

Experiences of Filipino Teachers in Facilitating Transition among Students with Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

This is a phenomenological study that aimed to explore and understand the lived experiences of Filipino Special Education (SPED) Teachers handling Transition planning. The study employed a case study methodology, which seeks to examine the essence of the experiences shared by participants within a common context. It employed a semi-structured interview, utilizing a priori codes to identify themes in the participants' responses through thematic analysis. The final theme is Bridging Gaps through Knowledge and Collaboration, comprising two subthemes: understanding the process and coordination, and collaboration and family involvement. The researcher concluded that the experiences teachers have in their transition planning are based on several stages that teachers must undergo to refine their pedagogies. While it is true that they face challenges, it is never a hindrance to continuing their passion and working with the community to include all learners.

INTRODUCTION

Education stands as a gateway to diverse opportunities, shaping individuals' competencies, nurturing potential, and imparting invaluable knowledge. In the context of inclusive education, the experiences of Filipino teachers in teaching students with disabilities are paramount.

In line with the universal right to education, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) emphasizes the importance of inclusivity, recognizing the diverse needs and backgrounds of all learners (UNESCO, 2022). This principle extends to students with disabilities, who deserve equitable access to quality education tailored to their requirements. Inclusive education goes beyond mere provision; it entails creating environments that embrace diversity and foster the full participation and engagement of every student. Against this backdrop, understanding the experiences of Filipino teachers in navigating inclusive practices becomes not just a matter of pedagogy but a fundamental aspect of promoting educational equity and social inclusion.

Furthermore, given the prevailing tendency for diverse learners, particularly those with disabilities, to be marginalized, each milestone in their educational journey represents a significant triumph in navigating the complexities of our challenging and inequitable society. Education serves as the cornerstone for empowering learners with disabilities to develop adaptive skills essential for daily living and self-sufficiency, thereby fostering their independence and integration into society. Thus, in alignment with the principles of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which advocates for inclusive and quality education for all, it becomes imperative to ensure that education is not merely a privilege but a fundamental right accessible to every child. This recognition underscores the urgency of addressing barriers to education, particularly for learners with disabilities, as highlighted by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (n.d.). Despite advancements in the educational system, lifelong learning opportunities remain elusive for many, perpetuating exclusion and undermining the rights of learners with disabilities. By shedding light on these disparities, the study highlights the need for targeted interventions and inclusive policies to ensure equitable access to education for all learners, regardless of their ability.

In the pedagogy of inclusive education, which emphasizes accommodating all students regardless of their limitations, a critical need arises to dismantle barriers and foster environments that enable the holistic development of every learner (Muzaffarova, 2020). The principles of inclusive education underscore the importance of nurturing environments where all students, including those with disabilities, can thrive and reach their full potential. Moreover, inclusive education extends beyond the classroom, encompassing the seamless transition of learning into society and higher education settings. Transition programs play a pivotal role in facilitating this continuity. These programs offer specialized opportunities for students with learning disabilities to gain valuable work experience in real-world environments. The present study aims to explore the challenges faced by students with special needs during their internships, as documented by Aliza

(2014) and Magee (2019). As part of the investigation, two students were carefully selected and trained to develop relevant work-related skills in preparation for their upcoming internships. Such insights are crucial for enhancing the vocational and independent living skills of students with disabilities, thereby empowering them to lead fulfilling and autonomous lives post-education.

The transition program, as outlined by Pawilen et al. (2018), serves as a vital avenue for imparting independent and vocational skills to students with intellectual and physical handicaps. Typically initiated during adolescence, around the age of thirteen, these programs play a crucial role in preparing youth with intellectual disabilities for the workforce. Platt (2013) underscores the significance of such preparation, emphasizing its role in fostering independence, facilitating employment opportunities, and promoting community engagement among participants. The existence and efficacy of transition programs carry profound implications for individuals with disabilities, their families, and society at large.

Moreover, initiatives aimed at delivering transition programs have proliferated across various countries, as noted by Solberg et al. (2014). In the United States, federal support for transition initiatives is exemplified through the collaborative efforts of governmental agencies, including the Department of Labor, the Department of Education, and the Office of Special Education Programs, under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014. This legislation, as highlighted by Shape (2016), facilitates the provision of youth career services, including Community-based Transition Programs, aimed at bolstering employment prospects and retention among youth with disabilities. The collaborative and coordinated approach to transition programs, as mandated by legislative frameworks such as the Workforce Innovation Act of 2014, underscores the commitment of governments to promote the socioeconomic inclusion of individuals with disabilities. Additionally, they contribute to the fulfilment of broader societal goals related to diversity, equity, and social cohesion.

Undeniably, the success of transition programs hinges on the pivotal role of SPED teachers in transition. Tasked with facilitating the acquisition of daily living and vocational skills, these teachers play a crucial role in preparing students for a successful transition to adult life within the community. Through effective communication, personalized instruction, and collaborative planning, transition teachers empower students with disabilities to navigate the challenges of adulthood with confidence and independence (Job Responsibilities, n.d.). The expertise and commitment of transition SPED teachers are essential for the success of transition programs.

Furthermore, transition services commence at age thirteen for learners in special education, with planning overseen by the specialized education team. Rooney (2016) emphasizes the importance of this coordinated effort, highlighting the creation of tailored transition goals that focus on postsecondary education, independent living, and employment, aligning with each learner's interests and abilities. The initiation of transition services at age thirteen holds significant implications for the future trajectories of learners with disabilities. By

establishing specific transition goals, educators and support teams lay the groundwork for seamless transitions into adulthood, encompassing postsecondary education, independent living, and employment. This proactive approach not only empowers learners to pursue their aspirations but also fosters a sense of autonomy and self-determination.

Moreover, alongside legislative endeavors to enhance transition systems for learners with disabilities, researchers have conducted numerous studies to identify best practices in transition services. These studies, as noted by Rooney (2016), serve as invaluable resources for educators and policymakers, offering insights into practical strategies and interventions to support the successful transition of youth with disabilities. Filipino SPED teachers in New Mexico encounter a wide range of student abilities, disabilities, and cultural backgrounds within their classrooms. They must be adept at addressing individualized needs and implementing evidence-based instructional strategies to promote student learning and development. Many of them face challenges related to limited resources, including funding shortages, inadequate staffing levels, and insufficient access to specialized support services and materials. These resource constraints can impact their ability to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities effectively.

Filipino SPED teachers must navigate complex legal and policy frameworks, including federal laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and state regulations governing special education services. Staying informed about legal requirements and policy changes is essential to ensure compliance and advocate effectively for students' rights. Additionally, Filipino SPED teachers engage in multidisciplinary teams, collaborate with general education teachers, and work closely with families to develop and implement individualized education plans (IEPs) and transition plans for students with disabilities.

The pivotal role of teachers in ensuring the success of transition programs cannot be overstated, as underscored by their multifaceted responsibilities within the program framework. Central to the Transition Program's objectives is the cultivation of essential daily living and vocational skills that are indispensable for a seamless transition to adult life within the community (Job Responsibilities, n.d.). Emphasizing communication, maximum independence, and skill generalization in natural settings, teachers serve as facilitators, mentors, and advocates for their students' holistic development. The diverse responsibilities outlined for transition SPED teachers underscore the need for comprehensive training and ongoing professional development to ensure effective instructional planning and implementation. This highlights the importance of investing in teacher education and support initiatives to enhance the quality and impact of transition programs for students with disabilities.

It is in this light that the researcher aims to explore the experiences of Filipino teachers in the transition program. There is a dearth of references on transition programs and transition planning, let alone the various experiences of teachers. It is in these essences that the researcher finds the relevance of the said undertaking. This study will be beneficial not only to teachers in the United States

but also to teachers in the Philippines, as it will shed light on the inclusive pedagogies that teachers employ in the transition program.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

In the study, three relevant theories or concepts stand out: Social Constructivism, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and Ecological Systems Theory.

Social Constructivism emphasizes the importance of social interaction and collaborative learning in the construction of knowledge. Within inclusive pedagogies, this theory suggests that students with disabilities benefit from active engagement with peers and teachers, fostering their learning and skill development.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provides a framework for designing instructional methods and materials that cater to diverse learning needs, ensuring accessibility and participation for all students. By implementing UDL principles, SPED teachers can create inclusive learning environments conducive to successful transitions.

Additionally, *Ecological Systems Theory* emphasizes the interconnectedness between individuals and their environments, urging SPED teachers to consider the various systems influencing students' development and transition outcomes. Understanding these theories and applying them in practice can enhance the teaching experiences, pedagogies, and transition planning processes of Filipino SPED teachers, ultimately benefiting students with disabilities.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The qualitative research design selected for this study enables the exploration of individuals' lived experiences and narratives related to specific phenomena (Smith, 2018). Utilizing a case study methodology, this research aims to explore the essence of the experiences shared by participants within a familiar context (Yin, 2018). Specifically, the researcher aims to analyze and attribute meaning to the lived experiences of Filipino SPED teachers in Rio Arriba County, New Mexico, USA.

The case study approach proves invaluable when aiming to attain a profound understanding of a particular issue, event, or phenomenon within its natural, real-life setting (Stake, 1995). In the realm of research, employing the case study methodology allows for the comprehensive exploration of interconnected phenomena (Merriam, 2009). For instance, it enables a detailed examination of the lived experiences of teachers as they navigate successful transition planning or, more broadly, investigate contemporary phenomena within the authentic contexts of their professional practice (Crowe et al., 2011).

Sample Population

The sample population for this study consisted of Filipino SPED teachers who specialize in transition planning for students with disabilities. Participants

were selected based on specific criteria to ensure the relevance and depth of professional insight. First, all participants were required to have a minimum of five years of teaching experience within the public school system of Rio Arriba County, New Mexico, United States. This criterion ensured that participants had substantial exposure to the local educational context and practices. Second, only Filipino SPED teachers were considered for inclusion, allowing the study to explore culturally informed perspectives on transition planning. Third, preference was given to participants who hold valid certification or licensure in the United States, supporting the study's aim to examine practices aligned with U.S. educational standards and district-level transition planning protocols. A total of five participants were recruited for the study, all of whom met the criteria. This purposive sampling approach was designed to capture a diverse range of experiences and insights, thereby enriching the study's findings.

Data Gathering Tool

A researcher-created semi-structured interview guide was developed based on the concept layers of teaching experiences, which facilitated the generation of a priori codes. The interview questions were presented to the reading committee for internal validation. After incorporating the committee's suggested revisions and receiving formal approval, the researcher proceeded with the data collection through interviews. The focus was on the teaching experiences of Filipino SPED teachers in facilitating transition plans among students with disabilities. Analyses of the responses were done using the thematic coding process.

Data Gathering Procedure

Purposive sampling, a commonly employed technique in qualitative research, was used to select information-rich cases, optimizing resource utilization while meticulously considering the limitations. This method involved identifying and selecting individuals or groups possessing exceptional knowledge or experience relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Beyond expertise, factors such as availability, willingness to participate, and the ability to articulate experiences and opinions coherently are also considered pivotal. Moreover, the procedural framework included setting appointments with potential participants, during which the nature and purpose of the study were transparently presented, ensuring mutual understanding and informed consent. Flexibility regarding the timing of interviews was also prioritized to accommodate participants' schedules, fostering convenience and cooperation. Additionally, to maintain the precision and accuracy of the data, interviews were recorded using audio, facilitating thorough analysis and interpretation. Subsequently, these recordings were transcribed meticulously to ensure clarity and fidelity to participants' expressions, contributing to the rigor and credibility of the study's findings. This comprehensive approach ensured the selection of participants who not only offer valuable insights but also are actively engaged in the research process, enriching the study's depth and credibility.

Treatment of Data

The treatment of data in this study involved conducting a thematic analysis, following Creswell's (2014) systematic process for coding data, to extract meaningful patterns and insights from the gathered information, thus addressing each of the outlined objectives comprehensively. This process entails analyzing specific statements and categorizing them into themes that represent the phenomenon of interest.

For the first objective, the teaching experiences of Filipino SPED teachers were evaluated by systematically examining the narratives and reflections provided by participants. This process entails identifying recurring themes and significant experiences related to their teaching roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, the second objective involves shifting the focus towards appreciating the best pedagogies employed by SPED teachers in the transition program. Utilizing thematic analysis, notable teaching methods, strategies, and approaches used by participants were systematically identified and synthesized to underscore effective practices.

Lastly, for the third objective, thematic analysis was employed to delve into the challenges and best practices encountered by Filipino SPED teachers in facilitating successful transition planning for students with disabilities. By meticulously analyzing participants' accounts, common obstacles and innovative solutions, as well as successful strategies, were discerned and elucidated.

Throughout this process, rigorous attention was given to maintaining the integrity and reliability of the data. Themes were identified through systematic coding and constant comparison of responses across participants and objectives. Additionally, triangulation techniques may be employed to ensure the validity and credibility of the findings. This thorough treatment of data aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of the teaching experiences, pedagogical approaches, challenges, and best practices of Filipino SPED teachers in facilitating transition planning for students with disabilities.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations encompass all aspects of participant involvement in the study. The participant selection criteria, as outlined, prioritize the inclusion of Filipino SPED teachers with extensive teaching experience and relevant certifications, ensuring their expertise aligns with the research objectives. It was imperative to uphold ethical standards by respecting participants' autonomy and ensuring that their participation was voluntary. Throughout the recruitment process, potential participants were provided with clear information about the study's purpose, procedures, and any potential risks involved. Moreover, they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity through coding of their responses, safeguarding their privacy.

Furthermore, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussion. This emphasizes the importance of minimizing potential risks and prioritizing participants' well-being throughout the research process. Additionally, participants were assured that their involvement in the study would not conflict with their professional

responsibilities or jeopardize their employment status, mitigating any concerns related to their participation.

Lastly, transparency and reciprocity were upheld by disseminating the research findings to the participants, allowing them to benefit from and contribute to the study's outcomes. Adhering to these ethical considerations, the research aimed to maintain the integrity and trustworthiness of the study while respecting the rights and welfare of the participating SPED teachers.

RESULTS

Based on the interviews gathered, three main themes emerged: First, Collaborative and Holistic Transition Planning for Student Success, with two subthemes: Organizing and Planning Valuable Student-Related Information and Appropriate Planning and Assessment. The second theme, Barriers to Effective Professional Practice, comprises three subthemes: Lack of Professional Knowledge, Lack of Resources, and Lack of Assessment Guidance. The last theme is Bridging Gaps through Knowledge and Collaboration, with two subthemes: Understanding the Process and Coordination, Collaboration, and Family Involvement.

DISCUSSION

Collaborative and Holistic Transition Planning for Students Success

Collaborative and holistic transition planning is an approach that emphasizes the importance of integrating various stakeholders—teachers, families, community members, and specialists—in the transition process for students with disabilities. This method acknowledges that successful transitions are not solely the responsibility of educators but rather require a unified effort to address the diverse needs of students. According to the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC, 2020), effective transition planning should involve a comprehensive framework that includes individualized education plans (IEPs), community resources, and family engagement.

In addition, collaboration in transition planning can significantly benefit students with significant disabilities by utilizing an interdisciplinary team approach. This involves integrating multiple professionals, such as special educators, speech-language pathologists, and school counselors, who each bring unique expertise to the table. Transition planning is crucial as it prepares these students for adulthood, encompassing aspects such as higher education, employment, and independent living. The collaboration between various professionals ensures a holistic approach to the student's development. Each team member, including special educators, speech-language pathologists, and school counselors, contributes distinct skills and perspectives. Special educators focus on developing academic skills and coordinating the transition process. Speech-language pathologists address communication needs, facilitating functional communication and social interaction skills essential for adult life. School counselors support career preparation and social-emotional development, ensuring students are well-prepared for the demands of post-secondary environments. This collaborative effort results in more tailored and effective

transition plans, thereby maximizing the potential for successful adult outcomes (Frazier et al., 2020).

Research has shown that collaborative transition planning has a positive impact on student outcomes. For instance, Test et al. (2021) found that students with disabilities who participated in collaborative transition planning reported higher levels of self-determination and satisfaction with their educational experiences. The study emphasized that when students are actively involved in the planning process and when their families and educators work together, they are more likely to achieve their post-secondary goals.

A holistic approach also involves addressing the emotional and social aspects of transition. According to Lindstrom et al. (2020), effective transition planning should consider not just the academic and vocational needs of students but also their social and emotional well-being. Emotional well-being is one among the key elements of a successful transition. Students often feel anxious, frightened, and uncertain about themselves when transitioning from one educational institution to another or from school to society. At times, the process takes a toll on their emotional well-being; collaborative transition planning helps support emotional coping.

To summarize, the findings can be linked to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes collaboration as a key component in understanding the multiple influences on students' development. The theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of various environmental systems. This theory highlights how different contexts as relationships, impact students' transition experiences. Understanding the various core components of Bronfenbrenner's framework allows educators to create culturally responsive transition plans that meet the diverse needs of all students. Collaborative efforts involving multiple stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, community organizations, and students, are crucial. It also emphasizes that effective transition planning must consider not only academic needs but also social and emotional well-being, with access to counselling services to help students manage the challenges they face along the transition. Community engagement and partnership are also necessary to provide valuable support. Understanding the diverse backgrounds of students can lead to more effective transition planning by creating inclusive environments that respect and celebrate diversity.

Organizing and Planning Valuable Student-related Information

Organizing and planning valuable student-related information is essential for educators aiming to support students effectively during their transition from high school to post-secondary opportunities. This process involves gathering insights into students' interests, aspirations, and personal circumstances, all of which significantly influence their educational paths and career readiness. Research indicates that when students' interests align with their educational goals, they exhibit higher levels of motivation and engagement (Schunk et al., 2020).

A collaborative approach is crucial in the transition planning process, involving students, families, educators, and community professionals. Engaging these stakeholders leads to improved outcomes, particularly for students with

disabilities (Lee & Kearney, 2022). Moreover, understanding students' personal circumstances—such as socio-economic status and family support—enables educators to provide targeted resources and guidance, fostering a more equitable educational environment (Rumberger & Lim, 2020). Technology also plays a vital role in this process, facilitating the collection and analysis of student data. Studies show that integrating technology enhances student engagement and strengthens communication among all parties involved (Hwang et al., 2022).

To ensure the effectiveness of transition plans, continuous feedback and adjustment are necessary. Regular check-ins enable educators to adjust their strategies in response to students' evolving needs and interests, ultimately leading to improved outcomes (Carter et al., 2021). This holistic approach to organizing and planning valuable student-related information is key to empowering students to navigate their futures with confidence.

In addition, selecting the most appropriate accommodations, interventions, or remedial approaches to assist a struggling learner requires consideration of the student's learning profile, educational history, and the resources available. Based on all the available information, teachers try out strategies and carefully monitor their effectiveness. Students with learning disabilities respond differently, as no two are affected in the same way (Tahan et al., 2022). This is the reason why organizing and planning student-related information is essential. It serves as the starting point for supporting the learning of students with disabilities, preparing them for transition.

Finally, information processing theory supports the theme, as it focuses on how individuals process information. As part of the cognitive theory, this is relevant to the study because teachers process the information their students provide. This may include data regarding the student's performance, both academically and non-academically, as well as their behavior. From this data, they process it and organize it to identify patterns, strengths, and weaknesses. For teachers, organizing student data ensures that important information is accessible and retrievable when needed. Using this theory, as teachers retrieve the information or data, they can find and utilize relevant student information for planning and decision-making. The theory centers on how information is received, processed, stored, and retrieved by the teachers. Teachers can develop effective systems and strategies that enhance their ability to manage student data, leading to improved educational outcomes.

Appropriate Planning and Assessment

Appropriate planning and assessment are fundamental components in supporting students' transitions from high school to post-secondary opportunities. As educators engage with students, they must prioritize collecting relevant information that reflects students' interests, aspirations, and individual circumstances. Mr. O emphasizes the importance of conducting student interviews and utilizing transition planning inventories to gather insights about students' goals and ambitions. This approach not only aids in understanding what students want to pursue after graduation but also allows educators to create tailored plans that address each student's unique needs (Schunk et al., 2020).

The assessment process should be collaborative, involving students, their families, and relevant professionals. Ms. K highlights her use of career assessment questionnaires to help students identify their interests and priorities. This collaborative approach is supported by research indicating that family involvement significantly enhances transition planning outcomes (Lee & Kearney, 2022). Additionally, ongoing assessment enables the refinement of these goals based on students' evolving interests and circumstances, which is crucial for effective planning (Carter et al., 2021).

Furthermore, effective transition planning must consider students' diverse needs, especially those with significant disabilities. Ms. T illustrates the importance of teaching essential life skills in conjunction with academic preparation. This holistic approach ensures that students are equipped to handle daily challenges, thus fostering independence. Research supports this notion by emphasizing the need for individualized education plans (IEPs) that are tailored to each student's unique situation (Rumberger & Lim, 2020).

Mr. O underscores the importance of gathering information to understand students' aspirations, *"I would start with, like, just in the process of collecting information based on student interviews using the transition planning inventory."* This approach enables educators to connect students' interests to their post-secondary goals, ensuring that transition plans are relevant and tailored to individual needs. He emphasizes that this process helps educators prepare students effectively: *"What we can do to prepare them for that... we can guide them and track them with whatever resources we have in the school."*

Similarly, Ms. K discusses the use of career assessment questionnaires to identify students' interests, *"First thing first is I give my students a questionnaire on career assessment... from there I asked them why they did it."* This structured assessment enables her to refine students' goals and ensure they align with their genuine aspirations. The iterative nature of this process is essential for developing measurable goals. *"We're gonna set up a goal and we call it measurable goals so that students can make sense of what they really want."* Furthermore, Ms. S emphasizes the importance of collaboration among all stakeholders in the planning process: *"You need to involve the students, the family, teachers, and relevant professionals in the planning process."*

This collaborative approach fosters a comprehensive understanding of each student's needs and creates a supportive environment for transition planning. Ms. U highlights the importance of addressing basic life skills, *"I have to focus on the very basic subtraction... preparing them to transition to college."* This focus on essential skills ensures that students are not only academically prepared but also equipped to handle the everyday challenges they face.

The UDL framework is closely linked to effective planning and assessment in transition planning, promoting an inclusive approach that accommodates the diverse needs of all learners. As UDL emphasizes flexibility in teaching methods and assessments, it ensures that educational practices are designed to meet the challenges and needs of the students. This process is fundamental in transition planning since it involves significant changes in the students' environment. Through the UDL framework, teachers are provided with a guide on the necessary

content for their lessons, enabling them to demonstrate their knowledge as well as that of their students, and making the learning and teaching process more engaging and interactive for all students.

Barriers to Effective Professional Practice

Barriers to effective professional practice refer to the obstacles that hinder educators from implementing best practices and achieving desired outcomes in their teaching environments. These barriers can be systemic, cultural, or personal, and often significantly impact the quality of education that students receive. For Filipino teachers participating in transition programs in the United States, these barriers are particularly pronounced as they navigate a new educational landscape that differs significantly from their prior experiences.

A study by Liao and Hsieh (2021) explores the challenges faced by immigrant teachers in adapting to new educational environments. The authors found that these teachers often encounter barriers, including limited access to professional development opportunities, language proficiency issues, and a lack of supportive networks. Specifically, the study highlighted that many immigrant educators feel isolated, which can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and hinder their ability to build effective teaching practices. Liao and Hsieh stated, *"Without adequate support systems, immigrant teachers struggle to integrate into their new roles, resulting in a negative impact on their professional effectiveness."*

Furthermore, systemic barriers also play a significant role. For example, the rigid structures of U.S. educational policies can limit the flexibility that teachers need to adapt their methodologies to suit their students' diverse needs better. As one Filipino teacher expressed, *"Sometimes, the policies don't allow us to be creative or to address the specific needs of our students."* This highlights how bureaucratic constraints can stifle innovation and responsiveness in teaching practices.

Additionally, the emotional toll of adapting to a new culture can also serve as a barrier. Filipino teachers may experience feelings of homesickness or cultural dislocation, which can affect their professional performance. Acknowledging these emotional challenges is crucial, as they can impact teachers' resilience and engagement in their roles. The process of transition planning, essential for individuals moving between life stages or settings, continues to face significant barriers that hinder effective professional practice.

Research indicates that the psychological needs of international teachers, including Filipino teachers, are often overlooked, leading to feelings of isolation and decreased job satisfaction (Chua, 2021). Culture shock can significantly impact the recruitment and retention of foreign teachers in US urban schools, underscoring the need for supportive measures to help them adjust to their new environment. Furthermore, Chua (2021) also noted that cultural dislocation can lead to a decline in professional performance, as teachers struggle to adapt to new educational systems while managing their emotional well-being. Fostering resilience is an imperative act. Support systems, such as mentorship programs and professional development opportunities that address cultural adaptation, can play a vital role in helping teachers cope with the emotional toll of their experiences in transition planning (Maravillas, 2020).

Social constructivism can be linked to this theme, as the theory emphasizes the importance of social interactions and collaborative learning in overcoming these barriers. Social constructivism posits that knowledge is constructed through social engagement and that learning occurs within a social context. For Filipino teachers transitioning to new cultural environments, the emotional hurdles they encounter, such as homesickness and cultural dislocation, can impact their ability to connect with colleagues and students, ultimately influencing their professional performance.

Moreover, in a social constructivist framework, the barriers that teachers experience are not just personal challenges but also communal issues that can be addressed through social interactions. Maravillas (2020) emphasizes the importance of collaborative cultures in schools, where teachers can support one another emotionally and professionally. Through this, it helps mitigate feelings of isolation and provides a platform for teachers to share their struggles and successes.

Finally, Social Constructivism emphasizes the importance of culturally relevant pedagogies that consider, acknowledge, and respect the diverse backgrounds of both students and teachers. the integration of culturally diverse practices creates an inclusive school that values unique experiences for all. Culturally responsive practices not only help teachers adjust to the environment but also enhance the learning atmosphere for every student. Culturally responsive teaching fosters a sense of belonging and engagement, which can alleviate the emotional toll (Chua, 2021; Maravilla, 2020) that students feel due to the barriers they encounter.

Lack of Professional Knowledge

Lack of professional knowledge in the context of transition planning refers to insufficient training, limited understanding of best practices, and gaps in awareness about available resources and legal requirements for professionals involved in guiding students with disabilities through the transition from school to post-secondary life (Mazzotti et al., 2021). This knowledge deficit can significantly impact the quality and effectiveness of transition planning, ultimately affecting students' post-school outcomes.

The first barrier, lack of professional knowledge, manifests as insufficient training, limited understanding of best practices, and gaps in awareness about available resources and legal requirements. Rowe et al. (2020) found that many professionals involved in transition planning report feeling underprepared to address the complex needs of individuals with disabilities transitioning to adulthood. This knowledge deficit can lead to suboptimal transition plans that fail to support individuals during critical life transitions adequately.

To address these gaps, professional development programs must encompass not only the technical aspects of transition planning but also focus on the essential skills needed. Teachers require comprehensive training in communication strategies that promote clear and empathetic dialogue with families (Leithwood, 2021). Developing skills in expectation management is vital, as it allows teachers to align parents' aspirations with realistic outcomes for their

children. Strengthening professional development to address the barriers encountered not only benefits the teachers but also leads to improved communication and collaboration with families. This fosters a more holistic approach to transition planning, prioritizing the needs and aspirations of students and their families.

Lack of Resources

Lack of resources in the context of transition planning refers to insufficient funding, limited access to necessary tools and technologies, inadequate staffing, and time constraints that impede the effective implementation of comprehensive transition plans for students with disabilities (Plotner & Marshall, 2020). This resource deficit can significantly impact the quality and scope of transition services, ultimately affecting students' post-school outcomes.

Recent studies have highlighted the persistent challenge of insufficient resources in transition planning. Wehman et al. (2021) found that many school districts struggle with limited funding for transition programs, a lack of specialized staff, and inadequate access to community-based resources essential for effective transition planning. These resource constraints can limit the range and quality of transition services available to students with disabilities.

The impact of limited resources on the quality and comprehensiveness of transition services is further illustrated by Ms. S's description of the challenges in coordination and placement said, *"A lot of coordination the lack of coordination with the team... because of the lack of coordination there's no proper placement there's no proper providing of classes there's no property so it's gonna be if you can do the transition planning process if there is a lack of coordination."* This statement suggests that resource limitations extend beyond mere financial constraints to include human resources and organizational capacity. It aligns with findings by Mazzotti et al. (2021), who identified interagency collaboration and coordination as critical factors in successful transition outcomes.

Moreover, the interviews reveal that resource limitations can manifest in various forms, including geographical constraints. Ms. T notes, *"Location is the main issue with special needs living in an away community for example a school is so far and parents are working and no one can bring this student to the nearest place of a school for example or a trade school or where to get the skills that that too is a very big obstacle to help a transitioning child."* This highlights the need for resources to address transportation and accessibility issues, particularly in rural or underserved areas. Rowe et al. (2020) similarly emphasized the unique challenges faced by rural communities in providing comprehensive transition services.

The lack of resources also impacts the tools and systems available for transition planning. Ms. U describes the adoption of a program to aid in the process, saying, *"Later on, the school has adopted a kind of program which we call it the Zillow which really helped us a lot in helping the students understand their interest because there is in that Zillow program there is an interest inventory, there are different careers that that are presented."* While this adoption of specialized tools is positive, it also underscores the need for ongoing investment in resources to support transition planning.

Lack of Assessment Guide

The lack of an assessment guide in transition planning refers to the absence or inadequacy of standardized tools, frameworks, and guidelines for evaluating students' transition readiness, measuring progress, identifying individual needs and goals, and establishing clear benchmarks for successful transitions (Neubert & Leconte, 2013). This deficiency can lead to inconsistent and potentially ineffective transition planning processes, ultimately impacting students' post-school outcomes.

The challenge of accurately assessing student interests and capabilities is further illustrated by Ms. U's description of their efforts to understand student goals mentioned, *"As a case manager, you have to make sure that you have to prepare questionnaire. You have to prepare a tools different tools in a way that you can get what is it that interests the students, what is it that the because even the students they don't know what aspect or what areas they're interested of doing in the future or even at present."* This observation underscores the importance of comprehensive assessment guides that not only evaluate skills and abilities but also enable students to explore and articulate their interests and aspirations. It aligns with findings by Neubert and Leconte (2013), who argued for the development of more holistic assessment approaches in transition planning.

The findings indicate that the lack of an assessment guide in transition planning reflects that, without an assessment guide, teachers may struggle to accurately evaluate students' readiness for transition, which can lead to poorly tailored support and services. This inconsistency not only undermines the effectiveness of transition planning but also leaves students without the necessary resources to develop their skills and achieve their goals. Consequently, educational policy makers must invest in the development and dissemination of comprehensive assessment tools that enable educators to conduct thorough evaluations. Establishing clear guidelines and benchmarks ensures that transition planning is systematic and geared towards the success of every student with disability.

Bridging Gaps through Knowledge and Collaboration

The transition of Filipino SPED teachers to the United States underscores the crucial role of bridging knowledge gaps through collaboration. Many Filipino educators migrate to the U.S. in search of better opportunities. Still, they often face challenges such as cultural adjustment, differences in educational systems, and varying expectations in special education practices (López, 2021). Addressing these challenges is essential for developing effective coping strategies.

One significant obstacle Filipino SPED teachers encounter is adapting to a new educational framework that may differ considerably from the systems they are accustomed to in the Philippines. This transition can lead to feelings of isolation and uncertainty as they navigate unfamiliar policies and practices (McChesney, 2020). Fostering a culture of knowledge sharing within educational institutions can be immensely beneficial. Creating support networks that include experienced educators and mentors allows Filipino SPED teachers to access valuable insights and resources that facilitate their adaptation (Higgins & Kram, 2020).

Collaboration with colleagues is another vital strategy for overcoming challenges. Engaging in professional learning communities enables these educators to share experiences, strategies, and resources, thereby enhancing their teaching practices and promoting a sense of belonging (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2021). Collaborative teaching models, where Filipino SPED teachers partner with local educators, provide opportunities for professional development while promoting cultural exchange and understanding (López, 2021).

Continuous professional development is also essential for Filipino SPED teachers to remain current with best practices in special education. Access to training programs focusing on U.S. educational standards and culturally responsive teaching empowers these educators to meet their students' needs effectively (Katz & Allen, 2020). Additionally, providing resources for self-directed learning enables teachers to take charge of their professional growth, fostering adaptability in their new environment (Kolb, 2021).

Understanding the Process

The transition process for Filipino SPED teachers in the United States is multifaceted, requiring a thorough understanding of educational policies, cultural nuances, and the diverse needs of students with special education needs. This understanding is essential for these educators to support their students and navigate their new roles successfully and effectively. As Mr. O articulated, *"It's just to really help them understand what this process is all about,"* highlighting the importance of guiding both students and educators through the complexities of transition planning.

A fundamental component of understanding the transition process lies in clarifying the various stages and resources available. Ms. K emphasized the necessity of clear communication, stating, *"Kids get confused, get lost... so what I do is collaborate with other professionals in the school."* This collaboration allows teachers to share insights and strategies that help demystify the transition process for students. Understanding these stages and resources ensures that both educators and students are well-prepared for the changes ahead.

Coordination, Collaboration, and Family Involvement

Collaboration is a cornerstone of effective practice for Filipino SPED teachers transitioning to the United States. This collaborative approach not only enhances the support available to students but also fosters a sense of community among educators. The interviews revealed that forming strong partnerships among teachers, specialists, and families is essential for navigating the complexities of the educational landscape. As Ms. K stated, *"What I do is collaborate with other professionals in the school... to see what really is best for the kid."* This collaborative mindset enables educators to leverage diverse expertise, ultimately benefiting their students.

The importance of interdisciplinary collaboration is echoed by Ms. S, who emphasized the need for *"enhancing collaboration and communication"* among stakeholders. She elaborated, *"You need to establish regular meetings, sharing information, and clarifying roles and responsibilities."* This aligns with McChesney (2020), who argues that effective collaboration among educators, families, and

community resources is crucial for supporting students with disabilities. When everyone involved is clear about their roles, as Ms. S noted, *"By the time that is very clear and precise, everybody knows where they're going; they're not wandering, they're not lost."* This clarity fosters an environment where students can thrive.

Moreover, engaging families in the educational process is critical for successful collaboration. Ms. S noted, *"You need to engage the family because if you're not coordinating with the family... It's not effective."* This finding aligns with research by López (2021), which highlights the importance of family involvement in creating a supportive educational environment. Ms. U reinforced this idea, stating, *"I collaborate with the parents... to understand the interests and strengths of the students."*

Additionally, the theme of Bridging Gaps through Knowledge and Collaboration illustrates the proactive measures taken by these educators to overcome obstacles, demonstrating their resilience and commitment to their students. Their efforts to understand the transition process and foster collaboration with families are commendable, highlighting the importance of continuous professional development and effective resource allocation. In conclusion, addressing the barriers faced by Filipino SPED teachers through supportive policies and resources is crucial for enhancing their professional practice.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions are drawn from the findings, and they have several important implications for educational policy and practice regarding Filipino SPED teachers in transition programs. First Filipino teachers undergo several stages to become the best at their pedagogy in the transition program. From their experiences, they can identify the best practices necessary to employ the necessities of transition fully. Second, the challenges they face are never a hindrance to stopping their passion and pursuing their goals for their children. Lastly, their coping strategies are not solely focused on themselves as they grow professionally inclined in their careers, but also on building a community that aims and strives for the transition and inclusion of all learners.

FURTHER STUDY

While this study has yielded some valuable findings, it also has limitations. Future research can further explore the following areas:

1. Longitudinal Studies: tracking the long-term impact of the transition plans on student learning outcomes and career development.
2. Comparative Studies: comparing the effectiveness of different transition planning in diverse educational settings.
3. Multimodal Studies: exploring the integration of various research designs and approaches, like quantitative and mixed-method designs.

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