

Teaching Abroad: Adaptation and Professional Transition of J-1 Filipino Physical Education Teachers

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the adaptation and professional transition experiences of J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers teaching in Arizona. It focused on how the participants described their adjustment to U.S. school culture, instructional practices, communication norms, professional roles, and the challenges they encountered while teaching Physical Education in a foreign educational setting. The study employed a phenomenological qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews with eight Filipino Physical Education teachers under the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. Data were analyzed through coding, formulation of meanings, and thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns across participants' narratives. Findings revealed that the teachers experienced adaptation as a demanding process shaped by culture shock, communication recalibration, student behavior, curriculum differences, and expanded professional responsibilities. Four emergent themes were identified: negotiating cultural and communicative adaptation in U.S. schools; reconstructing Physical Education pedagogy for a student-centered and resource-mediated context; expanding professional identity through reflective learning and community engagement; and sustaining teaching practice amid behavioral, emotional, and systemic challenges. The findings showed that successful transition required readiness, flexibility, peer and administrative support, reflective practice, and PE-specific professional preparation. As a practical output, the study proposed the PE-ADAPT Support Framework for J-1 Filipino Physical Education Teachers to guide orientation, mentoring, pedagogical adjustment, behavior management, support systems, and professional growth. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of how Filipino PE teachers navigate international teaching and sustain professional practice in U.S. schools.

KEYWORDS: adaptation, J-1 Filipino teachers, Physical Education, professional transition, teaching abroad

I. INTRODUCTION

The teacher shortage in the United States has become a persistent concern in public education, particularly in schools facing difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified educators. In response to these workforce gaps, school districts have increasingly turned to international recruitment as a strategic solution. Among those who have taken advantage of these opportunities are Filipino teachers, including Physical Education (PE) teachers, who have entered the U.S. education system through the BridgeUSA J-1 Teacher Exchange Program administered by the U.S. Department of State. This program enables qualified foreign educators to teach in American schools while contributing their pedagogical expertise and cultural perspectives (U.S. Department of State, 2023).

The increasing presence of Filipino teachers in the United States reflects broader patterns of global teacher mobility. In 2023, approximately 6,773 international teachers were employed in U.S. public schools through the J-1 program, marking a significant increase of over 150% since 2016 (U.S. Department of State, 2023). Filipino educators comprise a substantial portion of this group, with many school districts actively recruiting them due to their strong English proficiency, teaching competence, and solid professional preparation (Presquito & Madrigal, 2025). Their participation highlights how Filipino teachers have become integral contributors in addressing instructional shortages while adapting to diverse educational environments.

Research further shows that Filipino teachers in the United States commonly experience difficulties related to cultural differences, language nuances, homesickness, and variations in educational practices (Lanoy & M., n.d., 2025). Macapagong et al. (2023) similarly found that Filipino teachers in Arizona undergo culture shock and professional adjustment as they adapt to unfamiliar school systems and student behaviors. Despite these challenges, teachers gradually develop adaptive instructional

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practices, modifying their teaching strategies, classroom management techniques, and communication styles to align with host country expectations (Flores & Eludo, 2025).

Although existing literature provides substantial insights into the experiences of Filipino teachers in general education contexts, there remains limited research focusing specifically on Filipino Physical Education teachers in the J-1 exchange program. This group faces unique contextual challenges, including differences in sports culture, availability of facilities, curriculum implementation, and student participation in physical education settings. These factors require distinct forms of adaptation that are not fully captured in existing studies.

Given these gaps, this study seeks to examine the adaptation processes, professional transition experiences, and challenges encountered by Filipino J-1 Physical Education teachers in Arizona. By exploring their lived experiences, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of international teacher mobility and provide insights that may inform institutional support systems for foreign educators in similar contexts.

Research Question

This study examined the adaptation, professional transition, and challenges of Filipino J-1 Physical Education teachers in Arizona. It explored how they adjust to the cultural, instructional, and professional demands of U.S. schools as they transition from the Philippine education system, as well as the challenges they encountered in classroom management, instruction, and workplace integration. The study also examined how these experiences reflect their overall professional transition in an international teaching context. Findings served as a basis for recommendations to strengthen support systems for Filipino teachers in international exchange programs.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

Central Question:

What is the essence of the lived experiences of J1 Physical Education teachers in terms of their adaptation and professional transition?

Corollary Questions:

1. How do J1 Filipino Physical Education teachers describe their experiences in relation to their adaptation and professional transition?
2. What are the professional challenges encountered by J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers teaching in Arizona?
3. What meanings can be derived from the significant lived experiences of J1 Filipino Physical Education teachers?
4. What themes emerge from the narratives of J1 Filipino Physical Education teachers regarding their adaptation and professional transition?
5. Based on the findings of the study, what support programs may be proposed to assist J1 teachers?

II. SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study focused on the adaptation, professional transition, and challenges of Filipino J-1 Physical Education teachers teaching in public schools in the state of Arizona, United States. Specifically, it explored how these teachers adapted to the cultural, instructional, and professional environments of U.S. public schools and how they navigated challenges related to classroom management, instructional practices, curriculum implementation, and cross-cultural teaching. The study was anchored on the objective of generating insights that may serve as the basis for recommendations to strengthen support systems for Filipino teachers participating in international exchange programs and to enhance their teaching experiences abroad.

The study also described the participants' demographic profile, including age, gender, educational background, teaching experience in the Philippines, and length of teaching experience in the United States, to provide contextual information about the participants. Furthermore, it examined their lived experiences, professional challenges, and adaptation strategies as Filipino educators working under the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. The concepts of adaptation and professional transition were explored through the participants' narratives and interpreted using a qualitative phenomenological approach.

The participants consisted of eight (8) Filipino J-1 Physical Education teachers currently or previously assigned to public schools in Arizona. They were selected through purposive sampling based on established inclusion criteria. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, allowing the participants to provide rich and detailed descriptions of their lived experiences.

This study was delimited to Filipino Physical Education teachers under the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program assigned to public schools in Arizona. It did not include teachers from other subject areas, other visa categories, private schools, or other U.S. states. Likewise, the study focused solely on the participants' experiences during their teaching assignments in Arizona and did not examine their pre-departure preparation in the Philippines or their experiences after completing the J-1 program and returning home. Since the study employed a qualitative phenomenological design, the findings were based on the participants' personal

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accounts and interpretations. Consequently, the results are intended to provide an in-depth understanding of their lived experiences and are not intended to be statistically generalized to all Filipino international teachers or to other populations.

Despite these delimitations, the study provides valuable insights into the adaptation, professional transition, and challenges experienced by Filipino J-1 Physical Education teachers in Arizona. The findings may contribute to the enhancement of teacher preparation programs, institutional support mechanisms, and policies that promote the professional well-being and effectiveness of Filipino educators participating in international teaching programs.

FRAMEWORK

This study examined the relationship between adaptation and professional transition and challenges among Filipino J-1 Physical Education teachers working in Arizona. The conceptual framework was anchored on Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory by Young Yun Kim (2001) adapted by Guerriche & Grimshaw, 2024, and Social Cognitive Career Theory by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) adapted by Appling et al., in 2022, which together provide a framework for understanding how teachers adjust to new cultural and professional environments and how these experiences shape their career-related decisions in international teaching contexts.

The conceptual framework of this study was anchored on the assumption that the experiences of Filipino J-1 Physical Education teachers are shaped by three interconnected components: adaptation, professional transition, and challenges within the United States educational environment.



Figure 1. Conceptual Paradigm

The first component, adaptation, is explained through Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory by Young Yun Kim (2001). This theory posits that adaptation is a continuous process of stress, adjustment, and growth as individuals interact with a new cultural environment. In this study, adaptation refers to how Filipino teachers gradually adjust to the U.S. educational system by modifying instructional practices, developing classroom management strategies, improving communication with students and colleagues, and learning institutional norms while maintaining their professional identity.

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The second component, professional transition, refers to the shift experienced by Filipino teachers as they move from the Philippine education system to the U.S. school context. This transition involves changes in instructional roles, curriculum implementation, classroom expectations, and institutional practices. It reflects how teachers adjust from familiar educational structures to new professional standards and responsibilities in schools located in Arizona.

The third component, professional challenges, represents the difficulties encountered by teachers during their transition and teaching experience abroad. These challenges may include differences in curriculum standards, classroom management practices, student behavior, communication styles, sports culture in Physical Education settings, and institutional expectations. Such challenges serve as contextual factors that influence how teachers respond to and manage their new professional environment.

Within this framework, professional transition initiates the shift into a new educational system, while professional challenges emerge as teachers engage with unfamiliar expectations and working conditions. In response, adaptation occurs as teachers develop coping strategies and adjust their practices to function effectively in their teaching roles.

The interaction of these three components shapes the overall experiences of Filipino J-1 Physical Education teachers in the United States. Through qualitative inquiry, this study seeks to understand how teachers navigate professional transition, respond to challenges, and undergo adaptation in their international teaching journey.

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, to explore the lived experiences of J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers in relation to their adaptation, professional transition, and challenges encountered while teaching abroad. Qualitative research was appropriate for this study because it focuses on understanding individuals' experiences, perspectives, and meanings within their natural contexts. Rather than quantifying variables, qualitative research seeks to provide rich and in-depth descriptions of human experiences, making it suitable for examining complex and subjective phenomena such as cultural adaptation, professional transition, and workplace challenges (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Phenomenology was particularly relevant to this study because it aims to describe and interpret the essence of participants' lived experiences regarding a specific phenomenon. According to Clark Moustakas (1994), phenomenological research seeks to uncover how individuals perceive and make sense of their experiences, ultimately identifying the common essence shared among participants. In educational research, phenomenology is widely used to understand complex human experiences and social realities within educational settings (Bonyadi, 2023). In this study, the phenomenon centers on the experiences of Filipino teachers participating in the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program, particularly how they adapt to new cultural and educational environments, transition professionally within unfamiliar school systems, and navigate the challenges associated with teaching abroad.

The selection of this design was grounded in the nature of the research problem. While previous studies have examined the experiences of teachers working abroad, many have relied on quantitative or descriptive approaches that may not fully capture the depth and complexity of their lived experiences. There remains a need to explore these experiences from the participants' own perspectives to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how they navigate adaptation, professional transition, and workplace challenges. A phenomenological approach allows for this deeper exploration by prioritizing participants' voices, perceptions, and personal narratives (Van Manen, 2016).

The phenomenological design also facilitated the identification of common themes across participants' narratives. Through the analysis of recurring patterns and shared meanings, the study will reveal the underlying structures that characterize the experiences of J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers. These insights will contribute to understanding how teachers cope with cultural differences, professional demands, and personal challenges while adjusting to foreign educational settings. Furthermore, the findings served as a basis for the development of proposed support programs and institutional interventions tailored to the needs of international teachers. Recent studies have emphasized the importance of phenomenological inquiry in educational research because it provides a deeper understanding of lived experiences and meaning-making processes in diverse educational contexts (Öhlén & Friberg, 2023).

In conducting this study, the researcher served as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the researcher practiced bracketing (*epoché*) by setting aside personal assumptions, experiences, and biases throughout the research process. This process helps ensure a more authentic representation of participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

In summary, the phenomenological research design was appropriate for this study because it enables a deep and meaningful exploration of the lived experiences of J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers. It provides a framework for understanding how these teachers adapt to new environments, undergo professional transition, and overcome challenges while teaching abroad, ultimately contributing to the development of responsive and context-sensitive support programs.

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Research Instrument

Participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who have direct experience as J1 Filipino Physical Education teachers. These include educators who are currently teaching or have recently completed their teaching assignments under the J1 Exchange Visitor Program in public schools in the state of Arizona.

The inclusion criteria for selecting participants are as follows:

1. The individual is a Filipino citizen who is currently employed or has recently completed employment as a J1 Physical Education teacher.
2. The individual has a minimum of one year of teaching experience under the J1 Exchange Visitor Program.
3. The individual is currently assigned or has been assigned to public schools within Arizona.
4. The participant must be willing and able to articulate personal lived experiences related to adaptation, professional transition, and challenges encountered within a foreign educational setting.
2. The individual voluntarily agrees to participate and provides informed consent.

The exclusion criteria applied in this study include the following:

1. Individuals who are not participants of the J1 Exchange Visitor Program.
2. Individuals who are not teaching Physical Education or whose roles are outside the scope of the study.
3. Individuals with less than one year of teaching experience under the J1 program.
4. Individuals who are unavailable for in-depth qualitative interviews or who decline participation.

Data Gathering

Data for this study was generated through semi-structured in-depth interviews, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the lived experiences of J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers. This method was selected to capture the depth, richness, and meaning of participants' experiences related to adaptation, professional transition, and challenges encountered, ensuring alignment with the study's qualitative phenomenological design.

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method of data generation, enabling participants to articulate their experiences, perspectives, and personal interpretations of teaching in a foreign educational context. An interview guide was developed based on the central and sub-research questions to ensure that key areas such as cultural adaptation, professional transition, workplace challenges, and coping strategies are systematically explored. At the same time, the semi-structured format allowed flexibility for probing and follow-up questions, enabling the researcher to capture emergent insights and nuanced meanings that may not be anticipated at the outset.

Each interview was expected to last approximately 20 to 30 minutes and was conducted through secure online meeting platforms, depending on participants' availability and convenience. Participants were contacted and interviewed online to ensure accessibility despite geographical distance and work schedules. With the participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate documentation of responses. In addition, field notes were taken during and after the interviews to document non-verbal cues, emotional expressions, and contextual observations that may enrich the interpretation of the data.

To ensure depth and clarity of responses, the researcher employed active listening and reflective questioning techniques throughout the interview process. This approach encourages participants to elaborate on their experiences and provides opportunities for clarification and deeper reflection. Follow-up interviews may be conducted when necessary to validate responses or further explore emerging themes.

Data generation was conducted in an iterative manner, wherein initial insights from early interviews inform subsequent data collection. This process allows the researcher to refine interview questions and focus on emerging patterns and significant meanings across participants' narratives. The iterative approach supports a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and ensures that the data collected remain responsive to the study's objectives.

The use of in-depth interviews as the primary data source is appropriate for phenomenological research, as it prioritizes participants' voices and lived experiences. This method enabled the researcher to capture the essence of how J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers experience adaptation, professional transition, and challenges while teaching in the state of Arizona.

Statistical Treatment

Data in this study was analyzed using thematic analysis, following the framework of Braun and Clarke (2021), which provides a systematic approach to identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. This approach is appropriate for the study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences and the identification of recurring themes related to adaptation, professional transition and challenges among J1 Filipino Physical Education teachers.

The data analysis procedure was carried out through the following stages:

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1. Familiarization with the Data

The researcher began by immersing in the data through repeated reading of verbatim transcripts and careful review of field notes. This stage allows the researcher to gain a holistic understanding of participants' narratives. Initial impressions, reflections, and emerging insights will be documented through analytic memos to support deeper engagement with the data.

2. Generation of Initial Codes

The researcher systematically identifies and labels meaningful segments of data relevant to the research questions. Coding will be conducted using both inductive and deductive approaches, allowing patterns to emerge from the data while also being guided by the study's research objectives. Qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo or ATLAS.ti will be utilized to organize and manage the coding process efficiently.

3. Categorization and Clustering of Codes

Related codes were grouped into broader categories based on similarities and recurring patterns across the dataset. This stage will involve constant comparison, where data segments will be examined within and across participants to identify relationships and shared meanings.

4. Development of Themes

Categories were further analyzed to generate preliminary themes that represent significant patterns of meaning. These themes will capture the core aspects of participants' experiences, particularly in relation to adaptation and motivation in the J1 teaching context.

5. Review and Refinement of Themes

The researcher evaluated the coherence, consistency, and distinctiveness of each theme by comparing them against the coded data and the entire dataset. Themes were refined, merged, or redefined to ensure they accurately represent participants' lived experiences and align with the research questions.

6. Definition and Naming of Themes

Each theme was defined and appropriately named to reflect its central meaning and scope. The researcher will ensure that all themes are conceptually distinct and supported by relevant and representative excerpts from the data.

7. Interpretation of Findings

The final stage involved interpreting the identified themes in relation to the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. This process went beyond description to generate deeper insights into how J1 Filipino Physical Education teachers experience adaptation and motivation. The researcher connected the findings to existing literature and broader educational contexts to provide meaningful contributions to the field.

Throughout the analysis process, analytic memos and reflexive notes were maintained to document methodological decisions and interpretive insights. This practice ensured transparency, rigor, and trustworthiness in the overall conduct of the study.

III. RESULTS

This chapter presented the findings of the study as derived from the interview data generated from J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers teaching in Arizona. Consistent with the qualitative presentation format, the chapter remained descriptive in nature. It focused on the patterns that emerged from the participants' accounts and on the verbatim excerpts that illustrated those patterns.

Overview of Participants and Context

The participants were eight Filipino Physical Education teachers assigned in Arizona schools under the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. They are identified in this chapter as Participant 1 to Participant 8 to preserve confidentiality. Their demographic and professional backgrounds are presented to situate the findings and to show the range of perspectives represented in the data. The participants differed in age, gender, educational attainment, years of teaching experience, and length of participation in the J-1 program, but all entered the United States school context with prior teaching experience in Physical Education, coaching, health education, or related teaching responsibilities.

The research context is the experience of teaching Physical Education in Arizona schools as Filipino exchange teachers. Across the eight participant entries, the accounts described work in relation to school culture, communication practices, PE curriculum, classroom and behavior management, student diversity, professional relationships, support systems, safety protocols, documentation, technology use, and the emotional demands of teaching abroad. Their narratives reveal that adaptation was not limited to instructional adjustment. It also involved personal adjustment, cultural negotiation, reconstruction of professional identity, and the day-to-day management of challenges specific to Physical Education settings.

Table 1

Profile of the Participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Highest Educational Attainment	Years of Teaching	Years Participating in J-1 Exchange Visitor Program
Participant 1	35	Male	Master's degree in Educational Management	15 years	3 years
Participant 2	40	Male	Master's degree	20 years	approximately 4 years
Participant 3	32	Male	Master of Arts in Education, specialization in Physical Education	8 years	2 years
Participant 4	35	Female	Bachelor of Physical Education with earned master's units in Sports Science	12 years	3 years
Participant 5	34	Female	Master's degree in Teaching Physical Education	13 years	2 years; entering 3rd year
Participant 6	36	Male	Master's degree in Physical Education	14 years	3 years
Participant 7	38	Female	Master of Arts in Education, specialization in Physical Education	16 years	approximately 4 years
Participant 8	33	Male	Bachelor of Physical Education with earned master's units in Educational Management	10 years	2 years

As shown in Table 1, the participants were experienced educators rather than beginning teachers. Their ages ranged from 32 to 40 years old, indicating that they entered the J-1 teaching context with professional maturity and prior classroom exposure. Five participants were male and three were female. In terms of educational attainment, most participants had completed master's degrees, while two participants had bachelor's degrees with earned graduate units. Their teaching experience ranged from eight to 20 years, and their participation in the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program ranged from two years to approximately four years. These profiles provide context for the findings because the difficulties reported by the participants were not mainly caused by lack of teaching experience. Rather, their narratives point to the demands of transferring professional knowledge, values, and teaching habits into a different educational and cultural system.

Participant 1 was a 35-year-old male teacher who earned a master's degree in Educational Management. He had 15 years of teaching experience across local, private, public, and international teaching contexts and had been participating in the J-1 program for three years. His profile reflects the experience of a professionally mature PE teacher whose transition to Arizona required him to reconstruct his role from a local teacher to an international teacher working within a broader set of expectations.

Participant 2 was a 40-year-old male teacher with a master's degree and 20 years of teaching experience. His teaching background was mainly in Physical Education and Health, although his first four years in the Philippine Department of Education involved MAPEH. He also had more than 10 years of PE teaching experience in Dubai before moving to the United States in 2022. His profile is significant because his prior international experience did not remove the need for cultural and professional adjustment in Arizona.

Participant 3 was a 32-year-old male teacher who completed a Master of Arts in Education with specialization in Physical Education. He had eight years of teaching experience, including six years in the Philippines and two years in Arizona under the J-1 program. As the youngest participant, he represented the perspective of a teacher with a solid but comparatively shorter professional background who was actively learning how to align Philippine-based PE practice with the expectations of Arizona schools.

Participant 4 was a 35-year-old female teacher who completed a Bachelor of Physical Education and earned master's units in Sports Science. She had 12 years of teaching experience, with nine years in the Philippines and three years in the United States. Her profile shows a PE teacher whose preparation was anchored in discipline-specific training and whose transition involved comparing Philippine sports-performance orientations with U.S. emphases on lifelong fitness, inclusion, and student well-being.

Participant 5 was a 34-year-old female teacher with a master's degree in Teaching Physical Education. She had 13 years of teaching experience, including 11 years in the Philippines and two years in the United States, and she was entering her third year in the J-1 program. Her background reflects substantial Philippine teaching experience and specialized graduate preparation, but her narrative also shows that the early months of U.S. teaching remained a major adjustment period.

Participant 6 was a 36-year-old male teacher who finished a master's degree in Physical Education, with graduate work focused on curriculum, movement education, and sports pedagogy. He had 14 years of teaching experience in Physical Education, coaching, and health-related lessons and was in his third year in the J-1 program in Arizona. His profile is important because he

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entered the program with specialized PE preparation yet still had to adjust to student diversity, documentation, safety rules, accommodations, and weather-related considerations in Arizona schools.

Participant 7 was a 38-year-old female teacher who completed a Master of Arts in Education with specialization in Physical Education. She had 16 years of teaching experience and had been in the J-1 program since 2021, or approximately four years. Her profile reflects a senior female PE teacher who entered the U.S. public school context with extensive experience but had to rebuild confidence, establish authority in respectful ways, learn system-based procedures, and expand her role around safety, documentation, and inclusion.

Participant 8 was a 33-year-old male teacher who completed a Bachelor of Physical Education and earned master's units in Educational Management. He had 10 years of teaching experience and had been participating in the J-1 program for two years. His profile represents a younger but experienced PE teacher whose transition involved unlearning and relearning instructional habits, strengthening communication, managing independence abroad, and adapting to student voice, behavior systems, and inclusive PE expectations.

The participant profiles show that the study drew from teachers with varied levels of professional seniority, academic preparation, and J-1 experience. Their collective background strengthens the descriptive value of the findings because the participants were not inexperienced teachers entering the classroom for the first time. Instead, they were trained Filipino PE teachers who encountered transition demands because Arizona schools required different cultural understanding, communication practices, curriculum alignment, student-centered pedagogy, safety procedures, documentation habits, and emotional readiness.

Emergent Themes / Categories

Analysis of the interview data revealed four emergent themes that describe how J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers experienced adaptation and professional transition in Arizona schools. These themes were derived from recurring meanings across participants' accounts. Each theme contains sub-themes that capture more specific categories within the larger pattern. At this stage, the findings are presented at a summary level, with the emphasis on identifying the themes, defining their scope, and showing their connection to the research questions. The detailed evidence from participant accounts is presented in the next section.

Table 2
Summary of Emergent Themes and Categories

Theme No.	Emergent Theme	Sub-themes	Central Descriptive Meaning
Theme 1	Negotiating cultural and communicative adaptation in U.S. schools	Expectation-reality recalibration; communication recalibration; culturally flexible relationship-building	Participants described their entry into Arizona schools as a rupture between expectation and actual experience. Adaptation centered on learning U.S. school culture, direct communication, concise instructions, and flexible use of Filipino values.
Theme 2	Reconstructing PE pedagogy for a student-centered and resource-mediated context	Student-centered practical PE; curriculum, assessment, and technology transition; inclusive and safety-centered PE; PE-specific activity workload	Participants shifted PE practice from theory-heavy or teacher-led models toward practical activity design, student choice, fitness, technology, inclusion, safety, and performance-based assessment.
Theme 3	Expanding professional identity through reflective learning and community engagement	Adaptive learning stance; expanded international educator role; continuous growth and PE advocacy; purpose-driven persistence	Participants reconstructed their role from PE content deliverers to international educators, coaches, collaborators, safety managers, communicators, advocates, and continuing learners.
Theme 4	Sustaining teaching practice amid behavioral, emotional, and systemic challenges	Behavior management and authority negotiation; emotional strain and retention vulnerability; support networks and mentoring; PE-specific preparation and first-year support	Participants identified behavior management, emotional strain, homesickness, self-doubt, and insufficient PE-specific preparation as challenges that required mentoring, administrative support, family support, and professional communities.

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Theme 1: Negotiating Cultural and Communicative Adaptation in U.S. Schools

The participants described their transition to the United States as a process of adjusting their expectations, cultural understanding, and professional interactions. Although they entered the J-1 program with years of teaching experience, they encountered differences between the Philippine and U.S. educational environments that required continuous adjustment.

Participants initially associated teaching in the United States with better resources, improved professional opportunities, and more structured educational systems. However, their experiences revealed that international teaching involved complex adjustments related to school culture, communication practices, student behaviors, and workplace expectations.

The participants explained that adapting to U.S. communication styles was one of the earliest challenges they encountered. Unlike the communication practices they were familiar with in the Philippines, they needed to adjust to direct communication, immediate feedback, open discussions, and more assertive student interactions.

For Physical Education teachers, communication became particularly significant because PE instruction requires constant interaction, supervision, and immediate responses during activities. Effective communication was necessary not only for delivering lessons but also for ensuring student safety, managing participation, and establishing classroom relationships.

The findings indicate that cultural adaptation and communication adjustment were interconnected processes. Filipino J-1 Physical Education teachers successfully transitioned by becoming more flexible, culturally aware, and open to modifying their previous assumptions about teaching.

Sub-theme 1: Expectation-reality recalibration

Expectation-reality recalibration refers to the participants' recognition that teaching in the United States was not as easy or predictable as they initially imagined. Some entered the J-1 program with strong confidence because of their years of teaching experience, graduate education, or prior international exposure. However, their early encounters with U.S. school culture showed that experience from the Philippines or other countries did not automatically prepare them for Arizona classrooms. The participants described culture shock, differences in student behavior, new expectations for teacher-student interaction, and unfamiliar school routines. This sub-theme therefore captures the moment when participants began to revise their assumptions and accept that professional competence had to be recontextualized within the host school environment.

Sub-theme 2: Communication recalibration

Communication recalibration refers to the participants' adjustment to the communication patterns used in U.S. schools. They reported learning to use shorter, clearer, and more direct instructions, especially in Physical Education classes where students were expected to move quickly from explanation to activity. They also encountered idiomatic expressions, direct feedback, and students who were more vocal in expressing preferences or disagreement. For the participants, communication became both a language issue and a professional practice issue. They had to learn when to speak up, how to clarify expectations with colleagues, how to maintain rapport with students, and how to express authority without relying solely on the more formal or hierarchical communication patterns familiar to them from the Philippine context.

Sub-theme 3: Culturally flexible relationship-building

Culturally flexible relationship-building describes how participants retained important Filipino values while learning to use them in a different cultural setting. Respect, patience, hard work, faith, persistence, and care for students remained present in their narratives. However, these values had to be expressed through approaches that fit the host school culture. For example, building rapport required more encouragement, clearer boundaries, and greater openness to student voice. Patience was applied not only to students but also to the teacher's own process of learning unfamiliar rules and expectations. This sub-theme shows that adaptation did not mean abandoning Filipino professional identity. Rather, it involved making Filipino values flexible enough to function within the U.S. school environment.

Theme 2: Reconstructing PE Pedagogy for a Student-Centered and Resource-Mediated Context

The participants experienced significant changes in their Physical Education teaching practices as they adjusted to the instructional expectations of U.S. schools. They described a transition from familiar Philippine approaches toward more student-centered, inclusive, activity-based, and fitness-oriented instruction.

Participants observed differences in curriculum structure, student participation, assessment practices, and available resources. They adapted their lessons by incorporating student choice, lifelong fitness concepts, technology-supported activities, performance-based assessment, and accommodations for diverse learners.

The availability of facilities, equipment, and digital resources provided opportunities for improving instruction; however, these resources also required teachers to redesign activities and assessment strategies. Participants learned that effective Physical Education instruction in the U.S. context required flexibility, creativity, and responsiveness to learner needs.

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The findings show that professional transition involved not only adjusting to a new workplace but also reconstructing teaching practices according to the expectations, resources, and educational philosophy of the host school system.

Sub-theme 1: Student-centered practical PE

Student-centered practical PE refers to the shift from teacher-led and theory-heavy instruction toward activity-based learning, student choice, participation, and practical movement experiences. Participants described reducing lengthy explanations and allowing students to engage quickly in physical activities. Some noted that U.S. PE placed less emphasis on written examinations, books, and extended classroom discussion and more emphasis on fitness, teamwork, sportsmanship, recreational activities, and lifelong movement. In this sub-theme, the teacher's role changed from being the main demonstrator or lecturer to being a facilitator who designs opportunities for students to move, decide, practice, improve, and reflect on their physical development.

Sub-theme 2: Curriculum, assessment, and technology transition

Curriculum, assessment, and technology transition captures participants' adjustment to the tools and structures that shaped PE teaching in Arizona. They described the availability of Chromebooks, online resources, fitness applications, heart-rate trackers, performance-based assessments, and activity-based monitoring. These resources changed how they planned lessons, documented learning, and assessed student progress. In contrast to more book-based or paper-based approaches that some associated with the Philippine setting, participants had to use practical assessments, fitness goals, personal improvement indicators, and digital supports. This sub-theme shows that adaptation was institutional as well as instructional because teachers had to align with school-based systems of curriculum delivery and assessment.

Sub-theme 3: Inclusive and safety-centered PE

Inclusive and safety-centered PE refers to the participants' adjustment to a school context that emphasized learner diversity, student rights, accommodations, gender sensitivity, well-being, and physical safety. Participants reported that U.S. PE required them to think carefully about supervision, language, participation, and inclusion, especially when working with students of different abilities, cultures, beliefs, and learning styles. Safety was not a minor classroom rule but a major professional responsibility because PE involves movement, equipment, open spaces, and peer interaction. This sub-theme shows that adaptation required teachers to broaden their understanding of effective PE from skill performance to equitable and safe participation.

Sub-theme 4: PE-specific activity workload

PE-specific activity workload describes the distinctive labor required in teaching Physical Education. Participants reported that they had to prepare activities, materials, and strategies almost every day. They also had to maintain student engagement because students could become bored quickly and openly express dissatisfaction. Unlike conventional classroom teaching, PE required teachers to monitor several moving students, organize open spaces, supervise equipment, prevent incidents, and adjust activities in real time. This sub-theme clarifies that the workload of PE was not simply the number of classes taught. It included constant preparation, safety monitoring, behavior management, and responsive activity design.

Theme 3: Expanding Professional Identity through Reflective Learning and Community Engagement

The participants revealed that their experience as J-1 Physical Education teachers resulted in an expanded understanding of their professional roles. They no longer viewed themselves solely as instructors responsible for delivering PE lessons but also as international educators, cultural representatives, collaborators, mentors, and advocates for Physical Education.

Their responsibilities extended beyond teaching content. They were expected to establish relationships with students, collaborate with colleagues, communicate with parents, follow institutional policies, ensure student safety, and participate in professional development activities.

Through their experiences, participants developed greater confidence, adaptability, and professional awareness. They engaged in reflective learning by observing colleagues, seeking feedback, modifying strategies, and continuously improving their teaching practices.

The findings demonstrate that international teaching contributed to professional identity development by exposing teachers to new educational perspectives and encouraging continuous professional growth.

Sub-theme 1: Adaptive learning stance

Adaptive learning stance refers to the participants' decision to observe, research, ask questions, take notes, seek feedback, and revise their practices. The participants did not present adaptation as a passive process. They actively learned from classroom observations, colleagues, principals, instructional coaches, Filipino peers, online sources, and their own trial-and-error experiences. This sub-theme is important because it shows that prior teaching experience was helpful but insufficient unless paired with humility and willingness to learn. The participants' ability to adapt was strengthened by their readiness to treat the U.S. school environment as a new professional learning site.

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Sub-theme 2: Expanded international educator role

Expanded international educator role describes the participants' recognition that they were not functioning only as PE content teachers. They understood themselves as international teachers who represented Filipino professionalism while meeting the expectations of U.S. schools. Their responsibilities included maintaining safety, communicating with parents and colleagues, collaborating with classroom teachers, managing student behavior, supporting inclusion, and building trust as Asian and Filipino educators in a diverse school environment. This sub-theme shows that the J-1 placement expanded their professional role horizontally across multiple relationships and responsibilities.

Sub-theme 3: Continuous growth and PE advocacy

Continuous growth and PE advocacy refers to the participants' increasing commitment to professional development and to strengthening the status of Physical Education. They spoke about attending trainings, joining conferences, sharing resources, creating support groups, and demonstrating the value of PE as a discipline. Some expressed concern that PE is sometimes treated as less academically demanding or as 'just PE.' Their narratives resisted this view by emphasizing pedagogy, progression, pacing, student engagement, safety, and professional competence. This sub-theme shows that adaptation led not only to personal improvement but also to advocacy for the field.

Sub-theme 4: Purpose-driven persistence

Purpose-driven persistence describes the motivations that helped participants continue despite difficulty. Financial opportunity, family goals, professional advancement, love for PE, faith, and the personal 'why' of teaching appeared across the narratives. Participants acknowledged that financial reasons influenced migration, but they also stressed that survival in the J-1 context required more than the desire for income. Readiness, resilience, mental and emotional strength, and commitment to teaching were needed to remain effective. This sub-theme shows that persistence was sustained by a combination of personal, family, professional, and spiritual purposes.

Theme 4: Sustaining Teaching Practice amid Behavioral, Emotional, and Systemic Challenges

Despite their professional preparation, participants encountered several challenges that influenced their teaching experiences. The most significant challenge identified was student behavior management.

Participants explained that managing behavior in Physical Education was complex because PE classes involved movement, open spaces, equipment use, peer interaction, and safety considerations. Teachers needed to establish authority, maintain student engagement, monitor multiple activities, and respond quickly to unexpected situations.

Aside from professional challenges, participants also experienced emotional difficulties during their transition. Feelings of anxiety, homesickness, uncertainty, stress, and self-doubt were commonly experienced, particularly during the early stages of teaching in the United States.

However, participants were able to overcome these challenges through support systems and personal resilience. Mentors, administrators, colleagues, Filipino teacher networks, family members, and J-1 sponsors provided guidance and encouragement that helped them understand school expectations and cope with emotional adjustments.

The findings suggest that successful adaptation requires sustained support systems that address not only professional concerns but also emotional and personal needs.

Sub-theme 1: Behavior management and authority negotiation

Behavior management and authority negotiation was the most visible professional challenge across the narratives. Participants described student misconduct, talkback, vocal student preferences, open-space distractions, and the difficulty of establishing authority in PE classes. The challenge was intensified by the physical nature of PE because students moved around gyms and outdoor spaces, used equipment, interacted with peers, and shifted quickly from one activity to another. Authority therefore had to be built not only through rules but also through communication, relationships, consistency, and culturally appropriate classroom management.

Sub-theme 2: Emotional strain and retention vulnerability

Emotional strain and retention vulnerability captures the personal effects of professional transition. Participants reported anxiety, stress, homesickness, self-doubt, uncertainty about competence, and even thoughts of quitting or changing careers. These responses show that adaptation affected the teachers beyond lesson delivery. The early months and first year were especially demanding because participants had to learn curriculum, classroom management, communication norms, and school expectations while also managing separation from familiar support systems. This sub-theme highlights that professional adjustment can become a retention issue when teachers lack timely support.

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Sub-theme 3: Support networks and mentoring

Support networks and mentoring refers to the practical and emotional assistance that helped participants adjust. They identified principals, administrators, mentors, colleagues, classroom teachers, Filipino peers, family members, visa sponsors, and PE-specific communities as sources of support. These networks provided guidance on curriculum, school rules, behavior management, sensitive topics, communication, and emotional coping. This sub-theme shows that adaptation was social. Teachers were more able to sustain their practice when they had people who could explain the system, validate their experiences, and provide field-specific advice.

Sub-theme 4: PE-specific preparation and first-year support

PE-specific preparation and first-year support describes participants' recommendation for training that directly addresses the realities of teaching PE in U.S. schools. General orientation was viewed as helpful but incomplete. Participants identified the need for preparation in PE curriculum, safety protocols, classroom management in open spaces, behavior expectations, health-related topics, activity design, student diversity, and school-based procedures. The first year was repeatedly described as critical because it was the period when teachers had to build confidence while learning unfamiliar systems. This sub-theme points to the need for structured preparation and mentoring before and during the initial year of placement.

Thematic Narratives with Verbatim Excerpts

This section presents a detailed descriptive account of each emergent theme. The purpose is to demonstrate how the themes are grounded in the participants' own words. Verbatim excerpts are introduced and followed by descriptive commentary to clarify how each excerpt supports the theme. The discussion remains data-driven and descriptive. It does not provide theoretical interpretation, which is addressed in Chapter 5.

Theme 1: Negotiating Cultural and Communicative Adaptation in U.S. Schools

The first theme is reflected in the participants' descriptions of early adjustment to U.S. schools. Several participants entered the J-1 program with professional confidence and expectations that teaching abroad would be manageable because of their prior experience. However, their accounts show that the Arizona school context required a new kind of adaptation. Participant 1 described the experience as difficult from the beginning, while Participant 2 summarized his entry into the U.S. system as culture shock. This pattern was also evident in accounts that described school culture, district expectations, stakeholder communication, and the pressure of proving oneself professionally.

These excerpts show that adaptation began with a gap between expectation and actual experience. The participants did not describe teaching in Arizona as a simple continuation of their previous work. Instead, they encountered differences in student behavior, school routines, classroom expectations, district procedures, documentation practices, and communication styles. For teachers who had already built strong professional identities in the Philippines or other international settings, this created an initial period of recalibration.

Communication emerged as a central part of cultural adjustment. Participants described the need to change how they gave instructions, how they interpreted direct speech, and how they interacted with colleagues. Participant 1 emphasized language and communication, Participant 2 explained that middle school students preferred short and direct instructions, and Participant 3 identified communication as his biggest adjustment. Across participant responses, communication involved more than classroom talk. It also involved documentation, email, meetings, and stakeholder relationships.

Across these accounts, communication was not presented as a simple language issue. The participants were already English-speaking educators, but they still had to learn the communication norms of the school environment. This included idiomatic expressions, direct workplace communication, concise PE instructions, student vocality, formal documentation, parent communication, and the expectation that teachers communicate clearly with colleagues and administrators.

At the same time, participants did not indicate that adaptation required abandoning their Filipino professional values. Instead, they described flexible application of values such as patience, respect, openness, and relationship-building. Participants 4, 6, 7, and 8 emphasized cultural awareness, trust-building, boundaries, and the flexible use of Filipino values.

The theme therefore shows that cultural and communicative adaptation was both external and internal. Externally, teachers learned visible patterns of U.S. school life such as direct speech, student voice, formal documentation, short instructions, and open communication. Internally, they adjusted how they interpreted these patterns and how they expressed Filipino values in ways that remained effective in Arizona classrooms.

Theme 2: Reconstructing PE Pedagogy for a Student-Centered and Resource-Mediated Context

The second theme emerged from participants' descriptions of instructional change. Physical Education in Arizona was described as more practical, student-centered, resource-supported, activity-based, and focused on lifelong fitness. Participants

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compared this with prior experiences in the Philippines, where PE was often associated with theory, MAPEH integration, classroom-based discussions, sports performance, or limited resources. The participants emphasized routines, demonstrations, standards, safety protocols, documentation, technology, accommodations, and simultaneous management of timing, space, equipment, and student accountability.

These statements show that the participants had to reconstruct the purpose and method of PE instruction. PE was not only about sport history, terminology, drills, or performance. It also involved giving students choices, encouraging participation, focusing on fitness, modifying activities, and making movement meaningful for different learners. The participants described the teacher less as a lecturer or controller and more as a facilitator who structures opportunities for active participation.

Technology, documentation, and school resources were also part of the shift. Participants noted that Arizona schools provided equipment, digital platforms, online tools, and structured procedures. However, the availability of resources also came with stronger accountability. Teachers had to document incidents, enter grades online, align lessons with district expectations, and use technology to support instruction and assessment.

The participants also described the U.S. PE setting as more concerned with safety, inclusion, rights, accommodations, health needs, and learner diversity. Participant 1 noted that the teacher's responsibilities were broader, while Participants 6, 7, and 8 described accommodation, medical concerns, documentation, hydration, supervision, and standards-based justification as part of PE practice.

At the same time, the shift to practical, active, and student-centered PE created a distinct workload. Participants had to prepare varied activities, monitor open spaces, manage transitions, ensure safety, and sustain engagement. This workload was also described through hydration planning, outdoor activity limits, alternative indoor lessons, shade considerations, shorter activity intervals, equipment management, and the need for clear routines in active spaces.

Theme 2 therefore, shows that adaptation included a substantial pedagogical transition. The participants did not simply transfer Filipino PE methods into the Arizona setting. They reconstructed instruction around student engagement, practical movement, inclusive participation, safety supervision, digital tools, standards-based accountability, and flexible activity design.

Theme 3: Expanding Professional Identity through Reflective Learning and Community Engagement

The third theme concerns the participants' changing sense of who they were as professionals. Adaptation required more than adjusting lessons. It also required a learning stance. Participants repeatedly described observing, researching, taking notes, asking questions, accepting feedback, and learning from colleagues. This pattern was reflected in descriptions of adaptation through observation, help-seeking, department collaboration, online research, and willingness to begin again professionally.

These excerpts show that participants did not treat experience as enough. They positioned themselves as learners within a new professional environment. They watched colleagues, documented unfamiliar phrases and procedures, asked for feedback, reviewed standards, and revised their practice. The pattern across participants was active learning rather than passive adjustment.

The participants also described an expanded professional role. Participant 1 stated that he was no longer just a normal teacher but an international teacher. Participants 6, 7, and 8 deepened this finding by connecting the J-1 role to professional representation, safety management, parent and nurse communication, and systematic responsibilities beyond instruction.

Purpose also supported professional identity. Participants acknowledged financial opportunity and family goals, but they also emphasized sacrifice, faith, emotional readiness, and love for teaching as reasons for continuing. Purpose-driven persistence emerged as a combination of family sacrifice, financial preparation, professional endurance, humility, and willingness to remain teachable.

Theme 3 shows that the J-1 experience expanded professional identity in several directions: toward reflective learning, international representation, collaboration, advocacy, and purpose-driven persistence. Participants became more aware of what it means to be a PE teacher in a foreign school system and more intentional about improving their practice.

Theme 4: Sustaining Teaching Practice amid Behavioral, Emotional, and Systemic Challenges

The fourth theme focuses on what made adaptation difficult to sustain. Across participants, behavior management was the most persistent professional challenge. The issue was intensified in PE because classes often occurred in gyms, outdoor spaces, and activity settings where students moved, interacted, used equipment, and could quickly become distracted. The participants described boundary testing, refusal to participate, unsafe behavior during games, heat during outdoor activities, and low student valuation of PE.

These excerpts demonstrate strong convergence across the participants. They consistently described behavior management as a major challenge, especially with middle school students, large PE classes, and open activity spaces. Authority had to be established through communication, consistency, rapport, routines, procedures, and understanding of school protocols. This differed from contexts where teacher authority may be more strongly assumed.

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The challenge was not only professional but also emotional. Participants reported anxiety, stress, self-doubt, homesickness, loneliness, pressure to succeed, and even thoughts of quitting. The accounts demonstrate that emotional strain was closely tied to family separation, safety concerns, documentation anxiety, and first-semester systems overload.

These accounts show that transition difficulty had consequences for confidence and retention. The participants were trained and experienced, yet the new system still made them question their effectiveness. The emotional dimension of adaptation therefore needs to be understood as part of the teaching experience, not as an issue separate from professional performance.

Support systems were central to sustaining practice. Participants identified peers, principals, mentors, administrators, departments, family, Filipino teachers, visa sponsors, and PE-specific communities as necessary forms of support. The participants emphasized the need for support from both inside and outside school, including PE mentors, curriculum maps, observation opportunities, safety protocol training, and communities where teachers could ask questions without embarrassment.

Theme 4 shows that sustaining teaching practice required both personal resilience and systemic support. Participants did not describe adjustment as something that could be solved by individual effort alone. They emphasized mentoring, administrative guidance, PE-specific communities, school-based support, emotional support, and realistic preparation for the U.S. PE curriculum, student behavior, safety protocols, documentation, and daily activity design.

Integration of Participant Voices

Across the four themes, the participants collectively constructed adaptation as a process of recalibration, reconstruction, expansion, and endurance. Their accounts converged on the idea that teaching Physical Education in Arizona was not simply an overseas version of their previous teaching roles. It required learning the language of the school culture, the communication expectations of students and colleagues, the curriculum priorities of U.S. PE, and the behavioral realities of active learning spaces. Across the eight accounts, the integrated pattern highlighted district expectations, documentation, safety and liability, Arizona heat, student accountability, first-semester systems overload, and structured first-year support.

The participants showed strong convergence in several areas. First, all described adaptation as challenging, especially during the early months. Whether expressed as culture shock, expectation-reality rupture, mindset change, professional restart, adjustment pressure, or the need to prove oneself, the participants agreed that entry into U.S. schools required learning new expectations. Second, communication was consistently identified as important. Participants had to use concise directions, understand direct speech, interpret idioms, communicate with colleagues, document concerns, email clearly, and speak up when they needed help. Third, the participants agreed that PE pedagogy in the U.S. setting was more practical, student-centered, fitness-oriented, inclusive, safety-conscious, and documentation-driven than many of their previous experiences. Fourth, behavior management emerged as a shared difficulty, particularly in middle school, large classes, and open-space PE settings.

At the same time, participant voices showed variation. Participant 2 entered the United States with more than 10 years of international teaching experience in Dubai, yet he still experienced culture shock in Arizona. This shows that international experience did not remove the need for local adaptation. Participant 4 placed strong emphasis on inclusivity, student well-being, and accommodations. Participant 5 emphasized administrative support, daily preparation, faith, and returning to her “why.” Participant 1 framed the J-1 role as a shift from being a normal teacher to being an international teacher. Participant 3 emphasized observation, technology, and reflective practice. Participant 6 emphasized the transition as a change in mindset and as a process of learning routines, safety protocols, technology, and trust-building. Participant 7 emphasized rebuilding confidence, firm boundaries, behavior procedures, and the acceptance that becoming a beginner again is part of professional growth. Participant 8 emphasized gratitude, pressure, stakeholder communication, Arizona weather, safety-documentation anxiety, and the need for structured first-year support. These variations show that the same phenomenon was experienced through different entry points, shaped by personal background, years of teaching, school context, and coping resources.

The integration of participant voices also reveals a pattern of movement. The participants first encountered uncertainty, culture shock, and communication adjustment. They then modified their pedagogy by learning new approaches to instruction, assessment, technology, student choice, inclusion, safety, and activity flow. As they continued adjusting, they reconstructed their professional identities as reflective learners, collaborators, coaches, international educators, and advocates of PE. Finally, they identified the conditions needed to sustain practice, especially behavior management strategies, emotional readiness, mentoring, administrative support, family connection, PE-specific preparation, and structured first-year support. This integrated pattern shows that adaptation was not a single event. It was an ongoing process shaped by experience, support, reflection, and persistence.

This chapter presented the synthesis of the findings, conclusions, practical outputs, implications, recommendations, and final reflection of the study on the adaptation and professional transition of J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers in Arizona. It drew from the themes and categories developed in the preceding chapters and consolidated the major insights derived from the

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participants' narratives. The chapter was organized according to the research questions and the emergent thematic structure of the study. It also translated the findings into a proposed practical output intended to support future J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers, school administrators, mentors, sponsors, and related stakeholders in addressing the professional and cultural demands of teaching Physical Education in U.S. schools.

This section presents the synthesis of the key findings of the study in relation to the research questions. The study explored how J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers described their adaptation and professional transition in Arizona schools, the professional challenges they encountered, the meanings they derived from their experiences, and the themes that emerged from their narratives. Eight (8) Filipino Physical Education teachers participated in the study. Their teaching experiences ranged from eight (8) to twenty (20) years, while their participation in the J-1 program generally ranged from two (2) to three (3) years. Despite their established professional backgrounds, the participants experienced cultural, instructional, emotional, and institutional adjustments as they transitioned into the U.S. educational environment.

1. The participants experienced adaptation as a process of adjusting expectations, cultural understanding, and professional practices. The participants initially entered the J-1 program with expectations influenced by perceptions of better resources, professional opportunities, and teaching conditions in the United States. However, their actual experiences required adjustments to unfamiliar school norms, communication practices, student behaviors, and institutional expectations. The findings revealed that prior teaching experience provided a foundation for adjustment, but successful adaptation required flexibility, openness, and continuous learning within the Arizona school context.

2. Communication served as a critical factor in the participants' cultural and professional adaptation. The participants emphasized the need to adjust their communication approaches when interacting with students, colleagues, administrators, and parents. They learned to use direct and concise instructional language, interpret cultural expressions, and establish effective professional relationships. In Physical Education settings, communication was particularly important because instruction occurred in active environments where safety, participation, and behavior management required immediate and clear interactions.

3. The participants reconstructed their Physical Education pedagogy to align with a student-centered and resource-supported learning environment. The participants modified their instructional approaches by transitioning from familiar teacher-centered and performance-focused practices toward more student-centered, inclusive, fitness-oriented, and activity-based Physical Education instruction. They adapted to student choice, lifelong fitness concepts, performance-based assessment, technology integration, accommodations for diverse learners, and safety procedures. These adjustments required them to redesign activities, assessment strategies, and classroom management practices based on U.S. curriculum expectations and available resources.

4. The participants experienced an expansion of their professional identity as Filipino J-1 Physical Education teachers. Beyond their role as instructors, participants developed identities as international educators, cultural representatives, collaborators, coaches, safety managers, and advocates for Physical Education. Their responsibilities extended to building relationships with learners, collaborating with colleagues, communicating with parents, following school policies, addressing diverse learner needs, and participating in professional development activities. These experiences contributed to their professional growth while increasing the complexity of their teaching responsibilities.

5. Student behavior management emerged as the most significant professional challenge encountered by the participants. The participants identified managing student behavior as one of the most demanding aspects of teaching Physical Education in Arizona schools. This challenge was influenced by the active nature of PE classes, open learning spaces, movement-based activities, student interaction, and safety considerations. The participants emphasized the need to establish classroom authority, maintain student engagement, supervise multiple activities, and develop strategies specifically suited for Physical Education environments.

6. The transition to teaching in the United States involved emotional challenges that influenced professional confidence and persistence. The participants experienced emotional difficulties, including anxiety, stress, homesickness, uncertainty, and self-doubt, particularly during the early stages of their teaching assignment. These experiences demonstrated that adaptation involved not only instructional and professional adjustments but also psychological and personal transitions. The participants relied on resilience, family support, professional relationships, and personal coping strategies to continue their teaching journey.

7. Support systems played an essential role in facilitating successful adaptation and professional transition. The participants identified mentors, administrators, colleagues, Filipino teacher networks, family members, visa sponsors, and Physical Education communities as significant sources of guidance and support. These support systems helped them understand curriculum expectations, school procedures, communication practices, classroom management strategies, and emotional challenges. However, participants emphasized the need for more PE-specific support addressing curriculum implementation, safety practices, activity design, behavior management, and first-year adjustment.

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8. The participants' experiences reflected adaptive learning, professional growth, and purpose-driven persistence. The participants viewed their J-1 teaching experience as a continuous process of learning and professional transformation. Through observation, reflection, professional development, collaboration, and strategy adjustment, they developed greater confidence, adaptability, and cultural competence. While financial opportunities and personal goals influenced their decision to teach abroad, they emphasized that successful completion of the J-1 experience required preparation, patience, resilience, and commitment to professional growth.

Overall, the findings revealed four emergent themes: (1) Negotiating Cultural and Communicative Adaptation in U.S. Schools; (2) Reconstructing PE Pedagogy for a Student-Centered and Resource-Mediated Context; (3) Expanding Professional Identity through Reflective Learning and Community Engagement; and (4) Sustaining Teaching Practice amid Behavioral, Emotional, and Systemic Challenges. These themes demonstrate that the adaptation and professional transition of J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers involve interconnected processes of cultural adjustment, instructional transformation, professional identity development, and sustained support.

This section presents the conclusions derived from the findings of the study. The conclusions are grounded in the participants' accounts and aligned with the literature and theoretical perspectives used in the study. They are stated as consolidated insights that answer the research questions and clarify the contribution of the study to the understanding of J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers' adaptation and professional transition.

1. Adaptation among J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers is a dynamic process of cultural, communicative, and professional recalibration. The study concludes that adaptation cannot be reduced to becoming familiar with a new workplace. It involves learning how to interpret the culture of the host school, communicate according to U.S. norms, manage student behavior in a different social environment, and revise prior assumptions about teaching abroad. This conclusion is consistent with Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory, which views adaptation as a continuous process involving stress, adjustment, learning, and growth in an unfamiliar cultural environment (Kim, 2001, as cited in Guerriche & Grimshaw, 2024).
2. Prior teaching experience provides a foundation but does not remove the need for context-specific adjustment. The participants were experienced teachers before entering the J-1 program, yet they still encountered culture shock, communication challenges, new curriculum expectations, and behavior management difficulties. This shows that professional competence is transferable only when teachers are able to adapt it to the norms of the host context. The finding supports studies indicating that Filipino teachers abroad are professionally prepared and adaptable, but still face adjustment demands related to culture, classroom management, and communication (Macapagong et al., 2023; Oris & Caballes, 2024).
3. The professional transition of J-1 Filipino PE teachers requires a shift from familiar Philippine-oriented PE practices to U.S.-based student-centered, inclusive, and safety-conscious PE instruction. Participants moved from more teacher-directed, theory-based, or performance-focused approaches toward activity-based instruction, student choice, lifelong fitness, performance assessment, technology use, and inclusion. This conclusion affirms prior studies that international PE teaching requires instructional flexibility, student-centered strategies, and creative engagement (Palawan & Cancio, 2024; Villaver Jr., 2024).
4. Student behavior management is the most critical professional challenge in the PE teaching context. The participants' accounts show that behavior management in PE differs from behavior management in regular classrooms because PE involves movement, equipment, open spaces, physical contact, peer interaction, and heightened safety concerns. Authority-building, supervision, and engagement therefore become central tasks. The study concludes that any support program for J-1 Filipino PE teachers must include PE-specific behavior management and safety training, not only general orientation.
5. Emotional resilience and professional retention are directly influenced by the quality of support systems available to J-1 teachers. Anxiety, stress, homesickness, self-doubt, and thoughts of quitting were linked to the early stages of transition and to repeated challenges with students and school expectations. However, participants who accessed mentors, administrators, colleagues, family, Filipino teacher networks, and sponsors were better able to cope. This supports literature showing that emotional strain, social integration, and workload demands affect Filipino teachers abroad (Oca & Malaga, 2025), while collaboration, continuous learning, and institutional support strengthen adaptation (Obenza et al., 2025; Palawan & Cancio, 2024).
6. Professional identity development is one of the strongest outcomes of the J-1 teaching experience. The participants did not remain fixed in their previous professional roles. They became more reflective, more collaborative, more culturally aware, and more committed to professional development. Some also became advocates for PE and sources of support for other teachers. This conclusion aligns with literature stating that Filipino teachers abroad construct professional identity through experience, reflection, resilience, and interaction with new communities (Arcillo, 2024; Chua, 2021; Ralph, 2024).
7. The decision to persist in international teaching is shaped by self-efficacy, expected outcomes, and personal goals. Some participants were motivated by financial opportunity, family goals, career growth, and the desire for professional development.

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However, they also recognized that these goals required readiness, patience, resilience, and continuous learning. This conclusion is supported by Social Cognitive Career Theory, which explains career behavior through the interaction of personal factors, environmental supports, self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals (Lent et al., 1994, as cited in Appling et al., 2022).

8. General preparation is insufficient for J-1 Filipino PE teachers; preparation must be PE-specific, context-specific, and sustained beyond arrival. Participants recommended training on U.S. PE curriculum, classroom management, student behavior, safety procedures, communication expectations, sensitive topics, instructional technology, and first-year coping strategies. The study concludes that a stronger support system must begin before deployment and continue during the first year of teaching in Arizona. Such support should involve school administrators, mentors, PE departments, J-1 sponsors, and Filipino teacher communities.

Based on the findings, the study proposes the PE-ADAPT Support Framework for J-1 Filipino Physical Education Teachers as its primary practical output. The framework is a conceptual and application-oriented guide for supporting the adaptation, professional transition, and retention of J-1 Filipino PE teachers assigned in Arizona and similar U.S. school contexts. It translates the findings into a structured support model that can be used by school administrators, mentor teachers, PE department heads, J-1 sponsors, teacher placement agencies, and incoming Filipino PE teachers.

Name and Nature of the Output

The PE-ADAPT Support Framework is a transition support framework and planning guide. The acronym PE-ADAPT stands for Physical Education Adaptation, Development, Assistance, Professional Growth, and Transition. It is designed to address the four major themes of the study: cultural and communicative adaptation, student-centered PE pedagogy, professional identity development, and sustainability amid behavioral, emotional, and systemic challenges. It may be developed further into a toolkit, orientation module, mentoring guide, or district-level onboarding checklist for J-1 Filipino PE teachers.

Purpose and Rationale

The PE-ADAPT Support Framework was developed based on the findings that J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers experience significant cultural, instructional, emotional, and professional transitions before, during, and throughout their teaching assignment in the United States. The participants consistently emphasized that the greatest challenges occurred before departure and during the first months of teaching, when they encountered unfamiliar school cultures, student behavior, communication styles, curriculum standards, and workplace expectations. These findings demonstrate that effective support should begin even before teachers leave the Philippines and continue throughout their transition into the U.S. educational system.

Accordingly, the framework prioritizes pre-departure readiness as its first component by providing comprehensive orientation on U.S. school culture, professional expectations, Physical Education curriculum, classroom and behavior management, safety procedures, legal and ethical responsibilities, communication with students and parents, and practical situations commonly encountered by Filipino teachers in American schools. The framework also encourages experienced J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers to share authentic experiences, practical strategies, and survival tips with incoming participants through mentoring sessions, webinars, and professional learning communities.

Beyond supporting teachers during their exchange program, the framework recognizes that the benefits of the J-1 program should extend beyond the duration of international teaching. Filipino Physical Education teachers who return to the Philippines bring with them valuable international experiences, innovative teaching practices, inclusive instructional approaches, technology integration skills, standards-based assessment strategies, leadership competencies, and multicultural perspectives. These acquired competencies may enrich Physical Education instruction in Philippine schools and contribute to the professional development of fellow educators.

Upon returning to the Philippines, former J-1 teachers may serve as mentor teachers, resource speakers, curriculum contributors, instructional leaders, and advocates for quality Physical Education. They may conduct teacher training programs, facilitate professional learning communities, mentor future J-1 applicants, share best practices in learner-centered and inclusive Physical Education, and assist schools in integrating innovative instructional approaches gained from their international teaching experience. In this way, the knowledge and expertise developed through the J-1 program continue to benefit Philippine education even after teachers complete their international assignments.

Therefore, the PE-ADAPT Support Framework is designed not only as a transition guide for teachers entering the United States but also as a continuous professional development framework that promotes knowledge sharing, leadership development, and educational improvement upon their return to the Philippines. By emphasizing preparation before deployment, sustained support during transition, and professional contribution after completing the J-1 program, the framework maximizes the long-term value of international teacher exchange for individual teachers, schools, and the Philippine educational system.

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Core Components or Structure

The PE-ADAPT Support Framework consists of six interconnected components. Each component corresponds to a set of findings and may be translated into specific activities, mentoring sessions, orientation topics, or reflective tools. The components are presented in Table 6.

Table 6
PE-ADAPT Support Framework for J-1 Filipino Physical Education Teachers

Component	Purpose	Connection to Findings
P: Pre-departure and first-month readiness	Prepare teachers before deployment through orientation on U.S. culture, school expectations, PE curriculum, communication styles, legal responsibilities, classroom management, safety protocols, technology use, and practical scenarios they may encounter	Drawn from participants' reports that the first weeks and months were the most difficult and that preparedness was necessary for mental, emotional, and instructional adjustment.
E: Environment and communication calibration	Assist teachers during the first months in adjusting to American communication styles, school culture, collegial relationships, student interactions, and parent communication.	Drawn from the theme on cultural and communicative adaptation, especially the need to adjust to direct speech, vocal students, and clearer workplace communication.
A: Activity-based and inclusive PE pedagogy	Support teachers in implementing student-centered, inclusive, technology-supported, and standards-based Physical Education instruction.	Drawn from the pedagogical shift from theory-heavy and teacher-led PE toward student-centered, practical, inclusive, and resource-mediated PE.
D: Discipline, safety, and open-space management	Develop competencies in behavior management, movement supervision, equipment management, student safety, and emergency response in Physical Education settings.	Drawn from the finding that student behavior and supervision in PE settings were the most recurrent professional challenges.
A: Administrative, mentor, and peer support systems	Provide continuous mentoring, coaching, emotional support, collaboration, and professional guidance from administrators, mentors, sponsors, and Filipino teacher networks.	Drawn from participants' repeated emphasis on the importance of peers, administrators, mentors, sponsors, and family support.
P: Professional growth, identity, and well-being	Promote reflective practice, resilience, leadership development, emotional well-being, and continuous professional learning throughout the J-1 experience.	Drawn from the themes on expanded professional identity, emotional strain, retention vulnerability, and continuous learning.
T: Transition, Reflection, and Continuous Improvement	Prepare returning J-1 teachers to apply and share the knowledge, skills, innovations, and best practices gained in the United States by serving as mentors, trainers, curriculum contributors, and educational leaders in the Philippines.	Drawn from the overall findings that adaptation is not a one-time event but a continuous and cyclical process. Participants consistently described observing, asking questions, seeking feedback, revising strategies, building relationships, and learning from experience to improve their practice and sustain their professional transition.

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. For prospective J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers. Prospective J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers should undergo comprehensive preparation before deployment, including orientation on U.S. school culture, communication practices, student behavior management, Physical Education curriculum, instructional technology, safety protocols, and inclusive teaching strategies. Such preparation may help strengthen their readiness for professional transition and reduce adjustment difficulties during their first year of teaching.
2. For school administrators, PE department heads, mentor teachers, and instructional coaches. Schools employing J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers should establish structured mentoring and induction programs that provide continuous professional guidance, regular classroom observations, constructive feedback, and emotional support. Special attention should be given during the first year of teaching, when adjustment challenges are most evident.

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3. For J-1 sponsors and teacher placement agencies. J-1 sponsors and teacher placement agencies should enhance their pre-departure and post-arrival support by incorporating Physical Education-specific training and continuing assistance throughout the teachers' transition. This support should address curriculum expectations, classroom and behavior management in movement-based settings, communication practices, student safety, and school policies.

4. For school districts and educational leaders. School districts should provide continuous professional development opportunities that strengthen culturally responsive teaching, student-centered Physical Education instruction, instructional technology integration, behavior management, and inclusive teaching practices. These initiatives may further support the professional growth and long-term retention of international teachers.

5. For the implementation of the PE-ADAPT Framework. The proposed PE-ADAPT Framework should be implemented by schools, school districts, J-1 sponsors, and teacher placement agencies as a structured guide for supporting the adaptation and professional transition of J-1 Filipino Physical Education teachers. Its implementation should also be evaluated to determine its effectiveness in improving teacher readiness, professional adjustment, and retention.

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