codes and categories. Refine Themes and Subthemes.	
March 1, 2024	Continue Analysis	Continue review of codes and categories. Refine Themes and Subthemes.	
March 2, 2024	Continue Analysis	Continue review of codes and categories. Refine Themes and Subthemes.	
March 3, 2024	Participant Recruitment Closed Continue Analysis	Sent emails to standby participants with a \$5 Starbucks e-gift card as a token of appreciation for their interest to participate. Continue review of codes and categories. Refine Themes and Subthemes.	No additional participants were recruited.

APPENDIX H: DATA SATURATION**Data Saturation**

Participant	Axial Codes	Running Total
#1	108	108
#2	+13	121
#3	+26	147
#4	+9	156
#5	+1	157
#6	+2	159
#7	+2	161
#8	+0	161
#9	+0	161
#10	+0	161

A Phenomenological Study on the Experiential Gains of Filipino Special Education Exchange Teachers

A Summary of Themes, Codes, and Corresponding Participants

TRANSPOSITION: From Arrival to Survival

The Beginnings of the Exchange Teacher Participation Experience

ARRIVAL: (PreDeparture) Motivations and Preparations

	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4	Participant #5	Participant #6	Participant #7	Participant #8	Participant #9	Participant #10
1) Financial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2) Professional Advancement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3) Curiosity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4) Challenge	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5) Better Opportunities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6) New Experiences	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7) Excited, Amazement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8) Did Some Research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9) Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ARRIVAL: First Year Feelings

	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4	Participant #5	Participant #6	Participant #7	Participant #8	Participant #9	Participant #10
10) Mixed Emotions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11) Scared, Nervous	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12) Anticlimactic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13) Homesick, Lonely	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14) Hard, Struggle, Difficult	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
15) Overwhelming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16) Doubt (Uncertain, Unsure)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
17) Insecure, Not Confident	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18) A lot to learn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

ARRIVAL: First Year Adjustments

	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4	Participant #5	Participant #6	Participant #7	Participant #8	Participant #9	Participant #10
19) Social Adjustment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
20) Environment, Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21) Credentialing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22) Managing Finances, Debt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
23) Language	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24) Student Regard for Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
25) Americans are Direct	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SURVIVAL: Coping

	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4	Participant #5	Participant #6	Participant #7	Participant #8	Participant #9	Participant #10
26) Awareness that things are different	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
27) Embrace Change, Be Open, Be Flexible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
28) Persevere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
29) Self-reliance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30) Enjoy Yourself, Travel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
31) Be Grateful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SURVIVAL: Adjusting into the New Context

	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4	Participant #5	Participant #6	Participant #7	Participant #8	Participant #9	Participant #10
32) Welcoming Staff, Welcome Party	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33) Support Network	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
34) Time	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
35) Positive School Support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36) Positive Admin Support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

45) PI: Unstructured, No Standard Practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
46) PI: IEPs are Simple	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
47) PI: Providers do not Coordinate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
48) PI: Not all Schools have a Program, SPED Center	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49) PI: Weak Government Support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
50) PI: Undiagnosed Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
51) PI: Strong Parent Support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ADAPTING: First Steps - Taking Action, Apply What They Know, Reconfiguring Approaches

	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4	Participant #5	Participant #6	Participant #7	Participant #8	Participant #9	Participant #10
52) Ask Questions, Assert, Don't Assume	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
53) Seek Help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
54) Improvise, Innovate, Problem Solve	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
55) Take Ownership of Learning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
56) Persist, Forward Thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
57) Classroom Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
58) Establish Behavior Management Systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

59) Build Relationships	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
60) Establish Self As the Teacher	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
61) Engaging Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
62) Engaging Parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
63) Managing, Facilitating Para Support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
64) Adjust Behavior Approaches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

INTEGRATION: Special Education Learning Curve

	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4	Participant #5	Participant #6	Participant #7	Participant #8	Participant #9	Participant #10
65) New System, Process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
66) IEP Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
67) Facilitating IEP Meetings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
68) Collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
69) Student Equipment and Materials	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

INTEGRATION: Training and Supports

	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4	Participant #5	Participant #6	Participant #7	Participant #8	Participant #9	Participant #10
70) Received Training	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
71) Training Topic: IEP Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
72) Training Topic: Legal Compliance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
73) Training Topic: Safety Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
74) Training Topic: Curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
75) Training Topic: Ed Tech Tools and Technology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
76) Perceptions: Positive Review of OVERALL Trainings Received	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
77) Perceptions: Positive Review of Trainings Received at the BEGINNING	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
78) Perceptions: None at the Beginning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
79) Perceptions: Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
80) Provided a Mentor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
81) Perceptions: Positive Mentor Support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
82) Training Recommendation: Expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
83) Training Recommendation: Credentialing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
84) Training Recommendation: Laws and Compliance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
85) Training Recommendation: Facilitating Para Support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
86) Training Recommendation: Collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY: Implemented Cultural Exchange Activities

	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4	Participant #5	Participant #6	Participant #7	Participant #8	Participant #9	Participant #10
109) Takes Any Opportunity to Share about Culture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
110) CE Topic: Holidays, Traditions and Customs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
111) CE Topic: Filipino Words and Music	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
112) CE Topic: National Symbols and Facts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
113) CE Topic: Games	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
114) CE Topic: Art	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
115) CE Topic: Places	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
116) CE Topic: Food	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
117) CE Topic: Folk Dance and Traditional Clothing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
118) CE Activity: Letter Exchanges	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
119) CE Activity: Student to Student Dialogue	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

120) CE Activity: Whole Class Activities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
121) CE Activity: Comparing and Contrasting and Contrasting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY Reported Impact of Cultural Exchange Activities

	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4	Participant #5	Participant #6	Participant #7	Participant #8	Participant #9	Participant #10
122) Tourism, awareness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
123) Appreciation of culture through food, art, language, holiday celebrations, customs, traditional clothing, music and dance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
124) Forge friendships	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
125) Diverse perspectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
126) Appreciation and respect for differences	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY: Perceived Impact of Exchange Teacher to their Host School

	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4	Participant #5	Participant #6	Participant #7	Participant #8	Participant #9	Participant #10
127) Shared Leaving Something for the School Community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
128) Advocate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
129) Classroom Community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
130) Positive Student Relationships and Support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
131) Unique Activities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
132) Resource for Colleagues	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
133) Stability in the Department	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
134) Department Organization	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
135) Department Identity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
136) Positive Parent Relationships	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

OTHER FINDINGS: Exchange Teacher Program Dynamics

Unexpected findings that do not align with themes

ROLE OF SPONSOR (Per Sponsor Terms and Conditions Document and Sponsor Website Information)

	Global Pedagogies	Teach Abroad	Intercultural Education	Educators International
Purpose of the ETP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Participant Eligibility Requirements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sponsorship, J1 Cultural Exchange Visa	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Provide Information: Requirements, Fees, Cultural Exchange Requirements, Cost of Living and Sample Budget	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Initial Medical and Travel Insurance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Monitor Stay, Maintain Updated Contact Information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

ROLE OF HOST SCHOOL (Per Sponsor Terms and Conditions Document and Sponsor Website Information)

	Global Pedagogies	Teach Abroad	Intercultural Education	Educators International
Accredited K to 12 School	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Full-time teaching position	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Commensurate wages	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Support the Teacher	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Re Visa Sponsorship	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Temporary Stay of the Teacher	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Participant PERCEPTION of ROLE OF HOST SCHOOL (per Interviews)

	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4	Participant #5	Participant #6	Participant #7	Participant #8	Participant #9	Participant #10
146) Employment and Same Pay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
147) Recipient of the Cultural Exchange	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
148) Ensure Safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
149) Train, Develop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
150) Received Training	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
151) Provided a Mentor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
152) Positively Supported by Admin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX I: DATA ORIENTED AUDIT TRAIL

Data Oriented Audit Trail

Axial Codes	Subordinate Themes	Superordinate Themes	Overarching Themes
<i>From the Interviews and Letters</i> Financial (6) Professional Advancement (4) Curiosity (3) Challenge (3) Better Opportunities (10), New Experiences (3) Excited, Amazement (6) Did some Research (3) Orientation (4)	Pre Departure: Motivation and Preparations	Arrival	Transposition
<i>From the Interviews and Letters</i> Mixed Emotions (4) Scared, Nervous (5) Anticlimactic (3) Homesick/Lonely (5) Hard, Struggle, Difficult (7) Overwhelming (4) Doubt (5) Insecure (4) A lot to learn (6) Social Adjustment (5) Environment and Transportation (4) Credentialing (4) Managing Finances, Debt (5) Language (4) Student regard for teacher (4) Americans are Direct (3)	First Year: Feelings First Year: Adjustments		
<i>From the Interviews and Letters</i> Awareness that things are different (8) Embrace Change, Be Open, Accept (10) Persevere, Be Strong (4) Self-Reliance (5) Enjoy yourself, Travel (4) Be Grateful (4) <i>From the Interviews</i>	The New Context: Coping and Adjusting	Survival	

<p>Welcoming Staff, Welcome Party (8) Support Network (6) Time, Ease in (5) Positive Perceptions: School Support (4) Positive Perceptions: Admin Support (4)</p>			
<p><i>From the Interviews</i> Noticeable Differences (10) Organized, Formal (10) Standards for IEP implementation (10) Multidisciplinary Team (10) Paraprofessionals (10) Have Access to Services, Resources (10) Services comes with a cost, parents pay (10) Lack of Access to Services and Resources (10) Unstructured, No standard practice (10) IEPs are simple (6) Providers do not coordinate (3) Not all school shave a program, Center (3) Weak government support (4) Undiagnosed Students (3) Strong Parent Support (6)</p>	<p>Participant Perceptions: Special Education in the US and Philippines</p>	<p>Comparisons: Perceptions About Special Education in the US and Philippines</p>	<p>Transition</p>
<p><i>From the Interviews and Letters</i> Ask Questions, Assert, Don't Assume (4) Seek Help (3) Improvise, Innovate, Problem Solve (6) Take Ownership of Learning (6) Persist, Forward Thinking (4) Classroom Management (7) Establish Behavior Management Systems (3) Build Relationships (10) Establishing Self as the Teacher (5) Engaging Students (7) Engaging Parents (7) Managing, Facilitating Para Support (5) Adjust Behavior Approaches (4)</p>	<p>First Steps: Taking Action, Applying What They Know, and Reconfiguring Approaches</p>	<p>Adaptation</p>	
<p><i>From the Interviews</i> New System, Process (10) IEP Development (7)</p>	<p>Special Education Learning Curve</p>	<p>Integration</p>	

<p>Facilitating Meetings (3) Collaboration (7) Student Equipment and Materials (6)</p> <p>Received Training (10) Training Topics: * IEP Development (10) * Legal Compliance (5) * Safety Care (4) * Curriculum (4) * EdTech Tools and Technology (4)</p> <p>Perceptions Regarding Training * Positive Review of trainings received (7) * Positive Review of Trainings received at the Beginning (3) * None at the beginning (3) * Other Perceptions (5) ** Just at the beginning, not ongoing (1) ** (2) Late (2) ** (1) Fast Paced (1) ** (2) One time on testing (2)</p> <p>Provided a mentor (5) Positive Feedback on Mentor Support (3)</p> <p>Training Recommendations: * Expectations (6) * Credentialing information and Test Prep (5) * Laws and Compliance (5) * Facilitating Paraeducator Support (3) * Collaboration (3)</p>	<p>Training and Support</p>		
<p><i>From the Interviews and Letters</i> Personal Benefits (10) * Family in US (5) * Economic, Financial (5) * Self growth (8)</p> <p>Professional Benefits (9) * Elevated Professional Status (3) * Gained Knowledge and Skills (9) * Professional Validation (7)</p>	<p>Personal, Professional and Socio-Cultural Benefits</p>	<p>Impact of the Teacher Exchange Program</p>	<p>Transformation</p>

<p>* Perspective Shifts (9)</p> <p>Socio-Cultural Benefits (10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Experience, Travel (4) * Friendships (5) * Appreciation of Differences (10) * Acquiring American Cultural Norms (4) * Representation and Pride (6) * Acceptance, Belonging (5) <p>Have something to take back (10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Resources (5) * Strategies (5) * IEP Processes (3) * Practices (5) * Recommendations (3) 	<p>Giving Back: Teachers Training Teachers</p>		
<p><i>From the Interviews</i></p> <p>Takes any opportunity to share culture (10)</p> <p><i>From Interviews and Cultural Exchange Report Documents</i></p> <p>Cultural Exchange Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Holiday, Traditions and Customs (7) * Filipino Words and Music (5) * Philippine National Symbols and Facts (6) * Philippine Games (4) * Art (3) * Places in the Philippines (4) * Filipino Food (10) * Folk Dance and Traditional Clothing (6) <p>Cultural Exchange Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Letter Exchanges (6) * Student to Student Dialogue (6) * Whole Class Activities (7) * Comparing and Contrasting (5) <p><i>From Cultural Exchange Report Documents</i></p> <p>Reported Impact of Cultural Exchange Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Tourism, awareness (6) 	<p>Perceived Impact of Cultural Exchange Activities</p>	<p>Contributions to the School Community</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Appreciation of culture (10) * Forge friendships (8) * Diverse perspectives (4) * Appreciation and respect for differences (4) 			
<p><i>From Interviews and Letters</i> Shared that they believe they will leave something behind (10)</p> <p>Perceived Impact To Students (6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * (4) Advocate * (3) Classroom Community * (4) Positive student relationships * (3) Unique Activities <p>Perceived Impact To Colleagues (7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Resource, Bridge (7) <p>Perceived Impact To School (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Stability (5) * Organization (4) * Department Identity (4) * Positive Parent relationships (4) 	<p>Perceived Impact of the Exchange Teacher to their Host School</p>		

Axial Codes	Subordinate Themes	Superordinate Themes	Overarching Themes
<p><i>From the Interviews and Letters</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial (6) Professional Advancement (4) Curiosity (3) Challenge (3) Better Opportunities (10), New Experiences (3) Excited, Amazement (6) Did some Research (3) Orientation (4) 	<p>Pre Departure: Motivation and Preparations</p>	<p>Arrival</p>	<p>Transposition</p>

<p><i>From the Interviews and Letters</i> Mixed Emotions (4) Scared, Nervous (5) Anticlimactic (3) Homesick/Lonely (5) Hard, Struggle, Difficult (7) Overwhelming (4) Doubt (5) Insecure (4) A lot to learn (6)</p> <p>Social Adjustment (5) Environment and Transportation (4) Credentialing (4) Managing Finances, Debt (5) Language (4) Student regard for teacher (4) Americans are Direct (3)</p>	<p>First Year: Feelings</p> <p>First Year: Adjustments</p>		
<p><i>From the Interviews and Letters</i> Awareness that things are different (8) Embrace Change, Be Open, Accept (10) Persevere, Be Strong (4) Self-Reliance (5) Enjoy yourself, Travel (4) Be Grateful (4)</p> <p><i>From the Interviews</i> Welcoming Staff, Welcome Party (8) Support Network (6) Time, Ease in (5) Positive Perceptions: School Support (4) Positive Perceptions: Admin Support (4)</p>	<p>The New Context: Coping and Adjusting</p>	<p>Survival</p>	
<p><i>From the Interviews</i> Noticeable Differences (10) Organized, Formal (10) Standards for IEP implementation (10) Multidisciplinary Team (10) Paraprofessionals (10) Have Access to Services, Resources (10) Services comes with a cost, parents pay (10) Lack of Access to Services and Resources (10) Unstructured, No standard practice (10)</p>	<p>Participant Perceptions: Special Education in the US and Philippines</p>	<p>Comparisons: Perceptions About Special Education in the US and Philippines</p>	<p>Transition</p>

<p>IEPs are simple (6) Providers do not coordinate (3) Not all school shave a program, Center (3) Weak government support (4) Undiagnosed Students (3) Strong Parent Support (6)</p>			
<p><i>From the Interviews and Letters</i> Ask Questions, Assert, Don't Assume (4) Seek Help (3) Improvise, Innovate, Problem Solve (6) Take Ownership of Learning (6) Persist, Forward Thinking (4) Classroom Management (7) Establish Behavior Management Systems (3) Build Relationships (10) Establishing Self as the Teacher (5) Engaging Students (7) Engaging Parents (7) Managing, Facilitating Para Support (5) Adjust Behavior Approaches (4)</p>	<p>First Steps: Taking Action, Applying What They Know, and Reconfiguring Approaches</p>	<p>Adaptation</p>	
<p><i>From the Interviews</i> New System, Process (10) IEP Development (7) Facilitating Meetings (3) Collaboration (7) Student Equipment and Materials (6)</p> <p>Received Training (10) Training Topics: * IEP Development (10) * Legal Compliance (5) * Safety Care (4) * Curriculum (4) * EdTech Tools and Technology (4)</p> <p>Perceptions Regarding Training * Positive Review of trainings received (7) * Positive Review of Trainings received at the Beginning (3) * None at the beginning (3) * Other Perceptions (5)</p>	<p>Special Education Learning Curve</p> <p>Training and Support</p>	<p>Integration</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ** Just at the beginning, not ongoing (1) ** (2) Late (2) ** (1) Fast Paced (1) ** (2) One time on testing (2) <p>Provided a mentor (5) Positive Feedback on Mentor Support (3)</p> <p>Training Recommendations: * Expectations (6) * Credentialing information and Test Prep (5) * Laws and Compliance (5) * Facilitating Paraeducator Support (3) * Collaboration (3)</p>			
<p><i>From the Interviews and Letters</i> Personal Benefits (10) * Family in US (5) * Economic, Financial (5) * Self growth (8)</p> <p>Professional Benefits (9) * Elevated Professional Status (3) * Gained Knowledge and Skills (9) * Professional Validation (7) * Perspective Shifts (9)</p> <p>Socio-Cultural Benefits (10) * Experience, Travel (4) * Friendships (5) * Appreciation of Differences (10) * Acquiring American Cultural Norms (4) * Representation and Pride (6) * Acceptance, Belonging (5)</p> <p>Have something to take back (10) * Resources (5) * Strategies (5) * IEP Processes (3) * Practices (5) * Recommendations (3)</p>	<p>Personal, Professional and Socio- Cultural Benefits</p> <p>Giving Back: Teachers Training Teachers</p>	<p>Impact of the Teacher Exchange Program</p>	<p>Transformation</p>
<p><i>From the Interviews</i> Takes any opportunity to share culture</p>	<p>Perceived Impact of</p>		

<p>(10)</p> <p><i>From Interviews and Cultural Exchange Report Documents</i></p> <p>Cultural Exchange Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Holiday, Traditions and Customs (7) * Filipino Words and Music (5) * Philippine National Symbols and Facts (6) * Philippine Games (4) * Art (3) * Places in the Philippines (4) * Filipino Food (10) * Folk Dance and Traditional Clothing (6) <p>Cultural Exchange Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Letter Exchanges (6) * Student to Student Dialogue (6) * Whole Class Activities (7) * Comparing and Contrasting (5) <p><i>From Cultural Exchange Report Documents</i></p> <p>Reported Impact of Cultural Exchange Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Tourism, awareness (6) * Appreciation of culture (10) * Forge friendships (8) * Diverse perspectives (4) * Appreciation and respect for differences (4) 	<p>Cultural Exchange Activities</p>		
<p><i>From Interviews and Letters</i></p> <p>Shared that they believe they will leave something behind (10)</p> <p>Perceived Impact To Students (6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * (4) Advocate * (3) Classroom Community * (4) Positive student relationships * (3) Unique Activities <p>Perceived Impact To Colleagues (7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Resource, Bridge (7) 	<p>Perceived Impact of the Exchange Teacher to their Host School</p>	<p>Contributions to the School Community</p>	

Perceived Impact To School (5) * Stability (5) * Organization (4) * Department Identity (4) * Positive Parent relationships (4)			
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Axial Codes	Themes	Other Findings
<p><i>From Exchange Teacher Program Terms and Conditions Document and Sponsor Website</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Purpose of the ETP (4) * Participant Eligibility requirements (4) * Sponsorship, J1 Cultural Exchange Visa (4) * Provide Information: Requirements, Fees, Cultural Exchange Requirements, Cost of Living and Sample Budget (4) * Initial Medical and Travel Insurance (4) * Monitor Stay (4) * Maintain Updated Contact Information (4) <p><i>From the Interviews</i></p> <p>Perceived Role of the Sponsor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Visa Sponsorship (10) * Initial Insurance (3) * Ensure our Safety (5) <p>Supports from Sponsor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Welcome Email with Information (3) * Seminar/Orientation (4) * Reminders on Terms and Conditions e.g., satisfying credentials, cultural exchange reports, program fees (4) * Monthly Check-ins (4) * Other (3) * Perception: Sponsor Support, Not Much (10) 	<p>Exchange Teacher Program Roles and Responsibilities: Sponsor</p>	<p>Dynamics of the Exchange Teacher Program</p>
<p><i>From Exchange Teacher Program Terms and Conditions Document and Sponsor</i></p>	<p>Exchange Teacher Program Roles and</p>	

<p><i>Website</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Accredited K to 12 school (4) * Full-time teaching position (4) * Commensurate wages (4) * Medical Insurance (4) * Support (4) * Re Visa Sponsorship (4) * Temporary stay of the teacher (4) <p><i>From the Interviews</i></p> <p>Perceived Role of the Host School:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Employment and same pay (4) * Recipient of the Cultural Exchange (3) * Ensure Safety (4) * Train, Develop (6) * Received Training (10) * Provided a Mentor (5) * Positively supported by Admin (4) 	<p>Responsibilities: Host School</p>	
<p><i>From Exchange Teacher Program Terms and Conditions Document and Sponsor Website</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Satisfy Credentialing Requirements (4) * Maintain Insurance (4) * Maintain Updated Contact Information (4) * Implement Cultural Exchange Activities (4) * Residency Requirement (4) <p><i>From the Interviews</i></p> <p>Perceived Role of the Participating Teacher to Sponsor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Comply with Terms and Conditions, e.g., abide by the laws of the U.S., travel notification, updated contact information, insurance, DS2019 information, work towards satisfying credential requirements (10) * Pay Fees (3) * Submit Cultural Reports (7) * Learn and Return (3) <p><i>From the Interviews</i></p> <p>Perceived Role of the Participating</p>	<p>Exchange Teacher Program Roles and Responsibilities: Participant</p>	

Teacher to the School * To Teach (10) * To help fill a staffing shortage (3) * The CE aspect is the difference (3) * Implemented Cultural Exchange Activities at the school (10) * Unaware that the teacher is an exchange teacher (4)		
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Axial Codes	Theme Alignment	Research Questions
<i>(From the Organizational Documents and Sponsor Websites)</i> Sponsor Role * Purpose of the ETP (4) <i>School Role</i> * Full-time teaching position (4)	Outlier Finding: Dynamics of The TEP	<i>Central Research Question</i> What do Filipino special education teachers perceive as benefits of participating in the exchange program?
<i>(From the Interviews)</i> Pre Departure Motivations * (6) Financial (6) * (4) Professional Advancement (4) * (3) Curiosity (3) * Challenge (3): * Better Opportunities (10) * New Experiences (3)	Transposition	
<i>(From the Interviews and Letters)</i> First Year Feelings * A lot to Learn (6) Coping and Adjusting * Awareness that things are different (7)	Subtheme: Arrival Subtheme: Survival	
<i>(From the Interviews)</i> First Steps * Ask Questions, Assert (4) * Seek Help (3) * Improvise, Innovate, Problem solve (6) * Take Ownership of Learning, Keep on Learning, Attend Training, do your own research (6)	Transition Subtheme: Adaptation Subtheme:	

<p>Noticeable Differences (10)</p> <p>New System, Process (7)</p> <p>IEP Development, Online IEPs (7)</p> <p>Received Training (10)</p>	<p>Comparisons</p> <p>Subtheme: Integration</p>	
<p><i>From the Interviews and Letters</i></p> <p><u>Personal Benefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Family in U.S. (5) * Economic, Financial (5) * Better Version of the Self (8) <p><u>Professional Benefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * (9) SPED Knowledge and Skills (9) ** Student Engagement, Management (5) ** Collaboration (4) ** IEP (6) ** Other SPED Knowledge (5) * Professional Status (3) * Professional Validation (7) * Have something to take back (10) ** Resources (5) ** Strategies (5) ** (3) IEP Processes (3) ** Practices (5) <p><u>Socio-Cultural Benefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * (10) Appreciation of Differences (10) * (4) Experience and Travel (4) * (5) Friendships (5) * Acquiring American Cultural Norms (4) * Representation and Pride (5) * Acceptance, Belonging (5) 	<p>Transformation</p> <p>Subtheme: Impact of the Teacher Exchange Program</p>	
<p><i>(From the Organizational Documents and Sponsor Websites)</i></p> <p>Sponsor's Role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * (4) Purpose of the ETP * (10) Visa Sponsorship (J1 Cultural Exchange Visa) <p>Host School's Role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * (4) Full-time teaching position 	<p>Outlier Finding: Dynamics of The Teacher Exchange Program</p>	<p><i>Research Question 1</i></p> <p>What opportunities do Filipino special education exchange teachers perceive were provided that allowed them to share their teaching practices and culture?</p>

<p><i>(From the Interviews)</i> The Filipino Special Education Exchange Teacher's Role * To Teach (10) * Cultural Exchange Aspect is the Difference (3) * Implement Cultural Exchange Activities (10)</p>		
<p><i>(From the Interviews and Organizational Documents)</i> Takes any opportunity to share culture (10)</p> <p>Cultural Exchange Topics * Holiday, Traditions and Customs (7) * Filipino Words and Music (5) * Philippine National Symbols and Facts (6) * Philippine Games (4) * Art (3) * Places in the Philippines (4) * Filipino Food (10) * Folk Dance and Traditional Clothing (6)</p> <p>Cultural Exchange Activities * Letter Exchanges (6) * Student to Student Dialogue (6) * Whole Class Activities (7) * Comparing and Contrasting (5)</p>	<p>Transformation</p> <p>Subtheme: Contributions to the School Community</p>	
<p><i>(From the Organizational Documents and Sponsor Websites)</i> Host School Role * Support (4)</p> <p><i>(From the Interviews)</i> * Train, Develop (6)</p>	<p>Outlier Finding: Dynamics of The Teacher Exchange Program</p>	<p><i>Research Question 2</i> What types of support do Filipino special education exchange teachers perceive have helped them adjust and build their efficacy to teach American students with disabilities?</p>
<p><i>(From the Interviews and Letters)</i> First Year Feelings * A lot to learn (6)</p> <p>(5) Time, Ease in</p>	<p>Transposition Subtheme: Arrival</p> <p>Subtheme: Survival</p>	

<p><i>(From the Interviews)</i> Special Education Learning Curve * (7) New System, Process</p> <p>Training and Support * Provided a Mentor (6) * Received Training (10)</p> <p>Training Topics: * IEP Development (10) * Legal Compliance (5) * Safety Care (4) * Curriculum (4) * EdTech Tools and Technology (4)</p>	<p>Transition</p> <p>Subtheme: Integration</p>	
<p><i>(From the Organizational Documents and Sponsor Websites)</i> Sponsor Role * Visa Sponsorship, J1 Cultural Exchange Visa (10) FSEETs Role * Residency Requirement (4)</p>	<p>Outlier Finding: Dynamics of The Teacher Exchange Program</p>	<p><i>Research Question 3</i> What special education practices do Filipino special education exchange teachers intend to implement upon their return to support students with disabilities in their home country?</p>
<p><i>(From the Interviews)</i> (10) Have something to Take back (10) Teachers Training Teachers * Resources, e.g., ed tech, curriculum, program, tools (5) * (Strategies, e.g., function, ABC, classroom management, disability specific, accommodations, behavior, differentiation (5) * IEP Processes, e.g., development, documentation, goal setting, progress monitoring (5) * Practices, e.g., collaboration, prereferral intervention practices and processes (5)</p>	<p>Transformation</p> <p>Impact of the Teacher Exchange Program</p>	

APPENDIX J: RESEARCHER BACKGROUND

Researcher Background

2002 was the year that I first stepped foot in America, and with nothing much to hold me back, I took that huge leap of faith to leave a life of familiarity in order to seize the opportunity to work overseas, be independent, and experience what the United States has to offer. With four other teachers, one of whom is now my spouse, we all gained access to enter the country to teach through the teacher exchange program. At that time, having only three years of teaching experience in the Philippine setting, I was still pretty much a novice teacher, and while the cost I had to pay in order to participate was only \$3500, an amount that is considerably less than what it is today, it was money that I did not have and had to borrow in order to afford.

Coming to the United States was a moment I will never forget and the first year was indeed the most trying time. I remember mentally converting prices from dollars to pesos, just so I know if something is expensive or not. I remember waiting for my first paycheck and most of it was already spent to pay off bills and debt even before I was able to cash it in. I remember getting ready at 4:30 am and getting all bundled up for my daily 30-minute walk to the bus stop so that I could catch the 5:30 am bus in order to make it to school by 7:45 am. I also remember my Saturday laundry routine, where I packed all my dirty clothes in a duffel bag, got on a bus, and spent hours at the laundromat waiting for my laundry to be done, which, absent the technology of smartphones, was a long time spent on just waiting. While I enjoyed the cooler climate and not having to deal with crowded streets, smog, city noise, or heavy traffic, it still all felt very alien to me. It was quite a feat of adjustment to learn how to be in a new country and an unfamiliar system of teaching, but what made it even harder really, was not having access to the comfort of being with friends and family.

In terms of support, other Filipinos in the community have been very gracious to help in getting us settled in. They fed us, took us around to see places, and got us groceries, along with some things for the house. Meanwhile, the district I worked with at that time offered to reimburse my moving expenses of up to \$1500, which really helped in paying a good chunk of my debt. However, in terms of support to build my efficacy as a teacher in the US, I would say that I did not receive any and was pretty much left to figure things out on my own. I wanted to really understand the IEP process and the constructs of IDEA. I wanted to fit in as a teacher, feel seen, and be regarded as credible. So I signed up for every after school or weekend training that was available, I keenly observed how my American colleagues would speak and facilitate meetings, I learned the meanings of idiomatic expressions, and I took mental notes about cultural nuances. I was really driven to build my own human capital.

Being part of the first five that were hired from the Philippines in the county, I think the teacher exchange program was barely gaining momentum as a resource for teachers at that time. Since then however, groups of Filipino teachers have come, where some stayed, some moved, while others have returned home. In listening to my participants' stories, I was very much reminded of my own journey. I couldn't help but empathize with their experiences of coping, adjusting, and the work it took to get to that point that they felt more settled as a teacher in the United States, and in engaging in this topic for my research, I realized that the program requirements have changed a lot. For one, program participation can now go up to five years, while during my time it maxes out at three. Secondly, I do not recall submitting any cultural exchange reports, and my program sponsor's support was pretty much confined to visa sponsorship, whereas my role as an exchange teacher was that of maintaining my travel insurance, contact information, employment, and paying the annual program fees. Third, I was

able to circumvent the residency requirement due to hardship because I had my son. Then in being able to secure a no objection statement from the Philippine government to stay in the United States, the district petitioned for my work visa, which allowed me to eventually secure permanent residency in 2014. Within this span of time, I was able to reap many benefits as well. At a personal level, I am more financially secure, was able to buy a house, and surrounded by a diverse group of friends, while professionally, I was able to grow from a teacher to a district-level administrator, attributing everything that I know about special education from years of experience. Having been one who is always thirsty to learn, I feel very confident about the work I do and feel trusted by my colleagues as a resource, however, prior to all that, was the exchange program that I was fortunate to be a part of and have been instrumental in leading me to the many opportunities and blessings that I am enjoying today. This is my 22nd year in the United States. Pretty soon, I will have lived here for longer, but while I already am a naturalized citizen, I can't really say that I am from here, because my heart still feels more at home whenever I visit the Philippines.

APPENDIX K: SAMPLE PHASE ONE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: HIYAS

Phase One Interview Transcript: Hiyas

Participant: [REDACTED]

Interviewer: Madonna Catiis

Date of Interview: 02/07/2024

Location of Interview: Virtual via Zoom

List of Acronyms: FSEET: Filipino Special Education Exchange Teacher, IN: Interviewer

[Begin Transcript: 00:00:06]

IN: So, do you have any questions before we start?

FSEET: So, at the moment, po, I don't have any questions.

IN: Okay, so phase one of the interview will begin with some queries on your professional and educational background and build up to questions that would prompt you to share a more in-depth description of your initial transition in the United States.

FSEET: Ok.

IN: So, what's your full name?

FSEET: [REDACTED], [REDACTED] [REDACTED] po.

IN: Okay, do you have like a, if you don't mind, *pa-share ng cell number mo. I mean we communicate sa messenger, pero maybe sometimes that might be an easier way to communicate?* (... can you share your cell number. I mean we communicate on messenger, but it may be easier sometimes to communicate through text)

FSEET: Okay po, so [REDACTED]-[REDACTED]-[REDACTED].

IN: Thank you. I already have your email address, what about your physical mailing address? Because I'm thinking, *pag tapos ng lahat ito* (when this is all done), I might send you a little something.

FSEET: Oh, yeah. Yes, *yung* (my) personal email ko po, [REDACTED]@[REDACTED]mail.com.

IN: [REDACTED]@[REDACTED]mail.com And then your mailing address?

FSEET: Mailing *po ay* (is) [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Way, [REDACTED] City.

IN: *At some point pala ha, like kunwari merong napaka insightful ka na sinabi, and then I'm going to include a quote of that in my thesis, I'll make sure to keep your identity confidential ha,*

like pseudonym yung ilalagay ko. (At some point, like if there are insightful quotes from you that I want to include in my paper, know that I'll make sure to keep your identity confidential and use a pseudonym.)

FSEET: *Ok lang naman po na i-mention yung name ko. I don't think that will degrade my personality or reputation po kung imi-mention niyo po. Alam ko naman na it is for the benefit of the participants and also yung mga susunod pang JI. (It's ok if you mention my name. I don't think that it will degrade my personality or reputation if you mention it. I know this is for the benefit of the participants and future JIs.)*

IN: *Thank you for sharing that. But know that I need to make that commitment para di ma-trace back sa iyo, for your own protection. Like di ba dun sa consent form, nakalagay naman na minimal ang risk ng research ko, pero I still want to add those layers of protections for the participants. (Thank you for sharing that. But know that I need to make that commitment for your own protection, so nothing gets traced back to you. Like, on the consent form it states that there's minimal risk for research participants, but I still want to add those layers of protections for the participants.)*

FSEET: *Ok po.*

IN: *So ilang years ka nagturo sa Pilipinas before coming here? (How many years did you teach in the Philippines before coming here?)*

FSEET: *Actually I was counting it. I have five years of experience as a prep school teacher in a certain church, the [REDACTED] Church. And I have six as a prep teacher in one private school, that's 11, plus 17, I think I have a 28 years.*

IN: *So when you say prep teacher, you mean preschool?*

FSEET: *Opo (Yes). And then 17 years in the university. But in the university, there is a laboratory school. We are also assigned to teach in the elementary. So nagturo din ako elementary, SPED, at saka sa college, at saka sa MA level po. (So I also taught at the elementary, SPED, college, and masters level).*

IN: *Wow, you have a breadth of experience. So when you say elementary, you taught elementary SPED?*

FSEET: [Nods]

IN: *Then, at the university, is that a private? Would you consider that a private program or a public program?*

FSEET: *It is a public program since it's under CHED.*

IN: [Nods] *Okay, so under ng (the) Philippine Commission on Higher Ed.*

FSEET: [Nods] So 28 years. But I also have a center near my house, just beside my house. I do my practice in that particular center. Like 5 to 6 or 5 to 7 in the afternoon, I teach kids there and also manage it.

IN: *Anong* (What) grades?

FSEET: All grade levels *po*.

IN: So when you say center, is it a tutoring center or a SPED center?

FSEET: It's a learning center *po*.

IN: Okay. So grade levels, for SPED students only, that you taught in the Philippines, so it's like from preschool to lower and upper elementary?

FSEET: Yes *po*.

IN: Okay. So what *naman* is your education and professional background?

FSEET: So I have units in educational psychology at [REDACTED] University, but I haven't finished it yet. I think I have 39 units there. I graduated with an MA in special education at [REDACTED] State University, and my bachelor's degree was from [REDACTED] College as a kindergarten educator.

IN: Ok so bachelors in early childhood, an MA, and then you have units for educational psychology at [REDACTED]. Is that for another master's?

FSEET: That's for a Ph.D. *po*.

IN: Wow! *Tapusin mo yan mam* (You better finish that!).

FSEET: *Sinulatan ko na po sila* (I already wrote them).

IN: I'm guessing you're also licensed in the Philippines?

FSEET: Yes *po*.

IN: What about here? What is your current credential status? Preliminary, level two?

FSEET: I think it's, I'm in the preliminary.

IN: Okay. So Mild to Mod?

FSEET: Mod to Sev.

IN: What type of program or population of students did you teach there? So were they mild mod students, mod to severe students? Is there a particular type of disability or you have experience in a mix?

FSEET: *It's a mix of those. Kasi sa Pilipinas naman hindi na identify po kung mod or severe eh. Ang neurodevelopmental pediatrician ang diagnosis niya it's autism, intellectual disability pero hindi na po ini-include doon kung mod or severe. But based on my experience I taught a child with autism na I think was a severe case. I think it's even profound because nobody, no one in the, in [REDACTED] that was, the boy lives in [REDACTED] and no school admitted the child. Actually the principal advised the parent to put the child in a mental hospital already. Kasi wala pong tumanggap. Walang tumanggap dun sa bata so I accepted the child at my center. (It's a mix of those. Because in the Philippines, they don't identify students as mod or severe. The neurodevelopmental pediatrician would provide a diagnosis of autism or intellectual disability, but not include if it's mod or severe. But based on my experience I taught a child with autism who I think was a severe case. I think it's even profound because nobody, no one in the, in [REDACTED] that was, the boy lives in [REDACTED] and no school admitted the child. Actually the principal advised the parent to put the child in a mental hospital already because no one was accepting the child. No one was accepting the child so I accepted the child at my center.)*

IN: Oh no! I hurt *naman* for the student.

FSEET: *Opo. Kaya po buti po dito po talaga sa U.S. mam, may access sila sa school. (Yes. So here in the U.S., it's good that they have access to school.)*

IN: How long have you been a participant as an exchange teacher?

FSEET: I'm on my second year.

IN: Okay, so just for information purposes, *sinong program sponsor mo* (who is your program sponsor)?

FSEET: [REDACTED] po.

IN: So, just for information purposes too, what's the name of your host district and school?

FSEET: [REDACTED] school po, which is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] district po.

IN: Ok, so that's located in [REDACTED] county?

FSEET: *Opo* (Yes).

IN: How did you get placed there? How did you get placed with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] district, [REDACTED] school?

FSEET: I was interviewed because I know [REDACTED] from the [REDACTED] recruitment agency. I've known [REDACTED] for many years already. So *nung nalaman ko na may* (when I learned that

there was an) interview, I just tried it. But the first time that I was interviewed by the different agencies from here *po*, that was 2009. I was offered in New York, I was offered work in New York, but I didn't sign the contract because my daughter was high school then, and I didn't want her to be with my relatives because my husband is a seaman so *dalawa na po kami mag wo-work abroad kung sakali* (there would have been two of us working abroad if ever). So I didn't sign the contract because I think my daughter will need me. *Kaya, so nung meron ng chance, nakapagtapos na yung daughter ko, saka ako tinanggap, yung offer ng [REDACTED]. Actually, I was also interviewed. Ano, it's not interviewed pala, I was scheduled for an interview in Arizona. Pero may nagsabi sakin na mas maganda sa California. So tri-ny ko po yung California and [REDACTED] po yung nag-interview sakin.* (So when there was a chance, my daughter already finished school, that's when I accepted [REDACTED] offer. Actually, I was also interviewed. Uhm, actually I wasn't interviewed, I was scheduled for an interview in Arizona. But someone told me that California is better. So I tried California and [REDACTED] interviewed me.

IN: So what grade level and type of program are you currently teaching?

FSEET: *I was assigned at grade four po and then a mix of autism and intellectual disabilities po yung handle ko.* (I was assigned fourth grade, and then I handle students with a mix of autism and intellectual disabilities.)

IN: Self-contained yung class niyo? (Your class is a self-contained class?)

FSEET: Self-contained. They have academics, more on academics. But yeah, I also included *po* adaptive skills, life skills, computer and digital literacy. *Parang mas mabilis po kasi silang magtype, para wala ng magsusulat* (Because they are faster at typing, so they won't need to write).

IN: When did you arrive?

FSEET: Last August 2022.

IN: How did you find out about teaching in the United States?

FSEET: Like I said I tried to be interviewed before, like in 2009.

IN: *Oo nga pala.* (Oh yeah, you just said that). So, how did you hear about those opportunities in 2009?

FSEET: *Ano po, paano nga ba?* (Uhm, how did i?) I heard of it from a friend. Yeah, maybe a friend told me that there is an agency looking for teachers.

IN: What made you decide? Like, even like the first time or second time, like what made you decide to pursue teaching or professional experience outside *ng Pilipinas* (of the Philippines)?

FSEET: To be honest, the first time that I, I think the reason why I want to be here was to earn, to look for a greener pasture. *Pero nung* (But) later on when I was exposed to the children with

disabilities and their families and also the system and services of our country, *Pilipinas* (Philippines), with those children and their families. Sabi ko siguro ano, siguro (I said maybe uhm, maybe...) I have something to share *na* (that is) more than just earning money because I have a center *po*. So the first time that I, the reason why I put up that center *po* is because I want to earn. It's not because of the service but when these children and their families are crying, that was the time that I realized *na* (that) those services that I want to put up is not to earn anymore but to help these people. *Siguro yun yung reason bakit ako na dito sa profession na to. Hindi dahil, sabi ko, anong isasara ko na ba itong center? Kasi talagang mahirap po, mahirap. Pero every time that I will think na walang pupuntahan yung mga bata, then hindi, so yun nakabukas pa rin. Hanggang ngayon nakabukas pa rin po siya* (Maybe that is the reason why I am in his profession. Not because, I asked myself, do I close the center? Because it's really hard, it's hard. But every time that I will think about students having nowhere to go, then no so there it's still open. Until today, it is still open.)

IN: *Tapos pagbalik mo mas equipped ka na* (Then when you return you will be more equipped).

FSEET: *Kaya nga po. At mas maayos na yung center kasi kailangan po kasi ng building. Actually, non-profit po yun. Talagang non-profit siya. Kaya nung na-anay siya, wala kaming pamalit. Wala po talagang kaming pamalit. Kaya yung center ngayon, mas ok naman na kahit paapaano.* (I know. And the center is better, because we needed a building. Actually, it is a non-profit. It is really a non-profit. So when termites got to it, we don't have anything to replace it with. So the center, its better now.)

IN: *Pinaghirapan mo yun* (You worked hard on that).

FSEET: True.

IN: *Saka ano, talagang* (And, really...) you're supposed to be, I mean, you are where you are supposed to be.

FSEET: *Opo. And I think I'm learning to write. Siguro if I will write, I will write the things that people will learn. Hindi yung mga negative experiences. Of course, those are lessons to be learned. But I think if I will write something that the parents will learn, the children will learn, educators will learn. Siguro ganun po ang mangyayari. Yun po kasi yung direction ko na ngayon. So aside from having the center may direction pa ako ang gusto ng gawin* (Yes. And I think I'm learning to write. So maybe, if I will write, I will write the things that people will learn. Not about the negative experiences. Of course, those are lessons to be learned. But I think if I will write something that the parents will learn, the children will learn, educators will learn. I think that is what will happen. Because that is my current direction. So aside from having the center, I also have a plan that I want to do.)

IN: Yeah. Funny how, *parang iba yung motivation mo, pero iba pala.* (Like your motivation is different, but it became something else.)

FSEET: *Iba pala ang naging plano para sa akin.* (There was a different plan for me.)

IN: So what were your initial thoughts about teaching special education in the United States? So what was your first days look like? What was the first week? The first month? The first day like?

FSEET: Actually, I have a very high expectations when it comes to practices in the US, because all of the books that we are reading are, all came from this place. *So talagang mataas po ang expectations ko. So ano po yung unang experience ko?* (So I really have high expectations. So what was the initial experience like for me?) I was so excited to see the kids and the services that they are enjoying. I was so excited also to collaborate with paraeducators because we don't have paraeducators in the Philippines. *Lahat iyon, trabaho ng teacher mag-isa. OT, kung anong sa sabihin ng OT, speech, kung anong sasabihin nila trinatrabaho natin yun.* (All of that, the teacher does on their own. OT, whatever the OT says, speech, what they say we work on). So I was also excited to know the system here, how things are being operated, how the services are being operated here. *Lahat po, maganda yung feelings ko nung unang dating ko sa place na ito, kasi excited talaga ako dun sa kung anong mayroon dito* (Everything, I really felt good about when I first got here, because I was so excited to see what was here).

IN: *Ang ganda naman ng lens mo* (That's a nice perspective...) instead of like, I was overwhelmed. I was scared.

FSEET: *Hindi po, hindi ako. Hindi ko po, talagang palagay po ako. Pag tinatanong ako, ano nakadating ka dito? Okay lang. Anong damdamin mo natakot ka ba? Hindi.* (No, not for me. I wasn't, I was really content. When they ask me, so you got here? I'm okay. What did you feel, were you scared? No.)

IN: What does teaching special education look like sa Pilipinas? *Sabi mo kanina, walang mga paraprofessionals and ano pa ang different?* (You said earlier, that there are no paraprofessionals, what else is different?)

FSEET: *Walang para. May OT, kaya lang, they will come once a month at ano lang, tapos, and then, paano ba, ang approach ay parang transdisciplinary, it's more on transdisciplinary po. Yun pung may program ang OT, kung anong program niya, ituturo niya sa SPED teacher, at yung SPED siya ang mag i-integrate nung mga programs. Kasi mahal po ang OT, so teacher ang tinuturoan niya.* (There are no paras. There is an OT, but they will come once a month, and uhm, it's like, how do I describe it, the approach is transdisciplinary, it's more on transdisciplinary. The OT program, whatever her plans are, she will teach to the SPED teacher, and the SPED teacher, she will be the one to integrate that. Because OT is expensive, so it is the teacher that will be taught how to carry it out.)

IN: *So parang indirect services lang sa students?* (So is that like indirect services to students?)

FSEET: *So ang ginagawa ng OT, pagdating niya once a month, nag-te-therapy sya, at the same time, nagkakaroon siya ng consultation sa teacher.* (So what the OT does, she comes once a once and does therapy, at the same time she also provides consultation to the teacher).

IN: *Pag nag-the-therapy sya, paano yun, whole group?* (So when therapy is done, how is that? Whole group?)

FSEET: *Hindi po individualized* (No, it's individualized).

IN: *Like, pinu-pull out?* (Like pull-out?)

FSEET: *Opo. Lahat po nang naka-enroll po sa [REDACTED], lahat po nang naka-enroll may OT lahat. May nakalagay po, kasi sa neurodevelopmental pediatrician, may nakalagay doon sa report na "needs OT therapy". Ganon po. So hahanapan po namin siya ng schedule* (Yes, everyone who is enrolled in [REDACTED], everyone enrolled has OT. Because it is indicated, the neurodevelopmental pediatrician, on their report it indicates, "needs OT therapy". Like that. So we find the student a schedule).

IN: *So ilan ang students mo?* (So how many students do you have?)

FSEET: *Umabot po kami ng 39* (We got to about 39 students).

IN: So how is teaching American students with disabilities compare with teaching Filipino students with disabilities?

FSEET: *Pina pa compare niyo po? Kasi po para sa akin po, sa experience ko, it is easier for me to say sa mga parents kung they will agree with me, at kung tutulungan nyo ba ako, ito po yung gagawin ninyo. So sa Pilipinas, mas madali po na masolicit yung support ng parents. I felt more empowered in letting parents know that we are partners and that kailangan talaga naming magtutulongan.* (You're asking me to compare? Because for me, from my experience, it is easier for me to have parents agree with me, or if they will help me, this is what you need to do. In the Philippines, I find it easier to get the support of the parents. I felt more empowered in letting parents know that we are partners and that we really have to work together).

IN: So *tulongan* (help), like support from home?

FSEET: *Yes, yes. Sa Pilipinas po kasi, pag kausap mo yung parent, pwede kong sabihin din na kapag hindi nyo po ito ginawa o hindi po kayo makikipagtulongan po sa amin, huwag niyo na lang po ipasok yung anak nyo kasi sayang po ang pera nyo, kasi mahirap po ang pera sa atin eh. Pwede akong makapagturo, na mag-terapi-terapi kami, tapos walang mangayayari sa anak nila if hindi kami magtutulongan. Ayoko ng ganun. Kasi ang goal maging independent. Kasi yun naman talaga ang goal SPED, maging independent sila. So ma-mainstream talaga sila sa regular school at sa community nila. Kasi dun papunta yung buhay nila. Eventually, doon din sila eh. Yun yung maganda sa atin, pero dito po, parang, parang dito po, ang academic ng focus. Maganda din yun, pero sana, ilagay na natin sila sa community, para mahaba-haba pa, eh na-tra-train na sila. Dito po kasi, [Chuckles] parang mas may restrictions [Chuckles]. Sabi po do kami pwede bumisita sa bahay para makita namin yung home environment at tulongan yung parent kung pano suportahan yung pagtuturo ng mga pang araw-araw na skills sa mga activities sa bahay. So yun po yung disadvantage kasi napacritical ng role ng magulang. So dun ko siya tinitignan na hindi dahil sa, hindi kaya ng mga Pilipinong bata na makipagsabayan sa mga bata*

sa America. Pero I think malaki, crucial po talaga yung magiging role ng parent at paano niya susuportahan po yung anak niya. (Yes, yes. Because in the Philippines, when you talk to the parent, you can tell them that if they will do this, or if they will not help me, then don't send your child to school because it will just be a waste of your money, because money does not come easy in the Philippines. I can teach, we can therapy, but nothing will happen to the child if they don't help each other out. I don't like that. Because the goal is to be independent. Because that is the goal of SPED, for them to be independent. So they will be mainstreamed in the regular school and the community. Because that is where their life is headed. Eventually, that's where they will be. That is what is nice about the Philippines, but here, like, like here, the focus is academic. That is good too, but I hope, we can put them in the community, so you have a longer time to train them. So in the Philippines, Because here, there's like [Chuckles], there are more restrictions [Chuckles]. We were told that we cannot do home visits to get to see the home environment and work with the parent on how to support learning at home through the day to day activities, and that for me is a disadvantage because the parent's role is critical. That is how I look at it, not because Filipino kids can't compete with American kids. But I think that's huge, the role of the parent and how they support their child is crucial.)

IN: What approaches or strategies *na ginamit mo sa Pilipinas* (that you used in the Philippines) helped you during your first transition here?

FSEET: *Yun po, kasi* (Because) when it comes to strategies I think it goes down into, it will boil down into what the teacher teacher's philosophy is all about. *Kasi po and bakit ako sa sume-centro palagi sa bata? Kasi it's more of constructivist ang perspective ko or progressivist ang perspective ko na kailangan ibigay sa kanya yung kailangan niya para siya ay lumago at i-provide lang yung pangangailangan niya dahil meron na siyang capacity to learn on his own and you have to facilitate his or her learning. So nasa pilosopiya po ng teacher yun. So yung sa akin po, developmentalist din ako, naniniwala po ako na yung development ng isang bata ay process. So medyo matagal, ng kaunti, pero, uhm, ine-enhance nya kung ano yung natural tendency ng bata to learn. Kasi meron na syang tendency eh, may potential na sya, pero naniniwala kasi ako na nasa kanya na yung tendency to learn, ang kailangan lang ng teacher ay i-provide yung pangangailangan nya, so yun po yung pinanggagalingan ng strategy ko. So ang ginagawa ko po nung sa Philippines pa ako, like may problem sa tracking, eye-tracking, di ba ang bata kung saan saan nagsisimula, so ang natural training ko ay gumawa po akong ng fish pond tapos pinatingin ko sa kanila, so ayun tuwang tuwa po sila. So natural eye tracking ang nangyayari, di mo pinupwersa yung bata. Nung minsan pa nga nanghuli sila ng tilapia. Oh di ba, motor planning yun. So meron na sa paligid mo, idedevelop mo na lang yung tendencies nila, may skills naman sila, and then dedevelop mo na lang yun bilang teacher, so medyo matagal nga lang, kasi nga it's a process.* (Why has my focus always been student-centered? Because my perspective is more constructivist or progressivist, and my perspective is to give the student what s/he needs so s/he can grow and provide everything s/he needs because the child already has the capacity to learn on his own and you have to facilitate his or her learning. So that is rooted in the teacher's philosophy. So with me, I am also a developmentalist, I believe that child development is a process. So it takes longer, a bit longer, but it enhances the child's natural tendency to learn. Because the child already has that tendency, has that potential. Because I already believe in the child's natural tendency to learn, what the teacher needs is to provide what the student needs, so that is where my strategies come from. So what I do when I was in the Philippines, like for

example, the has a problem with tracking, eye-tracking, the child would start anywhere, so my natural training involved making a fish pond and then I ask the student to look, so there, the child's is really happy. Natural eye tracking happens, and you don't force the kid. Sometimes we even caught live fish, that's motor planning. So there are things in your environment, you just need to develop their tendencies, they already have skills, as the teacher all you need to do is develop that, it just takes a bit longer, because, like I said, it is a process.)

IN: So, what I'm hearing is, you use real life opportunities, natural opportunities.

FSEET: *Korek po* (That's correct).

IN: And then you find those, *ni-re-rephrase ko yung sinabi mo ha* (I'm rephrasing what you said), so let me know if it's accurate *ha*, so you find moments, like teachable moments?

FSEET: Yes. [Nods] Yes.

IN: Pero, as the teacher, you create those opportunities, and your approach is student-centered.

FSEET: [Nods] *Yes po*.

IN: So in terms of adjustments, *ngayon na dito ka na nagtuturo* (now that you're teaching here), what adjustments, did you have to make in your teaching strategies or style?

FSEET: *So first po ay yung set up ng environment. We don't have that kind of set-up that we have in the Philippines, na ready yung environment for learning. Ang set-up po kasi dito, masyadong school and environment. Wala pong masyadong natural environment. So puwede po, pero kailangan niyo pang puntahan ng mga bata. Pero po kasi, pagka ganoon ang training ng bata, minsan din kasi, kailangan mo i-confine yung bata sa isang environment, like parang kunwari, yung bata may problema sa pandinig, so kailangan sound proof yung environment para makapagfocus sya sa stimuli na i-pre-present mo, so parang controlled po yung environment in a way, dito po kasi hindi ganoon.* (So first is the set-up of the environment. We don't have that kind of set-up that we have in the Philippines, where the environment is for learning. Here the environment is a very school-like set-up. It is not too natural. So you can, but you will need to go there with the kids. But because, if the child's training is like that, because sometimes, you need to confine the child in an environment, like for example, the child has hearing loss, so you'll need a sound-proof environment so s/he can focus on the stimuli that you would present, so in a way, it's like a controlled environment, but here it is not like that.)

IN: *Sa Pilipinas, you mean, ganoon?* (So, in the Philippines, you mean, it's like that?)

FSEET: *Opo, sa Pilipinas, may ganon. Puwede mo i-set up ang environment ng ganoon. Dito po kasi hindi. Meron na kasing set-up ang school dito.* (Yes. In the Philippines it can be like that. You can set up the environment like that. But here no. The school is already set-up.)

IN: *So ang approach mo ay naturalistic.* (So your approach is naturalistic.)

FSEET: *Opo* (Yes).

IN: *So parang Montessori-based yung approach?* (Like a Montessori-based approach?)

FSEET: *Yes po. Kaya po dito parang structured or restricted sya for me* (That's why here it feels structured or restricting for me).

IN: So, what professional support did you receive from your sponsor during your first year, *nung kadarating mo lang dito sa U.S.* (when you first got to the U.S.)?

FSEET: Uhm, I don't, uhm, they usually call us to ask us about if we have any, like facing any problems we are encountering, *pero* (but) uh... aside from that, *wala po akong masyadong maalala* (I don't remember much).

IN: How often do they do that?

FSEET: *Tumatawag naman po. May mga call time naman po, at sometimes they really have to emphasize yung call time. May mga ganon po sila na situations. Pero yun lang po.* (They call. There's call time, and sometimes they really emphasize those call times. There are situations like that, but it is just that.)

IN: When you got here, *meron bang* (was there a) welcome letter, welcome packet, list of things to do?

FSEET: *May orientation po before the flight... pero CFO po ata yun, or sila ba yun?*

IN: *Anong kinover?* (What was covered?)

FSEET: *General information lang po. Na orient po kami if we face discrimination eto po yung gagawin, pero di ko na po masyado maalala.* (Just general information. We were provided orientation, like if we face discrimination, this is what you do, but I don't remember much)

IN: Maybe like your rights as a temporary worker?

FSEET: *Yes. Yes yung mga rights ko po* (Yes about my rights).

IN: Ok. What about your school? What professional support did you receive from your school district?

FSEET: *Uhm, may mga seminars. May mga like, may mga, like, may mga intervention din yung admin, like in-inform kami about yung sa online, kasi mahirap po kasi yung IEP dito.* (Uhm, there's seminars. There's like, there's intervention from the admin, like they inform us about the online, because the IEPs here are hard.)

IN: [Nods] *May IEP ka ba dun sa Pilipinas?* (Did you have IEPs in the Philippines?)

FSEET: *Kami po gumagawa ng IEP, pero hindi po kasing kumplikado katulad ng IEP niyo dito. Mahirap yung IEP dito, dahil nga sa technology pa.* (We do make IEPs, but the IEPs are not as complicated as the IEPs here. The IEPs here are hard, then there's the technology component to that).

IN: *Yung IEP ba sa Pilipinas, may format or template kayo?* (So the IEP in the Philippines, did you have a format or template?)

FSEET: *May template po. May template ako, kasi po gumawa po ako ng template. Umatend kasi po ako dati ng seminar, na ginawa din nung mga teachers na galing sa California din noon, so gumawa ako ng template on how we can write an IEP in a similar format. Pero di po nila na mention yung online IEP noon sa amin.* (There's a template. I have I template because I made a template. Because I once attended a seminar, facilitated by a Filipino teacher who also came from California before, so I made a template on how we can write an IEP in a similar format. But they did not mention the online IEP to us back then).

IN: Okay. What about a mentor? *Meron ka bang naging coach?* (Did you have a coach?)

FSEET: *Meron po. Pero po, uhm, parang, uhm, di ko po na maximize yung support ng mentor ko. Parang ang nangyari po kasi, as need arises, puwede po kami magmeet. Pero may mga times na i-ko-call ko siya, or i-e-email, tapos wala po siyang reply. And then parang ang lumalabas, parang ako ko pa yung hindi nag-re-reach out or nag-a-ask ng help.* (I did. but, uhm, like, uhm, I was not able to maximize my mentor's support. Like what happened was, as the need arises, we could meet. But there were times that I would call or email my mentor, but I will receive no response. Then it somehow looked like I was the one not reaching out or asking for help.)

IN: But you were though.

FSEET: *Oo nga po. Di lang po sya nagrerrespond sa pag reach out ko.* (Yes. There's just no response when I reach out)

IN: So, what support or professional preparations did you wish you had?

FSEET: *Uhm, siguro, based on my teaching condition today. So sana na enhance ko pa yung collaboration, kasi wala tayong paraeducators eh. So kasi po, sa Pilipinas, mas nauna po kasi yung program, bago pa kami nagopen ng center. Gumawa pa nga ako ng proposal bago nag-open ng center dun sa university, tapos saka lang sila nag open. So dun po sa center, ang nangyayari po, kami po ng mga sped teachers and nagcocollaborate. So pagka nagcocollaborate kami, kunwari we talk about eto yung bata, like eto yung discrimination stimuli ito na ganito, or kaya eto mas trial muna tayo, tapos naiintidihan na nila agad. So pag meron kaming paguusapan, hindi yung, what is that all about? Dito po kasi parang, well masaya ako na may paraeducators sa classroom, pero nagulat ako na parang di nila gamay kung pano suportahan ang learning ng mga bata. Nung una iniisip ko baka kako ayaw nila sumunod sa akin bilang teacher kasi Pilipino ako, na baka wala silang tiwala sa education at training ko. Pero, ano, nung lalo ko pa silang nakausap, natuklasan ko na wala naman pala silang gaanong training. So ako na naginitiate, kinilala ko sila, at trinain ko sila kasi kailangan ko ang tulong nila para*

maturuan ko ng husto ang mga bata. Pero di ko din naman sila masisi na hindi nila alam, kasi magkaiba naman kasi ng background ang mga paraprofessionals at yung mga sped teachers na nakasanayan ko na ka-collaborate. Kaya nga sana, kung may skills man, sana maenhance ko pa yun skills ko to collaborate. (Uhm, maybe, based on my teaching condition today. So I was hoping that I could have enhanced collaboration, because we did not have para educators. Because in the Philippines, the program came first, before we opened the center. I even made a proposal before they opened the center at the university, and then that's when they opened one. So at the center, what happens is, we the sped teachers, we collaborate. So, when we collaborate, for example we talk about the student, like this is the discrimination stimuli, or let's try this first, and they understand right away. So when we talk about something, there's no, what is that all about? Because here it's like, well I was glad that there are paraeducators in the classroom, but I was surprised that they seem to not know how to support student learning. At first I was thinking they were being resistant because they do not trust me as the teacher and maybe even doubt my education and training because I am Filipino. As I talked more with them, I found out that they did not really receive much training. So, I took it upon myself to establish a bond with them and be the one to train them because I need their help so I can better teach the kids. But I cannot blame them for not knowing, because the paraprofessionals and teachers I was used to collaborating with have a different background. So, I was wishing, if there are skills I want to enhance, it would be collaborating).

IN: Overall, how would you describe your first year?

FSEET: Uhm, not good. Hahaha.

IN: Hahaha.

FSEET: Hahaha. Ok, so, [chuckles] to a positive side

IN: Hindi, [Chuckles] *Okay lang.* (It's ok.)

FSEET: [Chuckles]

IN: [Chuckles] *Kung ano man yang nararamdaman mo.* (Whatever it is your feeling.)

FSEET: [Chuckles] To a positive side po, *kasi po* (because) before I left, I prayed *po*. I prayed, "Please give me a place where I can really learn".

IN: [Nods]

FSEET: *Tapos nung malapit ng matapos yung unang taon ko, "Panginoon, nagbibiro lang po ako."* Hahaha. (So when my first year was close to ending, "Lord, I was just kidding." Hahaha.)

IN: [Chuckles] *Eh hiningi mo yun eh.* (But you asked for it.)

FSEET: [Chuckles] *Hiningi ko nga.* Hahaha. (I did ask for it. Hahaha)

IN: *Kaya binigay sa yo. Hahaha.* (That is why it was given. Hahaha.)

FSEET: *Tapos ngayon nagbibiro na lang ako. Hahaha.* (So, now I'm saying I was just kidding. Hahaha.)

IN: *Hahaha. Kaya ako? Hindi na ako humihingi.* (Hahahaha. That's why with me? I stopped asking.)

FSEET: Hahaha.

IN: Hahaha. *Kung ano na lang ibigay nya.* (Anything He would provide)

FSEET: Hahaha.

IN: So when you said, not good, *kasi ba dun sa* (was it because of the) learning curve?

FSEET: I think it's because, I was not, I felt *na kulang ako sa direksyon, so kahit na mas gusto ko pa sana sila bigyan ng best ko, di ko naibigay yung 100% ko kasi, kasabay nung cultural adjustments, ang dami ko pang dapat matutunan. So medyo nagsisisi nga ako. Pakiwari ko, siguro kung nabigyan ako ng support or nakapaghandapa ako ng husto, nabigyan ko sana yung mga bata ng mas productive learning time at mas naturuan ko pa sila. Sabi ko nga sana na ako, namaximize sana ako, na sana nagamit ako para natuto pa lalo yung mga bata at magulang, pero ah, hindi umabot sa ganong kundisyon. Kaya may regret ako dahil sa ganon. Pero I am blaming no one. Kasi iba ang kultura dito. Napasok kami sa bagong kultura na hindi, na wala kaming ka-alam-alam. So sana meron kaming guidance, na more of, na sana, meron, na maging familiar kami, na mabigyan kami ng direksyon kung ano ba yung tatahakin namin at kailangan sundin, kasi mahirap yun. Mahirap talaga ang collaboration ng paras and teachers. Nung nagbabsaa ako ng research about it, mahirap po talaga sya. (...I lacked clear direction, and as much as I wanted to give my students my best, I was not able to give my 100%, because I was, in addition to the cultural adjustment, still learning. So there's some form of regret. I felt that had I received support or been prepared better, my students that year would have had more productive learning time and learned more. I was wishing, hoping to be maximized, that I was utilized so the students and parents can learn more, but it didn't, it didn't get to that point. So I have regret. Pero I am blaming no one. Because the culture here is different. I was brought into a different culture, one that I don't know anything about. So I was hoping we were given guidance That's more of , I'm hoping that, we would be familiar with, that we would be given direction as to what we need to deal with and do, because it's hard. Collaboration between paras and teachers is really hard. When I read on research about it, it's really hard.)*

IN: *I think ang nagpapahirap talaga is yung you have to work with adults, hahahaha.* (I think what is really making it hard is because you have to work with adults, hahahaha.)

FSEET: *Hahaha.Kaya ayun. Nasasayangan talaga ako kasi madalas nauuwi lang sa bangayan. Di naman ako nakikipag bangayan, iniwasan ko naman makipag-bangayan. Pero sayang kasi, sana mas meron pa para sa mga bata.* (Hahaha. So there. I find it such a waste because we end

up butting heads. I try not to butt heads, I avoid that, but I find it such a waste because there would have been more for the kids)

IN: *Sabi mo kanina, you had high expectations of the practices here in the U.S. Na meet ba yung expectations mo?* (Earlier you said you had high expectations of the practices here in the U.S. Were those expectations met?)

FSEET: No *po*. Not yet. *Parang nagagamit po yung J na punuan yung needs ng school, pero kasi po, parang pakiwari ko po, repetition lang ng pagtuturo ng bata, hindi po ako namamaximize as a teacher so yung sa exchange po na nangyayari for me, parang hindi ko pa po alam.* (Like the J is used to fill the needs of the school, so I think, this is just a repetition of teaching students, I don't think I am being maximized as a teacher, so the exchange that happens for me, I don't know yet.)

IN: Thank you for sharing that. So for our next interview, I'll ask more about your experience during this present time. *So tapos na yung pag recall natin nung nakaraan* (So we are done recounting the past). So that would include supports that you are receiving, so next time, we will talk more about the supports you received to develop your skills as a visiting teacher here.

FSEET: [Nods].

IN: So before that, I'll ask for some documents from you that can provide supplementary information about your participation experience.

FSEET: *Ano anong documents po?* (What kind of documents?)

IN: *Medyo may pagka-open ended sya, kaya nakakalito* (It is a bit open-ended, so it can be confusing). So any records that you personally maintain that can provide any supplementary information regarding your role and responsibilities, like any documents you received from your sponsor, or any evidence that you have of opportunities for exchange, such as cultural reports you submitted to them, and any opportunities you had for professional development, so maybe certificates of trainings you attended. It is broad so I will email you a description of types of documents you can send, *ha?*

FSEET: *Okay po. Sige po. Ibibigay ko po, kahit mamaya po.* (Okay. Alright. I will give it, maybe later.)

IN: *Hindi naman kailangan right away* (I won't need it right away). Whenever you can.

FSEET: *O sige po. Hahanapin ko po.* (Ok, I will find it)

[End Transcript: 00:41:52]

APPENDIX L: SAMPLE PHASE TWO INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: MALAYA

Phase Two Interview Transcript: Malaya

Participant: [REDACTED]

Interviewer: Madonna Catiis

Date of Interview: 02/12/2024

Location of Interview: Virtual via Zoom

List of Acronyms: FSEET: Filipino Special Education Exchange Teacher, IN: Interviewer

[Begin Transcript: 00:00:04]

IN: Thank you for giving me consent to audio record this interview. We are now recording. So for today, I will be asking questions about your perceptions of the role and responsibilities of your sponsor and host school, any opportunities that you had to share your culture, and your teaching skills as a Filipino teacher in your school community, and then it would conclude with your key learnings from the experience.

FSEET: Ok..

IN: So, you mentioned last time that your program sponsor is [REDACTED]

FSEET: *Korek.* (That's correct).

IN: How would you describe their role, to you, as an exchange teacher? What's their primary role and responsibility to you?

FSEET: Uhhmm, yes, so primary responsibilities na nila is just for us to be settled here like to get documentation to work here. Because they're the one that will give us the document, the DS... sorry, the DS-2019. That's a very important, *parang maging way* (like, to make a way), so you could work here. Without them, I don't think that we could come here. It's like a sponsor for the visa. *Remember para makapunta ka dito, like a worker, kailangan may mag-i-sponsor sa iyo, right? An employer or whatever. Kami kasi as an exchange teacher, we have to undergo sa kanila, parang ganon.* (Remember, so you can come here, like a worker, you'll need a sponsor right? An employer or whatever. But for us, as an exchange teacher, we have to go through them, something like that)

IN: Ahh, so you cannot enter the country as an exchange teacher without the exchange program sponsor.

FSEET: Yeah. They're like the, they're like the bridge for this opportunity.

IN: What about you as the exchange teacher? *Among role and responsibility mo to your sponsor?* (What's your role and responsibility to your sponsor?)

FSEET: *I think para lang, para to do my skills, I mean to share my skills dito sa [REDACTED] school (I think it's, it's to do my skills, I mean to share my skills here at [REDACTED] school). So basically, what I have as a teacher, whatever I've learned from my country, and then to share my knowledge of course. And then parang tulong din yun sa kanila, kasi they need teachers. So parang yun din yung na share ko sa government actually ng U.S. (And then like, also help them because they need teachers, so like, that's my share for helping the U.S. government too).*

IN: Do you pay fees?

FSEET: *Yes, kasi (because) they need to process your requirements, so you have to pay them. So yun, di naman to free eh, and especially non-immigrant kami, we have to pay it by ourselves. So basically talagang mag out of the pocket talagang everything to achieve all those requirements. I mean to get all the requirements that we need. So it's not free. Even the extension actually and then even sa family namin. We pay for that. It's them that will process all the papers. So like bridge lang sila, pero ako pa din talaga ang lahat. Kasi they're the one who's going to process everything. They're the one who's going to give you the DS 2019. Even sa family na nagpunta dito, they need also the DS 2019 as J2. Kasi ang DS, powerful paper yan to come here, kasi yun yung hinahanap ng U.S. Embassy. Kung wala kang DS 2019 as a teacher exchange, wala, hindi ka ma-approve to come here, and you cannot work. So para syang work permit na rin. You need to show the DS to get our J visa. Powerful paper talaga ang DS. (Yes, because they need to process your requirements, so you have to pay them. So, there, this is not free, and especially since we are non-immigrants, so we have to pay it by ourselves. So, basically we have to pay everything out-of-pocket. So, we have to pay them and then to achieve all those requirements, I mean to get all the requirements that we need. So, it's not free. Even the extension actually and then even for our family. We pay for that. It's them that will process all the papers. So, they are like, just a bridge, but I do everything else. Because they're the one who's going to process everything. They're the one who's going to give you the DS 2019. Even your family who will be coming here, they need also the DS 2019 as J2. The DS is a powerful piece of paper to come here, because that is what the U.S. Embassy will be looking for. If you do not have a DS 2019 as a teacher exchange, then no, you won't get approved to come here, and you cannot work. So it's also like a work permit too. You need to show the DS to get our J visa. The DS is a really powerful paper.)*

IN: Did you need to submit, like, annual reports to them?

FSEET: *We have, it's part of the requirements actually for teacher exchange. Kasi sa government talaga yan ng America. So it's not about them talaga. Parang required lang din sila*

ng government to do that, para makapag work sila, para ma-continue nila yung services nila. Kasi kung hindi nila mamemeet yung standard na yun, yung requirements na yun from USCIS, na nanggagaling din sa amin na mga exchnage teachers, then hindi sila makapag-function as sponsor. So parang kami ang nag-pro-provide ng mga experiences namin dito for them so they can meet their requirements sa government (We have, it's part of the requirements actually for teacher exchange. Because this is run by the U.S. government. So it's not really about them. Like, they are just required by the government to do that, so they can work, so they can continue their services. Because if they do not meet those standards, those requirements by USCIS, that also come from us exchange teachers, then they cannot function as sponsor. So we provide them the experiences we have here so they can meet their requirements to the government.)

IN: How often do you submit those reports?

FSEET: Every year, actually, mayroon din, wait, half a year lang pala hindi every year. So parang every half a year. So parang twice a year kami magsasubmit. So a report of your experience as narrative, and then another one is documentation (Every year, actually, there also, wait, it's half a year not every year. So like every half a year. So, like, twice a year, we need to submit a report of our experience as narrative, and then another one is documentation).

IN: *Ano among activities ginawa mo?* (What types of activities did you do?)

FSEET: So there are choices. Either two-way, one-way communication from the Philippines here or mag-show ka lang talaga ng, mag-set up ka ng event dito sa school mo to just share your culture. So lahat yun nagawa ko actually yun tatlong choices. Inisa-isa ko siya para lang masubukan. So yung isa na ginawa namin, kasama ko yung mga ka-group ko, nagbuo kami ng, nag-put up kami ng event sa school, sa cafeteria. And then nag-luto ako, nag-share kami ng palaro ng Pilipinas, tulad ng piko. Tapos, like parang ano siya, fiesta, may banners, may colorful banners. And then we introduced also, may powerpoint presentation, ng mga tungkol sa Philippines (... show an, set up an event here at the school to share our culture. So all of that I was actually able to do, the three choices. I did each one to try it. So one that we did, I did it with the group of Filipino teachers I was with, we formed an, we put up an event at school, at the cafeteria. And then I cooked, we shared Philippine games like the "piko". Then, like it was like a fiesta, there were banners, colorful banners. And then we also introduced, there was a powerpoint presentation, of things about the Philippines.)

IN: *Tungkol saan?* (About what?)

FSEET: So yung mga beautiful spots sa Philippines. Yun yung shinow-case namin. And then yung tulad ng "Mano po", as how we show respect to elders. Kasi gusto namin maintroduce, yung ganong custom ng respeto sa mga teachers dito, and how it's really different. Tapos

pinalaro namin yung mga bata, after that, kainan na. So yun. So pinakain namin yung mga staff, nag-invite kami ng mga classrooms, na available kung sino yung gusto umatend. Kasi one period lang naman yun. So may mga tatlong classes na pumunta, tapos yung ibang teachers na may prep na available, ininvite din namin tapos may ibang pumunta. Tapos may mga admin din, and then pati mga tao sa district, in-invite rin namin sila. So marami pumunta sa event, actually superintendent and head of district HR, pumunta rin. So na-experience nila. Kasi first kami. Kami yung pioneer na Pilipino dito. So gusto namin nila makita, at gusto din nila makita, tapos tinikman din nila lahat ng pagkain. Ang principal ko naging best friend ko dahil, nagustuhan yung aking, ano ba to yung may mais, yung maputi? (So the beautiful spots in the Philippines, we showcased that. And then the custom of “Mano po”, as how we show respect to elders. Because we wanted to introduce that custom of respect to the teachers here, and how it's really different. Then we had students play games, after that, we all ate. So, there. So, we put up a spread for staff, we invited classrooms, anyone who wanted to attend. Because it was just for one period. So, there were three classes that went, then some teachers who were on their prep period, they were also invited. Then there were administrators too, people from the district, we invited them too. So, a lot of people went to the event, actually even the superintendent and head of the HR department, they went too. So, they were able to experience that. Because we were the first. We were the pioneer Filipinos here. So, we wanted them to see, and they also wanted to see, and they tasted all the food. My principal, she even liked the dessert with the corn, the white one, what do you call that?)

IN: Maja Blanca?

FSEET: Maja Blanca! So nagustuhan nya yun, kaya ngayon hinahanap-hanap na niya. So mga pagkaing pinoy. So parang ganon yung piyesta style na ginawa namin. And then yung second na ginawa ko is nag-one-way ako. One way means nag-show up ako sa kanila ng lahat na mga videos from YouTube. Kasi marami naman nyan, para mapa-compare natin sa mga estudyante natin kung ano yung setup ng Filipino education. So pinakita ko sa kanila na yung isang bata doon, gumigising siya mag isa sa umaga, mag-pre-prepare yung nanay nya ng food niya, and then nakasuot ng uniform, tapos papunta na school, maglalakad lang, and then dumadaan pa sa ilog. Ganon. So parang ang mga students ko, nakakatuwa, kasi parang ang mga students ko na realize nila na wala siyang shoes, naka tsinelas lang kasi. Ano lang, para kasi, parang part of realization din nila. Sabi pa nga ng isa, “Oh my goodness, it’s still dark out and he’s already getting ready to leave the house”, eh sila daw, they are used to waking up at 7 o'clock, 7.30. Sabi ko pa nag sa kanila, naliligo pa yun every day before school, tapos, biniro ko sila na sila naliligo and then kayo papasok kayo na hindi naliligo. Talagang inano ko yung mga videos ma may comparison and contrast, kasi pag during the discussion talaga, dun kami nag-spe-spend ng time. So talaga nakakaantig, ang ganda ng interaction kasi lalo na nung nakita nila na ala-sais na nag sisi-uwi ang nang mga estudyante, then sila alas-tres pa lang pauwi na. And then, sabi ko, ang daming commute, sabi ko, naglalakad. Pinakita ko ang naglalakad sa bridge, tapos yung iba

aakyat pa sila sa bundok, ang dadaanan sa mga putikan pa bago makapunta ng school. And then nakasuot pa ng uniform. Tapos masipag pa yan pumasok, di pala-absent. (So, she liked that, so now she even asks for it. So, Filipino food. So, that was the fiesta-style event we did. And then the second one I did, is a one-way. One way means I showed them videos from YouTube. Because there's a lot available anyway, so the students here can compare the setup of Filipino education. So, I showed them a video of a Filipino child, who would wake up early, her mom would prepare the food, and then she would put on her uniform, then go to school. By foot and then pass through a river, like that. So my students, they were amazing, because they realized the student didn't have shoes, she was just wearing flip flops. So it was, like, for their, like they realized something. One even said, "Oh my goodness, it's still dark out and he's already getting ready to leave the house", but for them, they are used to waking up at 7 o'clock, 7.30. I even told them they take a shower every day before school, then I teased them, that they come to school not taking a bath. So, I showed them videos so they can compare and contrast, because when we discuss, that's when we really spend time. So, it is really touching, the interaction is amazing, especially when they saw that they start coming home around 6pm, and then they go home at three. And then, I also told them that they need to commute, they need to walk. I showed them student walking on a bridge, and others going up a hill, going through mud before they get to school. And then how they are wearing a uniform. Then how they diligently go to school and are not absent.)

IN: Exactly.

FSEET: Dito, walang reason to be absent. Sabi ko sa kanila, sa Pilipinas, they don't have the same privileges that they do. Sabi ko, they are very lucky. Sa Pilipinas, andami talaga na hindi nakaka-access, kasi nga wala talagang mga resources. Tapos, wala pang pagkain yan minsan, sabi ko dun, walang free school lunch. Something like that. So, yun yung one-way. (Here there is no reason to be absent. I told them, in the Philippines, they don't have the same privileges that they do. I told them they are very lucky. I told them, in the Philippines there are a lot who can't access, because there are no resources. Even food, sometimes they don't even eat, and then I said there, there's are no free school lunches. Something like that. So, that was for my one-way.) Then yung two-way ko naman. Ano yun eh, third-year na ako na nung nag two-way ako. So yung isang estudyante ko na very close ko yung family. So may Cerebral Palsy siya, tapos nasa college na siya. Wait, teka, actually, graduate na siya ng computer engineer. So, nags-start siya sa akin third grade. So, ang laki ng pinagdaanan niya sa akin actually. Three years siya sa akin. Talagang tinutukan ko siya, kasi nga, of course, physical therapist din ako. Tinuruan ko siya kung paano maghandle ng pen, paano magsulat, and then, yung even yung pen niya, kasi maliit pa siya noon, hindi niya mahawakan, di niya maggrip. So, ginagawa ko yung pencil niya. Sino-shoot ko yung pencil sa, bale pinagitnaan ko yung, alam mo yung parang clay. Tapos, di ba dito, mayroon ng mga readily available na ganun dito, yung parang rubber na ano di ba, madaling mapurchase, tapos bibigay mo na lang. So, doon sa Pilipinas wala, improvised talaga halos

lahat. So yun nga may nakapalibot na clay para ma-hold niya yung pencil properly, and then yun, nag-pra-practice talaga kami everyday ng writing. (Then for the two-way, that was on my third year. So, I have a student whom I'm very close with the family. So, he has Cerebral Palsy, but he is already in college. Wait, I think, actually, he already graduated as a computer engineer. So, he started with me when he was in third grade. So, he went through a lot with me actually. He was with me for three years. I really worked with him, because, since I am also a physical therapist I taught him how to hold a pen to write, and then, even his pen, because he was still smaller then, he can't hold it, he can't grip. So, what I did was I put a, so I put his pencil through, like a piece of clay. But here, you know how those are readily available, those things made of rubber, that you can just purchase and give your student. There in the Philippines, we don't have that, everything is improvised. So, there I have to wrap his pencil with clay so he can hold it properly, and then there, he would practice writing with me every day.)

So , yun nga student interview siya. Actually gabi na yun sa Pilipinas, kasi di ba pag umaga dito, gabi dun sa atin, So, that's my two-way. Nagkaroon ng interaction ang mga estudyante ko with him, and then, so may mga parang question and answer. So, dahil may cerebral palsy nga siya, of course medyo may struggle siya magsalita, tapos yung mommy niya talagang alalay lang para maintindihan namin yung sinasabi niya. Pero matalino talaga siyang bata, physical lang talaga ang needs nya, kasi nga quadriplegic din siya, so, apat na limbs talaga. Pero, imagine mo, naka-graduate siya, tapos kahit hirap na hirap, nakaakyat siya na stage, nilipat niya pa yung tassel niya. So, yun. Nakausap siya ng mga students ko. (So, there, that was a student interview. Actually that was night time in the Philippines, because the mornings here, are the evenings over there. So, that's my two-way. My students had the opportunity to interact with him, and then, so they had like a question and answer. So, because he has cerebral palsy, of course he somewhat struggled with his speech, so his mom was there to assist so we would understand what he was saying. But he is a real smart kid, his needs are mostly physical, because he is also quadriplegic, so all four limbs. But imagine that, he was able to graduate, then even if it was hard, he got up on stage and moved his tassel. So there, my students were able to talk to him.)

So, moderate to severe yung mga students na hawak ko, anim sila na students ko at that time, so kumbaga, maganda yung comprehension ng students ko, kaya nagkaroon talaga ng interaction. Tapos may mga questions sila na, paano ka pumupunta sa school, mga ganon. So yun nga, nakakatuwa talaga, kasi may mga question, yung mga students ko showing na naging interested talaga sila sa kanya. So tapos ayun ni-rerelate ko din sa kanila, so sabi ko nga, you can still do your task, you can still achieve your, yung pwedeng maging successful ka pa rin sa school kahit may disability ka. Even yung mga staff ko natuwa kasi ni-hindi nila ma-imagine na, O, CP siya pero ang galing-galing niya, kaya parang, sana-all ganon. Diba kasi ang perception kasi pagka limited ang physical movement, kala nila mababa ang capabilities, kaya yung mga staff ko, bilib na bilib sila. Like nag struggle sya sa speech nung interview, kaya tinutulungan sya ng mommy

nya, pero kaya nga very short lang yun, kasi ayaw ko rin magpuyat yung bata, so sabi ko 30 mins lang ito, kasi nga may next class na rin kasi ako. (So, I handle students here who are moderate to severe, there were six of them at that time, and their comprehension is really good so there was real interaction taking place. Then they had questions about how he goes to school, like that. So there. It was amazing because my students had questions that really showed they were interested in learning about him. So, then, I also related it to them, I told them, you can still do your task, you can still achieve your, like they can still be successful even if you have a disability. Even my staff they were amazed, because they can't imagine, like, he has CP but he is a really good student, so they wish it for everyone. Because, you know how there is a perception that, if you have limited physical movement, they assume that your capabilities are low, so my staff, they were really amazed. Like he struggled with speech during the interview, so that's why his mom was there to help, but that was why it was also very short, because I didn't want to keep him up, so I said, it's only for 30 minutes, because I also have my next class coming.

IN: *Ang galing galing naman! Pano na lang kung may AAC device siya?* (That's amazing. I wonder what it would have been like if he had access to an AAC device?)

FSEET: *Oh, yes, exactly. Yung nga ang wala sa atin. Yung mga devices, assistive devices, kasi nga maski access sa technology, wala rin nyan sa atin. Pero, yun, kahit wala assistive device, ang galing galing niyang bata. So yun, yung fiesta, yung YouTube saka yung student interview yung ilan sa mga activities na nagawa ko.* (Yeah we don't have that. Those devices, assistive devices, even access to technology, we don't have that over there. But still, even without an assistive device, he is still an amazing kid. So there, the fiesta, the YouTube videos, and the student interview; those were some of the activities I did.

IN: That's nice. Thanks for describing your activities really well. I detailed it here *din sa interview notes ko, saka nakita ko nga rin yung iba pa dun sa binibigay mo sakina cultural reports* (... too on my interview notes, and I also saw them in some of the cultural reports you shared). Did you work in another school or district or just one?

FSEET: *Wala* (None). Just one.

IN: So *yung sa school mo naman* (with your school), how would you describe their role to you as an exchange teacher? What's their primary role and responsibility to you?

FSEET: *Okay, ah, yung nga, support pa din. Support kasi, especially kapag sa technology, lalo na kasi alam nila na, dahil bagong dating nga kami, di naman namin gamay ang pag-gamit ng technology. So, we have trainings most of the time lalo na sa Microsoft. So, yun. Kaya na master namin yung Microsoft, actually may mga badges pa nga kami. Lagi nila kaming ini-include sa mga trainings, tulad ng mga handle with care training para sa special ed. Kahit para sa mga*

para-educators supposed to be yun, pero kahit kami, sinama nila kami. Uhm, ayun, andaming training and learning actually, kasi yung mga skills na alam nila na hindi kami trained, kasi nga galing kami ng Pilipinas, dun nila kami ni-train. So, mostly technology talaga. Kaya, yun Microsoft teams, yun na-master ko yun. (Okay, ah, so it's also support. Support because, especially with technology, especially since they know that, because we are new, we are not too familiar with technology. So, we have trainings most of the time, especially on Microsoft. So, there. We were able to master Microsoft, actually we also have badges. They always included us in trainings, such as handle with care, special ed trainings. Even if that was for paraeducators, but they included us too. Uhm, there, a lot of training and learning, actually they trained us on skills they know we have not been trained in because we came from the Philippines. So, mostly it was on technology. So there, Microsoft teams, I mastered that.)

Saka yung, ano pa yun, yung sa IEP, yun din pala. Kasi as a SPED teacher, yung mga trainings na very ano talaga. Actually, very exclusive pa nga, very exclusive na talagang kami lang. Walang ibang SPED teachers. Kasi, nag-e-extend pa nga kasi kami ng time. Umaabot kami ng hanggang mga alas cuatro just for the training. Tapos, pumupunta pa nga talaga iyong tiga SELPA. Yung representative nga nagpupunta pa itrain kami. Tapos nagset siya ng araw, like what day kami available, sabay-sabay kaming mga Filipino SPED teachers, ah, talagang sabay-sabay kami na nagtra-training na para lang doon. So, sa kanya, talagang goal setting lang talaga ang handle niya. So yung district, dinadala din nila kami sa mga trainings outside the school. So, yan, so ah, lalo na yung sa [REDACTED]. Pinapa-attend din nila kami ng mga training sa MCOE. Siyempre, sagot nila yun. (And also, what was that, for the IEP, that too. Because as a SPED teacher, the trainings were very, actually, it was very exclusive, very exclusive that it was just us. There were no other SPED teachers. Because we even extend time. We even go up until 4 pm just for the training. Then sometimes, people from SELPA also come. The representative comes to train us. Then she would set a day, like what day we would be available. We would get training altogether. All of us Filipino SPED teachers together just for that. So, with the SELPA representative we got trained on goal setting. Then the district too sends us to trainings outside of school, like at [REDACTED].

IN: *Tungkol saan naman yung mga training na ina-attenan niyo sa [REDACTED]? (What are the topics of the trainings you go to at [REDACTED]?)*

FSEET: *Lahat. So, about autism series, yan, yung, actually lahat ng mga trainings ng SELPA inattention namin yun, actually for like 2 years. Meron pa nga kaming mga natatanggap na e-mails from them, like invitation email na sini CC kami ng district o ng principal o ng SPED director. Sini CC nila kami sa mga emails nila, ah to inform us na may mga trainings na ganito, and if you are willing, puwede nga kaming pumunta, na sagot nila lahat. Yeah, so, actually kahit anong mga trainings na may kinalaman sa SPED na alam nila na magbebenefit kami. Tapos dahil medyo malayo nga ang [REDACTED], tapos nung may mga kotse na kami, sinasagot din nila yung*

mga mileage namin. So, ano sagot nila yun, kaya yung gas namin, nagiging free na pagka aatend kami sa mga ganon. Minsan naman, ako personally, dahil na SDC kasi ako, ako lang ang SDC sa amin. So, ako lang yung may credential na moderate to severe, so, dinadala nila ako na solo na ako lang. Minsan aattend ako with our SPED director sa mga trainings na mas extensive. (Everything. Like autism series, all SELPA trainings we attended, actually for like 2 we did that. We also receive emails from them, like training invitations and they, the principal or SPED director will CC us to inform us that there are trainings, and if we are willing, we can go. So, actually any training that is about SPED that they know would benefit us. Then because [REDACTED] is quite far, and since we already have our own cars, they would shoulder the mileage when we go. So, there, because they pay for mileage, our gas ends up free. Then sometimes, like for me personally, because I handle SDC, I'm the only SDC teacher at our school, so I'm the only one with a moderate to severe credential, so they would send me to trainings just by myself, and sometimes I attend more extensive trainings with our SPED director.)

IN: *Tapos, isa-sauli mo na lang yung learning sa school?* (Then you just return the training to the school?)

FSEET: *Ah, well, actually, minsan sini-share ko sa group, kapag, during departmentalized meeting. Pero may time kasi na sa akin lang yun. Lalo na yung tungkol sa transition program. Yung transition program kasi sa SDC lang siya. So, wala naman, hindi ng iba ma-a-apply yun sa kanila, like dun sa mga mild to moderate.* (Ah, well, actually, sometimes I share with the group during departmental meetings. But there are times that the training is just for me. Especially if it's about the transition program, because that is just for the SDC program. So, because I'm the only one, the mild to moderate teachers won't be able to really apply that.)

IN: *Ah, so like, talagang specific lang to you.* (Ah, so, it was really just specific to you)

FSEET: *Oo. So, yun, yun nga yung mga napansin ko na support.* (Yes, so there. That's the support that I got)

IN: *Ang supportive naman ng district mo.* (Seems like you have a supportive district).

FSEET: *Actually, marami pa, marami pang trainings na binibigay sila sa amin.* (Actually, there are still a lot of trainings that I got)

IN: *So, ano naman para sayo yung, like, ano sayo yung,* (So, what for you is, like, what for you...) I mean, how have you enriched your school community as a Filipino SPED teacher? How do you think you've impacted your school?

FSEET: *Ano ang impact? Hmm. Kasi, yeah. So that's what I've experienced also during my*

program. Uhm, we go to different communities like [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] to share our culture, not only here in [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Kasi, like for example, there's events, yung mga events events na yan, especially sa church. So, active ang mga Filipino sa churches, right? So, uhm they're inviting us to some events, especially nga kasi kami yung mga teachers na bagong dating. So we go to some events to share our culture. So, ang mga ginagawa namin, nagsasayaw kami. So yun pa pala yung sa cultural exchange, may community component din pala yun, so isa pa yung mga dance na yan. So, they, we introduce different kinds of ethnic dances, parang ganon, na they will learn how we wear a proper attire of that particular dance. And then, yung pa nga actually, gustong gusto nga nila, yung ibang lahi, na may mga Filipinos there, kasi pag kami umaatend, kasama na yung mga staff meeting sa school, so kami, we would, mag-share kami ng food. (What is my impact? Hmm. Because, yeah. so that's what I've experienced also during my program. Uhm, we go to different communities like [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] to share our culture, not only here in [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Because, like for example, there's events, those events, especially at the church. So, because Filipinos are active in the churches, right? So, uhm they're inviting us to some events, especially since we are the teachers who just got here. So we go to some events to share our culture. So, what we do, is we dance. So that too, the cultural exchanges also has a community component, so for those dances, we would introduce different kinds of ethnic dances, people learn how we wear a proper attire of that particular dance. And then one more thing, and people from different cultures, really enjoy this, because when Filipinos are there, attending the event, even for staff at school, so we, we would, bring food.)

IN: [Chuckles]

FSEET: [Chuckles] So, Oo, yun, madalas yan. Especially yang lumpia and pancit, yun, very well-known yun sa kanila, lalo na nung bago kami dito sa [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. So, sila, hindi pa sila na-i-introduce sa mga ganyang food. So, nung na, every meeting, may mga dala kami, yung mga kasamahan ko minsan nagpapaluto sa akin ng lumpia. So, minsan yung mga tiga [REDACTED] din, nagpapaluto ng lumpia kasi may mga meeting din sila. So, mga, something like that. Every meeting, nag sha-share kami, kapag may staff meeting, nag sha-share kami, ng mga food na hindi pa nila na-e-experience, na syempre alam din namin na kakainin din nila. So, kapag may mga potlucks dyan, nag-sha-share kami ng Filipino food talaga, hindi kami nagluluto ng ibang pagkain. So, ang i-no-offer namin sa kanila, is Filipino cuisine talaga. Minsan nga may mga nag-te-text pa sa akin na mga staff para lang sabihin na “[REDACTED] [REDACTED], we miss your lumpia”; “[REDACTED] [REDACTED], we miss your pancit”. (So, there, we do that frequently. Especially the lumpia and pancit, that is very well known especially during that time when we just got here at [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. So, with them, they have not been introduced to those types of food. So every meeting, we bring something, my Filipino friends at work, sometimes they ask me to even cook lumpia for them. So, sometimes, people from [REDACTED] too, they ask me to cook lumpia because they have a meeting. So, something like that. Every meeting, we share, if there is a staff meeting,

we share food that they have not experienced, that we know they would also eat. So, whenever there is a potluck, we always share Filipino food, we don't cook other things. So, what we offer them is always Filipino cuisine. Sometimes, I even get a text message from staff to let me know "██████ ██████, we miss your lumpia"; "██████ ██████, we miss your pancit".)

IN: [Chuckles]

FSEET: [Chuckles] *Nakakatuwa* (It make me happy).

IN: *So, parang, parang na-introduce mo yung kultura natin sa kanila through food and then hindi na nila nakalimutan* (So, it's like, you introduced our culture through food and then it was something they couldn't forget).

FSEET: *Yeah, and then sometimes, during the conversation din, kapag mga personal conversation lang, kasi minsan nai-invite din naman kami, or most of the time, ako na-i-invite sa mga party-party, and then minsan mga puti lang mga kasama ko, mga colleagues ganyan, and then, ano sila naman, mag tatanong. Like, parang, yung ano, ano yung religion nyo, alam mo yun, yung mga ganyan. So, parang na-o-open ko sa kanila ang picture ng Philippines. Tapos, nagpapakita ako sa kanila ng mga videos ng Philippines, like ito yung mga beach ng Philippines, and then "Oh, can we go there?" so why not right? Sama daw sila, eh ako, wala pang plan, mga ganun. Pero gusto daw nila sumama, kasi nga gusto nilang, parang na-encourage nila pumunta ng Pilipinas. Actually, minsan pa nga, dahil sa, so, there's a lot of negatives, so I'll tell them na I know, like, I know you've heard that there's a lot of negative sa the Philippines, but look at the beauty of the Philippines too! Sabi ko, kasi it's not about the negatives, kasi lahat naman ng bansa may negative, even here sa states, sabi ko sa kanila. Actually, marami silang natutunan sa akin na, ay talaga may ganyan pala, so sige, ay, punta kami, punta kami sa Philippines, kailan ka pupunta? sasama kami sayo, yung mga ganon. So, even yung mga estudyante ko, actually, nakakatuwa, pati sila willing to come sa Philippines. (Yeah, and then sometimes, during personal conversations too. Because sometimes we also get invited, I mean most of the time I get invited to parties, and then sometimes I'm with white people, like colleagues, and so they would ask me questions, such as, "What is your religion?", things like that. So I get to paint a picture of the Philippines, show them videos of beaches in the Philippines, and then they would say "Oh, can we go there?" so why not right? They want to come with me, but I, I don't have plans yet to go home, but they want to come with me, because they want, like they are encouraged to go to the Philippines. Actually, sometimes because there are also negatives, I'll tell them na I know, like, I know you've heard that there's a lot of negative about the Philippines, but look at the beauty of the Philippines too! So I tell them, it's not about the negatives, because all countries have negatives, even here in the states. Actually, they learned a lot from me, they would be surprised about things, so they want to go, they want to go to the Philippines, they ask when I would go because they would like to come with me when I*

go, So, even with my students, actually, it makes me happy, even they want to come to the Philippines.) *Kasi yung perspective nila, na nababalitaan nila sa Philippines, iba sa kuwento ko. Iba yung pinakita ko sa kanila patungkol sa Philippines. Kaya nakatuwa talaga.* (Because their perspective, from what they hear about the Philippines, and what they get from me, is different. I show them a different perspective of the Philippines, so it really makes me happy.)

IN: *Ang galing. Ang ganda naman nung pag promote mo ng bansa natin. So ano naman yung biggest contribution mo sa school as a professional? Like, sabi mo last time, expert ka sa behavior management, nagkaroon ka ba ng opportunity to share that or anything else?* (That's awesome. You promoted our country really well. So what about, what about your biggest contribution to the school as a professional? Last time you said you were an expert on behavior management, did you have an opportunity to share that or anything else?)

FSEET: *Actually yes pag nag-co-collab kami. Saka yung SPED director din, kasi bago lang siya nung time na yung and then I was the one who's helping him na magdiscuss kung anong sistema namin, and especially yung program sa SDC. Kasi nung time na yun, kakastart ko lang din ng SDC na walang proper transition from the previous SDC teacher kasi big lang nag-awol daw, so, parang, gumawa ako na sarili kong program. And then so, parang, ako yung nag, ang tawag doon, nag-guide ng konte with regards to special ed, kung ano yung mga situation namin sa special ed. Actually, naging staff of the month pa nga ako nung 2019.* (Actually yes, when we collaborate. And then with my SPED director too, because when he was new, I was the one who's helping him, we discuss how we do things, especially in our SDC program. At that time, we merely started the SDC program, there was no proper transition from the previous SDC teacher because I was told the previous teacher went AWOL, so I had to, I built the program. And then so, like, I was the, what do you call that, guided a bit with regards to special ed, like what our situation is in special ed. Actually, I was even the staff of the month in 2019.)

IN: *Oh wow! Galing galing naman.* (Wow, that's great!)

FSEET: *Ya, naging staff of the month ako.* (Yeah, I was staff of the month)

IN: So, okay so, I guess, what I'm hearing is *naging guide ka ng department so that they can understand the issues and make it better? Parang ganun ba yun?* (... you were the one that guided the department so they can understand the issues and make it better? Was it like that?)

FSEET: *Not really the whole department but the SPED director during that time kasi nga kaka transition palang siya. And then, yeah, so ako yung nag ano, nag-help sa kanya kung paano organized yung program, para alam din sya kung pano sya pinapatakbo. And then, sa staff naman, sa buong department naman, most of the time, ako yung nag-su-suggest with, with regards ng paano, yung mga, alam kong effective sa classroom ko that could help them in their*

classrooms too, like, so, yeah, like I shared how I put up my, the schedule of my students sa white board, ganon, and other things pa. Tapos sa gen ed teachers, I share strategies on how to handle students with behaviors, so matutunan din nila pano mag handle ng behavior, and then nagshashare din ako ng resources na puwede nila gamitin. So yun, yung iba they would copy it and implement it sa classroom, pero syempre yung iba, hindi kasi hindi mo naman ma-please please lahat. (Not really the whole department but the SPED director during that time he barely transitioned into the role. And then, yeah, so I, I was the one, who helped him understand how the program is organized, so he would know too how to run it. And then, with staff, with the whole department, most of the time, I would suggest, with regards to how, like those, like what I know is effective in my classroom that could help them in their classrooms too, like, so, yeah, like I shared how I put up my, the schedule of my students on the white board, and other things. Then there's the gen ed teachers, I share strategies on how to handle students with behaviors, so they would also learn how to handle behavior, and then I also share resources they can use. So there, with the others, they would copy it and implement it in their classroom, but the others not really because you can't please everyone.)

IN: *Oo Syempre. (Of course)*

FSEET: *Pero majority naman, napaka thoughtful nila. So napansin ko nga din yun pala. Like around the third year, ang open na nila sa suggestions, kasi they know I can handle students, at ang purpose ko lang naman to share is to be able to better manage their students. (But with the majority, they are very thoughtful. So, I noticed that too. Like, around my third year, they were more open to suggestions, because they know I can handle students, and my purpose for sharing is for them to be able to better manage the students.)*

IN: *So bukod dun sa napansin mo na change na yun, ano pa ang key learning mo from this experience? (Other than that change you had noticed, what are your other key learnings from this experience?)*

FSEET: *Yung key learning ko... Hahaha! Actually, ang key learning ko is to adjust. Hahaha. Yung adjustment. To adjust into a culture na you are not used to. So, there really is a big difference between the Philippines and dito, especially sa professional set up. So yun, and of course ano, I've learned a lot, like a lot talaga! Like 90% ng years ko puros learning. Especially dun sa IEP. Like I am confident already, na I can share it also dun sa kung sino man ang may kailangan ng help with the IEP. Like yung confidence ko, yung confident that I can teach it, pati kung pano i-handle ang IEP, like during the IEP meetings, kasi sa Philippines naman kasi ang IEP between the teacher lang and then the parent, wala namang LEA, walang mga supports and stuff, but here, ang dami mong taong kaharap, at ikaw na SPED teacher, ikaw talaga yung leader. (My key learning... Hahaha, actually, my key learning is to adjust. Hahaha. The adjustment. To adjust into a culture that you are not used to. So, there really is a big difference*

between the Philippines and here, especially with the professional set up. So yun, and of course, uhm, I've learned a lot, like a lot! Like 90% of my years were full of learning. Especially with IEPs. Like I am confident already, that I can share it with whomever needs help with the IEP. Like my confidence, I'm confident that I can teach it, even with how to handle an IEP, like during the IEP meetings, because in the Philippines, the IEP is only between the teacher and the parent, there are no LEAs, there are no supports and stuff, but here, you have a lot of people to involve, and you as the SPED teacher, you are the leader.

IN: Yeah, ikaw yung case manager (... you're the case manager).

FSEET: *Yeah. Kaya ikaw talaga ang in charge to make sure na its implemented, at ikaw din magfafacilitate at the same time. Kaya self-confidence wise, ang laki din ng naitulong nito sa akin. Like it trained me to be a leader. Like na-fe-feel ko din naman dati na meron akong parang katangian sa sarili ko na puwede akong maging leader, kaso dahil shy-type nga ako, nung nasa Pilipinas pa lang shy-type ako, hindi talaga ako yung humaharap sa maraming tao ganon, pero nag jo-join ako sa mga events, like kung may sayaw mga ganyan, ok ako dyan, pero yung ako lang mag isa, yung magle-lead ako ng group or whatever, wala akong confidence nyan. Dito ko na lang napatunayan sa sarili ko na kaya ko pala.* (Yeah. You would really be the one in charge of making sure its implemented, and you're also the one facilitating at the same time. So self-confidence wise, this also really helped me a lot. Like it trained me to be a leader. Like I have felt it before, that I have leadership traits, but because I'm shy, in the Philippines, I was really shy, I don't really go in front of a lot of people, I do join events, like if there was a dance, I'm ok with that, but me by myself, me to lead a group or whatever, I don't have the confidence for that. It was here that I was able to prove that to myself). *So, yeah, ang kagandahan din kasi yung mga heads ko, kasi minsan may isang meeting, actually, madaming naging meeting, tapos ang daming tao, may parent kasi na, inin-vite pa nga nya yung tiga SELPA na umattend, yung parent kasi na yun, very meticulous sya, so yung minsan, nag IEP meeting kami ng five hours* (So, yeah. But what was good with my admins, because one time there was a meeting, actually, there have been several meetings, where there were a lot of people, there was a parent that, she even invited people from SELPA, that parent is very meticulous, so one time, we had an IEP meeting which lasted five hours).

IN: Wow!

FSEET: *Oo, continuation pa nga yun. Kasi yung parent may gusto na ibigay yung district dun sa bata. Ako naman pinoprove ko na hindi kailangan kasi kaya naman ng bata. So andaming umattend, gusto nya lahat ng head ng district nandoon sa meeting. Siguro 13 kami sa meeting, tapos ako ang facilitator nun. So, oh my god, talagang grabe yung pressure nun. So ano, pero nacommend naman ako ng admin at the end. Tinawag ako sa office at the end, they told me I handled it really well. We did not give in to what the parent wanted, pero yung parent hindi din*

naman umalis ng meeting ng wala. (Yes, that was even a continuation meeting. Because the parent, she wanted the district to give something for her child. While I, I was trying to prove that it was unnecessary, because the student is capable. So there were a lot of people who attended, cause she wanted everyone, all heads of the district to attend. So, we were like 13 at the meeting, and I was the facilitator. So, oh my god, that was a lot of pressure. But I was commended by admin at the end. They called me to their office and they told me I handled it really well. We did not give in to what the parent wanted, but the parent didn't leave without anything.)

IN: *So yung, hindi naman umalis yung parent na parang defeated sya?* (So the, the parent did not leave feeling defeated?)

FSEET: *Exactly! Naacplain ko ng maigi sa parent yung, kung ano yung services na meron and how that is sufficient to meet the need of her child. So grabe talaga yung meeting na yun. May OT saka yung speech, parang nagigi-give up na sila, gusto na nila umalis.* (I was able to explain it well to the parent, like what services were there and how that is sufficient to meet the need of her child. So that was quite a meeting. The OT and the speech were there, and they were about to give up, they wanted to leave).

IN: *Naumay na sa meeting.* (They were done with the meeting)

FSEET: *Oo kasi nga paulit ulit na lang. Pero at the end naman, naging successful naman sya. So yung parent nga na yung, pag nagkikita kami, masaya naman sya, like "Hi [REDACTED], how are you? When are you going to be my child's teacher again?" Parang ay, haha, ganon, ok, inaaway away mo ko nung may meeting tayo noon, tapos ngayon close tayo, hahaha. Actually ang kaaway naman nya talaga yung district, kasi may ayaw ibigay sa kanya yung district, so ang job ko i-justify kung bakit di naman yun appropriate. So hindi talaga sa akin directed yung galit nya, pero yung galit nya na parang sa akin, syempre kumakampi ako sa district, kasi syempre I work for the district. Pero ang side ko talaga is doon sa bata. Kasi syempre pano mo maibibigay yung independence sa bata if nagiging dependent sya, eh yung gusto nya kasi may isa pang alalay dun sa anak nya, eh hindi naman kailangan, kasi kaya naman nya na walang 1:1. Kaya na namin ng mga staff ko, kasi 14 and estudyante ko, tapos 4 kami na adult, yung adult to student ratio, ok na, kayang kaya na, hindi na kailangan, akala ng anak niya. Ang tingin nya kasi di kaya ng anak nya, pero kayang kaya naman ng anak nya, di ba parang 3 is to 1, 4 is to 1, sufficient na yun. So ayun, nagging maganda naman ang naging relasyon ng lahat. Hahaha.* (Yes because it was repetitive. But in the end, it was successful. So that parent, whenever we see each other, she's pleasant, like "Hi [REDACTED], how are you? When are you going to be my child's teacher again?" So like, ok, weren't we arguing a lot at the meeting before, and now, were close?, hahaha. Actually, she was really upset with the district, because she was not getting what she was asking for, so my job is to justify why that is inappropriate. So the anger was not

directed to me really, even if it seemed that way, but of course I sided with the district, because I work for the district. But my side is really with the kid. Because how am I going to be able to give the child independence if he is going to be dependent because what the parent was a 1:1 aide, but the student does not need it because he can manage without one. With the staff we have in our room, we can handle his needs, because there are 14 students, then there's 4 of us adults, so the adult to student ratio is ok, we don't need another adult, she thought, her pection is her child can't, but he can, with a 3 is to 1, 4 is to 1, ratio, that is sufficient. So there, it turned out well and everyone left with relations intact. Hahaha.

IN: *So ngayon ok na sya* (So now, she's ok). Hahaha.

FSEET: *Oo, ok na siya. Haha. So yung nga na commend nga ako dun sa meeting na yun at sa sarili ko, naprove ko din na kaya ko pala mag lead. Tapos yung confidence ko talaga, like yung kakayanan ko, yung skills ko pala, puwede pala maimprove, at naimprove yun dito sa US. And then, of course, [Chuckles] na enhance talaga ang learning ko dito, at ang confidence ko nag boost talaga ng bonganng-bongga, like 100%. (Yeah, she's ok. Hahaha. So, when I was commended for that meeting, that was when I was able to prove that I can lead. And my confidence, like my capabilities, my skills, i could still improve, and I was able to improve that here in the U.S. And then, of course, [Chuckles] I was really able to enhance my learning here, and my confidence really got a boost, like it shot up to 100%.)*

IN: [Chuckles]

FSEET: [Chuckles] *Realization wise, realization lang. Na realize ko na, ah ok, may potential naman pala ako, na hindi naman pala ako na nasa loob lang ng cabinet, parang ganon, na lumabas ako, tapos safe, haha. (Realization wise, and this is just a realization, I realized that, ah ok, so I do have potential, that I am not just in the closet, something like that, I came out, and it's safe, haha.)*

IN: *Nakakataba kaya yun ng puso na ma-realize mo na (That is something special when you realize that...)* you can do something that you didn't think you could.

FSEET: Yeah. Oo.

IN: *Di ba sabi mo you already work with some teachers sa Pilipinas?* (Didn't you say you already worked with some Filipino teachers?)

FSEET: *Oo, yung mga nasa teacher prep programs.* (Yes, teachers in teacher prep programs.)

IN: *So ano naman yung, what are you most excited to share with teachers sa kanila tungkol sa*

special ed na dito mo natutunan, and then you hope na, or yung tingin mo possible na gawin dun sa atin? (So, what are, what are you most excited to share with the teachers about special ed, that you learned here, and then you hope to, or you think is possible to implement over there?)

FSEET: Marami. Hahaha. Marami grabe. Like the thing that I wanna share, na kahit dati ko ng iniimplement yung mga classroom management and behavior modification, pero mas natutunan ko pa, eh yung behavior modification. Like how to handle when behaviors escalate, yung mga deescalation strategies, ganon, yan yung mga talagang dito ko na natutunan. Kasi dito, very systematic, very, ah, structured yung approach. Like parang if ganito yung behavior na nangyari, then eto yung mga puwede mong gawin. Kasi sa Pilipinas kasi parang wala, if ganito ang ginagawa ng estudyante, ano ang gagawin ng teacher? Parang ang clueless. And it's not just about the special ed teacher, pati yung gen ed din. So yun yung mga gusto ko ishare, mga strategies na pag iniisip mo parang madali lang, pero pag andyan na, mahirap pala. So yeah, ano, ah, very ano talaga ako sa classroom management, kasi ayaw ko ng magulong classroom, kasi walang nangyayaring learning kapag magulo talaga ang classroom. So structure din pala ng classroom, learning environment, what it should be, ganon. (A lot. Hahaha. Like a lot. Like the thing that I wanna share, even if it was something I already implement is but learned more about is classroom management and behavior modification. Like how to handle when behaviors escalate, such as deescalation strategies, that I really learned here. Because here, it's very systematic, the approach is very structured. Like if this behavior is happening, then this is what you can do. Because in the Philippines, if a student's does something, what does a teacher do? Like we are clueless. And it's not just about the special ed teacher, even gen ed too. So that is something I want to share, strategies that you think are simple, but when it is there, it is not that easy. So yeah, I'm really, I'm really into classroom management, because I do not want a disorganized classroom, because no learning takes place if the classroom is disorganized. So I also want to share about classroom structure, the learning environment, what it should be.) Marami talaga ako natutunan, as in, kasi maraming resources dito, so ako, talagang I maximize those resources. Tapos I share those resources, pati yung mga powerpoint presentation, everything that I have, I share, lalo na sa mga bagong dating na Filipino teachers I would share. Everything that I have since dumating ako dito, I share that. Pati yung mga templates ko din pala, like for data collection, IEP. anything na puwedeng makatulong, pero mostly they ask about classroom management, saka din pala, most of the time, they ask about the referral process. Kasi I work with gen ed teachers, at dahil gen ed sila, they want to learn about paano ba yung pre-referral process dito, kasi sa Pilipinas, di naman lahat nabibiygyan ng proper intervention ang mga bata, so ano ba ang dapat gawin ng gen ed teacher di ba, ano ba ang puwedeng gagawin ng bata sa gen ed classroom? So shina-share ko din yun sa kanila, mga strategies, techniques. Even, yung sa IEP pala, kasi may mga gen ed teachers din dito na Pilipino, so ano ba daw yung puwede nilang gawin pag may IEP meeting silang a-attendan, paano ba magshare ng data. So I share those with them, mga observation or particular behaviors na kailangan nila i share during IEP meetings, or kung ano ba dapat nila gawin bago

magrefer sa special ed, mga references ko, para maging organized sila. (I really learned a lot, as in, because there are a lot of resources here, so for me, I really maximize those resources. Then, I share those resources, even powerpoint presentations, everything that I have, I share, especially with Filipino teachers who just got here, I would share. Everything that I have since I got here, I share that. Even my templates, like for data collection, IEP. Anything that can help, but mostly they ask about classroom management, and also, most of the time, they also ask about the referral process. Because I work with gen ed teachers too, and because they are gen ed, they want to learn about the pre-referral process here, because in the Philippines, not everyone is given proper intervention, so what does a gen ed teachers need to do, like what can be done with students in the gen ed classroom? So, I share this with them too, strategies, techniques. Even, with IEPs too, because there are gen ed teachers here too that are Filipino, so they want to know what they need to do if there is an IEP meeting that they need to attend, how do they share data. So, I share those with them, like observation or particular behaviors that they need to share during IEP meetings, or what they need to do before they refer the student to special ed, any references I have, so they can be organized.)

IN: *So sa mga natutunan mo dito, ano namang practices ang sana or dapat ituloy sa Pilipinas?* (So from the things you learned here, what practices would you continue in the Philippines?)

FSEET: *Ok, so from here, I want to continue sa Philippines the IEP. [Chuckles] Kasi nga wala ngang standard structure ang IEP. And then yung mga trainings. Gusto ko itrain ang mga teachers, not only special ed, but also gen ed teachers, how they can handle kids with specific learning disabilities, or any disability, or multiple disabilities. So mostly ang gusto ko sa Pilipinas, kailangan ng teachers talaga ng training and workshop. Kailangan talaga nila yun. Saka group support, gusto ko mag set up ng support for teachers, kasi nakaka frustrate if di nila alam ang gagawin nila.* (Because there is no standard structure for IEPs. And then trainings. I would like to train teachers, not only about special ed, but also gen ed teachers, how they can handle kids with specific learning disabilities, or any disability, or multiple disabilities. So mostly, I want for the Philippines, teachers really need trainings and workshops. They really need that and group support. I want to set-up support for teachers, because it can be frustrating if they don't know what to do),

IN: *Parang forum?* (Like a forum?)

FSEET: *Oo parang ganon, pero for teacher support. Kahit once a month lang. Kasi kailangan din natin yun, parang SEL for teachers di ba. So they know na yung frustrating experiences nila may iba din na naka experience na nun so they can learn from each other on how to handle certain situations. Kasi may mga group support naman for disabilities, pero usually para sa parents, so paano naman ang mga teachers? Di ba? Wala! So kaya gusto ko talaga yun, kasi paano na ang mga teachers? Paano nila madedeal ang mga estudyante sa klase nila? Ano*

anong scenario ba? Kasi madami kang matututunan sa scenarios eh. Yun yung mga maganda talaga, na matuto ang mga teachers, na hindi lang magcocomplain. So magococomplain sila kanino, sa admin? Ano naman gagawin ng admin? Tatawagan ang magulang? Eh paano yung bata? Kawawa naman ang bata na dedeprive ng learning ang mga bata. Kasi minsan, lalo na sa high school sa atin, may mga bata na hindi naaddress yung problems, so high school na hindi pa rin marunong magbasa, tapos ang approach ipupush lang ng ipupush yung bata, tapos ang experience frustrating lang for both the teacher and the student. (Something like that, but for teacher support. Even if it is only once a month lang. Because we need that, like SEL for teachers. So, they know that the frustrating experiences they have, have been experienced by others and they can learn from each other on how to handle certain situations. Because there are group support for disabilities, but usually for sa parents, so what about the teachers? Right? None! So, I really want that, because what about the teachers? How will they be able to deal with the students in their class? What scenarios are out there? Because you can learn a lot from scenarios. That's what is going to be a good thing, for teachers to learn so they won't just complain. Because they will complain to who? Their admin? What will the admin do? Call the parent? So what about the student? Poor kid will be deprived of learning. Because sometimes, especially at the high schools back home, there are problems that are not being addressed, so the student gets to high school, not knowing how to read, and the approach is to just keep pushing the kid, and the experience becomes frustrating for both the teacher and the student.)

IN: What advice would you give to your fellow Filipino special education teachers that are still in the Philippines, but aspire to one day become an exchange program teacher in the U.S.?

FSEET: Kung ang plan ng teacher is to be able to stay ng mas long term, then ang advice ko is to discourage them from the J visa, hahaha. Mag H visa na lang sila. Pero if okay lang na umuwi, kasi maganda naman ang goal talaga ng exchange program, pero kasi, at eto talaga ang problem kasi, paano naman ishahare ng teacher ang learning kung wala namang support ang government. Kasi uuwi sila and then wala namang nangyayari. Yung iba walang work, yung iba nagtuturo online, pero Americans pa rin ang students nila. So ang ano ko sa kanila, if gusto nila mag turo dito ng short term for their personal development and learning growth, and opportunity for their family, kasi puwede mo dalhin ang family dito mag may J ka, benefit din yun ng J visa, then go for it. Hindi din naman nagdadamot ang J. Thankful din ako kasi nadala ko family ko dito at naexperience din nila ang US dahil sa pagparticipate ko sa exchange program. Marami kang matutunan talaga dito sa US, and lahat ng years ko, very productive talaga sya, so thankful talaga ako kasi ang dami kong natutunan, na kung ang learning mo dati nasa 5 lang, mafulfill mo talaga ang maging 10 plus plus. (If the teacher's plan is to be able to stay for long term, then my advice is to discourage them from the J visa, hahaha. They should pursue an H visa. But, if they are okay with going back, because the goals of the exchange program are good goals, but here is where the problem lies, like how will the teacher share their learning back if there is no support from the government. Because they go home and then

nothing happens. Others don't work, others teach online, but they still teach Americans. So what I want to say, if what they want is to teach for the short term for their personal development and learning growth, and opportunity for their family, because you can bring your family here under a J visa, that's one of the benefits of a J visa, then go for it. The J visa program makes that possible. I am thankful because I was able to bring my family here and they got to experience being in the U.S. too because of my participation in the exchange program. You will learn a lot here in the U.S., all my years were really very productive *talaga sya*, so I am thankful that I learned a lot, that if your level of learning before was at a 5, you'll be able to fulfill that and bring it up to a 10 plus plus.)

IN: What a nice way to describe it. So that was my last question for you today. Again, I'll transcribe and review your responses, *tapos* (then) we will engage for one more time. *Pero bago yun* (But before then), I do need to collect one more thing from you, which is a letter where, you will be asked to write to your younger self, and the prompt is... "Look back to that time when you first started, and then think about where you are now. Write a letter addressed to yourself from almost five years ago when you first entered the United States, and tell her about how the teacher exchange program experience made you grow as a special education teacher." So, take your time to write it. Really reflect on your experience, and then, when I get that back, I, of course, have to read it; then, we can schedule the final interview shortly after. So thank you for your time today.

FSEET: Ang ganda nyan. Walang anuman. (That's really nice. You're welcome)

[Begin Transcript: 00:52:38]

APPENDIX M: SAMPLE PHASE THREE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: YUMI**Phase Three Interview Transcript: Yumi**

Participant: [REDACTED]

Interviewer: Madonna Catiis

Date of Interview: 02/14/2024

Location of Interview: Virtual via Zoom

List of Acronyms: FSEET: Filipino Special Education Exchange Teacher, IN: Interviewer

[Begin Transcript: 00:00:23]

IN: We are recording.

FSEET: [Nods]

IN: So this interview sessions is a bit different than the previous two, *kasi* (because), for this one, I would be doing more of the talking. And this is why, *kasi* (because), in order to ensure that what I had understood capture what you meant with what you had shared with me in the prior interviews, our time together tonight will be spent on me going over a review of the main ideas in your responses, and soliciting your feedback to ensure that the information I had translated and interpreted is representative of the thoughts and experiences that you shared with me. So, if there is anything that you are unsure of, or does not sound like you, please let me know.

FSEET: *Opo* (Yes)

IN: So you have a Bachelor's in Science in education major in SPED. You have a master's in early childhood, and then you are certified to teach in the Philippines. And then you have how many total years of teaching in the Philippines?

FSEET: 11 years po.

IN: And then the grade spans that you taught was from preschool to middle school, before you went here. And you were teaching in a private setting.

FSEET: *Opo* (Yes)

IN: And then the program that you were teaching in, you were teaching in a general education class with special education, uhm, with students with disabilities included, or mainstreamed.

FSEET: Yes po.

IN: And then the ability ranges that of the students that you were teaching, they range from mild moderate, moderate to severe, and some are also undiagnosed

FSEET: Yes, because we don't really have those classifications, because they are mixed. If parents can send them to school.

IN: So you worked with a heterogeneous group or students

FSEET: Yes *po*.

IN: And then the disability types that you've worked with over there include intellectual disability, ADHD, and multiple disabilities.

FSEET: [Nods]

IN: So you're currently completing your fifth year of participation in the exchange program?

FSEET: Yes.

IN: Your program sponsor is [REDACTED].

FSEET: Yes, [REDACTED].

IN: And then when I asked about the cost involved for that first year, just to come here, you mentioned that yours went around \$10,000.

FSEET: Yes.

IN: And then your pathway to participation was that you went through an agency who connected you to a school, who connected you to a sponsor.

FSEET: [Nods]

IN: And then you found out about the program, uhm, you were aware of this exchange program opportunity through family in the U.S.

FSEET: Yes, my husband's family in the U.S.

IN: And then when I asked you about your understanding of the sponsor's role, you said that their primary role is that of visa sponsorship and that they would be reminding you of the cultural exchange reports.

FSEET: Yes.

IN: Okay. In terms of your license, you're currently at a preliminary level one for an ed specialist credential with a specialization for mild mod disability. And then your host school is [REDACTED] School, with the [REDACTED] district, which is located in [REDACTED] county.

FSEET: Yes. Located in [REDACTED] County.

IN: And then you're teaching a mild-mod, self-contained class, and the grade span is second and third.

FSEET: Second and third, *yes po*.

IN: And then the disability categories of the students you're currently working with are Autism, ID, OHI, and SLD.

FSEET: *Yes po*.

IN: When I asked you about your understanding of the role and responsibility of your host school, to you as an exchange teacher, you mentioned that their primary responsibility is to be able to include you in school events, to provide you support in providing your students a good learning experience.

FSEET: [Nods]

IN: And then when I asked you about like, what does that mean? You mentioned it's teaching materials and then supporting your growth as a professional by providing trainings. Anything else that I didn't capture?

FSEET: I think for that, that's all I can think of.

IN: Okay, so the main, uhm, so the main research question that I wanted my research to answer is "What do Filipino special education exchange teachers gain from participating in the teacher exchange program?" And then, under that, I have three sub-questions. So we'll start with my first research question, which is, "What opportunities are provided for Filipino special education teachers to share their teaching practices and culture? And then so one of the questions that I asked the first time that we met was, what strategies or approaches that you use over there help your early years when you transition to teach in the U.S. And you mentioned you were able to apply the classroom management strategies that you brought with you, like all the strategies that you brought with you. And you even shared that you were surprised that it can be applied even if you are teaching in a classroom where the students are from a different culture.

FSEET: Yes. Yes.

IN: And when I asked you what type of classroom management strategies you implemented in your classroom, you said you were establishing routines, you used a visual schedule, and you would assign spaces for small group or centers.

FSEET: [Nods]

IN: And then when I reviewed, when I reviewed your documents, some of the opportunities that you were provided to share your teaching practices and culture at the school was that, like in the

classroom during circle time, there was a time wherein you talked to your students about Christmas traditions and songs, you shared that when you had a science lesson on volcanoes, you were able, you were given an opportunity to talk to your students about your hometown and you told them that the town that you grew up in is the town where the smallest volcano in Asia is.

FSEET: [Smiles] *Yes po.*

IN: And then you mentioned that at the school level you did an event like a fiesta event and then, at that event you presented the national symbols like our flag, our national fruit, and then, of course you had Filipino food, then you had some games.

FSEET: Yes.

IN: And then, you also shared with me like, a, uhm, like, a cultural exchange report wherein you implemented an activity in the community because you went to your daughter's high school and you taught a group of students how to dance the Tinikling.

FSEET: Yes! Right, I forgot about that.

IN: That was in the documents that you shared.

FSEET: Yes. Yes.

IN: You also said that, and this is a translation of what you said in the interview, "Whenever I am interacting with colleagues or at the social event, I see that as an opportunity to share about our culture."

FSEET: Yes.

IN: And then there was also a cultural exchange report that you shared with me wherein, it was about uhm, facilitating a virtual interaction between Filipino and U.S. students and you talked about traditions. And then the students learned how there are differences in our traditions but then there's also similarities. Like what particular celebration was that? Like what kind of event?

FSEET: All Saints also Day. Because my students from Hispanic backgrounds, I noticed that we shared a lot of things in common with them in terms of traditions.

IN: All Saints Day. Okay.

IN: Okay, a second research question I have for my research is, "What types of support do the Filipino special education exchange teachers receive that help them adjust and build their efficacy to teach American students with disabilities?" And then, during the first phase of the interview, I asked you what professional support did you receive from your sponsor during your first year? And, you said that the sponsor's primary role is that of bridging you to an employer so that they can provide you a visa, sponsor a visa.

FSEET: [Nods]

IN: And then, I also asked about professional support you received from your host school during your first year? And then you said before the school year started, they gave you like a week to prepare your classroom that you had time to really set up your space and decorate your classroom. And then, you also had a full day of training on IEP forms, [REDACTED] which is the online IEP management system that your district uses, you were given your class rosters, and you had time to review the IEPs of students on your caseload.

FSEET: Yeah, but I was not really able to review all in detail. I needed more days to do that.

IN: Ok. I will make a note of that. And then, when I asked you like what kind of support or preparations do you wish you had, you mentioned that all the before school training was great, but then you felt that it was very fast paced just to get you guys ready. And then, when school started, the training seemed to slow down and that you wish that you had more continuous support after that first bulk of time that was spent for training at the beginning.

FSEET: Yes. [Nods]

IN: And then I asked you whether you had a mentor and you mentioned that you did, and she showed you how to do the Woodcock, but then, you felt that you weren't really able to maximize her support because she was also teaching full time and at the same time supporting many others as well, not just you. And then, another support that you wish you had was that while you learned how to develop an IEP, like for your first year, you weren't really given much of an opportunity to learn how to facilitate an IEP meeting. And, you like your admin would be facilitating the meeting, so you would just report on sections such as the present levels of progress or just the goal that's needed to academics.

FSEET: [Nods]

IN: Any other supports that you received to help you develop during that first year?

FSEET: We had trainings on different curriculums too, for like after school, and we're getting paid for that.

IN: What kind of curriculum, like a gen ed curriculum or another program?

FSEET: A gen ed curriculum, like I remember Eureka Math, we were training in Eureka Math. And then for reading, I forgot our program.

IN: That's okay.

FSEET: Hmm, what else? For reading and different assessments, aside from the standardized tests, Hmmm, I don't know. I don't know. Not sure. *Pero dun po yun sa unang district na pinasukan ko.* (But that was with the first district where I was at).

IN: *Oo nga pala* (Oh yeah). This was your second host school district.

FSEET: *Opo, sa first po yun. Pero dito din po marami* (Yes, that was with the first. But, here I also received a lot). We would have PD days at the beginning of the year and then also, *pero ito po talaga malaking tulong sa akin, yun pong director namin* (and this one I found very helpful, our director), was someone, *na uhm, very approachable sya* (who was very approachable), and we can ask her questions and she would, uhm, always be supportive in assisting me with any sped questions *po. Kasi po, ang sped po dito di ba, dahil po may law and mga legal compliance na kailangan sundin, pag di ako sure, sa kanya po ako lagi nagco-consult at lagi po syang, uhm, yun pong kapag may mga tanong ako, or kailangan i-klaro, available po sya na magbigay ng guidance, so lalo po akong natututo about sped* (Because, sped here has laws and legal compliance procedures we have to follow, so whenever I am not sure, I always consulted with her, like when I have questions or need to clarify something, she was always available to provide guidance, so I end up learning more about sped).

IN: That's real nice that you have someone you can always go to.

FSEET: *Opo. Super helpful po.* (Yes. It was super helpful)

IN: So my, for my third research question in taking on this study, uhm, I, I wanted to know. what special education practice is, do the Filipino special education exchange teachers intend to implement when they return to support the Filipino students with disabilities? And so some of the questions that I asked that's related to that question was like, uhm, when I asked you what special education was like in the Philippines. And then you mentioned there really is no multidisciplinary team in schools, people practice independently, so there's no cross consultations happening between teachers and the therapists, and that there's no standard practices for documentation.

FSEET: [Nods]

IN: That there's an IEP but it's not detailed. It was more the background information of the student and the needs and then there were recommendations. You described it as looking more like a developmental pediatrician report rather than an IEP but you said they called that an IEP even if there were no goals.

FSEET: Yeah, *one page long lang po sya (it was just one page long).*

IN: Yeah, you did mention that too. And then you also said that, and I'm not, uhm, I wanted to verify whether this was a statement that you gave or not, that there's no diagnostic testing to identify students.

FSEET: Yes. *Pero ano po, ibig ko pong sabihin* (Yes, but what I meant was), there are no standardized tests for students with special needs, and in the classrooms, the test is for everyone, like quarterly exams or final tests, there's no accommodations. So the formative and summative,

testing, tests we gave are catered to students in gen ed. And there are no special testing accommodations provided.

IN: Ok, I will note that too. So then, when I asked you how do Filipino students with disabilities compared to American students with disabilities. You said in the Philippines, whether they're gen ed kids or special ed kids, they treat teachers with regard and respect. And that it's very rare that a child is disrespectful to an adult. Meanwhile, American kids are very different. And then some of it you can attribute to cultural differences because you learn that Americans are very direct.

FSEET: Yes, eventually when I was able to adapt also, I realized that that's how they are and that's how they talk. And it's not because they don't have respect or anything. It's just that's how they express themselves. So now I have a different, a different view of that. And that's the difference. It's very easy to interpret as disrespect, maybe because of the, *kasi* (because) it's very different for the kids in the Philippines, like, uhm, because maybe they are trained differently. I think, *parang tingin ko* (like from what I see), they're going to do their best whether motivated or not because they are expected to do it, for example, a skill or any academics. The parents push them, most of the parents, they wanted them to succeed all the time. Here, I don't think there's much of a push, or pressure, so maybe, like there are some who would try their best, but from what I see, *parang okay lang* (like it's okay), as long as they are happy. *Parang ganon* (Something like that). *Parang* (like) there's high expectations when it comes to academics, but like maybe here, not as much. I think. But I think, that's also a really, a cultural thing for us Filipinos.

IN: Ok, let me add that to my notes. And then when I asked how does teaching special ed in the Philippines compare with a special ed in America? you said in the Philippines, the students are mainstream, but there's no real accommodations taking place. Students are given the same. And the mindset is that giving them something different might be discriminatory. So there's really no special treatment. And then at times, students get retained. Then you said that in the U.S., individualization is really in practice, a continuum of options is available, and there's different eligibilities in a classroom. Anything else there that I missed?

FSEET: That's accurate.

IN: Okay, so like practices, what are you most excited to share with your colleagues in the Philippines? You said you want to share about the student-centered and holistic, strength-based approach to teaching students with disabilities.

FSEET: Yes *po* strength-based, *yun pong* mas mag-focus dun sa pag-build (putting the focus more on building) on what the child can do, and building from that versus *po yung pupunan lang yung kulang* (filling skill gaps). *Kasi po kapag ganon ang focus po, i mean syempre po importante na alam natin yung needs ng students natin, pero po kasi kung focus lang ay dun sa need or yung kung ano ang wala, versus po yung kung ano ang kaya ng bata, then alam mo kung san ka puwede umentra or kung anong skill set ang puwedeng gamitin ng bata para lalo pa syang matuto* (Because when the focus is on, I mean it is of course still important that we know our students' needs, but if the focus is on the need or what is lacking, versus what the child can do, then we can know what to leverage on so the child can learn more) *Pero, parang may sinabi*

din po ako na parang small group instruction (But, I think I also said something about small group instruction)?

IN: Yeah, you said you also want to share what you learned about setting learning goals, classroom accommodations, progress monitoring, and IEP documentation. You also want to share about collaboration, coordination of services between providers. And then, in terms of practices that you want to continue, you said facilitating, managing, and implementing classroom management systems, implementing focused teaching and small group instruction, not just in sped but also in the gen ed classrooms. So, that's something that you would like to continue.

FSEET: Yes.

IN: And then my central research, or overarching question that I wish to uncover in carrying out this study is, "What do the Filipino special education teachers gain as a result of their experience as an exchange program teacher?" So one of the questions I asked that is related to that is when I asked you about what made you decide to teach in the U.S, you said that it was initiated by your spouse because it was an opportunity for your family

FSEET: Yes *po*, for family.

IN: And then I asked you about your initial thoughts about teaching in the U.S. and you said that you were excited and anxious, that it was a mix of emotions. That you were excited about it being a new experience, but then you were also missing your family. You also said that you felt that you were pushed out of your comfort zone.

FSEET: [Nods]

IN: You also said that you found the first weeks very challenging. You wanted to do well, but you were unsure about the expectations. And then, at the beginning, because of your private school training, you started the day with a prayer. And then they had to tell you, that "We don't do that here." [Laugh]

FSEET: [Laughs] *Meron pa ngang isa na* (There was even another time that), I started a song during circle time, "God made me" [Sings], and they had to shush me again. [Laughs]

IN: [Laughs]

FSEET: [Laughing] *Biglang may* (All of a sudden there was) [singing, laughing] God made me. My God made me. [Laughs] *Nakakahiya po yun* (That was embarrassing).

IN: [Chuckling] So other than that piece as an adjustment to your teaching style,

FSEET: [Laughs]

IN: [Chuckling] when I asked you about adjustments you need to make in your teaching style? You said you made a lot of adjustments. You said, because of the cultural differences and how

the students are, you had to adjust how you present yourself to your students, you have to really begin with establishing or building relationships to get students to bring in more effort or get them motivated, and you also needed more processing time when you present a lesson because you had to take time to talk and explain the topic. I mean, you said that, you know, you can speak English because you taught in English when you were in the Philippines, but you were, I guess, somehow intimidated about being in the presence of native English speakers.

FSEET: *Yes po.*

IN: You also said that you needed to adjust on working with other adults in the classrooms because you weren't used to that. So you had to learn how to work with them and use them to assist you with facilitating classroom activities.

FSEET: Yes, utilize them better.

IN: that you were not used to that because there's no para's in your classroom in the Philippines.

FSEET: No, I don't have any paras in the classroom that would, like, to assist with instruction. Cause the only time, I mean not like an aide, more like a helper, like, *meron po yung tatawagin mo* (there's people that you can call) to help clean the classroom, but no paras for instructional support.

IN: When I asked you, how would you describe your first year overall? You said that it was challenging, but you learned a lot.

FSEET: [Nods]

IN: And then I asked you, like, what did you learn? You said you learned about sped, about what a real IEP is, and how to progress monitor and document student progress.

FSEET: SPED and IEPs yes. [Nods]

IN: I also asked you, what do you think you will leave behind? What will your students remember most about your teaching, or what practice or approaches do you think you'll be leaving behind?" You mentioned specific things such as using graphic organizers, using games in math, and incorporating music when you teach ELA. And then, you elaborated by saying that when you're singing, you're teaching reading while singing, and then, when you're doing percussion, it's a time wherein you can incorporate teaching students about syllables.

FSEET: *Yes po.*

IN: Then, when I asked you how have you enriched your school community?

FSEET: [Smiles] Yes, the Ms. Universe question, I believe... [chuckles]

IN: [Chuckles] I asked what would you say your impact is? You said you've enriched the school because of the relationships that you have established with your colleagues, with the parents and with the kids. You also said that at the school, you don't feel different. You don't feel like you're an outsider. You felt that you were really accepted. You felt that the parents trusted you with their kids. They appreciated you. And then when the students come to your room, they feel your love for them, and you also feel that they love you back.

FSEET: *Opo* (Yes)

IN: And then you even said, and this is me translating it in English, so you let me know if it is accurate, "When I go to school every day, I don't just come to teach. I go because I really enjoy being there." And then, "I want to be remembered as the teacher that really taught the kids, and I think my impact is that feeling that I leave with them whenever they come to my classroom."

FSEET: Yes.

IN: I find that very touching. Like, your classroom is a very safe space for your students, like a psychologically safe space.

FSEET: Thank you *po*.

IN: And then I asked you, what are your key learnings from the experience? You said, personally, you were the type of person who likes to stay in their comfort zone and just be a follower. You said that you used to frequently feel unsure about whether you're doing the right thing because you tend to rely on someone telling you what to do. But because of this experience, and you even added that this is true in all aspects of your life, is that you were able to push yourself. You learned to trust yourself and eventually surprised yourself that you were able to make your own decisions and that you are capable of doing great things.

FSEET: [smiling] Aww.

IN: Did I capture that correctly?

FSEET: [Nods] Yes, *tama po, sakto po* (that's right, its exact).

IN: So I also asked you about advice you would give to other Filipino special education teachers who are aspiring to one day come to the U.S. as exchange teachers, and you said, that they be open minded, and then you said, "*wag masyadong magexpect*", so the advice is for them to temper their expectations, and take everything as a learning opportunity. Is there anything else?

FSEET: *Parang yun lang po yung naiisip ko* (That's all I can think of).

IN: So...

FSEET: Ay wait po, naalala ko na po yung (Oh wait, I just remembered the name of the) Reading curriculum, Benchmark Advance.

IN: Ok, I will make a note of that. Okay, so how was this recap. Did all that was reviewed consistent with what you shared?

FSEET: Perfectly said *po*.

IN: So for your final question, how would you sum up this entire experience? And your sentence frame is, "This experience has ____."

FSEET: mold me into ah.... almost, into an almost perfect teacher. [laughs] sorry *po... pang Ms. Universe na naman kasi yung tanong* (you're asking me Ms. Universe type questions again) [laughs].

IN: [Chuckles] Ok let's pause for a bit... so you have some processing time.

FSEET: Mold me into a teacher, a better special education teacher, than when I started.

IN: Awww. So proud of you!

FSEET: Thank you *po*. No, actually, thank you *po* for doing this study and including me.

IN: No, thank you. Thank you giving me a chance to tell your story. So, this concludes our time together. I think I have everything that I need, but there's a chance that I might reach out when I'm writing the last chapters, in case I have some clarifying questions. I hope that's ok.

FSEET: *Okay lang po* (That's ok).

IN: Ok, good night [waves].

FSEET: Good night *din po* [waves].

[End Transcript: 00:39:39]

APPENDIX N: SAMPLE LETTER WRITING: MUTYA**Letter Writing: Mutya**

Dear Self,

I hope this email finds you well. Five years ago, you were going through a challenging time, feeling lonely and depressed without your family here in the US. I want you to know how incredibly proud I am of the progress you've made since then. You made a conscious decision to cultivate strength, not only for yourself but also as a teacher. Despite the challenges, you embraced US culture and dedicated yourself to learning new skills, such as effective communication with administrators, colleagues, and parents, as well as developing and implementing IEPs for your students.

As an exchange teacher, you excelled in sharing your own culture with your colleagues and the community, bridging gaps and fostering understanding among peers. Today, I am thrilled to share that you've grown into a stronger person and a compassionate special education teacher. Your dedication and hard work have been recognized, leading to your appointment as head of the department—a testament to your expertise and leadership.

Your perseverance has brought your family to the US after two long years, bringing immeasurable happiness into your life. Your journey has inspired and touched the lives of not only your students but also your colleagues, and you've become a source of support and guidance, helping others navigate the challenges of teaching and providing valuable insights.

Embrace new opportunities for growth, both personally and professionally. Take care of yourself and maintain a healthy lifestyle. You are an inspiration to those around you, and your journey is far from over. Your strength and resilience are remarkable. Keep pushing forward, never losing sight of your passion for teaching and making a positive impact on your students' lives. I am incredibly proud of the person you've become and cannot wait to see what the future holds for you. Keep moving forward, spreading compassion, and making a difference in the lives of those you touch.

With love,



APPENDIX O: SAMPLE LETTER WRITING: DIWATA**Letter Writing: Diwata**

Dear [REDACTED],

As I sit down to write this letter, I am filled with a profound sense of reflection and gratitude for the incredible journey that has unfolded since the day you set foot in the United States. It seems like a lifetime ago when you embarked on this adventure as a special education teacher, unsure of what lay ahead. Little did you know the transformative impact that the teacher exchange program would have on your personal and professional growth.

Firstly, let me assure you that the challenges and uncertainties you faced during those initial days were not unsuccessful. The cultural exchange and the exposure to diverse educational practices have shaped you into a more resilient, adaptable, and empathetic special education teacher you are today. Your ability to navigate unfamiliar terrains, both in the classroom and in your daily life, is nothing short of commendable.

The exchange program has been a catalyst for your professional development. The collaboration with fellow educators from different backgrounds has broadened your perspective on special education. The exchange of ideas, teaching methods, and strategies has enriched your toolbox as a teacher. The diverse range of students you've worked with during this program has taught you the value of individualized approaches and the importance of fostering an inclusive learning environment.

Beyond the classroom, the exposure to a new culture has influenced your teaching style positively. The insights gained from observing and learning from your American counterparts have allowed you to implement innovative and effective techniques in your own practice. The cultural exchange has not only enhanced your pedagogical skills but also enriched your ability to connect with students on a deeper, more personal level.

In terms of personal growth, this journey has been transformative. Living in a new country has not only expanded your cultural horizons but has also instilled a sense of resilience and adaptability that will serve you well in the years to come. The friendships forged with colleagues and students have added layers of richness to your life, creating a network of support that transcends borders.

As you read this letter, please know that you have not only survived the challenges but have thrived to face them. The lessons learned, both inside and outside the classroom, will continue to shape your identity as a special education teacher and as an individual. Embrace the growth, celebrate victories, and continue to approach each day with the same enthusiasm and passion that brought you here in the first place.

Looking ahead, remember that the journey is ongoing, and there is always more to learn, discover and share. Cherish the memories, learn from the experiences, and keep nurturing the flame of curiosity that led you to this incredible adventure.

With heartfelt pride and encouragement,



APPENDIX P: SAMPLE LETTER WRITING: DATU**Letter Writing: Datu**

Dear [REDACTED],

Three years ago, you were scared of moving to this country—a country you only see in movies. Having zero teaching experience in a special education class makes this move more nerve-racking and frightening. You were scared but excited at the same time. Being adventurous as you are, you took this challenge with positivity and curiosity.

Back then, you were scared of a lot of things—being discriminated, not measuring up to the US standards, being disrespected by students, being sued because you were told that families and parents in the US are extra demanding, being away from home and have no one to rely on in times of troubles...and the list goes on. However, three years later, you are still standing and proudly have overcome a lot of challenges. You expanded your knowledge in the field of Special Education. IDEA made a lot more sense now to you! The law that you were scared of before is now your guiding light in making sure that you provide the most appropriate and relevant education to your students. IDEA is your friend, not your enemy!

Writing IEPs is now a piece of cake for you. Learning the different IEP systems may have been a challenge in the beginning but it made you more efficient and effective in writing IEPs. Now you are jealous of it and hoping that the Philippines has its own IEP management to standardize its format and contents. You saw how legislative efforts make IEPs more comprehensive and inclusive. I hope the Philippines keep up on this and really enforce the law to protect the rights of learners with Special Needs.

Behavior management was one of your biggest concerns. While you had training in this area in the Philippines, you were still concerned due to the fact that cultural factors influence the behaviors of students; hence, a whole lot of modifications needed to be done. That fear turned into courage. Now you try to deliberately trigger students to provide them a safe space to practice their coping skills—preparing your students for the real world, a world that is not trigger-free.

I am also proud of how you build a community in your current worksite. Despite all your cultural differences, you were able to unite your team and really establish a good relationship among each other. I am proud of how you bring the Filipino culture on the table—a table where racism is greatly engrained. Your “Filipino-ness” is shining so brightly. As you always say, “Philippines, represent!” 😊

A lot of things are still coming your way—good and bad. But I am sure that with your resilience, curiosity, and positivity, you will overcome everything life throws at you! Keep going, [REDACTED]! Always aim to be a better version of yourself. :)

Love,

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX Q: SAMPLE LETTER WRITING: TALA**Letter Writing: Tala**

Dearest [REDACTED],

First of all I would like to congratulate you for getting this far from processing your papers in the Philippines and having been confirmed as a teacher exchange participant in the United States. Expect that the transition won't be easy and you might experience a culture shock in the workplace, workload, and even in your residential community. But please know that you can find a support system among other J1 teachers and seasoned teachers in your school or county. Approach them with respect and kindness so that they will mentor you to be better in this teaching field.

In your school, you will have a community wherein you have to collaborate with different professionals and other non-teaching staff. Address them politely and try not to involve yourself in other people's business that doesn't concern you and your students. Before you start working, the Admin will discuss your roles and responsibilities in school. Make sure that you fully understand them and follow them. If you have any questions or concerns pertaining to your work or unresolved issues with other school stakeholders, exercise your rights in the workplace and deal with it in a professional way to avoid grudges and burn out.

As you know, Filipinos are global people and for sure you will find one in your workplace and in your neighborhood too. Build good relationships with them and help them in any way you can so that when time comes that you can also count on them. Just a reminder to also be cautious in giving your trust, practice respecting boundaries and always keep a humble attitude.

Most importantly, keep in mind that you have a commitment to your Visa Sponsor and see to it that you do your annual cross-cultural report as your obligation to the United States and your home country, the Philippines. Even though you are a J1 teacher, you still need to complete all the State teacher credentialing requirements to upgrade your teaching status. Once you become a credentialed teacher, you have a greater edge when you wish to come back to teaching in the States after your two-year residency requirement in the Philippines. Plan and balance your time wisely for your family, friends, work, and credentialing. Don't forget to unwind and enjoy the American cultural experience so you have something to treasure and share with others.

Being a J1 teacher also has perks such as receiving the same rights and salary of a US teacher. You have the right to be given a chance to participate in school and out of school teacher training. So take that opportunity to broaden your horizon as an educator. You also have the right to be represented through school unions. Engage in Union activities so that you are aware of any change in policies and you can count on them to represent you if you need their help in the future. You also have the right to bring your dependent/s on your second year on a J2 visa and your spouse can

also apply for work. You and your J2 can also have a full tax refund for three years and partial refund on your extension. Spend your money meaningfully and as much as possible pay all your debts and it is paramount that you save for the future.

All the things that I mentioned above became part of my experience as a J1 teacher. There's a famous saying from a "Spiderman Movie" which is "Greater power comes with greater responsibility." I always keep this in my mind as I grow from this journey. Now that you are an international teacher, you have a greater power to utilize all the experiences and learnings that you have. You also have a greater responsibility to share them with others and ensure that you deliver a quality teaching and create a good impact that can positively influence your American and Filipino students and all the people around you. Showcasing Filipino culture as a teacher must bring pride to you and to all the people that you inspire.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter and I hope this helps you a lot as you navigate in this whole new world.

All the best,



APPENDIX R: LIST OF ORGANIZATIONAL DOCUMENTS COLLECTED

Documentation Provided by Participants

Participant	Document
Amihan	<p>Program Sponsor Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants Terms & Conditions <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Virtual Student Interaction ● Topic: Philippine Facts <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Virtual Student Interaction ● Topic: Fun Facts about the Philippines <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Community Event, School ● Topic: Folk Dance, Raragsakan Dance
Datu	<p>Program Sponsor Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants Terms & Conditions <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class, Following Directions, Vocational ● Topic: Food, Filipino Cuisine, Pancit Making <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Letter Exchange ● Topic: Holiday, Easter <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Letter Exchange ● Topic: Christmas <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class, Following Directions, Vocational ● Topic: Food, Filipino Cuisine, Mango Graham Cake <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class, Discussion ● Topic: Christmas Traditions <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class, Discussion

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Topic: Philippine Customs <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: US Classroom and Virtual Student from Philippines ● Topic: Meet and Greet, Interview, Dialogue, Lifestyle <p>Artifact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Photo: Slide Shared with School District Staff, What does it mean to be Filipino ● Photo: Cards from Administrators
Diwata	<p>Program Sponsor Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants Terms & Conditions <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Letter Exchange ● Topic: National Symbols, Philippines and US
Hiyas	<p>Program Sponsor Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants Terms & Conditions <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Community Event, Social ● Topic: Food, Filipino Cuisine <p>Other Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resume with List of Trainings she attended
Ina	<p>Program Sponsor Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants Terms & Conditions <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class, Virtual ● Topic: Philippine Facts, Video: It's More Fun in the Philippines <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Letter Exchange ● Topic: Friendly Letters <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class, Discussion ● Topic: Philippine and US Map and Flag <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class, Discussion

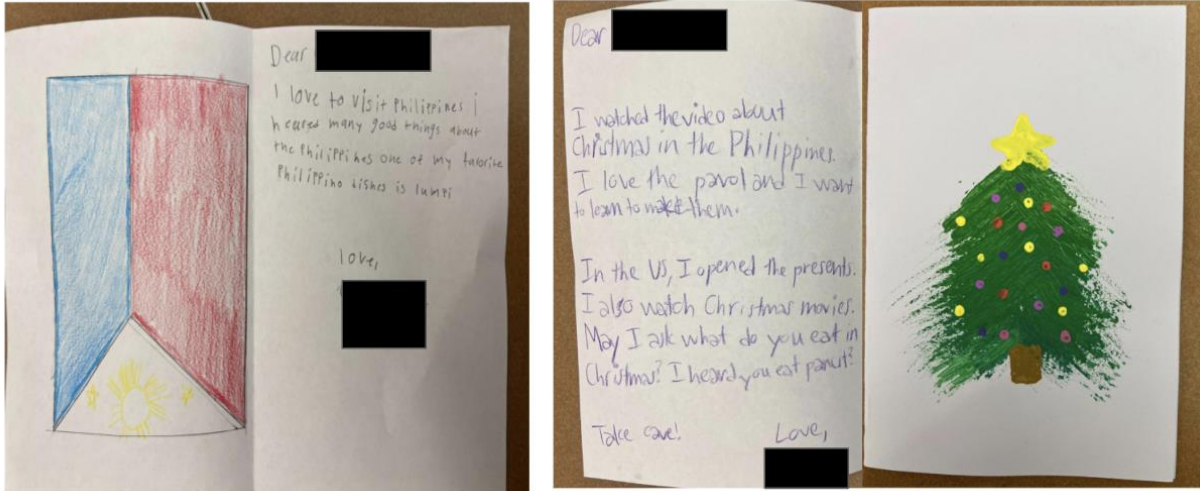
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Topic: New Year Traditions <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: School Community, Social ● Topic: Food, Filipino Cuisine
Kaya	<p>Program Sponsor Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants Terms & Conditions ● Fees <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Virtual Student Interaction ● Topic: Game, Sungka <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Letter Exchange ● Topic: Friendly Letter, Holiday Traditions <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Community Event, Church ● Topic: Folk Dance, Sinulog Dance
Malaya	<p>Program Sponsor Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants Terms & Conditions <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Virtual Student Interaction, Dialogue ● Topic: Philippine Facts, Lifestyle <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Travel, Individual ● Topic: Yosemite National Park <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: School Community, Social ● Topic: Food, Filipino Cuisine, Varied
Mutya	<p>Program Sponsor Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants Terms & Conditions <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class, Discussion ● Topic: Christmas Holiday Traditions <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class, Following Directions, Vocational

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Topic: Food, Filipino Cuisine, Lumpia Making <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class with Virtual Student, Dialogue ● Topic: Greetings, Lifestyle <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class, Following Directions, Art ● Topic: Parol <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: U.S. Classroom and Virtual Teacher from Philippines ● Topic: Christmas Song <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Community, Church, Social ● Topic: Traditional Clothing <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class and Virtual Student ● Topic: Game, Patintero <p>Artifact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Photo: Kudos
Tala	<p>Program Sponsor Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants Terms & Conditions ● Fees <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class, Vocational, Following Directions ● Topic: Food, Buko Salad <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class, PE ● Topic: Game, Sepak Takraw <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class, Discussion, Compare and Contrast ● Topic: Lifestyle, Breakfast <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activity: Whole Class, Lesson Exchanges with Philippine Teacher ● Topic: People, Compare and Contrast Jose Rizal and Martin Luther King

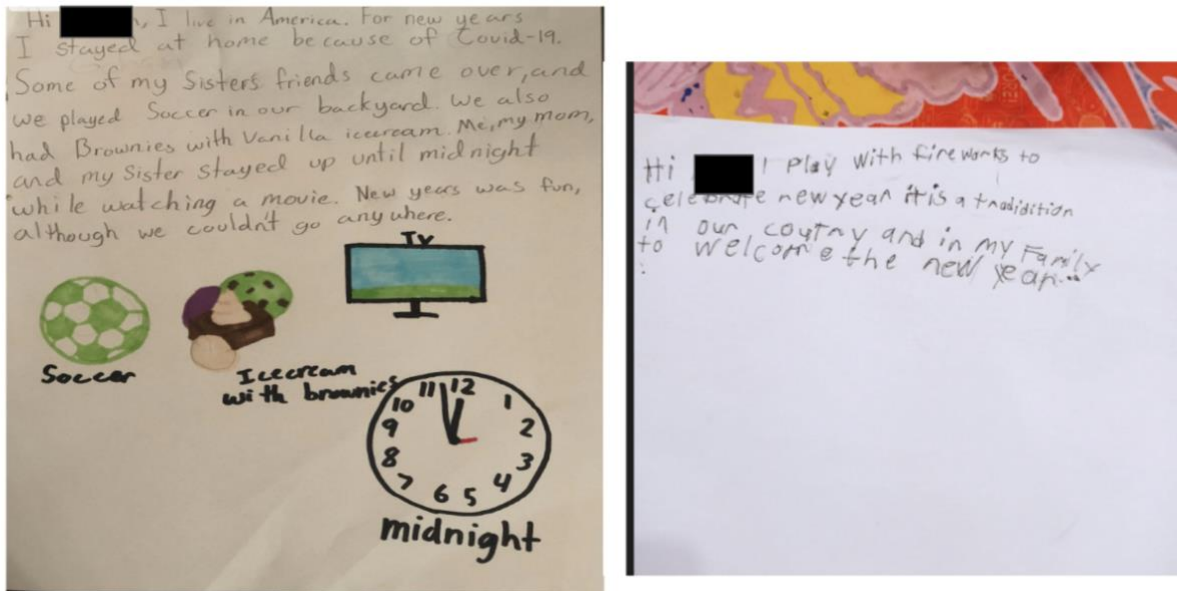
Yumi	<p>Program Sponsor Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Participants Terms & Conditions <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Activity: Whole Class, Circle Time● Topic: Christmas Songs Philippines <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Activity: Community, High School Students● Topic: Folk Dance, Tinikling <p>Cross Cultural Activity Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Activity: Whole Class, Discussion, Virtual Learning● Topic: Philippine Games
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APPENDIX S: SAMPLES OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE ACTIVITIES

Letter Exchanges: Datu



Letter Exchanges: Tala



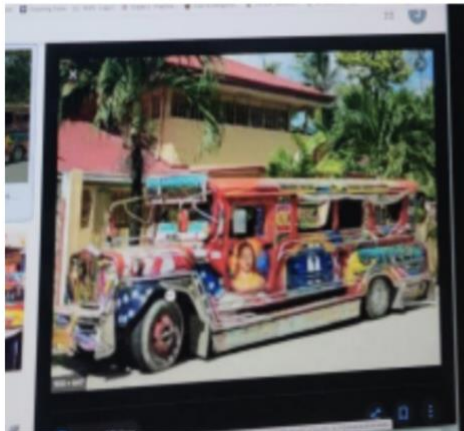
Student to Student Interaction: Amihan

What was the estimated impact of this cross-cultural activity?

In this activity, students and staff have grown more awareness about the Philippines such as basic facts like its origin. However, through this virtual exchange, my former student, Anne, did a little review about the Philippines and went on to discuss the more fun facts about it such as the Jeepney, being the main form of transportation of the Philippines, 180 languages used by the Filipinos but maintaining English and Filipino as the official Language, Christianity is its predominant Religion, its undying love for Basketball, Filipinos as one of the top texters and so much more

Any other thoughts, suggestions or feedback on cross-cultural activities?

The Virtual Exchange is a great way to give both students from here and in the Philippines a brief overview of each other's culture. It gives them an opportunity to know more what this world has to offer and to constantly raise awareness of cultural diversity and its importance.



Whole Class Activity: Mutya

General overview of each activity:

My pupils and colleagues learned how to sing and interpret the song "Kumukutikutitap" together with our students in the Philippines and interpret all the parts of the lyrics to let them understand the meaning. Christmas songs are really part of our tradition and usually every Christmas our students prepare a presentation which is usually a dance or a song.

Before learning the song the students from the Philippines introduced themselves one by one and also the students in the US.

Dialogue:

Filipino: Hello, Ako si.....

American: I would like to introduce myself using your language.

Filipino: Okay. Tuturuan kita (I will teach you)

American: Ako si.... (I am)

The students in the US tried to introduce themselves using the Filipino language.

Then one of my Filipino students in the Philippines read the lyrics of the song and I helped her translate it into English. Each part of the lyrics was learned by both students in English and in Filipino.

Impact of the activity to J1 participants and to the students: My students and colleagues enjoyed and learned the lyrics of Kumukutitap. I was so happy to see my students in the Philippines too as they sang the song and I was so proud of all my American and Filipino students as they sang together. My Filipino friend who is a Music Teacher in the Philippines was so happy to share the meanings of each part of the song to my colleagues and to my students. The following copy of the song was in our conversation and each part of the song was explained to the students. The Music Teacher taught the students and my colleagues the actions for each part of the song. In this activity there was a cultural exchange of language based on the interpretation of the song as well as the conversation of my students here and there in the Philippines as well as conversation with my colleagues here with the music teacher in the Philippines.

Filipino	English
Kumukuti-kutitap, bumubusi-busilak	Flickering, glistening
Ganyan ang indak ng mga bombilya	That's how the lights dance
Kikindat-kindat, kukurap-kurap	Wink, blink
Pinaglalaruan ang iyong mga mata	Playing with your eyes
Kumukuti-kutitap, bumubusi-busilak	Flickering, glistening
Ganyan ang kurap ng mga bituin	That's how the stars twinkle
Tumitibok-tibok, sumisinok-sinok	Heart beating, hiccups
Koronahan ng palarang bituin	Crown with shiny stars
Iba't ibang palamuti	Different decorations/ornaments
Ating isabit sa puno	Let us hang them in the tree
Buhusan ng mga kulay	Pour with colors
Tambakan ng mga regalo	Put many gifts
Tumitibok-tibok, sumisinok-sinok	Heart beating, hiccups
Wag lang malunod, sa sasabihin	Just don't drown, just words
Pupulu-pulupot, Paikot ng paikot	Wrap around, turn around
Koronahan ng palarang bituin	Crown with shiny stars
Dagdagan mo pa ng kendi	Add more candies
Ribon, eskoses at bonita	Ribbons, scots and ornaments
Habang lalong dumadami	As it increases in number
Regalo mo'y dagdagan	Add more gifts

Whole Class Activity: Ina

General overview of the activity

Discussion is about celebrating the New Year around the world. In this activity videos of how other countries celebrate New Year were shown to students and explained. As we learn how other countries' beliefs and traditions before and after New Year we were able to compare and contrast ours as well. In South Africa, it was a custom to throw old furniture out of the window to mark the beginning of the new year. In Italy, furniture and other items were thrown outside as well that symbolizes letting go of the past. In Ecuador, they burn Ano Viejo, a masked scarecrow dressed in old clothes and stuffed with papers. In the Philippines, people create noises the louder the better. Firecrackers, fireworks and trumpets were used to make noises. It is believed to remove all the bad luck for the coming year.

The estimated impact that the activity had on the audience and you as a J1 teacher

Students were engaged with this video and have made comments and comparisons of their own traditions and beliefs in celebration of the new year. In addition to new year celebrations, Christmas was also mentioned by other students. That's why we also discussed it. I mentioned that our country celebrates Christmas the longest. September hits and malls and other establishments started decorating Christmas ornaments. One example of this is "parol". Filipino light lantern that is usually in the shape of a star. Students were asked to color and cut their own "parol".



Whole Class Activity: Datu

Lesson Focus/Goals:

Students will dive deeper into Philippine culture to find more about its traditions, national symbols, values, and highlights through an interactive trivia game.

Materials Needed:

Kahoot, Chromebooks

Learning Objectives:

Find a deeper appreciation and knowledge of another culture.



Structure/Activities:

Preparation: Students will write down their questions about the Philippines. The teacher will collate the questions and make a trivia game on Kahoot based on the students' responses.

Action: Students will play the Kahoot game. At the end of each question, the teacher will explain why that is the correct answer.

Reflection: The students were able to identify different cultural practices. One thing that struck them the most was the act of "mano po" to show respect to the elderly. My students also expressed that they want to try Filipino food, especially Sinigang and Adobo. They suggested that we cook these dishes for our cooking classes.

This cultural activity was helpful in building knowledge among students. Since there was a discussion before the game, the students' listening comprehension was enhanced and practiced. Moreover, the students showed appreciation for Philippine values, traditions, and culture by trying to compare American and Philippine ways of living. Since this was in the form of a game, the students were so excited and engaged during the presentation. This was a good way to introduce the Philippines to my students who have special needs. Lastly, the students had to choose their nicknames from a pool of Filipino terms and names. Each name was explained to them, including their definitions and English translations.

APPENDIX T: SAMPLE TEXTURAL AND STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTIONS: AMIHAN

Sample Textural and Structural Descriptions: Amihan

Major Theme	Textural Descriptions	Structural Descriptions
Transposition	<p><u>From the Interviews</u> “I heard about the J1 program through word of mouth. An old classmate who is also in the program and teaching in Vegas told me about it.”</p>	Pre Departure
	<p>“I connected with [REDACTED] from the [REDACTED] agency and she connected me to get interviewed by school districts. Then when [REDACTED] hired me, they made us choose our sponsor, by drawing lots, like a raffle. I guess they were thinking that through random picking we won't get to complain about which program sponsors we would be assigned to. Lucky me, I got [REDACTED] which is the most expensive one.”</p>	Pre Departure
	<p>“I paid initially around \$12,000. I don't have that kind of money, because otherwise why would I need to go look for work abroad? So, I took a loan offered by the agency. They were charging me \$13,000 if I opted to include their offer to help me find housing, but I chose not to and went to look for people who knew people so I can save... All in all with interest, it went up to about 1.2 million pesos or roughly \$24,000, which you have to pay off in a year.”</p>	Pre Departure
	<p>“Why did I choose to work abroad? Like many Filipinos it's because of financial reasons. Also, I want to be independent and this opportunity would give me that opportunity.”</p>	Motivation
	<p>“Right before I left, if I remember correctly, there were several orientation meetings with the recruitment agency. They talked about requirements and processing so not so much about getting ready to live here. So no support or preparations really about moving here.”</p>	Preparations
<p>“When I applied it was during the pandemic year so everything was moving slow. So, it took me</p>	PreDeparture	

	<p>year from the time I was interviewed and hired to get into the U.S... I arrived in December and was not able to start right away because I need to get my social security number, and my fingerprints. But again it was a pandemic year so things were taking longer than usual. To make matters worse my visa sponsor gave me till March to get all that settled or they will terminate my visa. I was panicking because I can't have them terminate my visa! I just got here and I have a big debt I had to pay. Fortunately, in February, I got all that settled and was able to begin working beginning of March.”</p> <p>“My first year was hellish! It was so hard because you have to adjust to everything! When I got here I was so happy. We landed in San Francisco and I remember feeling so amazed. As we drove, going out of San Francisco, the scenery at the beginning was beautiful, and you can't keep your eyes off the window. But then as we kept on driving to get to [REDACTED] city, the area started becoming more grass and less neighborhood. I was unaware that I was going to be living in a very rural area where there was no public transportation! That was really disappointing for me! To add to that, the class I was assigned to was nowhere near my experience. I have a class of students who are medically fragile and my experience was teaching elementary students with autism. My experience and assignment was a definite mismatch so, that was a big adjustment for me.”</p> <p>“Looking back, I wish I asked the district questions. So, if I was going to give a new exchange teacher any advice, it would be for them to make sure that they know the assignment they will be going into. I mean, we hope districts match our experience but I don't think we can rely on that. They come and hire teachers from the Philippines because they need teachers and so if you think about it we have an option to also be selective. I wish I was able to do that so at least I would be prepared for what I was going into. I ask my sponsor every year to be transferred but they keep denying my request, so I know that this is</p>	<p>Arrival</p> <p>First year Feelings</p> <p>First year feelings Excited Anticlimactic</p> <p>Adjustment: Rural area No transportation</p> <p>First year feeling: Disappointment</p> <p>Adjustment: Experience mismatch</p> <p>Adjustment Experience mismatch</p> <p>First Year Feeling: Unhappy Regret</p> <p>No support from sponsor</p>
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	<p>where I would be stuck in until I have maxed out my visa. Don't get me wrong, I like where I am now, but it was not easy to get to this point because I was a mismatch. I think as a J1, the teaching environment and program you will go into plays a part in your transition to the U.S. and feeling like you got the most of this experience. Most of the time we don't really think much about where we will be placed, because the goal is to have that opportunity to work in the U.S. so anywhere was fine, but I hope I asked questions and gotten to know the district and program I will be going into, because to grow and really maximize the exchange program experience, you need to be placed in a program that is a good match. I think teachers will be more successful if they were informed or if their assignment is matched to their experience.”</p> <p>“Not only that, I also have to deal with the adult drama in the classroom. Like, I am glad to have paraprofessionals, but I have to manage the drama between the adults. Like, I am the teacher, but they are resistant to being asked and being told, like I have to find a way to make them do work. So, there's the kids with medical needs that at the beginning I was very intimidated and scared to deal with because think of the liability to that when you make a mistake? Especially since we did not even have a nurse so no one trained me when I got here, and I had to learn on my own, add to that the behavior challenges my students have, like I have to get used to getting hurt that I go home and find random bruises on me. Then, there's the parents who are litigious and angry, and then the adults that are supposed to be helping are also a challenge. It was just too much!”</p> <p>“The staff are hard and the students are hard so it made me wonder if this is something that just happens to a Filipino teacher, but I made it through because I have no choice but to keep on going. I am a problem solver by nature so I persisted.”</p>	<p>Adjustment: Managing paras Meeting student needs Parents Student behaviors</p> <p>First year feeling: Intimidated No Support On my own Challenging Overwhelmed</p> <p>First Year Feeling: Hard</p> <p>Coping: Self-reliance Problem solve Persistence</p> <p>First year feeling: Excited Victorious</p>
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	<p><u>From the Letter</u> “When I first entered the United States of America, I was excited. I felt victorious.”</p> <p>“I knew what I signed up for- It meant missing my family, missing milestones of my daughter, getting broke. I was anxious for the most part of it. Teaching here at that time was too undetermined. I often had to figure things out by myself. Remember the time when I had to walk 15 minutes back and forth, almost every day from home to my workplace in the cold weather or the hot summer. I came here carless, but never complained. I could never complain. I wanted this. I only used to dream of America. I can never complain about the privilege given to me, knowing I only applied once and immediately got a job offer.”</p> <p>“... I dreaded [REDACTED] at first. It wasn't the place I imagined America would be.”</p> <p>“The fact that I did not have a car and transportation was too hard to be in a small town, it was hard to access transportation to get to the fun places.”</p> <p>“They were just too much. It was too difficult having all in one together. Arguing staffs, uptight administration, paying loans, walking home tired, induction courses, CLAD courses, CBEST, daylight saving time, cold weather, fighting roommates, being alone and work politics.”</p> <p>“I only secretly used to cry at a baseball park alone, pouring out my emotions, wiped my tears, went back home, and moved on. It's all I could do-to move on. I had to! I had a huge chunk of loans to pay. I can't fail, there's no back up plan, I was the backup plan.”</p>	<p>Made a sacrifice Undetermined Anxious Self-reliance</p> <p>Adjustment Transportation Weather</p> <p>Coping: Staying grateful</p> <p>First year feeling: Dread Anticlimactic</p> <p>Adjustment Rural Transportation</p> <p>First year Feeling: Overwhelmed</p> <p>Adjustment: Managing staff Administrators Transportation Debt management Credentialing Weather Alone People</p> <p>First Year feeling: Sadness</p> <p>Coping: Moving on Staying grateful Self-reliance</p>
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	<p>“I was too grateful and could not waste what was in front of me.”</p> <p>“Leave something for yourself, learn to take things one step at a time but Keep moving, keep going”</p>	<p>Taking care of the self Forward thinking One step at a time</p>
Transition	<p><u>From the Interviews</u></p> <p>“The idea, and reality did not match. I was not informed that the students I will be serving are students who are medically fragile, have extreme behaviors, and seizures. So I was really surprised with my caseload. It was far from what I had expected, I was not prepared that my students would be needing a lot of support. I had to adjust to everything because I was a mismatch. I felt intimidated at the school because of the students that were assigned to me. I can’t make a mistake because it can easily lead to something I can get sued for.... That first year was really tough. Like I had anxiety all the time.... Don’t get me wrong it still is tough, I just got used to it by now. Coming home with bruises I don’t even know I had or where it came from.”</p> <p>“I was thinking, I am the teacher so I need to be the one to make decisions. I am the teacher so staff would rely on me, but how could I do the work if I have no training? I didn’t know how to do G-Tube feedings? There was no nurse that would do training? I didn’t understand the seizure protocol. So, they just dumped me in the classroom with no support and expected me to know what to do.”</p> <p>“I didn't know what to do. I was figuring it out and I felt that I was losing my credibility to my staff. I can no longer wait for the district to provide me support. So, I watched, observed, and took it upon myself to learn on my own... So I started teaching in March, so from March to summer school I was just observing and learning, and it felt like I had a better handle on things by August.</p>	<p>First Year feeling: Anticlimax Intimidated anxious Tough</p> <p>Adjustment: Caseload Student behaviors</p> <p>Adjustment: Establishing self as the teacher Meeting student needs</p> <p>First year Feelings: No Support No guidance On my own</p> <p>Unsure</p> <p>First Steps: Taking Initiative Learn by observing</p>

	<p>“At the beginning, I relied on staff to show me how, then eventually I had a coach who helped show me how to run a class for students who are medically fragile, and later on, although it was already really late, like maybe April or May, I think, a contracted nurse did come to train me. I’m not sure if it’s because I started in March so no teacher training was given, but still right? How can they just plop me at the site and expect me to know what to do? Even an American teacher won’t know what to do, what more me?”</p> <p>“I heard there’s no teacher that really lasts in this program. Like they would have a sub or the teacher would quit mid-year. I can’t do that. I have loans to pay. So in asking me what first steps I took, all I was really able to offer my students was my presence. That the class has a teacher, and that they will be cared for when they are with me and they would be safe.”</p> <p>“In the Philippines, access to services come with a cost that the parents pay out of their own pocket. So, if you don’t have money, services like PT, OT, or speech are inaccessible. Here, whether you are rich or not you can access those services at school. Students here are really lucky because they have access to services, rich or not.”</p> <p>“I worked at a small center as a sped teacher and there’s a separate clinic where the speech, OT, PT work you, also in the same center, but I don’t really know what the other providers are doing. Unlike here where the approach is team-based, over there, there is a multidisciplinary team, but the services are not really connected.”</p> <p>In the Philippines I also noticed that parents work with you and they push their kids and have high expectations. Here they are just angry, they are angry at me for some reason, and they can be litigious, so I had to learn how to pacify parents.</p> <p>Everything was an adjustment. It was such a draining time. Like a new country and a new</p>	<p>Support: Solicit staff help Coach Training, but was late</p> <p>First Steps: Being present Take care of students Make sure they are safe</p> <p>Comparisons: Free Access vs paid access</p> <p>Comparisons: Siloed practices versus team collaboration</p> <p>Comparisons: Parent Support</p> <p>Adjustment: Pacifying parents</p> <p>Learning Curve: Everything Behavior management</p>
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	<p>everything! But okay, to be more specific, like I had to adjust of course to what I need to do as a teacher to meet my student's needs. Like I need to manage the behavior, I need to understand know how to implement seizure protocols, and do G Tube feeding. I need to learn how to engage students who use eye-gaze. I needed to find a way to get my staff to work with me. I need to collaborate with the multidisciplinary team. There was a lot. It was a lot since there's also the IEPs... Not sure if things would be different if my district or administrator had been more supportive though, unlike this which I had to learn things the hard way on my own."</p> <p><u>From the Letters</u> "I did not know what to do with the behaviors, with the class, the staff. All I knew is to establish a routine, make sure they are safe, were doing something and I complied with IEP meetings. Having to get beaten up by students almost every day, while pacifying angry parents."</p>	<p>Meeting student needs, e.g. G-Tube, seizure protocol, eye-gaze Collaboration IEP</p> <p>No Support from admin Self-reliance</p> <p>First year feelings: Unsure</p> <p>First Steps: Establish a routine Keep students safe Provide activities Complied with IEPs</p> <p>Adjustment: Student behaviors Pacifying parents.</p>
Transformation	<p><u>From the Interviews</u> "I am more confident in handling behaviors. Like if you give me any kid with a behavior, I can manage that. So, if I could take something back and train others, it would be about behavior management. I can talk about behavior triggers, function, and patterns. I can discuss the ABC's of behavior. Like I am confident in that. (antecedent-behavior-consequence). "</p> <p>"What is my impact as a J teacher? My students have severe extensive needs, so I think I learned more from the students than the students from me, but if there was something, I think I gave the program some stability since I have been the teacher here for three consecutive years. I also think I case managed and advocated for their needs, so their IEPs reflect the services and support they need so all that is ready to be implemented and followed through on by whoever the next teacher would be."</p>	<p>Skills: Behavior management</p> <p>Giving Back Behavior management</p> <p>Impact of the TEP: Personal growth</p> <p>Contributions to the School Community: Stability for school/program Advocating for student needs</p>

	<p>“In terms of benefit? A lot of it is on my own personal growth. Like I learned to case manage and modify behaviors, but I attribute that more to time on the job and learning on my own. I mean I did learn, but I think in terms of reciprocity, like me filling a position they need, I don’t think there’s much. I have professional growth because of the program, because of my time in the program, not because I was provided support or really received training.”</p> <p><u>From the Letter</u> “I am independent. I am paying my own bills, surviving this country.”</p> <p>“I have been a better Special Education Teacher, I have learned to de-escalate behavioral concerns, run IEPs, learn from this culture I’m in, manage my classroom in the “American way” and build relationships and trust from parents. God had to season me, must have put me in here for a reason.”</p> <p>“While it brings pride and joy that I am teaching here with a few number of staffs, get paid decently to pay bills and provide the life I wanted for myself and family, it is also a humbling experience. I have set aside my anger issues and temper. I have learned to be calm, composed, collected and be patient.”</p> <p><u>From the Cultural Exchange Report Documents</u> “I organized a virtual exchange activity between my students and ██████, a former student of mine who is in the Philippines. He briefly discussed some facts about the Philippines, like the three main islands, the characteristics of the Filipino people, the national symbols, animals, and more.”</p> <p>“Through this activity, my students, and even the classroom staff, are more aware of the Philippines, its geographical location, people, national symbols, and brief background of its</p>	<p>Benefit: Personal growth</p> <p>Benefit: Professional benefits</p> <p>Personal Benefits: Financial Independence</p> <p>Professional Benefit: Deescalation Classroom management.</p> <p>Personal benefit: Humbled Personal growth</p> <p>Cultural Exchange Activity Virtual exchange with a student, Philippine Facts</p> <p>Cultural Impact: Forge Friendships Awareness</p>
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	<p>history. Arranging for my students to interact with another student virtually is a great way for them to know each other. Through this activity, I believe I have raised awareness of the culture of my country, its history, and people.”</p> <p>“I organized a virtual exchange activity between my students and [REDACTED], a former student of mine who is in the Philippines. She briefly discussed some fun facts about the Philippines like the Jeepney, being the main form of transportation of the Philippines, the 180 languages used by the Filipinos but maintaining English and Filipino as the official Language, Christianity is its predominant Religion, its undying love for Basketball, how the largest mall in Asia can be found in the Philippines, and how Filipinos are one of the world’s top texters.</p> <p>“The Virtual Exchange is a great way to give both students from here and in the Philippines a brief overview of each other’s culture. It gives them an opportunity to know more what this world has to offer and to constantly raise awareness of cultural diversity and its importance. Both my students and staff enjoyed this virtual exchange as they had a glimpse of what the Philippines is like both physically and socially. ”</p> <p>“The Raragsakan was presented to our school community by a group of Filipino teachers, myself included. The Raragsakan is a dance to express merriment where the circular movements of the dance symbolize how the Kalinga women gather and prepare for a celebration of unity and harmony after a war or hunting success, as well as peace pacts between tribes.”</p> <p>“Dancing with music is a way to express one’s culture in the form of art. It can build identity and distinction from other cultures and sharing this dance gives others an awareness of the rich culture of the Filipinos. The specific cultural message we are sending to others through this dance is how we as a people always manage to stand up and wipe off the dust from our</p>	<p>Cultural Exchange Activity Virtual exchange with a student, Philippine Fun Facts</p> <p>Cultural Impact: Awareness</p> <p>Cultural Exchange Activity Dance, Raragsakan</p> <p>Cultural Impact: Awareness Appreciation</p>
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	<p>shoulders, that we are capable of staying composed despite struggles, and we always strive to maintain a positive outlook in life.”</p>	
<p>Outlier Finding Dynamics of the Exchange Teacher Program</p>	<p><u>From the Interviews</u></p> <p>“The sponsor’s main role is to help me maintain the legality of my status and stay because they are my sponsor. Without them, I won’t have a J visa. So their responsibility is to collect fees from me, and when, I as a foreigner experience hostility, racism, or are unsafe, they need to intervene.”</p> <p>“What I hope though is that they take my feedback when I was trying to move to a different school district, It’s like I was not given that option or choice. It didn’t matter that I was unhappy, have unmet expectations, had no support, and close to burning out. I wish they would take on a more active role.”</p> <p>As for the school, their role is to provide me a fair, hostile free, discrimination free, and safe working environment and to support me as a teacher so I can be better at my job in teaching the students. They are also the recipient of the cultural exchange, so they also need to support me to implement cultural exchanges.</p> <p>“My role as an exchange teacher is to teach while also getting paid the same. And because my visa is a cultural exchange visa, I also need to implement cultural activities at school and in the community and report that back to my sponsor. I wish our HR let the admins know though because I got scolded for implementing a cultural activity. Imagine that! I get no support and I get scolded? So, I explained to them that I am a J1 teacher and I need to do this, if she has a problem with it, then she can find another teacher next year. Our district HR should really let our admins know that we are J1 teachers and the purpose of the J1. Like, do I have to do everything? Explain my program even? So, like, I’ve been saying, there is no reciprocity in this district and sadly I will be stuck here until my time is up. I hope when they find another teacher for this position, I hope that person</p>	<p>Sponsor Role: Visa Sponsorship Information</p> <p>Ensure safety of participants Insurance</p> <p>Support Dependents visa</p> <p>Host School Role: Allow teacher to gain experience Support the teacher in implementing cultural exchange activities</p> <p>Teacher’s Role: To teach Implement cultural exchange activities</p>

	outlasts me.”	
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APPENDIX U: SAMPLE TEXTURAL AND STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTIONS: INA

Sample Textural and Structural Descriptions: Ina

Major Theme	Textural Description	Structural Description
Transposition	<p><u>From the Interviews</u> “A friend, who is also a J1 SPED teacher from NV told me about the exchange program”</p>	Pre Departure
	<p>“I emailed the agency, who then scheduled me to get interviewed by a school district. Actually, I was supposed to go to Texas in 2018, but because of personal reasons I decided to delay it. Until I emailed the agency again in 2019 and then got interviewed and hired by the [REDACTED] district in California. Then, when I got an offer of employment, the recruiter was the one that assigned the sponsor.”</p>	Pre Departure
	<p>“I paid \$13,000... That includes the amount to cover the one-way plane ticket and \$2000 as my pocket money. I did not finance with the agency, even if they offered because their interest rates are higher. I looked for another loan and with interest I paid \$18,000, which I need to pay off in a year.”</p>	Pre Departure
	<p>“I decided to participate because I want to be independent, gain experience, and grow as a teacher, but also reap the financial benefits”</p>	Motivation
	<p>“To prepare myself, I watched videos. I went on YouTube and searched videos about classrooms in the US or teaching in US to be able to picture it”</p>	Preparation
	<p>“The first year was very challenging...I felt like I was just zoned out, or spaced out, lost, something like that... I wish the sponsor gave me a list of things I need to do when I first got here.”</p>	First Year Feeling: Challenging Lost
	<p>“It was not easy to be far away from friends and family.”</p>	Homesick
	<p>“It was hard but I did it.” “The agency connected me to a host family... it</p>	Hard

	<p>was the host family that provided me support.”</p> <p>“The host family was the one that supported me... they helped me get the things I need to do so I can start working. They drove me so I can apply for my social security number and open a bank account.”</p> <p>“I coped by being open to just everything and doing a lot of trial and error, like if the first way is not successful, I just find another way.”</p> <p><u>From the Letter</u> “Years ago, you took a leap of faith and dove into the unknown... you were always unsure of yourself and your capabilities.”</p> <p>“Being independent was a huge challenge and so many unfamiliar things made you zone out and caused great distress.”</p> <p>“Do persevere and always find a reason to be grateful every day and know that relearning and unlearning are not weaknesses, but rather a form of humility and a sign of wisdom to be admired.”</p> <p>“Continue to have faith in yourself, in others, and most importantly in God. Yes, even if it’s tough and even more in the darkest hours Also, remember to give serious importance on your overall and financial wellness, so you may be able to take care of your family and others, but while you are at it, enjoy the perks of travels...”</p>	<p>Support Network</p> <p>Support Network</p> <p>Coping: Being Open Trial and Error</p> <p>First Year: A leap of faith</p> <p>Unsure</p> <p>Adjustment: Independence</p> <p>Coping: Be strong. Learn</p> <p>Coping: Have faith</p> <p>First-year feeling: Tough</p> <p>Coping: Take care of your finances, Enjoy travel</p>
Transition	<p><u>From the Interviews</u> In the Philippines, only the rich people have access to services such as PT, OT, or speech, but each specialist does their own thing and the sped teachers do not know what they are doing. Over here, there is coordination of services between service providers.</p> <p>In the Philippines, we did have an IEP, but it is</p>	<p>Comparisons: Access Siloed Practices</p> <p>Comparisons:</p>

	<p>not taken as seriously as it is here. Over there it is mandated too, but also not really because no one will come after you. Unlike here where it is heavily supported by the law. IEPs there is more casual. IEPs here is working for the students, and services are heavily documented and synchronized.</p> <p>The structure and system here is definitely not the same. You find ways and find solutions to provide what the student needs. There are no excuses.</p> <p>“Filipino students are respectful and soft spoken. But American students are very direct students and they did not seem to see me as a figure of authority in the classroom”</p> <p>“I had to establish boundaries because I am naturally touchy and affectionate with students, but here you are not allowed to do that.”</p> <p>“I was not able to teach right away because I did not have my social security number yet. But I was encouraged to observe the long-term sub in my room... No, I was not paid to observe, but I wanted to so I can see and I learned a lot from observing the sub.”</p> <p>“I started with the usual, like Classroom management, establishing routines, making visuals for my room, planning differentiated instruction, and implementing behavior management approaches.”</p> <p>I did need to lay low on consequences and increased positive reinforcement so I can engage students and build a positive relationship, because, like I said, they seem to not see me as their teacher.</p> <p>I did not get much support during that time. Actually, I was already here for a week before the principal took the time to meet or introduce herself. I was also hoping to get an orientation or training, but I did not receive that.</p>	<p>IEP Law Documentation Synchronized</p> <p>Adjustment: Different System</p> <p>Comparison: Give what student needs</p> <p>Comparisons: Filipino and American Student differences Regard for Teacher</p> <p>Adjustment: Boundaries</p> <p>Support: Time to Observe Sub</p> <p>First Steps: Classroom Management Organize Space Plan Establish Routine Behavior System</p> <p>Reconfigure: Behavior Management</p> <p>Perception on Support: No Orientation No Training</p>
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	<p>“I was already working for a month and no one taught me about IEP forms or the online system, or timelines. I reached out to the other J teachers in our district and they helped me a lot. The Filipino teachers that came ahead were actually very helpful in my learning and adjustment into the newness of everything.”</p> <p>“I had a tri due the following day and I did not know what to do, so the sped coordinator stepped in to help me learn how to test and write an IEP... It was rushed and they just showed me one time.</p> <p>“My advice for new exchange teachers would be to ask questions. It's not forbidden to ask questions.”</p> <p>I wish I had detailed communications with the district, an orientation, or received training as a new teacher. I guess it's because compared to the other Filipinos, I came here on my own and was not part of the group. So, maybe they forgot about me.</p> <p>“I thought the help was automatic when I got here. I was just waiting for someone to come, but no one came. I probably expected too much. And also because I don't ask, like many Filipinos, we don't ask and we just accepted what was given. So, I had to learn how to ask.”</p>	<p>No Support Reached out to Others Other Filipino teachers helped Support Network</p> <p>Rushed One Time</p> <p>Take Initiative Ask Questions</p> <p>No support Isolation</p> <p>No Support Cultural Learning Curve: Asserting</p>
Transformation	<p><u>From the Interviews</u></p> <p>“I want to tell the teachers in the Philippine about resources and educational technology and how this can make our teaching better.”</p> <p>“When I return I plan to continue the practice of gathering data, assessing students, and</p>	<p>Giving Back</p> <p>Continue Practices</p>

	<p>documenting.”</p> <p>“The OT told me that us Filipinos are so polite because of how we address other people, like we don't call them by their first name. She noticed that as a common thing among the Filipino teacher. If I think about it, respect is one of our values as a Filipino. I guess they see the kind of respect a Filipino has as different.”</p> <p><u>From the Cultural Exchange Report Documents</u></p> <p>“I did a virtual tour for my colleagues about the Philippines by showing them the video “It’s More Fun in the Philippines” so they have an idea of what the Philippines can offer, in terms of beautiful tourist spots and share the welcoming culture of the Filipinos. After the clip, I taught them some greetings so they know how to say good morning/afternoon/evening in Filipino.”</p> <p>“A staff member said that some words in Filipino were similar to some words in Spanish. I grabbed that opportunity to explain that my home country was colonized by Spain and the reason why we have similar words. The staff had fun watching, asked a lot of questions that show their interest, and were amazed with the festivities shown on the clip. They said they would love to travel to the Philippines one day. As I reflected, I think this activity helped build their perspective on language, place and culture.</p> <p>“Connected students via video. But because of the time difference, they each made a recording to share about themselves. After getting introduced virtually, I helped them practice writing friendly letters with each other, which they send via picture on email.”</p> <p>“I think exchanging letters is a great way for students to meet other people around the world.”</p> <p>“As a whole class activity we talked about the Philippines. We talked about how it is an archipelago made up of 7000 islands. We looked</p>	<p>Respect of Filipinos</p> <p>Cultural Exchange Activity: Activity with Staff, Video of the Philippines Greetings</p> <p>Cultural Impact: Awareness Tourism Diverse Perspectives</p> <p>Cultural Exchange Activity: Letter Exchange</p> <p>Cultural Impact: Forge friendships</p> <p>Cultural Exchange Activity: Whole Class</p>
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	<p>at the U.S. and Philippine map and also talked about the flag and compared it to the U.S. flag.”</p> <p>“This activity helps broaden student perspectives on place and culture.”</p> <p>“Today, in class, we talked about how New Year is celebrated around the world. I showed students videos that help them understand and we learned that in South Africa, it was a custom to throw old furniture out of the window to mark the beginning of the new year. In Italy, furniture and other items were thrown outside as well that symbolizes letting go of the past. In Ecuador, they burn Ano Viejo, a masked scarecrow dressed in old clothes and stuffed with papers. In the Philippines, people create noises the louder the better. Firecrackers, fireworks, and trumpets were used to make noises. It is believed to remove all the bad luck for the coming year.”</p> <p>“Students were engaged in the discussion and they made comments and comparisons of their own traditions with their family’s celebration of the New Year.”</p> <p>“Today, I was able to socialize and share local food from my country with my classroom Staff. My staff brought tamales while I brought suman, which is a Filipino delicacy that is made with ground sticky rice, wrapped in banana leaves, and steamed. This was very similar to the tamales, which was made with corn masa, wrapped in corn husk then steamed too. As we compared the two delicacies it made us realize the common things we have in food, including the process of making it. We concluded in our conversations that since both Mexico and the Philippines were colonized by the Spaniards, most of their influences are still visible and present. We enjoyed eating the food we brought, but most importantly, this showed us to appreciate how we may be different and same as well.”</p>	<p>Comparing and Contrasting</p> <p>Cultural Impact: Diverse perspectives</p> <p>Cultural Exchange Activity: Whole Class Comparing and Contrasting</p> <p>Cultural Impact: Diverse perspectives</p> <p>Cultural Exchange Activity: Social, Food, Comparing and Contrasting</p> <p>Cultural Impact: Diverse perspectives Appreciation and respect for differences</p>
Outlier Finding Dynamics of	<p><u>From the Interviews</u></p> <p>“The sponsor’s role is mostly they get to decide</p>	<p>Sponsor Role: Visa Sponsorship</p>

<p>the Exchange Teacher Program</p>	<p>on your status.”</p> <p>“The sponsor sends newsletters on email and does monthly check ins, but I don’t think that counts as support because it is more like a status check and they only do it via google form where they ask questions to check if I am still here, if there were any changes to my address or school, if I am ok, or if I am satisfied with the program.”</p> <p>“There are sponsor events and I think those events are more social or like a meet and greet thing, but I don’t really know because I have not attended. I have been invited, but location was inaccessible to me. I cannot attend because I did not have transportation.”</p> <p>“The school’s role for me is to provide me a safe workplace, a fair workplace treatment, and be able to provide instructional and social support.”</p> <p>“As a J1 teacher, I have a responsibility to submit report to my sponsor about the learnings I gain from the program.”</p> <p>“The school did not see me as a J teacher, so I have the same responsibilities as any teacher. But because they did not know I had to ask permission to implement my cultural activities, it took a while before I could implement one because they had to check student privacy policies, but they did let me eventually.”</p>	<p>Sponsor Support: Unsure if it is support Newsletters and Check-ins Status check (?)</p> <p>Sponsor events Social</p> <p>School Support: Safe and fair workplace Provide instructional and social support</p> <p>Teacher Responsibility: Submit reports</p> <p>To teach Implement Cultural Exchange Activities</p>
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APPENDIX V: SAMPLE TEXTURAL AND STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTIONS: KAYA

Sample Textural and Structural Descriptions: Kaya

Major Theme	Textural Description	Structural Description
Transposition	<p><u>From the Interviews</u></p> <p>“I applied through an agency... heard from a friend who is already participating in the program... also a J1 sped teacher teaching in Colorado.”</p> <p>“I had to borrow \$17,000.... Financing through the recruiter. That included the recruiter’s fees, the program sponsor’s fees, and they also charged us for pre-departure preparatory courses on classroom management, and behavior modifications that we need to take, and also the \$2000 as my pocket money... with interests included I ended up paying a total of \$30,000.”</p> <p>“I was already a SPED Teacher 3 in the Philippines, that was the highest level to attain and the next level would be supervisorship. I did apply for that reclassification, but I also applied to be a teacher here because I wanted to try it for my own professional advancement.”</p> <p>“There was an orientation from the CFO before our flight and the recruiter also helped set up our housing and had two-weeks’ worth of groceries, but that was part of what we paid for.”</p> <p>“I was excited to come to the U.S. It was my first time to travel, my first time on a plane! When I got here the apartment complex that the sponsor had helped us find was really beautiful. There’s even a pool, a gym, and a laundry area! To normalize my stay I had to learn how to get around, especially since my school was 45 minutes away. It took a while for me to understand how the bus system works, because it is very different, but the more I started seeing the area, I realized that we were in an unsafe neighborhood. There’s a lot of police in our area,</p>	<p>Pre Departure</p> <p>Pre Departure</p> <p>Motivation: Professional advancement</p> <p>Preparations: orientation</p> <p>Arrival: excitement, amazement</p> <p>Adjustment: transportation</p>

	<p>sometimes they even knock on our apartment to ask if we saw someone.”</p> <p>“Before we left, the sponsor said to look up our area on YouTube so I did. and what popped up was about gangs, shooting, crime, drugs. But my idea of America was different, so I was, I guess in denial and was still very excited, but when I got here I got really scared. Even walking around does not feel safe. There’s people shouting or cussing at you. There was even a time that me and the group of Filipinos I came here with were harassed on the bus. The guy was yelling at us telling us to ‘go back to your country.’ We got so scared that we got off even if that was not yet our stop.”</p> <p>“My experience was in elementary but I was placed in a middle school RSP class with students with challenging behaviors. I had to get used to the F-word and the B-word just being thrown around without taking it personally... There were daily arguments, and aggression between students. There’s a police officer that is stationed close to our classroom and there was even a button in our classroom that we can push so someone can come to help us.”</p> <p>“It was a really hard class that me and the other teachers, before we start our school day, we would pray. I was also informed that I was the 5th teacher for that class.”</p> <p>“While I have years of experience, in this country, I am a new teacher, and my success as a teacher is reliant on the amount of support and guidance that I will receive from them. It is important that they not only give me classroom supplies, or curriculum, I need support on how to utilize the curriculum or the apps. I need to know what their expectations are.”</p> <p>“It was a struggle... faced with handling students with extreme difficult behaviors, I was up for the challenge, but I feel like I had no support.”</p> <p>“I have a mentor and was told I can ask for help,</p>	<p>First Year Feeling: Anticlimactic</p> <p>Preparations: Did some research</p> <p>First Year Feeling: Scared</p> <p>Adjustment: student regard for teacher, student behaviors</p> <p>Adjustment: Experience and assignment mismatch First year Feeling: Hard</p> <p>Adjustment: Novice status</p> <p>First-year Feeling: Struggle</p> <p>No Support</p> <p>First-year Feeling:</p>
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	<p>but when I need it, the person that is supposed to help made me feel that I cannot ask for it, like I was bother or a burden to them, so eventually I just stopped asking for help and had to figure things out on my own.”</p> <p>(RE: Advice for Future Exchange Teachers) “Be open to change and be ready to adapt, because challenges are guaranteed to come.”</p> <p>“To prevent feeling lost or having a mental breakdown, you will need to draw from the strength you possess mentally, psychologically, and spiritually. So lakasan mo loob mo, magpakatatag ka pa lalo (be strong, and by strong, I mean get strong-er).”</p> <p><u>From the Letter</u> “I understand that you're facing challenges during this program, but remember that overcoming these struggles will only make you stronger and more self-reliant.”</p> <p>“The weather changes and time differences may bring gloominess and sadness, especially during the cold winter months when you just want to stay indoors.”</p> <p>...you kept yourself busy, juggling studying courses alongside your teaching and career responsibilities. While mentally draining and expensive, passing the various tests and exams to meet your credentials is an accomplishment worth celebrating.”</p> <p>“Being away from your family, especially during holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas, can be incredibly difficult.”</p> <p>“...you've learned to enjoy the company of others during these times, learning to find happiness with new friends and acquaintances.”</p>	<p>Struggle No Support</p> <p>Mentor No support Coping: Self-Reliance</p> <p>Coping: Embrace Change Be Open</p> <p>Be Strong</p> <p>Adjustment: Challenges</p> <p>Adjustment: Weather</p> <p>Adjustment: Credentialing</p> <p>First-Year Feeling: Overwhelmed</p> <p>First-Year Feeling: Homesickness, missing family</p> <p>Coping: Support Network</p>
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Transition	<p><u>From the Interviews</u></p> <p>“It was a big adjustment, because in the Philippines when the teacher arrives in the classroom, students are ready to listen, but here it's like I was not even there.”</p> <p>“I think in the Philippines, quality teaching occurs, but the pace of progress is slow because there is no help. It is the teacher that carries the burden of setting up and building the sped program because there is no standard implementation in schools and there's no government support”</p> <p>“In the U.S. students have access to resources... If a student has no program at our school, they are referred to another school, and the parents will have to take them there, unlike here, there's transportation.”</p> <p>“We don't have paraprofessionals, the parents are the ones who would give us support.”</p> <p>“The students' IEP had a behaviorist, but there was no behaviorist because I was told that the person had quit so all the behavior management landed on me.”</p> <p>“I had to really take my time to build rapport and build relationships... Also, a lot of trial and error. If something does not work, try something else. I have to keep telling myself that I came here to challenge myself so when things get hard, I would say ‘Remember [REDACTED], you are in it to conquer the challenge.’”</p> <p>“The students did not want to do anything so I have to begin by rewarding them a lot at first to the help them associate doing work with earning a reward. I had to start with Behavior modification strategies such as setting up a tangible reward system. At first it was inconsistent, but students were eventually able to build a connection to understand "if this, then that.” I began with giving students frequent rewards, but then of course I don't want them to only do work because they</p>	<p>Comparisons: student regard for teacher</p> <p>Comparisons: No standard for implementation, No government support</p> <p>Comparisons: student access</p> <p>Comparisons: Paraprofessionals</p> <p>Learning Curve: Behavior management</p> <p>First Steps: Build Relationships</p> <p>First Steps: Behavior Modification</p>
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	<p>will get something out of it, so I had to slowly add more time on when students will be meaning a token then gradually fade that out until they would just be okay with doing a good job as their reward. For example, at first I told them they will get like a pizza party at the end of 2 weeks. Then, I started introducing intangible rewards, for example like a monthly movie of their choice...I think building that work and reward association took around 3 months for the students to understand. The response was inconsistent, but it felt that things were getting better and students were making more of an effort and that was what was needed so I can finally start the academic teaching. But then, they told me I was filling an excess position so after putting in all that work, I was getting let go. So, to maintain my stay here I had to look for another school.”</p> <p>“At the beginning of the year there were team building activities, collaboration time, training on curriculum, software, and apps, and being oriented to the teachers union... but all those topics are gen ed. Then there was one day when we were with our departments. I found out that about 80% of the department is composed of Filipinos, and that's how I at least felt I had a community here.”</p> <p>“They trained us on SEIS, there's a speaker on sped compliance and laws.”</p> <p>“I was taught to do the WJIV after school, they showed me one time, and that was it... I even came to them after school, it was after work hours and I did not even know about things such as having contracted time... when I asked when I will be testing students since I had them all day, I was told to do it during my break.”</p> <p>“When I had my first IEP, I was asking for support on how to facilitate, because I wanted to learn... instead of showing me, my coach took it and had the IEP, but then I was the case manager for the student... and I was unable to attend because my class had no sub.”</p>	<p>Training</p> <p>Support System</p> <p>Training: Online IEP system SPED Compliance, Law</p> <p>Learning Curve: Testing</p> <p>Perception on Training Perception on Support</p> <p>Learning Curve: Facilitating IEPs</p> <p>Perception on Support</p>
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Transformation	<p><u>From the Interviews</u></p> <p>“I can share the free apps, but then it may not be applicable in the public school setting. What I think is most applicable, especially with this push towards inclusion in the Philippines, is teaching them about accommodations that can be implemented in the general education classroom and when testing students”</p> <p>“It’s very fulfilling and I know that I am capable enough to teach wherever I go because of this experience.”</p> <p>“Share my learnings as a resource speaker to my fellow teachers in the Philippines during their in-service training and services, the teaching strategies and practices from the United States that might be useful in our students and system in the Philippines.”</p> <p>“I have been in this position for 4 years. So, in terms of impact, I would say I brought stability to the department and organization to the program”</p> <p>“Participating in this exchange gave me and my family financial stability. I was able to buy property in the Philippines, help others and my children are living more comfortably.”</p> <p>“This experience has made me a strong and self-reliant individual. It made me a confident, independent, disciplined, emphatic and courageous person.”</p> <p>“It also has given me a chance to come here as a professional and do the same work as a teacher. It gives me personal fulfillment knowing that my training and education in the PH was something that I was able to apply.”</p> <p>“My will to teach and for the student to learn is the same, I just have more tools.”</p> <p>“Participating in this program comes with prestige when I return. It gives me a competitive edge, and a more esteemed status in the field.”</p>	<p>Giving Back: Resources, Strategies</p> <p>Validation</p> <p>Giving Back: Strategies</p> <p>Impact to School: Stability, Organization</p> <p>Personal Benefit: Economic</p> <p>Self-Growth</p> <p>Validation</p> <p>Professional Benefit</p> <p>Professional Status</p>
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	<p>“I have great relations with my colleagues, students, and parents. I have a positive attitude, I’m always smiling, and I always say good morning to everyone.”</p> <p>“I love meeting people, and meeting people from different backgrounds gave me insight and wisdom. I learned how to collaborate with peers. I gained confidence in my teaching and learned more from others.”</p> <p>“I feel that People trust my input because they go to me to consult and ask questions, and I get to help them with strategies to implement in the class. So, I also feel proud, cause it feels good when they solicit your ideas. It makes me feel like I am one of them and that I have something to contribute.”</p> <p>“It gave me a broader perspective as a teacher. and opened horizons and it helped me become a more efficient individual and teacher. The learnings I gained from the U.S. made me more equipped, more knowledgeable, enough that I will have sufficient knowledge to share and train others.”</p> <p><u>From the Cultural Exchange Report Documents</u> “I asked students to write a friendly letter for students in the Philippines about their ways of celebrating holidays like Thanksgiving, a holiday that Filipinos don’t celebrate. I also encouraged them to write something about their family traditions. I then talked to Ms. [REDACTED], a teacher from [REDACTED] school in the Philippines, to explain the purpose of exchanging friendly letters among our students, and she agreed to have her students participate in this exchange of friendly letters through mail once they receive the letters from our students. Because Filipinos do not celebrate Thanksgiving, they were encouraged to write about customs, beliefs, and traditions during the New Year in the Philippines. Their teacher mailed the letters here in the U.S. and my students will reply to the letters when I receive them.”</p>	<p>Perceived Impact to School Community: Positive relationships</p> <p>Socio-cultural benefit Confidence Learning from Others</p> <p>Validation Confidence Resource for colleagues</p> <p>Confidence Professional benefit</p> <p>Cultural Exchange Activity: Letter Exchange, Holiday Traditions</p>
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	<p>“As a J1 Teacher, I want to let my students know that friendship can happen everywhere in any form. I believe this activity not only teaches students how to write friendly letters, it also encourages students to be aware of how other cultures celebrate holidays, and meet new friends.”</p> <p>“Sungka is a turn-based Philippine game, that is very similar to Mancala. Sungkaan is placed horizontally between the two players, where each player has seven houses in front of him and the heads should be at the far ends to the left and right. To win at Sungka the player's aim is to capture as many shells and place them into your "ulo" (head).”</p> <p>“I contacted Ms. [REDACTED], a parent of a former student, to ask if she can, through a video, have her daughter, [REDACTED] show my class how to play the game Sungka/ She agreed to the request, but because of the 16-hour difference, her mom took the video and shared it with me, which I then shared with my students here in California.”</p> <p>“As a J1 Teacher, I believe this activity not only teaches my students how to follow directions and take turns, it also encourages students to be aware that there are similarities in games that children play around the world.”</p> <p>“Special Education Teachers, including myself, performed the Sinug dance, a dance ritual meant to be a prayer for the Child Jesus or Santo Niño during the Sinulog Festival. In the Philippines, the Sinulog Festival can be similar to Mardi Gras because of the amount of people it draws to the island of Cebu every year.”</p> <p>“The Sinulog festival is a celebration of unity and oneness among the Filipino people. Through performing the Sinulog dance at a church event, we were able to gather an audience and share with them traditional Filipino music and dance. In this way, we are able to exchange culture, establish</p>	<p>Cultural Impact: Forge Friendships</p> <p>Cultural Exchange Activity: Whole Class Virtual Student from the Philippines Game</p> <p>Cultural Impact: Appreciation of culture</p> <p>Cultural Exchange Activity: Community, Church Event, Folk Dance</p> <p>Cultural Impact: Awareness and appreciation of culture</p>
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	<p>awareness of who we are, our roots, rich culture, and history.”</p> <p><u>From the Letters</u> “You've met individuals from all walks of life who have become second family, mentors, friends, and confidantes. These relationships have enriched your life, and you'll cherish them forever. Interacting with students from diverse backgrounds and collaborating with colleagues from different cultures has broadened your perspective and enhanced your teaching abilities.”</p> <p>“You believe that this J1 experience has made you a stronger, more confident, independent, disciplined, empathetic, and courageous person. You're eager to share your learnings and experiences with fellow teachers in the Philippines, knowing that they will benefit from the teaching strategies and practices you've learned here in the U.S. This program has elevated your professional and personal skills, and you feel ready to continue your teaching career with newfound confidence and excitement.”</p>	<p>Socio-cultural benefit</p> <p>Learning from others</p> <p>Perceived Impact: Self-growth</p> <p>Validation Giving Back</p> <p>Confidence Fulfillment</p>
<p>Outlier Finding Dynamics of the Exchange Teacher Program</p>	<p>“...Make sure we know of the terms and conditions of their sponsorship and what we need in order to maintain that sponsorship of the J1 visa.”</p> <p>“... provide us constant communication and send us reminders regarding our annual cultural exchange reports”</p> <p>“They also host monthly virtual meet and greets. It's like a J1 community forum where we meet their other J1 participants, so not just Filipinos, but people from other parts of the world. Participants will be asked to share experiences, only if they want to. We are not required to attend, but it is fun whenever I do because we do games, and there's raffle prizes.”</p> <p>“As a J1 teacher, it is my responsibility to maintain my visa, be familiar with my sponsor’s terms and conditions, submit the cultural reports,</p>	<p>Sponsor Role: Visa Sponsorship</p> <p>Sponsor Role: Reminders on Terms and Conditions</p> <p>Sponsor Support: Sponsor-facilitated online community events</p> <p>Responsibility to Sponsor</p>

	<p>and be a law abiding visitor in the U.S.”</p> <p>“At the school, my role and function is to teach the students in the caseload assigned to me.”</p> <p>“Because my time here is short, I am here to learn as much as I can so I have something to share when I return.”</p>	<p>Responsibility to School</p> <p>Learn and Return</p>
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