



# Teaching Beyond Borders: A Phenomenological Study

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## Abstract

Teaching beyond borders is very common especially in the rural areas. This study determined the underlying experiences of five public school teachers teaching away from home, effects to their teaching, and coping mechanisms they encountered as professionals. The qualitative research was employed using phenomenological approach which focused on the analysis of lived experiences as narrated by participants. Findings revealed that all the participants experienced difficulties in teaching away from home. The degree of difficulty that they experienced differed from one another. Further findings showed that teaching away from home, experiences, effects and coping mechanisms depend mainly on how the participants develop a sense of flexibility and adaptation in the community they belong to. All the participants revealed that despite the difficulties and challenges encountered in doing their profession, they opt to accept the reality by adjusting in order to survive as to consider having a sense of professionalism. They face their burdens by seeking new family away from home and adjustments in all terms. In the end, experiences are just an experience, it will just come and go, it will definitely change but we will never know when it will last. A more understanding and thorough work out in selection process help in minimizing if not totally eliminating the teachers' deployment beyond borders.

**Keywords:** *Teaching, beyond borders, phenomenology, lived experiences, teachers coping mechanisms, teaching away from home*

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## Introduction

Working away from home and family has become a necessity for many people, whether it is to further our career prospects, to set ourselves up for the future, or fulfil a life's dream. With some professions, it's part of the job description. If you do have a choice and you have a young family, it can be difficult because you know that you will never get that time back. Many professionals have opted for a simpler, more modest lifestyle so they can be at home with the kids more often.

Initially when you start working away from home, it can be hard but it's adventurous. You meet new people, see new places, get to know new things but, in case your work profile is hard and you're unable to handle everything, you get homesick. You miss home and the comfort there. It's not necessary that you only miss home when you can't handle things; it may also be because you love your family a lot and are missing them. But eventually, as you keep working, you get used to it and you find a balance to make things work. It is in this context that this study was made. This study was conducted to find out the challenges, experiences, and the coping mechanism of teachers assigned away from their home.

This study was anchored on the theories of Symbolic Interactionism, formulated by Blumer (1969, as cited by Potts, 2015) is the process of interaction in the formation for meanings for individuals. The inspiration for this theory came from Dewey (1981), which believed that human beings are best understood in a practical, interactive relation to their environment. Moreover, this study was anchored in Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" (1954, as cited by Dutil, 2022) "Motivation and Personality," which introduced his theory about how people satisfy various personal needs in the context of their work.

Later on, as they continue to work away from home, teachers develop the feelings of loneliness and long to be working near at home. Development comes late when you are already in the job. For you never cease to seek any ways in order for you to grow and think of getting out by means of upgrading you studies and find better offerings near home. Thus, D.O. 22, s. 2013 or known as Teachers Transfers from one station to another is another way of these teachers be sent back home. It was clearly stated also there that it is necessary rules govern in transfers.

These theories stated will give connection to further studies of the phenomenon of a teacher teaching beyond borders.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study research design used in this study is qualitative research is an effort to understand the nature of a setting and the experiences others have in this context (*Merriam, 1998 as cited by Zeek, 2002*) and will employ a phenomenological approach design by Creswell (2013) as the main technique that will be sought to describe the lived experiences of the five teachers to this study that can give us the background in understanding the living experiences of teachers teaching away from home, their struggles in performing their responsibilities to their own family and its coping strategies to overcome the challenges they experience being assigned in the far-flung areas.

### ***Participants of the Study***

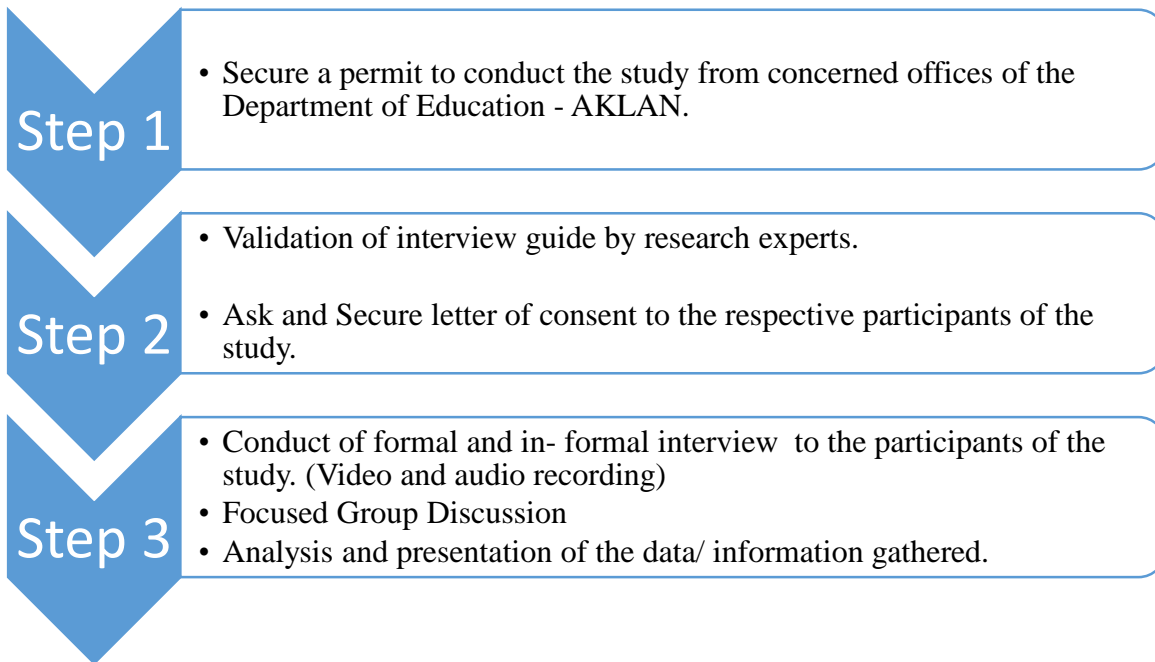
The participants of the study were five (5) public school teachers of the Elementary / Secondary schools within the municipality of Libacao. The participants were chosen purposely based on the following criteria:

1. They must be a permanent teacher of public school specifically assigned in one of the remote Barangay of the Municipality of Libacao.
2. Has 2-3 years and personally experienced the life and challenges of being away from their family and teaching beyond borders.

### ***Data Gathering Instrument***

The researcher used an interview guide in conducting in-depth interviews and storytelling to gather relevant information for the study. The interview guide questions were based on the statement of the problem. It was composed of three parts, where the first part was about the experiences/challenges they encounter in teaching away from home. The second part was about the effects of teaching away from home in their personal lives, and the last part was about their coping strategies to overcome the challenges / problems they met being away from home due to their nature of work. During the in-depth interview, the participants were allowed to narrate their stories freely and spontaneously. Enabling questions were also asked. Timely interruptions and prudent probing were utilized. A video and audio recorder were used in data gathering to make sure that the information / data needed in the study were recorded which was later on transcribed for analysis and interpretation.

## Data Gathering Procedure



## Ethical Considerations

According to Bryman and Bell (2007), ethical considerations can be specified as one of the most important parts of research. Dissertations may even be doomed to failure if this part is missing. They help to determine the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Essentially, this consideration addresses issues such as honesty, objectivity, respect for intellectual property, social responsibility, confidentiality, non-discrimination, and many others, for it will greatly impact the integrity of the research project.

The researcher ensured the anonymity of the teacher-participants by using pseudonyms to conceal their real identity. All the information disclosed by the participants were treated with utmost confidentiality by strictly adhering to the provisions of Republic Act 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

## Findings

This phenomenological study presents the lived experiences of Akeanon teachers teaching beyond borders. It provides opportunity for individuals to share their life experiences in order to illuminate the previously misunderstood, unknown, or discounted. Variety of experiences were presented to help the reader understand the research participants.

After interviewing the participants and analyzing their shared stories and experiences, three major themes were identified, (a.) Problems encountered by teachers teaching away from home, (b.) impact of teaching away from home to their personal life, (c.) Coping Mechanisms to manage the problems they encountered.

In terms of delivering the lesson and availability of school resources and facilities have very limited resources. No textbooks available, they need to reproduce materials for teaching at their own expense which adds also to their own expenses. Another problem is there is no supply of electricity, so even they want to improve their way of teaching through audio visual they cannot do it.

Language is considered to be a barrier in delivering the lessons especially they are dealing with indigenous pupils and students. They must learn the local dialect spoken by the locals which is not easy for her since she is not a native of the barangay. Suffered health problems due to the weather condition that is too cold. And travelling going to the station they are exposed to sun and later on they will become wet because they need to cross the river. They only rely on the albularyo or quack doctor in times of emergency because there is no available health center with supply of medicines and health practioner in the area.

In dealing with the community, she considered learning the local dialect of the people is difficult and she needs to adjust with the way of life the residents practiced. The culture of the people in the barangay, especially the language and other practices were once difficult to adapt and adjust.

## **Conclusion**

Teachers in their own perspective and experience revealed that the cost of transportation going to their stations really affects their income. The terrain going to their work station is too risky for them. They also added that unavailability of teaching materials and lack of facilities really affects their delivery of lessons to the students. Their health condition is also affected due to weather condition, and there is no available health center in the area. There is no safe source of water nearby, supply of electricity in their respective schools is not available.

They also considered language as a barrier, all of them are not residents of the barangay and do not have any background of the local dialect of the IP's (Indigenous People). The teachers

find it difficult to adjust and communicate with locals especially with the students in delivering the lesson.

In terms of their personal and professional lives, since most of them were mothers, their responsibility to their children is often sacrificed. They need to leave their children with their husband when they are away and only seeing them once or twice a month.

To surmount the struggles, they encountered being away from home they need to adapt with the practices of the locals, and live like the natives. Learning the language of the residents in their respective school assignment is the biggest factor in developing a good relationship with the community. Another is in expressing their thoughts and ideas in teaching the students.

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