

Challenges And Resilience in Multicultural Teaching: Unpacking the Cultural Barriers Among Filipino Educators in Southeast Asia in Times of Covid 19 Pandemic

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Teaching interruptions; Differentiated instruction; Instructional emphasis; Cultural Barriers; Filipino educators; Multicultural Teaching; Teacher Resiliency;</p> <p>DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.22437/langue.v3i1.34332</p> <p>Received: June 10, 2024</p> <p>Reviewed: June 30, 2024</p> <p>Accepted: October 5, 2024</p>	<p><i>This study investigates the challenges and resilience of Filipino educators in Southeast Asia teaching in multicultural environments during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach, the study analyzed the narratives of eight Filipino educators selected via purposive sampling from nine Southeast Asian countries. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and thematically analyzed. The findings revealed that Filipino educators faced diverse challenges, including difficulties in managing virtual classrooms, addressing differentiated learning needs, and maintaining instructional quality during the pandemic. Despite these challenges, many educators demonstrated resilience, adapting to their teaching environments and expressing a strong commitment to continue teaching despite uncertainties and anxiety about job security. Key themes that emerged from the data include struggles with virtual instruction and differentiated assessments, managing frustrations and expectations in challenging learning environments, and fostering a supportive and tolerant classroom atmosphere. Participants also emphasized their role as nurturing figures, promoting acceptance, and creating a sense of belonging in multicultural classrooms. While teaching multicultural students presented significant challenges due to cultural diversity and the pandemic, most educators found the experience rewarding. The study advocates for integrating cultural competency development into teacher training curricula to better equip educators for teaching in diverse and dynamic classroom settings.</i></p>

1. Introduction

Every new lesson provides a great number of hurdles for instructors especially if a teacher would have students hailed from various countries, had competing views, and had a varied educational background. A multicultural classroom may be enjoyable for both the teacher and the learner, especially when it fosters the appropriate kind of motivation in the latter (Xerri, 2016). However, Zhao (2016) stated that when teachers and students from various

cultures work together to create a multicultural classroom environment, they may meet some dissonance in behavior and have differing attitudes and opinions about it. Misunderstandings and confrontations can arise when their sentiments and perspectives on the matter differ, and even culture clashes can emerge when one expects one form of behavior and receives something quite different (Zhao, 2016).

The implementation of multicultural education significantly depends on the teachers' ability. International students in University of Muhammadiyah Malang tend to communicate with their peers using their mother tongue that made difficult for them to mingle with other or local students. Nurbatra (2018) also mentioned that the use of English as International Language is inevitable in multicultural classroom, particularly with foreign students.

Cultural barriers in the classroom may have an impact on individuals' learning experiences as well as the environment for other students. Teachers must be prepared for scenarios that may interfere with the learning of the students. Messages are easily misconstrued if they are provided in a manner that is new to the student's culture. Miscommunication is the most typical issue caused by cultural differences (Kenesei & Stier, 2016; Xie, 2013).

Filipino instructors are well-regarded in other countries for their academic abilities, particularly in the teaching of the English language. Despite hurdles such as variations in curriculum and cultures while teaching overseas, the need for Filipino instructors to teach affords limitless options. Frederiksen (2014) states that one of the essential difficulties experienced by teachers working abroad is that they do not know the mother language of that country. Teachers working abroad are likely to have professional problems in terms of mastering a different curriculum, knowing the student structure, and establishing close relations with colleagues. Nagel and Brown (2003) list the professional problems experienced by teachers in the form of lack of time, poor relations with administrators and colleagues, crowded classes, insufficient resources, excess workload, and problematic student behaviors.

Resilience is an individual's way of coping with adversities by using personal and social resources (Prilleltensky, 2012). This definition transcends the individualistic notion of resilience as it synthesizes the idea of collectivism, which is a familiar orientation parallel to Filipino context of the shared inner-self (Estanislao, 2017). Filipino anthropologist Felipe Landa Jocano conceptualized several themes that were laid out parallel to the coping and resilience of the Filipino people such as Letting God Be, Humor, and Community (Ang & Diaz, 2017).

Instructors from the Philippines are well-known in other nations for their academic ability, notably in the teaching of English. Due to economic and personal constraints, Filipino instructors would generally be forced to teach abroad. Despite challenges such as differences in curriculum and customs, the need for Filipino teachers to teach in other countries opens up a world of possibilities. Not just in the Philippines, but across the world, Filipino instructors are noted for their tenacity. During the COVID 19 epidemic, Filipino teachers have been exposed to many upheavals as a consequence of COVID's life-threatening threat. Filipino instructors are noted for their tenacity and tenacity. More professional development is a fundamental contributor to effective teaching and learning.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study Sites and Participants of the Study

This study was conducted in Manila, Philippines during the 2nd Semester of Academic Year 2021-2022 while actual interviews were held online. Educators residing in different Southeast Asian countries were selected as participants of this study based on pre-determined criteria, availability, and convenient time. There was one Filipino participant from different academic institutions in the Southeast Asian countries who were member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) namely Thailand, Kingdom of Laos,

Challenges And Resilience in Multicultural Teaching: Unpacking the Cultural Barriers Among Filipino Educators in Southeast Asia in Times of Covid 19 Pandemic
Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malaysia. East Timor was excluded from the study despite being part of Southeast Asia because it is not a member of ASEAN though it has close economic ties with other ASEAN countries particularly Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Thailand. Myanmar was consequently discontinued because of the country's current volatile and repressive political situation.

Moreover, according to the International Organization for Migration, approximately 7 million of the 9.85 million migrants in ASEAN came from inside the area in 2017.

It is stated that while there are various purposive sampling strategies, criterion sampling seems to be employed widely in implementation research.

The researcher has only included those with three years and above teaching experiences overseas and living overseas for at least three years as criteria which were enough to identify their understanding on the challenges and resilience in teaching in a multicultural environment in a foreign country. There was a total of nine (9) participants who participated in this study, please refer to the table provided below:

Table 1

Participants of the Study based on Country

#	Name of School	Country	Grade Level Handling
1	Mae Fah Luang University	Thailand	Tertiary
2	Kiettisack International School	Laos	Primary/Secondary
3	My Prep School PTE LTD	Singapore	Primary
4	Engage Minds Learning International School	Brunei	Pre-school/Primary
5	University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City International School of Business	Vietnam	Tertiary
6	Technological Institute of the Philippines	Philippines	Tertiary
7	Asian Hope International School	Cambodia	Primary
8	Sekolah Pelita Harapan	Indonesia	Pre-school/Primary
9	Southern University College	Malaysia	Tertiary

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Appraisal of the Respondents' Socio-Demographic Characteristics

In here, it presented the profile of the Filipino educators handling a multi-cultural class during the pandemic. The profile in qualitative studies were sometimes call *robotfoto* or personal data sheets of study participants, which contained crucial personal and professional information (De Guzman & Tan, 2007). For this study, this included the ASEAN country where the educator is currently based, their demographic information and details of professional teaching experience. This portion also provided brief narratives of their perspectives.

This segment presents the emerging themes gathered from the responses of the Filipino educators from the narratives that were presented. The analysis of the data utilized thematic analysis which is a technique for assessing qualitative data. Since the source of data describes collection of texts, such as interview or transcripts of Filipino educators. The researcher scoured through the data for recurring themes, such as subjects, ideas, and meaning patterns. The findings revealed similarities in the experiences of the Filipino educator's experiences related to the challenges of these teachers in a multi-cultural classroom instruction with regards to teaching interruptions, differentiated instructions and instructional emphasis during the pandemic.

3.2 Emerging Themes and Study Implications

1. Challenges of Filipino Educators on Teaching Interruptions, Differentiated Instructions, and Instructional Emphasis

1.1 Challenges on Teaching Interruptions

In here, it provides the emerging themes representing the challenges experienced by the Filipino educators in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results centered on the teaching interruptions and obstacles arising from a culturally

diverse classroom set-up which drastically affected the effective delivery of instruction to the learners.

The educators were confronted with various teaching interruptions in the multi-cultural classroom at the onset of the pandemic. These challenges were brought by the impact of the pandemic not only to their school system but to the whole world. Unequivocally, COVID-19 is the greatest challenge that these expanded national education systems have ever faced. Many governments have ordered institutions to cease face-to-face instruction for most of their students, requiring them to switch, almost overnight, to online teaching and virtual education (Daniel, 2020).

1.2 Challenges on Differentiated Instructions

It presents the emerging themes related to challenges on differentiated instruction in a multi-cultural classroom. The themes were gathered from the narratives of the participants as they navigate the difficulties engaging learners with different learning needs and characteristics.

Tomlinson further described differentiating as the process by which a teacher adapts their instruction to meet the needs of one student at a time or small groups for the best experience and results. The use of ongoing assessment and flexible grouping makes this method of instruction successful, regardless of whether teachers differentiate material, process, products, or the learning environment (Gaitas et al., 2017). In the case of these educator participants, using differentiated learning or instruction is not a new concept. As mentioned by one of the participants, they do have separate classes or sessions for groups and for

Challenges And Resilience in Multicultural Teaching: Unpacking the Cultural Barriers Among Filipino Educators in Southeast Asia in Times of Covid 19 Pandemic

individuals before the pandemic. Various challenges were identified and described by the Filipino educators in providing individualized and differentiated learning and assessment.

1.3 Challenges on Instructional Emphasis

It showed the educators perspectives on instructional emphasis and how it was affected while the COVID-19 pandemic. It also highlighted, to a great extent, the Filipino participant's feelings of uncertainty. As such, the themes showed how they view the flexible learning being implemented in their schools. The participants have approached the students using various teaching strategies and methods aligned with the needs and demands of a multicultural class. Each educator has their own unique experiences in attaining their learning outcome goals allaying the limits brought by the pandemic. One major shift was the shift to online learning which meant that instruction and learning will occur in a virtual classroom. Not all the Filipino educators however rely on online learning alone, some have adopted a blended or hybrid form of learning but unanimously, the online learning modality was agreed upon as the major challenge in terms of instructional emphasis.

2. Teacher Behavior and Teacher Efficacy Beliefs

2.1 Teacher Behavior in Classroom to Address Teacher Resiliency in a Multicultural Classroom

It presents how the educator's behavior reflected their resiliency despite the limitations, challenges and obstacles related to the pandemic. Having taught a multicultural classroom allowed the teachers to demonstrate their innate ability to overcome these challenges and epitomize the distinct and noble role of an educator.

Various classroom behaviors and strategies were exhibited by the educators which for them helped in a way to address and promote the teacher's resiliency in

the classroom immediately after the onset of the pandemic. The educators needed to be straightforward and sincere when dealing with their students especially during the virtual class. The students according to them deserve as much since everyone is struggling with the shift to online learning. The participants should always be aware of the status of their students in the virtual classroom and constantly check if they (the students) were still listening, attentive and engaged with the lessons (Phirangee & Malec, 2017).

2.2 Teacher Efficacy Beliefs to Address Teacher Resiliency in a Multi-cultural Classroom

It provided the participants views that symbolizes resiliency in action. This efficacy belief allowed the teachers to demonstrate their unique attributes of a caring and nurturing parent-figure. An attribute common to Filipino educators and influenced them to ascend greater heights in teaching a multi-cultural class.

To be given an important responsibility, being given additional or extra loads, or leading a program comes into their mind when teachers describe establishing oneself. From the perspective of the educators, seeking growth also includes continuing their studies and constantly striving for improvement. The teachers mention of constantly evaluating themselves and reflecting on their current professional status to remain competitive.

The teachers believe that they have an important role to fill which for them seemed to be an attempt to establish one's significance in the educational workplace. Moreover, being able to work harmoniously at work meant being open minded, accepting other people's differences and willing to communicate with peers and co-workers (Kerin & Murphy, (2018). The Filipino educators also stressed the need to

Challenges And Resilience in Multicultural Teaching: Unpacking the Cultural Barriers Among Filipino Educators in Southeast Asia in Times of Covid 19 Pandemic
establish friendships as another way to build efficacy in teaching. A harmonious relationship at work decreases stress and lighten the workload.

3. Implications from Examining Challenges and Resilience Among Filipino Educators in Southeast Asia

3.1 Implications of the Challenges on Teaching Interruptions to Multi-cultural Classroom Setting

Despite the endless potential and opportunities, teaching and learning in a multi-cultural context can present significant difficulties for both the teacher and the student in terms of navigating the online platform and equipment. Searching for methods to make the students' online learning experience easier is another tactic. Even if the perception of the teacher/learner roles in a group differs, instructors must arm themselves with a toolkit of instructional strategies to foster a more collaborative learning environment. They need to put in more effort to change their culture to fit the online educational institutions.

3.2 Implications of the Challenges on Differentiated Instructions to Multi-cultural Classroom Setting

Based on a personal motivation and a desire of the educators to address learning needs, individualized instruction was seemed to have been implemented in various ways. The following four main issues were noted from the participants' namely instructional issues, such as classroom management, student-related and pedagogical content knowledge issues, challenges related to the school environment, a lack of professional development opportunities and support, and issues related to teacher identity. Teachers in the ASEAN countries most

Challenges And Resilience in Multicultural Teaching: Unpacking the Cultural Barriers Among Filipino Educators in Southeast Asia in Times of Covid 19 Pandemic
experienced difficulties with classroom management, student-related issues, and a lack of chances for professional development.

3.3 Implications of the Challenges on Instructional Emphasis to Multi-cultural Classroom

Teachers' practices may be fostered, and their cultural competency can be improved at the school level. In order to train teachers with a high degree of cultural competency, the CHED should provide relevant programs and courses.

3.4 Implications of Teacher Behavior to Teacher Resiliency

Any program intended to support educators in excelling in their positions must take into consideration "both sides of the equation" such as work environment (Price et al., 2012) guaranteeing helpful management, moderate workloads, and favorable school cultures in the country they are working and where staff members interact and cooperate. Despite the fact that the present work environment of the teachers can make constructive adaptation seem like an opportunity, many of the educators seemed content in their positions

3.5 Implications of Efficacy Beliefs to Teacher Resiliency

Regarding teacher self-efficacy, it is argued that raising the Filipino teachers' perceptions of their own efficacy leads to an increase in their sense of commitment

Challenges And Resilience in Multicultural Teaching: Unpacking the Cultural Barriers Among Filipino Educators in Southeast Asia in Times of Covid 19 Pandemic
to teaching and professional identity, which in turn raises their perceptions of their own accomplishments and increases their sense of job satisfaction.

4. Conclusion

The majority of Filipino teachers find it both rewarding and fulfilling to work with multicultural students here at home or abroad. Filipino teachers were confident and positive in teaching English to their students, and the results suggested that knowing the culture and learning dialects were essential. Despite the fact that English is the language of instruction in your country of origin, knowing and understanding basic phrases helps and facilitates interaction between teachers and students. Filipino teachers were competent enough to adapt effectively and switch to online learning. Lack of interest highlights the challenges these teachers faced. Despite the difficulties of teaching during the pandemic, all educators describe themselves as adapting, 'thriving' and 'surviving'.

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