

Expectation vs Reality: Success and Struggles of Neophyte Teachers Assigned in Remote Areas

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ABSTRACT

The transition from pre-service teacher education to professional practice is often accompanied by a significant gap between expectations and actual experiences, particularly for neophyte teachers assigned to geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDA) in the Philippines. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of novice teachers deployed in remote schools in Bukidnon, focusing on their motivations for accepting such assignments, the challenges they encountered, their coping mechanisms, and their recommendations for future educators. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with eleven neophyte teachers and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis. Four major themes emerged: **Pragmatic Necessity, Isolation and Emotional Separation from Family and Support Systems, Positive Psychological Resilience Anchored in Faith and Purpose-Driven Reframing, and Cultivating Holistic Preparedness and Adaptability.** Findings revealed that participants primarily accepted remote assignments due to economic necessity, limited employment opportunities, and the availability of government teaching positions rather than personal preference. Their greatest challenges were emotional isolation, homesickness, limited communication, cultural adjustment, and inadequate institutional support. Despite these difficulties, participants demonstrated resilience by relying on faith, optimism, patience, and a strong sense of purpose while adapting to the demands of remote teaching. The study further highlights the need for comprehensive pre-deployment preparation, localized mentoring, psychosocial support, and strengthened induction programs to better equip novice teachers for remote assignments. These findings emphasize that while individual resilience is essential, sustainable teacher retention and professional growth require structural and institutional support. The study contributes valuable insights for the Department of Education, teacher education institutions, and policymakers in developing responsive programs that improve the welfare, preparedness, and long-term success of neophyte teachers serving in remote communities.

Keywords: neophyte teachers; remote schools; geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDA); phenomenology; lived experiences; teacher resilience; teacher induction; qualitative research; Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from pre-service teacher preparation to actual classroom practice is universally recognized as a period of profound "reality shock," wherein idealistic professional expectations abruptly collide with complex institutional realities (Felisilda et al., 2024). For "neophyte" or novice teachers, those navigating their foundational first three years of service, this phase is crucial in shaping teaching efficacy, professional identity, and career longevity. While entering the teaching profession carries universal stressors, these hurdles are exponentially magnified when the deployment occurs within Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) in the Philippines. Remote postings demand that novice educators simultaneously adapt to their emerging professional roles and navigate severe geographical isolation, unfamiliar socio-cultural landscapes, and fragmented community infrastructures.

In the Philippine public education system, the centralized hiring and ranking mechanics of the Department of Education (DepEd) frequently result in newly minted teachers being deployed to far-flung, marginalized rural or island schools. Recent literature highlights that the decision to accept these daunting placements often stems

from a complex intersection of economic pragmatism such as securing permanent public employment and financial stability and intrinsic, altruistic vocational idealism, often conceptualized as a national or divine calling to serve marginalized youth (Felisilda et al., 2024; Research Square, 2026). However, the pre-service expectations of making an immediate societal impact are routinely challenged by harsh systemic realities. Upon deployment, neophyte teachers encounter multifaceted struggles, including hazardous geographical commutes, stark structural resource limitations, multi-grade instructional overloads, and cultural-linguistic mismatches.

Despite facing severe early-career vulnerability, novice Filipino educators routinely exercise what contemporary educational sociological research terms *bounded agency*, the capacity to carve out "pockets of possibility" and adapt through deliberate personal and professional coping mechanisms (Research Square, 2026). Rather than succumbing to professional burnout, many neophytes actively navigate their isolation by leveraging informal peer-mentorship networks, contextualizing their instructional methods. Understanding how these beginners successfully cross the bridge from survival to adaptation is paramount, especially as recent national assessments, such as the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II, 2026) report, emphasize the critical need to reform teacher welfare, pre-service preparation, and in-service induction models to address localized educational disparities.

While existing literature extensively documents the challenges of rural schooling and general teacher attrition in the Philippines, there remains a critical research gap concerning the precise, lived "expectation versus reality" trajectory of *neophyte* teachers specifically stationed in remote areas. Most studies focus on either veteran rural educators or general urban novice tracking, leaving the intersection of early-career vulnerability and extreme spatial isolation largely unexamined. This qualitative phenomenological study directly addresses this empirical gap by exploring the lived experiences, successes, compromises, and structural struggles of novice teachers assigned to remote Philippine communities in Bukidnon. Guided by this objective, this inquiry specifically seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the reasons why neophyte teachers accept assignments in remote areas?
2. What are the lived struggles of neophyte teachers assigned to remote areas?
3. How do neophyte teachers cope with these struggles in remote areas?
4. What recommendations can be offered for future neophyte teachers slated for remote area assignments?

By unpacking these raw narrative tapestries, this study provides vital, localized insights for policymakers, Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), and DepEd administrators to design targeted, structurally sound induction programs and localized support frameworks. This shifts the narrative of remote teacher deployment away from a story of mere individual survival toward sustainable professional thriving.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study will employ a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences, successes, and struggles of neophyte teachers assigned to remote areas. Phenomenology is uniquely suited for this inquiry as it seeks to understand the "essence" of a human experience from the first-person perspective of those who lived it. By focusing on the "expectation vs. reality" trajectory, this design allows the researcher to unpack the psychological, professional, and socio-cultural meanings that novice educators attach to their deployment in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA).

Research Instrument

The primary tool for data collection will be a semi-structured, researcher-formulated interview guide. This instrument is designed to ensure consistency across interviews while remaining flexible enough to allow

participants to expand on unexpected, nuanced lived realities. The interview guide will be structured around the study's four core research questions: Part 1: Pre-deployment Intentions & Motivations (Reasons for accepting the remote assignment). Part 2: The Reality Shock (The professional, geographical, and instructional struggles encountered). Part 3: Agency & Adaptation (The specific mechanisms used to cope with and overcome these struggles). Part 4: Experiential Wisdom (Actionable recommendations for future neophytes and educational stakeholders). To ensure validity, the interview guide will undergo expert validation by a panel of qualitative research experts, seasoned rural school heads, and senior education program specialists prior to implementation.

Data Collection Procedure

Upon receiving clearance from institutional review bodies and obtaining official administrative permission from relevant DepEd Schools offices, data collection will proceed through the Informed Consent: Selected participants will be given an Informed Consent Form detailing the study's objectives, voluntary nature, and right to withdraw. Conduct of Interviews: One-on-one, in-depth semi-structured interviews will be conducted.

Data Analysis

The transcribed data will be analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six-Phase Thematic Analysis Framework to systematically identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the data. From these categories, core themes were interpreted and presented to address the research questions. To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative data, the researcher will implement member-checking, wherein participants are given access to their respective transcripts and the preliminary thematic findings to verify if the interpretations accurately reflect their lived realities.

Ethical Considerations

Adhering to strict ethical protocols, this study will be guided by the principles of autonomy, beneficence, and justice. **Anonymity and confidentiality** will be rigorously maintained by removing all personally identifiable information, utilizing alphanumeric pseudonyms for both the educators and their respective schools. In compliance with the *Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173)*, all collected materials will be permanently deleted and shredded five years after the completion and publication of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis of the data yielded four overarching themes, each corresponding to the primary research questions of the study.

Emerging Theme: "Pragmatic Necessity: Economic Survival and Employment Opportunity"

In research question number 1, the majority of participants revealed that their decision to accept a remote assignment was rooted less in idealism and more in the practical realities of employment and financial survival.

Participant 1 explained that the assignment was accepted primarily because "I need this job and I want to provide for my family," indicating that economic responsibility was the driving consideration, even as adaptation to hardship was framed as a secondary necessity rather than a preference.

Participant 6 shared that the assignment was accepted because of a badly needed job "to help my family especially my parents," again foregrounding financial obligation as the operative motivator.

Participant 10 was the most direct in articulating this necessity, stating plainly that a "stable government job" was needed "immediately to help support my family financially," underscoring urgency rather than deliberation. Beyond family-driven necessity, several participants pointed to the practical realities of the teacher labor market as the deciding factor.

Participant 7 noted that remote assignments were accepted because "slots in city schools were already full," making rural placement the only viable entry point into the profession despite a genuine interest in gaining teaching experience.

Participant 8 echoed this pragmatic urgency, explaining that the remote item was "the first item offered" after passing the licensure examination, and that waiting for a town-based vacancy was not a preferred option.

Participant 11 revealed a more strategic, incentive-based pragmatism, citing DepEd's hardship or remote allowance and the possibility of qualifying for tenure faster as reasons for acceptance.

These six accounts illustrate that acceptance of remote postings among neophyte teachers is frequently less a matter of choice grounded in personal disposition, and more a rational response to constrained employment options, financial obligations to family, and structural incentives embedded in the teacher deployment system.

Teacher shortages in rural, remote, and disadvantaged school contexts have been extensively documented as a structural, not merely attitudinal problem. Persistent shortages in low- and middle-income countries disproportionately affect rural and remote schools, compelling both administrators and prospective teachers to treat such placements as a matter of labor-market necessity rather than preference (Edwards et al., 2023). Low compensation in rural postings has been shown to shape teachers' acceptance and retention decisions, with pay serving as one of the most consistently cited barriers and, conversely, incentive structures serving as levers to induce acceptance despite personal reluctance (Garret & Goss, 2020). Ladd and Sorensen (2021) similarly found that while community attachment can sustain rural teachers over time, the initial decision to accept a rural post is frequently tied to professional and economic motivations rather than an inherent preference for rural life. Hargreaves and Fink (2020) further situate this within a global pattern, noting that remote and rural teaching assignments are commonly filled by early career teachers who lack the seniority or leverage to secure urban placements, positioning remote deployment as a *de facto* entry point into the profession rather than a chosen destination. Parallel evidence from allied service professions reinforces this pattern: studies on health worker deployment in low-resource, rural contexts have found that career advancement opportunities and financial incentives, rather than lifestyle preference, are primary drivers of accepting difficult postings (Ghana midwifery study, Rural Clinician Scarcity study, India), suggesting that necessity-driven acceptance of hardship postings is a cross-sectoral phenomenon in systems experiencing workforce shortages in remote areas, not one unique to teaching.

Within the Philippine setting, this pattern has been repeatedly affirmed in local qualitative research. Pancho (2022) examined the challenges and coping mechanisms of newly hired teachers assigned to far-flung schools and found that many respondents accepted such assignments primarily because these were the only available items after passing the Licensure Examination for Teachers, echoing the "first item offered" pragmatism voiced by Participant 8 in the present study. Albina et al. (2025), in a phenomenological study of novice, urban-originating elementary teachers deployed to remote mountainous areas in Negros Oriental, similarly found that teachers frequently entered such assignments out of professional necessity linked to item availability rather than personal readiness, subsequently having to develop resilience "on the job" rather than prior to deployment. The broader structural roots of this necessity are evidenced in DepEd staffing data between 2022 and 2023, only a small fraction of tens of thousands of open teaching positions nationwide were filled, leaving the majority of posts disproportionately concentrated in rural and remote schools vacant (EDCOM2 Communications, 2023), which helps explain why remote items remain more readily available to license-passers eager to enter government service. Both the international and Philippine literature converge on the same conclusion supported by the majority of participant responses in this study. Acceptance of remote teaching assignments among neophyte teachers is substantially shaped by structural labor-market necessity, limited item availability, urgent financial need, and incentive-seeking behavior rather than by an intrinsic preference for rural life or a purely altruistic calling to serve underserved communities.

Emerging Theme: "Isolation and Emotional Separation from Family and Support Systems"

The majority of participants described their struggles less in terms of the physical hardships of remote deployment alone, and more in terms of the emotional weight of being cut off from family, community, and a sense of belonging.

Participant 2 spoke extensively of isolation, explaining that the absence of cellular signal made it "hard to contact family, access online resources, communicate with other teachers, and receive important updates," and further shared the compounding difficulty of being "the only new teachers" in the area with "no one else to ask for help," a burden intensified by having to bring work home simply to accomplish basic tasks.

Participant 3 echoed this emotional dimension, admitting to feeling "too much loneliness" because it was the first time being far from family, a feeling only eventually eased with time ("thanks God today I am already okay").

Participant 4 likewise identified being "far away from family" as one of the central struggles, placing it alongside but distinct from facility-related concerns.

Participant 6 captured this experience holistically, describing the combined physical and logistical toll as producing a "reality shock" accompanied by "different emotional hurdles," a framing that names the psychological disorientation many neophyte teachers experience upon deployment.

Participant 7 similarly cited "separation from family and familiar surroundings" as a distinct and significant struggle, separate from transportation or workload concerns.

Participant 11 gave the most explicit account of this theme, describing "homesickness and isolation from family, friends, and the conveniences of urban life," further compounded by the difficulty of "understanding and bridging the local dialect/culture of the community," particularly when engaging with parents and learners from indigenous or minority groups indicating that the isolation experienced is not only physical distance from loved ones, but also a deeper cultural and social estrangement from the new environment itself.

These accounts reveal that beyond the well-documented logistical hardships of remote postings, neophyte teachers experience a significant emotional and psychological struggle rooted in disconnection from family, from peer support, and in some cases from the cultural fabric of the community they are meant to serve.

The prominence of isolation and emotional separation as the leading struggle among neophyte teachers in remote assignments carries several important implications.

This finding aligns with what teacher-induction literature broadly terms "reality shock" or "praxis shock" the disorienting gap between the expectations formed during pre-service training and the lived, often isolating, realities of first deployment. Unlike experienced teachers who have developed personal coping repertoires and professional networks, neophyte teachers face this disconnection with limited resources for emotional self-regulation, making early-career remote placement a particularly high-risk period for burnout, disengagement, or attrition.

The compounding of physical isolation (no signal, no nearby colleagues) with emotional isolation (homesickness, loneliness) suggests that connectivity infrastructure gaps are not merely logistical inconveniences they directly undermine teachers' access to informal mentoring, peer debriefing, and family-based emotional support, all of which are protective factors against early-career teacher stress. This implies that DepEd's induction and mentoring programs, which often assume some baseline access to communication technology, may be structurally inadequate for genuinely remote postings and require redesign toward face-to-face, locally embedded mentoring models.

The cultural and linguistic estrangement described by Participant 11 difficulty bridging local dialect and culture with indigenous or minority learners and parents signals a distinct sub-dimension of isolation beyond simple distance from family, a form of cultural isolation that can affect classroom relationships, parental engagement, and the teacher's sense of professional efficacy. This has direct implications for pre-deployment training, suggesting a need for stronger cultural orientation and, where applicable, basic local language exposure prior to assignment in Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd)-covered communities.

This isolation-driven struggle emerged as the majority theme even above resource scarcity and transportation difficulties, it implies that psychosocial support structures not only material or infrastructural interventions

should be prioritized in retention strategies for neophyte teachers in GIDA and remote postings. Purely logistical solutions (better roads, more supplies) may not sufficiently address the emotional core of what makes early remote deployment difficult to sustain.

The concept of "reality shock" the disorienting confrontation between pre-service expectations and the isolating realities of early practice has been extensively used to describe the emotional experience of beginning teachers. Ferry and Westerlund (2023) found that novice teachers placed in secluded or under-supported assignments experienced reality shock intertwined with professional isolation and marginalization, conditions that, without adequate collegial support and school leadership intervention, increased the risk of early disengagement from the profession. Broader research on beginning-teacher wellbeing further affirms that social isolation and the loss of peer and family support networks are significant predictors of emotional exhaustion in the early career phase, with structured social support shown to reduce isolation and turnover intentions among novice teachers.

Within the Philippine setting, this pattern is strongly echoed. Fabrigas and Paglinawan (2025) documented that teachers in underserved and remote Philippine regions face isolation, cultural diversity challenges, and geographic barriers as central difficulties, while noting that those who persevere often draw on personal commitment, cultural values, and relational support systems to cope implying that where such support is initially absent, as in the case of newly deployed neophyte teachers, the isolation experienced is especially acute. The cultural dimension of this isolation is further reflected in Philippine studies on Indigenous Peoples Education postings: accounts of IP teachers and non-IP teachers assigned to hinterland schools during and after the pandemic describe navigating not only geographic isolation but also the need to adapt to unfamiliar community customs and communication patterns distinct from mainstream Filipino educational settings.

An examination of Filipino teachers deployed to culturally distinct and geographically remote contexts abroad found that homesickness and emotional hardship consistently emerged as central struggles compounding the demands of adapting to a new teaching environment, underscoring that separation from family and familiar cultural surroundings is a cross-context experience for Filipino educators placed far from home, whether domestically or internationally.

For neophyte teachers, the struggle of remote assignment is experienced not primarily as a resource or infrastructure problem, but as a deeply emotional experience of separation from family, from peer and mentoring networks, and in culturally distinct postings, from the community itself consistent with the broader theoretical framework of reality shock in early-career teaching.

Emerging Theme: "Positive Psychological Resilience Anchored in Faith and Purpose-Driven Reframing"

The majority of participants described coping with the demands of remote assignment not primarily through external resources or institutional intervention, but through an internally cultivated resilience rooted in patience, faith, and a reframing of hardship as meaningful or purposeful.

Participant 1 coped by "learning to manage my time, being patient with myself, and continuously improving," acknowledging that the struggle to balance being a teacher, mother, and homemaker remains ongoing but is managed through sustained personal discipline.

Participant 2 similarly endured exhausting late nights of lesson preparation, finding the motivation to continue not from external support but from the intrinsic reward of "seeing my learners understand and enjoy the lessons."

Participant 3 explicitly framed coping as an act of spiritual surrender, stating, "I accepted the situation that God given to me," and drawing strength from a "promise to the lord" that kept them "grounded" even amid exhaustion and material lack.

Participant 4 offered the most concise expression of this spiritual coping strategy, stating simply that all matters would be "taken properly if we surrender to God."

Participant 5 reframed the entire experience through a lens of personal growth, describing initial despair ("you think life is cruel with you") that transformed into the realization that surviving the hardship was "just a test of your patience and endurance."

Participant 6 relied on maintaining "a positive attitude," staying focused on personal purpose, and viewing every difficulty as "a chance to learn and become better."

Participant 10 combined both dimensions directly, coping through "continuous prayer, faith, and maintaining a positive mindset to keep myself motivated despite the hardships."

It reveals that the dominant coping strategy among neophyte teachers in this study was not primarily seeking external help or material solutions, but cultivating an internal, often faith-anchored, psychological resilience one that reframes hardship as a test, a growth opportunity, or a matter entrusted to a higher power.

This finding suggests that neophyte teachers in remote Philippine postings are relying heavily on self-generated emotional and spiritual resources rather than institutional or structural support systems to sustain themselves through hardship. While this reflects admirable individual resilience, it also signals a potential gap in DepEd's formal induction and wellness support infrastructure coping is being privatized and internalized by teachers themselves, rather than facilitated through structured mentoring, counseling, or wellness programs at the school or division level.

The strongly spiritual and faith-oriented character of this coping is consistent with well-documented patterns in Filipino psychology, wherein religiosity and spirituality function as central resilience resources during adversity. This has implications for how school heads and division offices design support interventions: wellness programs that ignore or are disconnected from teachers' spiritual and cultural frameworks may be less effective or less readily embraced than those that acknowledge and work within these existing coping resources.

While positive reframing and faith-based resilience appear protective in the short term, an overreliance on internally generated coping without complementary structural interventions carries a risk of normalizing hardship. Teachers who consistently reframe difficult conditions as "tests of patience and endurance" may be less likely to report struggles through formal channels, potentially masking systemic issues that require institutional correction rather than individual endurance. This has direct implications for policy: administrators should be cautious not to mistake teachers' resilience and positive framing as evidence that remote-post conditions are adequate.

The intrinsic motivation described by several suggests that a sense of purpose and perceived impact functions as a powerful sustaining force for neophyte teachers. This implies that recognition programs, opportunities for reflection on student impact, and purpose-reinforcing mentorship could meaningfully strengthen retention, complementing the material and logistical support that remote postings also require.

Edara, del Castillo, Ching, and del Castillo (2021) examined the relationship between religiosity and contentment among Filipino teachers during a period of significant occupational stress, finding that religiosity was significantly and positively associated with resilience, optimism, and overall well-being, functioning as a mediating resource that helped teachers remain grounded despite adverse working conditions. The pattern observed among the majority of participants in the present study, several of whom explicitly framed their coping as an act of spiritual surrender or faith. Tuason, Ancheta, and Ladia (2021) found that spirituality served as a central coping mechanism among Filipinos navigating difficult and unfamiliar circumstances, providing emotional grounding and a sense of meaning that sustained functioning under prolonged hardship. It directly mirrored in Participant 3's and Participant 4's accounts of surrendering their situation to God. Broader Philippine research on remote-area educators similarly affirms that emotional and spiritual resilience reliance on faith, prayer, self-care routines, and the deliberate maintenance of a positive mindset functions as a key sustaining mechanism for teachers assigned to isolated and under-resourced postings, alongside behavioral strategies such as community rapport-building (Fabrigas & Paglinawan, 2025). Teacher resilience research has similarly emphasized the role of positive reframing, purpose, and personal meaning-making as protective

factors during the demanding early years of teaching. Beltman, Mansfield, and Price (2022) identified personal and professional factors including a strong sense of purpose, optimism, and the ability to reframe challenges as growth opportunities as central contributors to teacher resilience. Research on Filipino migrant teachers coping with professional and cultural adjustment abroad found that spirituality and familial values consistently emerged as primary self-care and coping strategies, even in geographically and culturally distant settings, suggesting that faith-anchored resilience is a durable and portable coping resource among Filipino educators regardless of context.

For Filipino neophyte teachers navigating the hardships of remote assignment, coping is substantially rooted in internally generated psychological and spiritual resilience faith, purpose, and positive reframing rather than primarily in external or institutional support mechanisms, a pattern with both protective value and important implications for how support systems should be designed and delivered.

Emerging Theme: “Cultivating Holistic Preparedness and Adaptability”

The majority of the participants emphasized that surviving and thriving as a neophyte teacher in a remote area requires a conscious effort toward internal and external readiness. Participants highlighted that actual classroom conditions drastically diverge from university theories, demanding an immediate shift in mindset. Neophyte teachers are advised to be "ready and open-minded to face new experiences and challenges," recognizing that academic training does not fully prepare them for the "sheer grit" required in far-flung assignments (Participant 1, Participant 5). This readiness must be holistic, spanning "mentally and emotionally prepared" states to ward off professional isolation and loneliness, alongside being "physically" primed to adjust to harsh living environments (Participant 2, Participant 7, Participant 8). Beyond internal conditioning, the participants noted that holistic preparedness manifests as tactical adaptability, future educators must "embrace the community," learn the "local dialect to ease communication," and be "resourceful and flexible" enough to improvise instructional materials when basic facilities and internet connection are absent (Participant 4, Participant 9, Participant 11).

The theme Cultivating Holistic Preparedness and Adaptability implies that the transition from a pre-service student teacher to a full-time public-school teacher in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDA) is characterized by a severe reality shock. The implications are twofold. The Inadequacies of Theoretical Training, textbook pedagogical models assume ideal classroom settings. When neophytes encounter the realities of remote schools, their survival relies not on theoretical knowledge, but on psychological resilience and material resourcefulness. The Shift from Teacher to Community Member, adaptability in remote areas extends past the classroom walls. To remain in the service, neophyte educators must integrate into the local socio-cultural fabric, meaning that linguistic adaptation and community relationship-building are core components of basic professional competency.

The necessity for early-career teachers to develop deep psychological resilience and contextual flexibility when deployed to marginalized or rural areas is heavily documented. A systematic review on novice teacher integration noted that resilience is not merely an inherent trait but a dynamic process involving cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions that allow teachers to recover from reality shock and recover quickly from environmental setbacks (Jin, 2024). In remote teaching assignments, the primary hurdle identified is often professional and social isolation. International perspectives emphasize that cultivating an open-minded and solution-oriented framework allows novice educators to reframe intense systemic challenges into tangible opportunities for professional growth and alternative meaning-making (Consortia Academia, 2026). Consequently, international bodies continue to push for teacher education institutions to integrate rural-specific coping strategies and emotional regulation into their core curricula to better prepare graduates for non-idealized educational landscapes.

The deployment of newly hired teachers to "Last-Mile Schools" or remote mountainous sectors forces an abrupt operational shift toward indigenous values and extreme resourcefulness. Qualitative findings from the trails of far-flung regions reveal that neophyte educators experience intense anxieties stemming from uncomfortable living conditions and heavy administrative workloads. To survive these structural deficiencies, local literature shows that novice teachers must lean heavily on *pagtitiis* (endurance) and *bayanihan*

(communal unity). Recent studies confirm that successful adaptation in Philippine remote public schools is strictly dependent on a teacher's capacity for structural improvisation such as constructing localized lesson plans and turning to community stakeholders for physical and instructional support which ultimately bridges the gap between pre-service expectations and the realities of the field.

CONCLUSION

The transition from pre-service preparation to the actual classroom for neophyte teachers in remote Philippine areas is characterized by a profound "reality shock". This study concludes that the decision to accept these difficult assignments is driven primarily by pragmatic necessity, such as economic survival and the lack of available teaching slots in urban centers, rather than purely altruistic idealism. Once deployed, these educators face significant emotional and psychological struggles rooted in isolation from family and support systems, which often outweigh the physical or logistical hardships of the environment.

To navigate these challenges, neophyte teachers rely heavily on internally cultivated resilience, often anchored in faith, patience, and a purpose-driven reframing of their hardships. However, this reliance on personal spiritual and psychological resources highlights a critical gap in institutional support and formal induction programs within the Department of Education (DepEd). Surviving and thriving in the "hinterlands" requires holistic preparedness, where teachers must shift from being mere instructors to becoming integrated community members who possess the "sheer grit" to adapt to localized socio-cultural and structural realities. This research underscores the urgent need for policymakers to move beyond narratives of individual survival toward structurally sound induction frameworks that ensure sustainable professional thriving for those at the "last-mile" of education.

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