

Pedagogical and socio-cultural adaptation: Lived experiences of Filipino early childhood teachers in Canada

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Abstract

Aim: This study explored the lived experiences of Filipino early childhood educators working in multicultural daycare settings in British Columbia, Canada, with particular attention to their pedagogical practices, socio-cultural adaptation, and professional identity formation.

Methodology: The study employed a transcendental phenomenological research design using Seidman's (2019) three-interview approach. Eight Filipino early childhood teachers with at least three years of teaching experience in Canadian daycare centers were purposively selected as participants. Data were analyzed using the Stevick–Colaizzi–Keen method to identify essential themes from the participants' narratives.

Results: Five key themes emerged from the analysis: interconnected teaching aspirations, resource-rich and supportive learning environments, adaptation to inclusive and multicultural contexts, learning across cultural differences, and building partnerships of trust and belonging. The findings reveal that Filipino educators encounter pedagogical and socio-cultural challenges when adjusting to Canadian early childhood education practices, particularly in reconciling differences in instructional approaches and classroom dynamics.

Conclusion: Filipino early childhood educators demonstrate resilience and adaptability by integrating their cultural values with Canadian early childhood education frameworks. Their experiences highlight the importance of culturally responsive teaching, collaborative support systems, and inclusive educational environments in promoting professional growth and effective teaching in multicultural settings.

Keywords: *Canadian daycare, early childhood teachers, pedagogical adaptation, socio-cultural adaptation*

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (ECE) is globally recognized as essential to children's holistic development and lifelong learning. International frameworks, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s Sustainable Development Goal 4 (2025), highlight the need for high-quality early learning and emphasize that learning begins at birth. In response, countries such as Canada and the Philippines have enacted major policy reforms to expand and improve ECE, recognizing its profound impact on individual and societal well-being.

In the Philippines, the government supports inclusive early education through measures like Republic Act No. 12199 (the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) System) and updates to the Early Years Act. These policies focus on access and equity for marginalized communities and align with global priorities (Castulo et al., 2025). Similarly, Canada's ECE is guided by the Universal Child Care Benefit and various provincial policies, all aimed at ensuring equitable, high-quality early learning opportunities (Government of Canada, 2025). Together, these frameworks span efforts from global to local for inclusive early education.

Despite these advances, ECE continues to face challenges worldwide. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns over learning recovery, equity, and system resilience have grown. Teacher preparedness, class size, institutional barriers, and societal attitudes still affect the effectiveness and inclusiveness of ECE (Ratten, 2023; Sing Yun, 2023). In response, Canada and the Philippines recognize that context-sensitive, strategic interventions are essential for their learners (Harvard University, 2025).

In Canada, multiculturalism shapes ECE and reflects the country's diverse population. By 2025, more than 957,000 Canadians identified as having Filipino origins, influencing early learning environments. Recent scholarship has called for more culturally responsive ECE approaches (Heinz et al., 2024; Rhijn et al., 2021). Filipino early childhood educators constitute a

growing and valuable segment of the workforce, yet their experiences of pedagogical and socio-cultural adaptation remain underexplored in the literature (Ancho et al., 2023).

To address this gap, the present study examined the lived experiences of Filipino early childhood teachers as they adapted pedagogically and socio-culturally within Canada's multicultural ECE sector. Given the limited scholarly attention to the specific adaptation experiences of Filipino teachers, this qualitative phenomenological inquiry analyzed their challenges, coping strategies, and cultural contributions. The study aimed to deepen understanding of multicultural adaptation in ECE and to inform culturally responsive policies and practices that support Filipino teachers and learners in diverse educational settings.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Lived Experiences of Early Childhood Teachers

Filipino early childhood teachers working overseas experience both professional growth and considerable challenges as they pursue improved financial stability, career advancement, and exposure to new teaching cultures (Andres, 2021). While they often bring nurturing, family-centered values to their classrooms and demonstrate adaptability, these educators face significant obstacles, including adapting to new instructional standards, language barriers, emotional strain from family separation, and under recognition of their qualifications (Jacela, 2022). Despite these challenges, their resilience and commitment continue to shape their evolving professional identities in multicultural settings.

Pedagogical Challenges in the Multicultural Classrooms

Early childhood teachers in multicultural classrooms often navigate complex pedagogical challenges as they strive to create inclusive environments for diverse learners. While many educators value multicultural education, they frequently encounter obstacles, including limited institutional support, insufficient training, language barriers, and rigid curricula that prioritize dominant cultural norms (Esparrago-Kalidas, 2025). Despite these challenges, teachers who employ culturally responsive practices—such as building strong relationships with families and integrating students' cultural backgrounds—can foster more equitable and engaging learning experiences, though sustained institutional support remains critical for success (Abdalla & Moussa, 2024).

Socio-Cultural Challenges in the Multicultural Classrooms

Filipino early childhood teachers working in multicultural settings, such as Canada and other international contexts, face a complex mix of opportunities and challenges as they adapt to new educational systems, navigate language barriers, and integrate their caregiving values into diverse classrooms (Alicamen & Becamon, 2022). Supported by ethnic community networks and institutional policies that increasingly value cultural inclusion, these educators demonstrate resilience as they manage cultural adaptation, maintain connections to their heritage, and negotiate dual processes of integration and cultural preservation (Banda et al., 2024). Despite encountering challenges such as instructional adaptation, diversity management, and the need for emotional support, Filipino teachers enrich multicultural early childhood education through their commitment, adaptability, and culturally rooted caregiving practices (Quitolbo, 2024).

Coping Strategies of Early Childhood Teachers

Filipino early childhood teachers in Canada's multicultural early learning environments often face significant challenges, including job instability, emotional stress from family separation, and barriers to professional advancement, despite supportive policy frameworks (Bates & Dynia, 2025). To cope, these educators rely on adaptive strategies such as community engagement, collaboration, and reflective practice to enhance their cultural awareness and teaching methods, and use storytelling and culturally relevant resources to bridge gaps with diverse students (Ashrafova, 2024). However, the effectiveness of these coping mechanisms is often limited by structural and institutional barriers, underscoring the need for more consistent support and professional development opportunities.

Role of Early Childhood Teachers in Multicultural Classrooms

Filipino early childhood teachers in multicultural Canadian classrooms play a crucial role by integrating culturally rooted values such as *pakikisama* (interpersonal harmony), *malasakit* (compassion), and *respeto* (respect) into their teaching, thereby fostering inclusive and supportive learning environments (Benitez, 2022). Despite their professionalism and adaptability, these educators often face systemic challenges, including barriers to certification and limited recognition of their cultural contributions, which can hinder their full participation in shaping classroom practices. Research emphasizes that, although policy frameworks promote multiculturalism, genuine inclusivity requires moving beyond surface-level gestures toward deeper engagement with cultural diversity through sustained professional development and culturally responsive pedagogy (Lakhwani, 2023).

Filipino early childhood teachers working abroad experience both professional growth and significant challenges as they adapt to new educational systems, languages, and cultural expectations. Their nurturing, family-centered values, together with their adaptability, help them manage emotional strain and under recognition in multicultural settings. Despite these obstacles, their resilience and commitment continue to shape their evolving professional identities.

In multicultural classrooms, early childhood teachers must overcome pedagogical and socio-cultural barriers, such as limited institutional support, language differences, and rigid curricula that often privilege dominant norms. Filipino educators enrich these environments by drawing on ethnic community networks, integrating culturally responsive practices, and maintaining connections to their heritage. However, their efforts are frequently hampered by inadequate training, lack of recognition, and the need for greater institutional backing.

To cope with these challenges, Filipino teachers employ strategies such as community engagement, collaboration, and reflective practice, while also incorporating values such as *pakikisama*, *malasakit*, and *respeto* into their teaching. Their roles extend beyond caregiving, as they actively foster inclusive classrooms and bridge cultural gaps, even as systemic barriers persist. Ultimately, genuine inclusivity in early childhood education requires deeper institutional commitment to culturally responsive pedagogy and ongoing professional development.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by multiple theoretical frameworks, each providing a distinct perspective on the experiences of Filipino early childhood teachers in Canada. Schön's Reflective Practice Theory (Schön, 2017) highlights how teachers learn and adapt by reflecting on their professional actions, enabling them to refine their teaching approaches across diverse cultural and institutional settings (Hommel et al., 2023).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) frames teachers' experiences within multiple layers of influence, from classroom relationships to broader policy and cultural contexts. Filipino educators must navigate and sometimes shape these interconnected systems as part of their migration and integration process (Tong & An, 2024).

Triandis' (1989) Theory of Self sheds light on how teachers balance their private, public, and collective identities, blending Filipino cultural values with Canadian expectations. This ongoing negotiation informs their sense of professional responsibility and their approach to caregiving.

Transnational Family Theory explores the impact of migration, separation, and cross-border obligations on teachers' personal and professional lives (Semagn et al., 2026). Filipino educators maintain strong family ties while adapting to new roles in Canada, resulting in complex and layered caregiving identities.

Cultural Adaptation Theory addresses the psychological and behavioral adjustments migrants must make to succeed in a new culture. Filipino early childhood teachers manage acculturation stress and develop bicultural strategies, which enhance their resilience and promote inclusive, culturally responsive classrooms (Huff et al., 2021).

Together, these theoretical frameworks provide a comprehensive lens for understanding how Filipino early childhood teachers navigate, adapt, and thrive within the complex cultural and institutional landscapes of Canadian early childhood education.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing globalization of the education workforce has led to the growing presence of immigrant educators in multicultural early childhood education environments. In Canada, Filipino early childhood teachers constitute a significant portion of the childcare workforce, particularly in daycare centers serving culturally diverse communities. While these educators contribute valuable cultural perspectives and caregiving practices, they often encounter pedagogical and socio-cultural challenges as they adapt to new educational systems, teaching approaches, and institutional expectations.

Differences in curriculum orientation, classroom management practices, and culturally responsive teaching strategies between the Philippines and Canada may require Filipino educators to modify their instructional approaches and professional identities. In addition, immigrant teachers may experience socio-cultural adjustment issues, including language differences, workplace integration, and negotiation of cultural values in multicultural classrooms.

Despite the increasing number of Filipino educators working in Canadian early childhood settings, limited research has explored how they navigate these pedagogical and socio-cultural transitions and how these experiences shape their teaching practices and professional roles. Understanding these lived experiences is important in informing teacher support programs, multicultural education policies, and professional development initiatives that promote inclusive and culturally responsive early childhood education.

This phenomenological study therefore, explored the lived experiences of Filipino early childhood teachers in Canadian daycare centers, with particular emphasis on their pedagogical adaptation, socio-cultural challenges, coping strategies, and evolving professional roles in multicultural educational environments.

General Objective

To explore the lived experiences of Filipino early childhood teachers in Canada and examine how they adapt pedagogically and socio-culturally within multicultural daycare environments.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine how Filipino early childhood teachers adapt pedagogically and socio-culturally in daycare centers in British Columbia, Canada.
2. To identify the pedagogical and socio-cultural challenges experienced by Filipino early childhood teachers in multicultural daycare settings.
3. To investigate the coping strategies employed by Filipino early childhood teachers in addressing pedagogical and socio-cultural challenges in early childhood education.
4. To analyze Filipino early childhood teachers' perspectives on their professional roles in response to emerging educational trends in multicultural learning environments.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of Filipino early childhood teachers as they navigate pedagogical and socio-cultural adaptation in daycare centers in British Columbia, Canada?
2. What pedagogical and socio-cultural challenges do Filipino early childhood teachers encounter in multicultural daycare classrooms?
3. What coping strategies do Filipino early childhood teachers employ to manage pedagogical and socio-cultural challenges in early childhood education settings?
4. How do Filipino early childhood teachers perceive their professional roles in response to emerging educational trends in multicultural learning environments?

METHODS

Research Design

The study used a transcendental phenomenological research design, based on the philosophical principles of Husserl and implemented through Moustakas's (1994) methods. This qualitative approach was purposely selected to capture the genuine, lived experiences of Filipino early childhood education teachers in Canada, enabling the researcher to set aside personal biases and focus on the core of participants' stories (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). By emphasizing subjective meaning-making, the design enabled a thorough exploration of how these educators develop professional identities and adapt culturally in multicultural educational settings.

Rooted in Husserl's philosophical framework and operationalized through Moustakas's method, this approach enables the researcher to examine participants' subjective realities while bracketing personal biases. Given that the research questions focus on experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and professional identity, a phenomenological design is most appropriate as it captures the depth and essence of these phenomena. This design facilitates a rich exploration of how participants make meaning of their pedagogical and socio-cultural adaptation, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of their shared experiences within multicultural educational contexts.

Population and Sampling

The study focuses on Filipino early childhood teachers working in multicultural settings, particularly in British Columbia, Canada. This defines the overall population, which includes those who have migrated and are currently employed in early childhood education centers or daycare settings.

A purposeful sampling technique is employed, targeting individuals who meet specific criteria such as Filipino heritage, professional experience in early childhood education, and experience working in multicultural or Canadian contexts.

Participants consist of eight (8) Filipino early childhood teachers with varying years of teaching experience, representing diversity in age, gender, and length of stay in Canada. These participants offer firsthand insights into cultural adaptation, professional identity, and caregiving practices in multicultural classrooms.

The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) the participant must be a Filipino early childhood education teacher who has lived and worked in Canada for at least three (3) years; (2) participants are employed in a licensed daycare center; (3) must hold either permanent resident status or Canadian citizenship; (4) must provide informed consent to participate in the study; and (5) must be available for an in-depth, one-on-one interview.

To maintain the study's focus and integrity, the following exclusion criteria were applied: (1) early childhood teachers who are not of Filipino descent; (2) participants with less than three (3) years of teaching in early childhood education; (3) educators who are not permanent residence or Canadian citizens; and (4) individuals who did not provide informed consent or expressed reluctance to engage in the study's interview process.

Instruments

Data were collected using a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide, which was reviewed and validated by experts to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. Comprehensive contextual descriptions and reflexive practices further ensured that the voices of Filipino daycare teachers in Canadian early childhood settings were faithfully represented, supporting the study's relevance and applicability to other multicultural contexts.

Trustworthiness

The research instrument underwent a thorough validation process to ensure its appropriateness and alignment with the study's objectives. Consistent with qualitative research standards, reliability was not emphasized; instead, the study established trustworthiness through the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Strategies such as maintaining a systematic audit trail, employing triangulation across interviews, focus groups, and field observations, and adopting Seidman's (2019) three-interview series model enhanced the authenticity, rigor, and overall integrity of the findings.

Data Collection

In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted to clarify the social and cultural aspects of caregiving in a multicultural context, focusing on the lived experiences of Filipino daycare teachers in Canadian early childhood education. Following Seidman's (2019) three-interview series model, each participant attended three face-to-face sessions of about 20 minutes, scheduled flexibly to respect their time and comfort. This phased approach enabled in-depth exploration of individual stories and helped build rapport essential for gathering authentic, meaningful accounts.

The first interview phase, Focused Life History, encouraged participants to share their backgrounds, formative experiences, and the cultural values shaping their identities as educators. This narrative-oriented approach helped participants reflect on significant life events. It also provided valuable context for understanding their perspectives and motivations. By inviting participants to anchor stories in personal and cultural histories, the study laid the groundwork for rich, nuanced data collection.

The second phase, Details of Experience, followed the initial stage and concentrated on the contemporary realities of teaching in Canadian daycare centers. During this phase, the researcher fostered a welcoming environment, explained the study's objectives and procedures, and obtained informed consent. Through open-ended questions, participants described their daily experiences, including interactions with children, colleagues, and parents. They also discussed the unique challenges and opportunities faced in a multicultural educational environment. This phase captured the daily realities and complexities of caregiving abroad.

The third phase, Reflection on Meaning, marked a transition from the earlier descriptive focus to a deeper exploration of participants' interpretations of their migration and professional experiences. In this stage, the conversation shifted from description to analysis. Participants considered the broader significance of their journeys as Filipino educators adapting to Canadian norms, practices, and expectations. They reflected on cultural adaptation, professional growth, identity negotiation, and layered caregiving roles. This phase offered insight into how participants made sense of their challenges and successes, and how these experiences have influenced their sense of self and vocation.

Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained. Participants' names were masked, and composite profiles protected their identities. I systematically coded and organized interview data so participants could share authentic stories while retaining privacy and security. This ethical approach enabled the study to gather comprehensive, context-rich, and deeply personal narratives. The research reveals the complexities of caregiving in transnational, multicultural contexts.

Treatment of Data

The study employed a phenomenological data analysis based on Moustakas's (1994) adaptation of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen (SCK) method, with further simplification from Creswell and Poth (2018), to uncover the essence of Filipino daycare teachers' experiences in Canada. Analysis began with bracketing, as the researcher intentionally set aside prior knowledge and biases to ensure the findings remained grounded in participants' perspectives. Using HyperRESEARCH software, the researcher engaged in iterative reading of interview transcripts, highlighting significant statements and memoing initial impressions. This enabled the focused extraction of meaningful patterns directly from the participants' narratives.

Significant phrases and sentences were then coded and grouped into categories, which were synthesized into broader themes reflecting core aspects of adaptation, caregiving, and professional identity. HyperRESEARCH's tools, such as keyword

coding and visual mind-mapping, facilitated the identification of connections and the development of thematic structures across the dataset. Throughout the process, constant comparison and ongoing analysis ensured nuanced insights were captured, and themes were refined. The final synthesis involved constructing a composite textural-structural description that integrated both what participants experienced and how they experienced it, resulting in a richly layered narrative that reveals how Filipino educators negotiate cultural traditions, caregiving values, and their professional roles in Canadian early childhood education settings.

Ethical Considerations

The study strictly followed university research protocols and international ethical standards, with approval obtained from an institutional ethics review board prior to data collection. All necessary institutional permissions were secured before the study began. Informed consent was obtained from both daycare managers and participating teachers, with clear explanations of the study's purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, and confidentiality. Participants were assured of their voluntary involvement, the right to withdraw at any stage, and the use of measures to minimize any potential psychological or emotional discomfort. All personal information was kept confidential, and only non-sensitive data from in-depth interviews was collected and securely managed throughout the research process.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This study explores the lived experiences of eight Filipino early childhood teachers in licensed daycare centers in British Columbia, focusing on how their cultural backgrounds, values, and teaching philosophies shape their professional identities and practices in a multicultural environment. By presenting detailed participant profiles and capturing their voices through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the study uncovers key themes at the intersection of culture and education. The analysis highlights the nuances of their teaching journeys, offering insights that enrich our understanding of cultural diversity in early childhood education.

1. Lived experiences of early childhood teachers in navigating pedagogical and socio-cultural adaptation

Themes

The Interconnected Roots of Teaching Aspirations
Resource-Rich and Supportive Learning Environments
Adapting to Inclusive and Multicultural Environments
Learning Across Differences: Building Identity, Sharing Wisdom

1.1. The Interconnected Roots of Teaching Aspirations

This theme highlights the significant role of family in shaping participants' aspirations to become teachers. Many of the study's participants grew up in families where teaching was a prevalent occupation.

Participant 2 shared, "*My mother was a high school teacher,*" and "*my sister was an elementary teacher*" (Page 13, Line 424). In families where teaching is a prominent career, it becomes a normalized path, and the idea of teaching is deeply embedded in the family culture. This can foster a sense of duty to carry on the family tradition, a common phenomenon in professions passed down through generations. Research by Frosch et al. (2021) supports this hypothesis, finding that children frequently choose paths similar to those of their parents when exposed to them early on.

Furthermore, the influence of family members, particularly those who were teachers, extended beyond the professional domain to encompass values such as service, care, and accountability. These beliefs were frequently internalized by participants, who grew to see teaching as more than just a job, but a vocation or calling. This is consistent with Lortie's (1975) concept of "apprenticeship of observation," in which children of teachers frequently internalize the attitudes, actions, and values associated with the teaching profession (Taylor et al., 2022). Thus, the family and early influences category highlights the significant impact of early exposure to teaching, combined with family expectations, on participants' intentions to become educators.

1.2. Resource-Rich and Supportive Learning Environments

The theme of 'Resource-Rich and Supportive Learning Environments' captures how early childhood educators in the Philippines encounter a different teaching environment in Canada. They characterize the Canadian classroom as being full of technology, up-to-date and well-maintained materials, and a nurturing, growth-oriented learning environment. The teachers emphasized that the wealth of materials, the incorporation of technology, and the overall standard of the classroom significantly enhance their teaching experiences and provide pupils with a more engaging educational experience.

The availability of resources, including books, toys, and equipment, enables a broader range of engaging pedagogical strategies. Filipino educators in Canada have reported that they no longer incur personal expenses on critical supplies, in stark

contrast to their experiences in the Philippines. One teacher shared, *Participant 2: "Back home, I often spent my own money to buy crayons and paper. Here, resources are provided."*

The abundance of resources enables early childhood teachers to provide hands-on learning experiences, which are critical for young children. With a variety of materials at their disposal, teachers can employ interactive learning approaches that cater to various learning types. The tactile aspect of these items allows youngsters to explore, discover, and learn while playing. This hands-on approach is consistent with constructivist learning theory's emphasis on active engagement and experiential learning (Chand, 2023).

The availability of numerous resources also guarantees that students are exposed to a diverse range of themes, ideas, and materials that foster creativity and intellectual curiosity. This is especially crucial in early childhood education, when the groundwork for lifelong learning is laid. The range of learning resources stimulates children's imaginations, promotes critical thinking, and fosters a love of learning that will serve them well throughout their educational careers (Tekyi-Arhin, 2023).

1.3. Adapting to Inclusive and Multicultural Environments

Inclusive practices are crucial for creating an environment where all students, regardless of their background or learning needs, feel valued and have equitable access to education. One of the significant distinctions Filipino instructors in Canada have observed is the cultural emphasis on diversity in Canadian classrooms. As participant 3 expressed, *"Canada is such a diverse country... much easier for us teachers to be inclusive"* (Phase 2, Page 32, Line 1126). This reflects a significant shift from the educators' previous experiences in the Philippines, where classrooms were often divided by academic performance. Participant 5 explained, *"In Canada, classrooms are inclusive and diverse. In the Philippines, we were segregated by grade performance - honors, average, general"* (Phase 1, Page 37, Line 1256).

Research suggests that inclusive education promotes beneficial academic and social results. Jardinez and Natividad (2024) argue that inclusive education promotes students' cognitive and emotional development by developing mutual tolerance and understanding. In inclusive classrooms, students have the opportunity to learn from one another's talents and experiences, resulting in a more comprehensive educational experience. Furthermore, integrating students of varying abilities and backgrounds enables a more comprehensive approach to teaching, as it requires teachers to employ multiple teaching styles that cater to diverse learning needs (Ranbir, 2024).

1.4 Learning Across Differences: Building Identity, Sharing Wisdom

The life experiences of Filipino early childhood teachers in Canada demonstrate the richness and complexity of teaching in a multicultural, student-centered context. The theme "Learning Across Differences: Building Identity, Sharing Wisdom" portrays the journey these educators undertake as they navigate new teaching approaches, embrace cultural diversity, and share their own cultural wisdom while also evolving and transforming their identities as educators. This theme focuses on the challenges that contribute to personal and professional growth, the significance of flexibility and resilience, and the enrichment they receive as they learn from and share their different cultural perspectives.

Adapting to a new school system, culture, and community presented challenges for Filipino educators in Canada, but these obstacles provided opportunities for growth and advancement. Participant 7 reflected on this dual nature of their experience, stating, *"Teaching in Canada has been both a challenge and a blessing. Compared to my life before, I see education here as more student-driven and supportive of individuality"* (Phase 3, Page 15, Line 480). This acknowledgement captures the dual nature of the experience: on the one hand, the transition to a more student-centered, individualized educational approach necessitated significant adjustment; on the other hand, it provided an opportunity for personal growth and the development of a new teaching philosophy.

These challenges were viewed not as setbacks but as opportunities for growth. As participant 4 put it, *"That moment helped me see challenges as opportunities for development"* (Phase 2, Page 24, Line 875). This reframing of challenges as chances to improve and evolve is an essential mindset for educators, particularly when adjusting to a new cultural and educational context. The educators viewed every challenge, from unfamiliar routines to different teaching styles, as *"an opportunity to rise"* (Participant 7, Phase 2, Page 40, Line 1359). This viewpoint aligns with the growth mindset concept, which encourages individuals to view challenges as learning opportunities rather than impediments (He et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the teachers' willingness to face these problems demonstrates their resilience, which is critical for their ability to adapt and thrive in a new system (Squires et al., 2023). As they navigated the unfamiliar landscape of Canadian schooling, they not only overcame obstacles but also advanced professionally, underscoring the importance of perseverance and adaptation. This ability to turn problems into growth opportunities aligns with resilience research, which suggests that instructors who maintain a positive, adaptive mindset are more likely to have successful teaching careers, particularly in challenging situations (He et al., 2023).

2. Pedagogical and socio-cultural challenges of early childhood teachers to adapt to multicultural classrooms in daycare settings

Themes

Socio-Cultural Realities of Teaching Across Contexts

Pedagogical Contrasts

Adapting to Diverse Educational Environments

2.1. Socio-Cultural Realities of Teaching Across Contexts

In contrast, Canadian classrooms value child-centered, inquiry-based learning, in which a child's curiosity and interests shape the educational process. Canadian teachers are urged to step back and facilitate rather than dominate the learning process, allowing for more fluid and dynamic interactions. As one participant described, early childhood educators in Canada face challenges related to sociocultural adjustments, underscoring the difficulties of teaching in a culturally diverse, constantly evolving environment. The study reveals that teachers, particularly those new to Canada, encounter distinct challenges as they adapt to classrooms that are culturally, environmentally, and socially diverse.

Teaching in inclusive and diverse classrooms is one of the most significant socio-cultural challenges that educators in Canada encounter. The educational landscape in Canada is characterized by its multiculturalism, and educators are expected to be sensitive to their students' diverse needs. Culturally responsive teaching methods that respect and value diversity are essential for educators working in diverse classrooms. As participant 5 noted, "...Canada is such a diverse country, that it is much easier for us teachers to be also inclusive" (Phase 1, Page 38, Line 1270-1271). This demonstrates an understanding that Canada's diversity presents both possibilities and problems for early childhood teachers. While the inclusive environment may appear more natural due to the vast diversity, it also requires teachers to be more adaptable in meeting the diverse needs, backgrounds, and experiences of their early childhood learners.

The challenges of inclusivity in classrooms stem from research on culturally responsive pedagogy, which emphasizes that early childhood teachers should adapt their teaching practices to reflect the diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds of their students (Ashrafova, 2024). Teachers must employ instructional strategies that not only engage students from diverse backgrounds but also help bridge knowledge gaps, ensuring all students feel represented and respected. According to Hossain (2024), instructors must also learn to navigate cultural differences and create an environment where students' identities and experiences are recognized and appreciated.

2.2. Pedagogical Contrasts

Early childhood teachers transitioning to Canadian daycare settings encounter significant pedagogical differences from their previous teaching experiences in the Philippines, particularly in terms of instructional approaches and learning processes. These distinctions can pose substantial challenges for educators as they adapt their practices to the child-centered, inquiry-based learning environment prevalent in Canada. The transition from more regulated, teacher-centered environments to those that promote student autonomy and discovery necessitates careful consideration and adaptation.

The transition from teacher-centered to child-centered approaches represents a major shift in pedagogical practices. In many countries, including the Philippines, early childhood education often follows a more teacher-directed approach, with the educator taking the lead and teaching delivered in a systematic, step-by-step manner. Participant 4 noted, "*In the Philippines, the demos are patterned... the child's answer is already practiced*" (Phase 1, Page 31, Line 1089). This method emphasizes clear, rigid expectations for students, with a strong focus on the teacher as the central figure who controls the flow of information.

In contrast, Canadian classrooms value child-centered, inquiry-based learning, in which a child's curiosity and interests shape the educational process. Canadian teachers are urged to step back and facilitate rather than dominate the learning process, allowing for more fluid and dynamic interactions. As participant 7 described, "*Pedagogically, the Philippines was teacher-centered, but in Canada, inquiry-based and child-centered learning is emphasized*" (Phase 1, Participant 7, Page 41, Line 1387). This transformation necessitates that early childhood teachers adopt a more flexible, responsive teaching approach, allowing students to explore topics of interest and engage in collaborative, self-directed learning.

This adjustment may be challenging for early childhood teachers in Canada who have grown up in a classroom environment dominated by teachers. Teachers must learn to create learning environments where students feel comfortable asking questions, exploring ideas, and expressing themselves openly. The transition to a child-centered approach necessitates a fundamental transformation in how instructors perceive their job, from sole authority in the classroom to a guide and supporter of student-led learning (Adlerstein & Cortázar, 2022).

2.3 Adapting to Diverse Educational Environments

Adapting to various educational environments is a significant challenge for early childhood teachers, especially those migrating to multicultural classrooms in Canada. The challenges of management struggles, classroom dynamics and student behavior, communication and teaching style adjustments, and cultural and linguistic barriers are central to the adaptation

process. This section delves deeper into these problems, building on participants' experiences and supporting the interpretation with relevant research.

One of the most significant difficulties mentioned by the participants is classroom management, particularly when instructors meet opposing expectations from school administration and broader institutional agendas. Participant shared,

"I always find the biggest struggle is management. It's always hard when you have management that cares about the students, while management that only cares about the money" (Phase 2, Page 25, Line 874).

This highlights a conflict between caring for students' well-being and the institution's financial interests, making it challenging for teachers to focus solely on delivering excellent education and emotional support to their pupils.

Adekola et al. (2017) highlight the significance of a supportive institutional structure in assisting instructors in navigating such difficulties. Teachers' ability to manage classes and handle student needs is significantly influenced by school leadership and regulations. The attempt to reconcile these demands adds to teachers' emotional and cognitive load, thereby limiting their capacity to focus solely on teaching and student care.

Teachers confront emotional obstacles in addition to institutional management issues, such as dealing with children's separation anxiety. Participant 4 remembered, *"One moment that stands out was when a child who struggled with separation anxiety"* (Phase 2, Page 31, Line 1069). Separation anxiety is a prevalent problem in early childhood schools, particularly when children are transitioning to a new environment. Attachment theory research (Bowlby, 1988) emphasizes the necessity of instructors giving emotional security throughout transitional periods. Teachers must create an environment in which children feel safe and supported, which frequently necessitates specialized management tactics to address emotional difficulties such as separation anxiety.

3. Coping strategies of early childhood teachers to manage the pedagogical and socio-cultural challenges Themes

Leveraging Cultural Strengths

Collaboration with Teachers & Administrators (Collaborative Support System)

Transforming Challenges through Culturally Responsive Teaching

3.1 Leveraging Cultural Strengths

One of the most essential methods for educators to capitalize on their cultural strengths is to share and incorporate cultural elements into the classroom. This not only improves the learning atmosphere but also exposes pupils to a variety of traditions and worldviews. Participant 1 reflected, *"I've had opportunities to share elements of Filipino culture with both colleagues and families - whether through songs, stories, or holiday traditions"* (Phase 3, Participant 1, Page 2, Line 29). This statement emphasizes the importance of cultural integration, which entails teachers sharing their cultural backgrounds with others to promote an inclusive classroom environment.

Sharing cultural traditions promotes understanding and increases students' learning experiences. This is consistent with Basnet's (2024) research, which found that introducing cultural variety into the curriculum fosters an inclusive school atmosphere. By sharing songs, stories, and holiday customs, educators not only promote a global perspective in the classroom but also celebrate diversity as a strength that benefits all kids.

Cultural integration and sharing are crucial coping strategies used by educators. Teachers frequently find ways to introduce and share aspects of their cultural background with colleagues and pupils. Participant 1 shared,

"I've had opportunities to share elements of Filipino culture with both colleagues and families - whether through songs, stories, or holiday traditions" (Phase 3, Page 2, Line 29). This strategy not only enriches the learning environment but also fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation for diversity within the classroom.

Cultural integration, particularly through shared traditions and practices, fosters a more inclusive and global perspective within the classroom, where students are exposed to diverse cultures and perspectives. This aligns with research by Markey et al. (2023), which suggests that incorporating diverse cultural elements into the curriculum enriches students' learning experiences and promotes inclusivity.

3.2 Collaboration with Teachers & Administrators (Collaborative Support System)

This theme emphasizes the importance of early childhood educators forming a mutual support system in which colleagues collaborate, share tasks, and offer assistance to overcome challenges across various educational settings. It emphasizes the need to foster a community of practice in which instructors support one another and advocate for their children's needs. Collaborative support systems examine how educators manage the pressures of their roles by leveraging teamwork, mentorship, and professional connections within their educational contexts.

Collaboration with colleagues, particularly Canadian teachers and administrators, is a fundamental approach for early childhood educators to address pedagogical and sociocultural issues. Participant 5 shared, *"At first, I was shy to share my ideas with Canadian colleagues, but over time they encouraged me to speak up"* (Phase 2, Page 22, Line 1106). This expression underscores the first challenge many teachers face when presenting their ideas and opinions, especially if they are new to the

Canadian educational context and its cultural norms. However, the supportive environment provided by Canadian colleagues encourages instructors to speak up, promotes confidence, and fosters a collaborative spirit.

Studies have shown that effective collaboration can considerably improve teaching methods and professional satisfaction. According to Singh et al. (2023), collaborative teaching environments improve student outcomes by enabling teachers to share ideas, resources, and strategies. Collaborative efforts enable early childhood educators in Canada to adapt to new teaching approaches while also providing a sense of professional belonging. Teachers can enhance their skills by openly discussing their experiences, fostering mutual growth, and a sense of community within the school.

3.3. Transforming Challenges through Culturally Responsive Teaching

Early childhood educators in Canada use culturally responsive teaching techniques to overcome pedagogical and socio-cultural barriers in diverse classes. The subcategories of Nurturing and Guidance, Respect and Cultural Sensitivity, and Adaptability, Resilience, and Multiculturalism represent these tactics. Embracing culturally responsive teaching enables educators to create inclusive, supportive, and adaptable learning environments that foster emotional, social, and intellectual growth for all children.

Nurturing and direction are essential coping methods. Many teachers incorporate their cultural values, particularly nurture, compassion, and patience, into their teaching methods. Participant 3 shared, "*As a Filipino, nurturing comes naturally, and I bring that into every interaction - through gentle guidance, songs, storytelling, and patience*" (Phase 3, Page 5, Line 132). This statement highlights the significant role that cultural values, such as nurturing play, play in teaching, particularly in helping children navigate social and emotional challenges. For these educators, the ability to guide children with patience and empathy is central to their approach, contributing to a more supportive and responsive learning environment.

The focus on emotional and social guidance is crucial, as participant 1 noted, "*The students tend to look to us for guidance, not just in terms of academics, but also in emotional growth and social learning*" (Phase 3, Page 1, Line 20-21). This suggests that early childhood educators serve not only as academic advisors but also as mentors, helping pupils develop critical emotional and social skills. Their ability to provide this advice helps children build resilience, emotional intelligence, and a sense of belonging, all of which are essential skills for navigating diverse cultural and social contexts.

Culturally responsive teaching further aids educators in addressing pedagogical challenges by nurturing students, respecting cultural sensitivities, and adapting to diverse needs. These approaches align with research on effective multicultural education, helping educators provide meaningful, inclusive learning experiences (Amarullah et al., 2024).

4. Role of early childhood teachers in emerging educational trends within a multicultural setting

Themes

Future Aspirations

Collaborative Growth and Support

Bridging Cultural Gaps (positioning themselves as cultural connectors)

4.1. Future Aspirations

Early childhood educators in Canada have a variety of career goals, driven by a desire for both professional development and personal fulfillment. These goals are divided into two categories: professional development and leadership, and individual and relationship fulfillment. Educators envision themselves taking on leadership roles, contributing to curriculum development, and engaging in ongoing self-discovery, all while fostering meaningful relationships and a sense of belonging within the Canadian community. Below is a closer look at these future objectives, as stated by the participants.

One of the most common goals voiced by early childhood educators is professional development through leadership positions. Many instructors are motivated not only to grow as teachers but also to influence and guide others in the profession. Participant 8 reflected, "*Model leadership that is compassionate and visionary*" (Phase 2, Page 25, Line 542). This statement emphasizes the desire to exemplify a leadership style that blends imaginative thinking and compassion, with a focus on the well-being and development of both students and colleagues.

In line with these aspirations, many teachers expressed a desire to take on leadership roles such as mentoring new teachers and contributing to curriculum development. Participant 8 shared, "*I see myself continuing to grow as an educator and hopefully taking on leadership roles such as mentoring new teachers or contributing to curriculum development*" (Phase 3, Page 15, Line 486). This demonstrates a clear desire to influence the educational landscape by mentoring future educators and guiding them through the challenges of the profession. Curriculum development is also a popular topic among instructors, who aim to create tools and frameworks that better support diverse learners in early childhood settings.

Additionally, some educators expressed the goal of advancing their qualifications to support their growth. For example, Participant 2 stated, "*Siguro being a master's in early childhood education*" (Phase 3, Page 4, Line 100), reflecting the aspiration to pursue a master's degree in the field. This indicates a commitment to gaining more profound expertise in early childhood education, which would further enable them to take on leadership roles, enhance their teaching practice, and advocate for improvements in the education system (Grimm, 2023).

4.2. Collaborative Growth and Support

The theme, 'Collaborative Growth and Support,' captures how early childhood educators in Canada grow by forming meaningful connections with administrators, co-teachers, parents, and the broader community. This collaboration has a substantial impact on career advancement, workplace learning, and skill development. Educators seek a supportive work environment that promotes both professional and personal growth, thereby contributing to their ongoing development in the field of education. The following subcategories within this theme demonstrate how collaboration benefits career and personal fulfillment.

A key component of collaborative growth is the partnership among teachers and various stakeholders, including administrators, co-teachers, and parents. These collaborations offer teachers opportunities for professional exchange, skill development, and a broader perspective on their teaching practices. Participant one shared, "*My collaborations with Canadian teachers and administrators, my experience with them is very eye-opening*" (Phase 2, Page 33, Line 1146-1147), reflecting how working with colleagues in Canada has expanded their teaching experience and exposed them to new methods and ideas.

Moreover, collegiate collaboration is seen as essential in widening teaching experience. Teachers not only exchange knowledge but also learn to improve their teaching methods through their colleagues' guidance. Participant 6 explained, "*My collaboration with the collegiate teachers and administrators, I think we exchange knowledge, and they teach me how to improve my teaching experience*" (Phase 2, Page 36, Line 1251-1252). This exchange highlights the importance of shared learning and collaboration in promoting continuous improvement in teaching practices.

Additionally, teachers contribute their unique perspectives to the collaborative process (Sabri, 2025). Participant 7 remarked, "The collaboration I make with my Canadian teachers and administrators is like I bring a unique perspective to them" (Phase 2, Page 40, Line 1354-1355). This highlights how teachers, especially those from diverse cultural backgrounds, bring fresh insights that can enrich the team's overall approach and help create a more inclusive learning environment.

4.3. Bridging Cultural Gaps: Teachers as Cultural Connectors

The theme of Bridging Cultural Gaps highlights the crucial role that educators play as cultural connectors, particularly in diverse classrooms where students and their families come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Teachers act not only as instructors, but also as cultural bridges, promoting understanding, cooperation, and mutual respect among the school community. This function needs a careful balance of stewardship, work ethics, and mutual respect, all of which contribute to cultural exchange and integration.

In education, stewardship refers to instructors' responsibility to nurture their students' intellectual and emotional development while simultaneously preserving the cultural integrity of the students' backgrounds. Teachers must guide students through their academic journeys while preserving their cultural identities and backgrounds. Participant one noted,

"My relationships with parents and the community have made me more confident in my role not just as a teacher, but as a bridge between cultures" (Phase 2, Page 8, Line 280).

This statement highlights teachers' understanding and responsibility for bridging cultural divides, emphasizing that their role extends beyond the classroom and into the community, where they serve as guardians of academic knowledge and cultural sensitivity.

Numerous studies on multicultural education emphasize the necessity of culturally responsive teaching techniques. Johnson and Elliot (2020), in their foundational work on culturally relevant pedagogy, emphasize the importance of teachers' understanding their students' cultural contexts to guide their intellectual growth. She contends that instructors who understand and incorporate students' cultural qualities into the curriculum foster a sense of belonging and motivation, both of which are critical for academic achievement. This aligns with the concept of stewardship in education, where teachers are seen as facilitators of both cultural preservation and intellectual achievement.

Furthermore, the idea of instructors serving as "bridges between cultures" is consistent with Caingcoy's (2023) discussion of culturally sustaining pedagogy. He argues for an approach that not only recognizes students' cultural backgrounds but also actively preserves and revitalizes these cultures inside the academic setting. In this light, the educator's job stretches beyond simply disseminating knowledge to include advocating for their students' cultural identities and needs (Abdalla & Moussa, 2024). The research participants' findings support this broader concept of teaching, in which community engagement and cultural awareness are essential components of effective education.

Conclusions

This study highlights the complex pedagogical and socio-cultural experiences of Filipino early childhood teachers working in multicultural daycare settings in Canada. The findings demonstrate that immigrant educators play a vital role in enriching early childhood education by integrating cultural values, caregiving traditions, and inclusive teaching practices into multicultural classrooms.

The results reveal that Filipino educators navigate significant pedagogical transitions as they adapt from teacher-centered instructional traditions to more child-centered and inquiry-based learning approaches common in Canadian early

childhood education. Through collaboration with colleagues, culturally responsive teaching practices, and reflective professional growth, these educators demonstrate resilience and adaptability in diverse learning environments.

The study contributes to educational research by providing insights into the professional identity formation of immigrant teachers and their role in fostering culturally inclusive early childhood education. The findings also highlight the importance of institutional support systems, culturally responsive pedagogy, and collaborative professional communities in promoting effective teaching and learning in multicultural settings. Overall, the experiences of Filipino early childhood teachers illustrate the importance of recognizing cultural diversity as a resource for pedagogical innovation, teacher development, and inclusive educational practice.

Recommendations

School administrators and childcare center managers may strengthen inclusive early childhood education environments by providing professional development programs focused on culturally responsive teaching and multicultural classroom management. Such initiatives may support immigrant educators in adapting instructional practices while valuing their cultural perspectives.

Educational institutions and early childhood teacher education programs may incorporate multicultural training and experiential learning opportunities that prepare pre-service teachers to work effectively in diverse educational contexts. Programs may also include mentoring systems that support immigrant educators in navigating pedagogical and professional transitions.

Curriculum developers and policymakers may consider integrating culturally responsive frameworks into early childhood education curricula to promote inclusive learning environments that respect cultural diversity and encourage intercultural understanding among young learners.

Early childhood educators may continue to strengthen collaborative professional networks and share culturally relevant teaching strategies that enrich classroom learning experiences and foster mutual respect among culturally diverse communities.

Future researchers may explore broader perspectives on immigrant teacher adaptation in early childhood education by examining institutional support mechanisms, cross-cultural pedagogical practices, and the long-term impact of multicultural teaching environments on teacher professional development.

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