

# Teaching in a Far-Flung School

Jonah Mae Z. Quillano

Teaching is a noble and fulfilling profession that involves imparting knowledge, skills, and values to learners (Moreno et al., 2023). Teachers play a crucial role in shaping individuals and contributing to societal development (Becirović & Akbarov, 2015; Elbertson et al., 2025). However, the profession is also characterized by various challenges that test teachers' dedication and commitment. In the Philippine context, these challenges are more pronounced in far-flung schools, where access to quality education remains limited. Many of these schools serve marginalized and disadvantaged communities where poverty is prevalent and often evident in the classroom setting. Consequently, providing quality instruction and implementing effective learning initiatives in these areas become both essential and demanding responsibilities for teachers.

Teachers assigned to far-flung schools often encounter significant physical, social, and professional challenges (Ucag et al., 2024; Galut, 2025; Algonos et al., 2024; Callano & Bantulo, 2025). Quejada and Orale (2018) noted that teachers travel long distances, sometimes riding motorcycles for hours and walking along hazardous paths just to reach their assigned schools. In some cases, they rely on various modes of transportation, such as *baesa* and *habal-habal*, to access remote locations. These circumstances require teachers

to make substantial personal sacrifices, including spending extended periods away from their families, in order to fulfill their professional responsibilities.

### **Teaching as a Mission Amid Challenging Contexts**

Education is a fundamental pillar of national development, and teachers play a crucial role in shaping future generations (Bulut et al., 2025; Dittrich, 2024; Niazi, 2025). This responsibility becomes more demanding in far-flung schools, where limited access to transportation, educational resources, and essential services creates significant challenges in the delivery of quality education. Teaching in these areas requires resilience, adaptability, and a strong commitment to service, as educators often travel long distances and work under physically and emotionally challenging conditions (Ucag et al., 2024; Galut, 2025; Algonos et al., 2024; Callano & Bantulo, 2025; Quejada & Orale, 2018). Environmental factors such as difficult terrain, unsafe travel routes, and adverse weather conditions further complicate teachers' daily responsibilities and may affect their ability to perform their duties effectively (Algonos et al., 2024; Callano & Bantulo, 2025; Quejada & Orale, 2018).

Beyond delivering instruction, teachers in far-flung schools are expected to motivate learners, address diverse educational needs, and serve as role models within their communities. Teaching is a demanding profession that requires the use of varied instructional strategies to engage students and facilitate meaningful learning experiences (Putri & Elizar, 2025; Langelaan et al., 2024; Goyibova et al., 2025). In resource-constrained settings, teachers must be innovative and resourceful in sustaining student interest and participation (Sepadi, 2025). Their role extends beyond academic instruction, as they also influence learners' values, attitudes, and aspirations (Feliza, 2025). Consequently, teaching in far-flung schools requires educators to balance instructional responsibilities with social and community-related roles.

Despite these challenges, many teachers willingly accept assignments in far-flung schools, demonstrating their dedication to the profession and commitment to educational equity. Their perseverance is often sustained by intrinsic motivation and a strong sense of purpose. Xu et al. (2023) emphasized that one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching is witnessing students succeed, while Javilla (2019) highlighted the fulfillment teachers gain from making a positive difference in learners' lives. Meaningful interactions with students and participation in community activities further strengthen teachers' sense of accomplishment and belonging. Trigwell (2012) found that teachers experience greater satisfaction when adopting student-centered approaches, while Zhang et al. (2025) emphasized that inspiring students contributes significantly to both learner success and teacher motivation. Furthermore, external support mechanisms such as seminars, training programs, and motivational activities can enhance teacher retention and sustain their commitment to serving in challenging environments (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012).

### **Challenges Encountered by Teachers**

Teaching in far-flung schools is often complicated by socioeconomic and environmental conditions that significantly affect both teaching and learning. Poverty within these communities remains a major challenge, influencing students' academic performance, behavior, and access to educational opportunities (Callano & Bantulo, 2025; Quejada & Orale, 2018). Many learners come from disadvantaged families whose parents have limited educational backgrounds and are often unable to provide sufficient academic support. As a result, teachers must address not only instructional concerns but also the broader social realities that shape students' learning experiences.

Economic hardship further contributes to issues such as child labor and absenteeism. In many cases, cultural practices and financial necessities compel students to prioritize work over schooling, leading to reduced academic engagement and lower educational attainment (Guarcello et al., 2015). These circumstances place additional responsibilities on teachers, who must find ways to motivate learners and support their continued participation in education despite these barriers.

The challenges of teaching in far-flung schools are intensified by geographical isolation. Many schools are located in remote areas that are difficult and hazardous to access, requiring teachers to travel long distances under challenging conditions (Quejada & Orale, 2018). Such circumstances often result in additional financial burdens, limited access to healthcare services, and prolonged separation from family members, all of which can affect teachers' well-being and professional performance. Moreover, parental influence and community expectations play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward education. Callano and Bantulo (2025) noted that parents with limited educational backgrounds may place less importance on formal schooling, which can reduce students' motivation to attend classes and pursue academic success.

### **Coping Mechanisms of Teachers**

Despite the numerous challenges associated with teaching in far-flung schools, teachers employ various coping strategies to ensure effective instruction and maintain their well-being. One of the most effective approaches is the use of contextualized instructional materials, which connect lessons to learners' real-life experiences and improve their understanding of concepts (Atondo, 2022). In resource-limited settings, this strategy enables

teachers to make learning more relevant, meaningful, and engaging by utilizing familiar contexts and locally available resources.

Teachers also provide one-on-one tutorials to address individual learning needs and support students who may struggle academically. This approach helps learners develop their intellectual, communication, and social skills while allowing teachers to provide more personalized instruction (Goyibova et al., 2025). Such practices demonstrate teachers' adaptability, creativity, and commitment to ensuring that students continue to learn despite the limitations and challenges present in far-flung schools.

Beyond instructional strategies, teachers also rely on coping mechanisms to maintain their emotional and psychological well-being. The demanding nature of teaching in remote areas requires educators to effectively manage stress and adapt to difficult circumstances. Nwoko et al. (2024) emphasized that effective coping mechanisms help teachers manage stress and reduce psychological risks associated with their profession. These coping strategies not only support teachers' well-being but also enable them to remain committed and effective in fulfilling their roles in far-flung schools.

## **RESEARCH FOCUS: The Lived Experiences, Challenges, and Coping Mechanisms of English Teachers Assigned in Far-Flung Schools**

In the Province of Aklan, Philippines, particularly in the municipality of Madalag, several schools are situated in far-flung areas that primarily serve Indigenous Peoples (IP) learners. Teachers assigned to these schools face numerous challenges, including difficult transportation, prolonged separation from their families, adjustment to unfamiliar environments, and limited communication caused by weak internet connectivity and frequent power interruptions. Given these circumstances, this study explored the lived

experiences of English teachers assigned to far-flung schools. Specifically, it sought to understand the challenges they encounter, the coping mechanisms they employ, and how they adapt to the demands of teaching in remote communities.

The study employed a qualitative research design grounded in phenomenology and narrative inquiry. Through in-depth face-to-face interviews, the study involved five purposively selected teacher-participants assigned to far-flung schools in the District of Madalag. All participants were female and possessed varying educational backgrounds and years of teaching experience. With participants' consent, interviews were recorded, transcribed, and prepared for analysis.

Thematic analysis, following the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to identify recurring patterns and organize the data into meaningful themes. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the interview guide underwent expert validation, and participant validation was conducted to verify the accuracy of the interpretations. Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the study, including obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, respecting participants' autonomy, and adhering to established ethical research standards.

Teaching in a far-flung school is an experience filled with both hardships and profound rewards. Through their experiences, teachers learn to become more resourceful, adaptable, and resilient in the face of adversity.

### ***Access/Road Going to School***

The lived experiences of teachers assigned to one of the far-flung schools in the Division of Aklan revealed a multifaceted journey, particularly in dealing with the difficult roads leading to their schools. Teacher Lavender and Teacher Jasmine shared their experiences regarding the challenges they

encountered during their daily commute. According to Teacher Jasmine: *“We experienced a lot of challenges while traveling going to school and going home. There were times that we need to walk because of the very risky condition of road, especially if the weather was not good and there was a flood.”*

The long and hazardous journey to and from school became a significant part of their lives. Despite these difficulties, the experience taught them to be courageous and resilient in fulfilling their responsibilities as educators.

### ***Teachers’ Feelings About Teaching in Far-Flung Schools***

The teachers experienced a wide range of emotions while teaching in far-flung schools. Feelings of worry, stress, sadness, fear, pity, and emotional pain were common when they encountered challenges in their work environment. Nevertheless, they remained steadfast in their commitment to their profession and continued to serve their learners with dedication.

Teacher Tulip and Teacher Lilac shared their feelings about teaching in a far-flung school. According to them, the experience brought mixed emotions and required resilience, adaptability, and a deep commitment to education. Teacher Tulip stated, *“The moment I knew that I will be assign to one of the farthest schools in the District of Madalag, I felt sad because I will be far from my family and I cannot spend time with them. We were staying in our station for five days, only Saturday and Sunday were the time that we can be together with them. But despite my sadness, I am still happy because I can provide the daily needs of my family and I can buy those things that I can’t afford to but before. I am happy that I can help and teach the children there. I am sad, fear, and worried, but being happy was the prevailing emotion that I felt because I am serving the IP community.”*

A similar experience was shared by Teacher Lilac, *“It was very challenging when you were assigned at the far-flung school, especially if you were a nursing mother, it was very hard to be away to your child. You cannot spend so much time with your family. You need to sacrifice in order to perform your obligation as a teacher.”*

Individuals who are exposed to a new environment and culture often experience feelings of uncertainty, confusion, and frustration. Similarly, the teacher-participants encountered various emotional challenges while adjusting to their assigned schools. Despite these experiences, they remained determined, resilient, and committed to fulfilling their responsibilities as educators.

### ***Adapting to the Lifestyle, Beliefs, Culture, and Traditions of the Community***

Another significant experience shared by the teacher-participants was learning to adapt to the lifestyle, beliefs, culture, and traditions of the communities where they were assigned. Teacher Tulip, Teacher Lilac, and Teacher Daisy emphasized the importance of developing positive relationships with learners and community members as part of their adjustment process.

Teacher Daisy shared, *“As a teacher assigned in the far-flung school, you need to adapt the lifestyles, beliefs, culture, and tradition of the people in the community. We should be adaptable to have a good relationship with others and we should respect their culture and tradition as well. As time goes by, I adapt their lifestyle and way of living, like washing our clothes in the river, cooking vegetables that was available there, and using lamp when there was no electricity. If there was school activity like the celebration of Indigenous People’s Day, we give importance to their culture. As a highlight of the program, the IP elders and the learners perform the ‘Inagong Dance’,*

*this was their traditional dance in Barangay Panipiason. This dance shows the different movements of the animals like how the monkey moves. I observed that the people in the community were kind, lovable, and helpful.”*

Teacher Tulip and Teacher Lilac shared similar experiences. Over time, they learned to appreciate and respect the customs and traditions of the Indigenous Peoples community. Through continuous interaction with learners and community members, they were able to establish meaningful relationships that contributed to their successful adjustment and teaching experience in the far-flung schools.

Teaching in far-flung schools also presented several challenges as mentioned by the teachers.

### ***Difficulty in Comprehension Due to Language Barriers***

One of the challenges was the difficulty in comprehension caused by language barriers. Based on the statements of Teacher Tulip, Teacher Lilac, Teacher Daisy, Teacher Jasmine, and Teacher Lavender, language differences emerged as a significant challenge in delivering instruction. The participants collectively expressed, *“Most of our students are Indigenous People, and there are instances that we don’t have any idea what their dialect means, and this is one of the reasons why sometimes it is difficult for us to deliver instructions.”*

Communication barriers were identified as a common challenge in classroom instruction. Despite the teachers’ strong desire to teach and support their learners, language differences often made it difficult to communicate lessons and instructions effectively. Since many learners spoke a dialect unfamiliar to the teachers, misunderstandings occasionally occurred during classroom interactions. Consequently, teachers had to find ways to bridge communication gaps, including the use of translation, simplified explanations,

and other strategies to facilitate understanding and improve classroom communication.

### ***Poverty***

Poverty emerged as one of the most significant challenges encountered by teachers in far-flung schools. According to Teacher Lilac, *“One of the challenges teaching in far-flung school is poverty. This is the main problem encountered by teachers in school. Sometimes, this is the reason why they cannot focus on their studies. They are going to school with an empty stomach and without any snacks or lunch. If there are school activities that require financial matters, they cannot join because of lack of financial support. As a teacher who understands their situation, we do not give any projects or activities that require them to buy materials. Instead, we give them projects that are available in the community. Sometimes, there are instances that teachers are the ones who provide the materials if they are very important in the class.”*

Similarly, Teacher Daisy shared, *“Because of poverty, parents may not be able to provide adequate support and guidance to their children with their schoolwork. Students from impoverished families are more likely to drop out of school due to financial pressures, the need to work, or a lack of motivation.”*

The participants recognized poverty as a major factor affecting students' education. Many learners come from economically disadvantaged households where parents have limited educational backgrounds and insufficient resources to support their children's schooling. These circumstances affect students' academic performance, participation, and motivation to learn. As a result, teachers often adjust classroom requirements and provide additional support to accommodate the realities faced by their learners.

### ***Child Labor and Absenteeism***

Another challenge identified by the participants was child labor, which often contributes to absenteeism among learners. Teacher Jasmine explained: *“There are times that some of our students fail to go to school because they need to work to earn money. There are some students who ask permission because they cannot be in school for several days since they need to work in banana plantations or help harvest rice in the fields. There are also some students who work as habal-habal drivers to earn money for their daily needs and school expenses. These are some of the reasons why they are always absent and why they need to work at an early age.”*

The participants observed that economic necessity and certain cultural practices often compel students to work instead of attending school regularly. Consequently, some learners experience frequent absences or eventually discontinue their studies. These situations become additional challenges for teachers, who must continuously encourage students to remain in school while addressing learning gaps caused by prolonged absences.

### ***Weather Conditions***

Weather conditions were also identified as a major challenge in far-flung schools. Teacher Lavender shared, *“Weather condition is one of the biggest problems encountered by the teachers teaching in the far-flung school. First is the very risky road due to flooding and landslides. We experience walking for four hours from school going home because our drivers are not able to pass the road because of the floods. Sometimes, this is the reason why teachers find themselves stranded, unable to reach the school, resulting in missed classes and disrupted learning schedules. The same scenario is also experienced by the students. They cannot go to school if there is continuous*

*heavy rain that results in flooding because it is very risky for them to cross the river.”*

The participants emphasized that unpredictable weather conditions significantly affect both teachers and learners. Floods, landslides, and heavy rainfall make transportation difficult and dangerous, often disrupting classes and limiting access to school. These conditions not only affect the continuity of instruction but also pose risks to the safety and well-being of both teachers and students.

Despite the challenges they encountered, the participants found inspiration in the resilience and determination of their learners.

### ***Encouraged by the Learners’ Situation***

Teacher Jasmine shared, *“Amidst the reality of economic hardship, our learners have the unwavering determination to pursue their education. We can see in them the eagerness to learn. Even without snacks or despite financial difficulties, they still pursue their education to build a brighter future.”*

The participants described how the learners’ perseverance served as a source of motivation and encouragement. Although many students face economic hardships, long travel distances, and limited resources, they continue to attend school and demonstrate a strong desire to learn. Witnessing this determination inspired teachers to remain committed to their profession and strengthened their resolve to support their learners despite the challenges of teaching in a far-flung school.

### ***Making Contextualized Instructional Materials***

The development of contextualized instructional materials emerged as another coping mechanism employed by the participants. Teacher Lavender emphasized, *“To become an effective English teacher, we need to think and*

*craft different ways on how the learners can easily understand the lesson. By using available resources and contextualized materials, such as local stories, we can make lessons more meaningful and engaging.”*

The participants recognized the importance of adapting instructional materials to the learners’ context. By incorporating local experiences, familiar situations, and community-based resources into lessons, teachers were able to make learning more relevant and meaningful. This approach helped improve students’ understanding and engagement, particularly in an environment where access to educational resources was limited.

### ***Community Engagement***

Community engagement also emerged as an important coping mechanism among the participants. Teacher Lilac highlighted the value of building strong relationships with community members and stakeholders. According to her, *“Community engagement is not merely a supplementary activity, but it is one way of having an effective and successful teaching and learning process in school.”*

The participants emphasized that actively engaging with the community allowed them to better understand the learners’ backgrounds, needs, and circumstances. Through participation in community activities and collaboration with parents and local leaders, teachers were able to establish trust and strengthen partnerships that supported students’ learning. These positive relationships contributed to a more effective teaching and learning environment and helped teachers successfully adapt to life and work in far-flung schools.

## **Conclusion**

Teaching in far-flung schools is characterized by significant physical, emotional, and instructional challenges. Teachers face barriers related to accessibility, language, poverty, and environmental conditions. However, they demonstrate resilience through adaptability, cultural integration, and innovative teaching strategies. While individual coping mechanisms enable teachers to manage these challenges, there is a need for systemic support, including infrastructure development, language training, and community-based interventions. Addressing these issues is essential to ensure equitable and effective education for learners in far-flung areas.

## Bibliography

- Algonos, C. J. L., Calizo, E. V., & Bauyot, M. M. (2024). Experiences of teachers teaching in far-flung areas of Division of Davao del Norte: A phenomenological study. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 8(6). <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.806212>
- Ashiedu, J. A., & Scott-Ladd, B. D. (2012). Understanding teacher attraction and retention drivers: Addressing teacher shortages. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(11), 17–35. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2012v37n11.1>
- Atondo, H. B. (2022). Contextualized instructional materials in teaching reading and writing skills. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, 11(8), 17–34. <https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrse.2022.197>
- Becirović, S., & Akbarov, A. (2015). Impact of social changes on teacher's role and responsibilities in the educational system. *Journal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education (JoLIE)*, 8, 21–34. <https://doi.org/10.29302/jolie.2015.8.2>
- Bulut, B., & Elci Oksuzoglu, I. (2025). Teachers' beliefs about education for sustainable development: Challenges and opportunities. *Sustainability*, 17(16), Article 7552. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17167552>
- Callano, C., & Bantulo, J. (2025). Challenges encountered by teachers of far-flung integrated schools in modular learning: A multiple case study. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 44(1), 94–113. <https://doi.org/10.70838/pemj.440106>
- Dittrich, A.-K. (2024). An international reconstruction of teachers' and teacher educators' perspectives on the challenges of education for sustainable development in teacher education. *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development*, 18(2), 122–141. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09734082241309704>
- Elbertson, N. A., Jennings, P. A., & Brackett, M. A. (2025). The role of educators in school-based social and emotional learning. *Social and Emotional Learning: Research, Practice, and Policy*, 6, Article 100134. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sel.2025.100134>
- Feliza, M. A. (2025). Teachers as ethical role models: Their influence on student character formation. *International Journal of*

- Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology*, 5(6), 716–720. <https://doi.org/10.48175/IJARST-26773>
- Galut, M. N. A. (2025). Surviving in the trails: Teacher's lived experiences in remote areas. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 10, Article 1456269. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2025.1456269>
- Goyibova, N., Muslimov, N., Sabirova, G., Kadirova, N., & Samatova, B. (2025). Differentiation approach in education: Tailoring instruction for diverse learner needs. *MethodsX*, 14, Article 103163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mex.2025.103163>
- Guarcello, L., Lyon, S., & Valdivia, C. (2015). *Teacher shortage and the challenge of ensuring quality education for all* (Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015, *Education for All 2000–2015: Achievements and Challenges*; Document No. ED/EFA/MRT/2015/PI/27). UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/>
- Javilla, M. A., & Fabella, F. E. (2019). *Lived-experiences of mobile teachers in remote schools in Antipolo City*. SSRN. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3516399>
- Langelaan, B. N., Gaikhorst, L., Smets, W., & Oostdam, R. J. (2024). Differentiating instruction: Understanding the key elements for successful teacher preparation and development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 140, Article 104464. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104464>
- Moreno, N., Cruz, S. J., & Meneses, J. (2023). The construction of the teaching profession as a first choice. *Diversitas Journal*, 8(3), 3105–3122. <https://doi.org/10.48017/dj.v8i3.2696>
- Niazi, A. (2025). Education is the foundation of individual growth and social progress. *Integrated Journal for Research in Arts and Humanities*, 5(4), 80–83. <https://doi.org/10.55544/ijrah.5.4.11>
- Nwoko, J. C., Anderson, E., Adegboye, O. A., Malau-Aduli, A. E. O., & Malau-Aduli, B. S. (2024). “SHIELDing” our educators: Comprehensive coping strategies for teacher occupational well-being. *Behavioral Sciences*, 14(10), Article 918. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14100918>
- Putri, K., & Elizar. (2025). Implementing a differentiation approach in teaching to accommodate diverse learning styles of primary school students: A systematic literature review. *Journal for Lesson and Learning Studies*, 8(1), 119–128. <https://doi.org/10.23887/jlls.v8i1.89659>

- Quejada, A. B., & Orale, R. L. (2018). Lived experiences of elementary teachers in a remote school in Samar, Philippines. *Journal of Academic Research*, 3(3), 1–13.
- Sepadi, M. (2025). Inclusive education in resource-constrained settings: Exploring mainstream teachers' curriculum knowledge and practices for autistic learners in South Africa. *Frontiers in Education*, 10, Article 1641336. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1641336>
- Trigwell, K. (2012). Relations between teachers' emotions in teaching and their approaches to teaching in higher education. *Instructional Science*, 40(3), 607–621. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11251-011-9192-3>
- Ucag, M. S., Gerodias, E. G., Medel, A. F. S., & Chua, J. S. (2024). Navigating educational frontiers: Unweaving the challenges faced by teachers in far-flung schools on Negros Island. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 20(3), 323–330. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11358546>
- Xu, T., Hasbun, T. C., & Abel, C. D. (2023). Why teach? Challenges, rewards, and future considerations for the profession. *Texas Educator Preparation*, 7(1), 35–45. <https://doi.org/10.59719/txep.v7i1.6>
- Zhang, Y., Guan, X., Wang, J., Yin, S., Li, X., Li, Y., Jobe, M. C., & Ahmed, M. Z. (2025). The impact of perceived teacher support on students' learning approach: The chain mediating role of academic engagement and achievement goal orientation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16, Article 1513538. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1513538>