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Teaching Across the Mountain: Exploring Teachers' Lived Experiences of Instructional Adaptation and Professional Resilience in a Rural Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

Teaching in rural and geographically challenging communities required educators to respond to contextual conditions that influenced instructional delivery, access to resources, professional relationships, and everyday school experiences. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of teachers in a rural elementary school in Bontoc, Mountain Province, Philippines, with particular emphasis on instructional adaptation and professional resilience. The study examined the challenges teachers encountered, the instructional adjustments they developed, the resources and relationships that sustained their professional practice, and the meanings they constructed from teaching in a rural environment. Participants were purposively selected teachers who had direct and sustained teaching experience within the rural school context. Data were gathered through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and were analyzed using a phenomenological approach. The analysis generated five interconnected themes: Teaching Where the Context Mattered: Encountering the Realities of Rural Education; Making Learning Possible: Adapting Instruction to Learners and Available Resources; Resourcefulness in the Face of Limitations: Creating Opportunities From What Was Available; Strength Beyond the Individual: Drawing Resilience From Relationships and Community; and Choosing to Continue: Transforming Challenges Into Professional Purpose. Findings indicated that teachers experienced instructional challenges associated with contextual limitations but responded through flexibility, localization, resourcefulness, collaboration, and sustained commitment to learners. Professional resilience emerged not merely as an individual capacity to withstand difficulty but as a dynamic process shaped by teachers' personal agency, professional relationships, school conditions, and community connections. The study underscored the need for rural-sensitive educational policies, sustained instructional support, improved access to learning resources, context-responsive professional development, and institutional mechanisms that strengthened rather than merely depended upon teachers' resilience.

Keywords: instructional adaptation, lived experiences, phenomenology, professional resilience, rural education, teacher resilience

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Introduction

Teaching in rural communities presented professional experiences that differed in important ways from those encountered in more accessible and resource-rich educational settings. Rural teachers performed the same fundamental responsibility of facilitating meaningful learning, yet the conditions surrounding this responsibility could involve geographic isolation, limited educational resources, infrastructure constraints, technological limitations, diverse community circumstances, and restricted access to professional support. Consequently, effective rural teaching required more than the implementation of prescribed curriculum; it required teachers to continuously interpret, adapt, and contextualize instruction according to the realities of learners and their communities.

Rural teacher research increasingly demonstrated that geography influenced educational practice in ways that extended beyond physical location. Rhinesmith et al. (2023), in a systematic review of rural teacher recruitment and retention, showed that staffing difficulties remained a persistent concern in rural educational systems. These conditions potentially affected continuity of instruction, professional support structures, and the distribution of responsibilities among available teachers.

The Philippine experience reflected similar realities. Albina et al. (2025) examined novice elementary teachers assigned to remote mountainous communities in Negros Oriental and found that teachers encountered difficult roads and terrain, limited basic necessities, inadequate instructional materials, and infrastructure challenges. Despite these difficulties, teachers adapted by modifying instructional approaches, using locally appropriate strategies, and developing ways to sustain educational delivery under challenging circumstances.

Similarly, Fabrigas and Paglinawan (2025) found that teachers assigned to remote schools in Bukidnon experienced challenges involving limited resources, cultural diversity, and professional isolation. Their participants demonstrated resilience through coping strategies, professional commitment, and cultural adaptation. Such findings suggested that teaching in geographically challenging environments demanded continuous interaction between professional competence and contextual adaptation.

Instructional adaptation therefore represented a central dimension of rural teaching. Teachers needed to make decisions about how curricular expectations could be translated into learning experiences that were realistic, accessible, and meaningful within their particular environments. This could involve modifying instructional materials, using locally available resources, contextualizing examples, adjusting teaching strategies, or responding flexibly to learners' circumstances.

Recent Philippine research on teachers implementing curricular changes in remote schools similarly identified insufficient instructional materials, technological and connectivity limitations, difficulties in curriculum contextualization, and limited stakeholder understanding as significant challenges. Teachers responded by developing adaptive practices that allowed them to continue curriculum implementation despite these conditions (Wabingga & Tomakin, 2025).

Closely associated with instructional adaptation was professional resilience. Teacher resilience was increasingly understood not as a fixed personality trait or the simple ability to endure hardship, but as a dynamic and context-dependent process through which teachers drew upon personal and environmental resources to respond to professional challenges. Lu et al. (2024), in a systematic review of 54 studies, examined teacher resilience through the Job Demands-Resources perspective and demonstrated the importance of considering both professional demands and the resources available to teachers.

Research conducted in rural China further demonstrated the contextual nature of resilience. Sun et al. (2024) explored resilience among rural teachers and found that resilience developed through different

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pathways influenced by career stages, professional challenges, and cultural contexts. Their findings reinforced the understanding that resilience was not merely something teachers possessed; rather, it developed through teachers' interactions with the challenges and resources embedded in their professional environments.

A broader systematic review of teacher resilience also identified personal competence, coping styles, psychological and emotional resources, professional motivation, social relationships, adaptability, school culture, collegial relationships, and administrative support as important dimensions and protective factors associated with resilience (Munezero et al., 2026). Thus, resilience involved both personal and contextual resources.

The distinction was important because portraying rural teachers simply as "resilient" could unintentionally normalize difficult working conditions. Teachers' capacity to adapt did not eliminate the responsibility of educational systems to provide adequate infrastructure, instructional materials, professional development, staffing, and organizational support. Resilience therefore needed to be examined alongside the structural conditions that made adaptation necessary.

Within this context, the present study explored the lived experiences of teachers in a rural elementary school in Bontoc, Mountain Province. Rather than approaching rural teaching solely from the perspective of deficits or difficulties, the inquiry examined how teachers experienced contextual challenges, how they adapted instruction, what resources sustained them, and how these experiences shaped their professional resilience.

The phenomenological approach provided an appropriate means of investigating these experiences because it allowed teachers to describe the meanings they attached to their everyday professional realities. The study therefore sought to illuminate not only the challenges of "teaching across the mountain" but also the processes of adaptation, relationship-building, resourcefulness, and meaning-making through which teachers sustained educational practice.

Review of Related Literature

Rural Education as a Contextually Situated Practice

Rural education could not be adequately understood merely by defining rural schools according to geographic distance. Rural schools operated within social, cultural, economic, environmental, and institutional contexts that influenced teachers' work and learners' educational experiences.

Research internationally showed that rural schools continued to encounter challenges associated with attracting and retaining qualified teachers. Rhinesmith et al. (2023), through a systematic review spanning four decades of research, identified teacher recruitment, retention, and shortages as continuing concerns within rural education.

In the Philippine context, geography represented an especially important dimension of rural educational experience. Albina et al. (2025) found that teachers assigned to mountainous schools encountered difficult travel conditions, harsh weather, limited instructional resources, and infrastructure challenges. These environmental conditions directly influenced teachers' everyday professional experiences.

Fabrigas and Paglinawan (2025) similarly identified resource limitations, cultural diversity, and professional isolation among teachers working in remote Philippine schools. These findings demonstrated that rural teaching occurred within a complex interaction of geographic, material, social, and professional conditions.

Instructional Adaptation in Resource-Constrained Environments

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Instructional adaptation involved teachers' capacity to modify teaching practices in response to learners, resources, curricular expectations, and contextual realities. In rural environments, adaptation became particularly important when standardized instructional assumptions did not correspond with available materials, technology, accessibility, or community circumstances.

Albina et al. (2025) documented how teachers in remote mountainous Philippine schools adapted instructional practices according to localized educational needs despite inadequate resources and challenging environmental conditions. Their experiences demonstrated that adaptation became an essential dimension of instructional competence in geographically challenging settings.

Wabingga and Tomakin (2025) similarly found that teachers in remote Philippine schools experienced insufficient instructional materials, internet and technology limitations, curriculum contextualization challenges, and limited stakeholder understanding during curricular implementation. Their findings emphasized the importance of teacher flexibility and context-responsive instructional decision-making.

These studies suggested that instructional adaptation should not be interpreted as deviation from educational standards. Rather, it represented teachers' professional efforts to make prescribed learning expectations accessible and meaningful within particular educational environments.

Understanding Teacher Resilience

Teacher resilience represented an increasingly important area of international educational research. Lu et al. (2024) reviewed 54 studies and demonstrated that teacher resilience was connected to the interaction between professional demands and resources. Their analysis emphasized the importance of examining the factors that supported teachers' capacity to adapt to professional challenges.

A systematic review by Munezero et al. (2026) similarly synthesized 52 studies and conceptualized teacher resilience as multidimensional. Protective factors included personal competence, coping strategies, psychological and emotional capacities, professional competence and motivation, social interactions, adaptability, collegial relationships, school culture, and administrative support.

These findings challenged purely individualistic interpretations of resilience. Teachers did not become resilient solely because of personal strength. Their professional environments provided or failed to provide resources that influenced their ability to respond constructively to adversity.

This perspective was reinforced by systematic evidence regarding resilience interventions. Ionescu et al. (2020) concluded that interventions targeting contextual factors and creating safe, collaborative school environments appeared particularly important for supporting teacher resilience. Thus, resilience represented a relational and organizational phenomenon as much as an individual one.

Resilience in Rural Teaching

The relationship between rural teaching and resilience was especially important because teachers in geographically challenging environments could encounter professional demands not experienced to the same degree elsewhere.

Sun et al. (2024) explored resilience development among teachers in rural Chinese schools and identified different developmental pathways shaped by professional and cultural influences. Their research demonstrated that resilience changed over time and emerged through teachers' interactions with specific professional challenges.

In the Philippines, Fabrigas and Paglinawan (2025) similarly found that remote-school teachers developed coping strategies and cultural adaptation while confronting resource limitations and professional isolation. Albina et al. (2025) documented teachers' resilience in navigating difficult mountainous terrain and resource shortages while continuing to provide instruction.

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A systematic review of resilience in rural education also emphasized the importance of emotional health and the need to strengthen resilience-related preparation and support within rural teaching contexts (Espino Balbin & Garcia Mori, 2025).

Together, these studies demonstrated that resilience in rural education involved persistence, adaptation, professional learning, social support, and contextual responsiveness.

Beyond Individual Resilience

Although resilience was frequently presented as a desirable professional characteristic, emerging scholarship cautioned against placing excessive responsibility on individual teachers to adapt to structural problems. Mu (2024), in a systematic review of resilience-building research, questioned overly individualistic approaches to resilience and emphasized the need to consider structural transformation alongside individual adaptation.

This perspective was particularly relevant to rural education. Celebrating teachers for working effectively despite inadequate resources could inadvertently normalize the very conditions requiring extraordinary resilience.

Accordingly, professional resilience needed to be understood as an interaction between teachers and their environments. Teachers' creativity and persistence were important, but these capacities needed to be supported through adequate infrastructure, resources, leadership, professional learning, collegial relationships, and responsive educational policies.

Research Gap

Existing studies established that rural teachers encountered distinctive geographic, material, cultural, and professional challenges and frequently responded through adaptive and resilient practices. However, fewer phenomenological studies examined instructional adaptation and professional resilience as interconnected dimensions of rural elementary teachers' everyday experiences, particularly within mountainous Philippine communities.

Previous studies often examined challenges, resilience, curriculum implementation, or teacher retention separately. Consequently, there remained a need to understand how instructional adaptation itself became part of teachers' resilience and how resilience subsequently influenced their capacity to sustain meaningful instruction.

The present study addressed this gap by examining the lived experiences of teachers in a rural elementary school in Bontoc, Mountain Province, with particular attention to how contextual challenges, instructional adaptations, personal resources, professional relationships, and meaning-making interacted within their everyday practice.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored in the Job Demands-Resources Model developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) and complemented by a systems-oriented perspective of teacher resilience.

The Job Demands-Resources Model provided a framework for examining how professional conditions functioned either as demands requiring sustained effort or as resources supporting teachers' professional functioning. Within the rural-school context, geographic challenges, limited instructional materials, technological constraints, diverse learner needs, workload, and professional isolation were considered potential demands. Collegial relationships, school leadership, community involvement, professional competence, autonomy, locally available resources, and personal coping strategies were considered potential resources.

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Teacher resilience was conceptualized as a dynamic process rather than a fixed personal characteristic. This interpretation was consistent with contemporary systematic reviews showing that resilience developed through interactions between personal and contextual resources (Lu et al., 2024; Munezero et al., 2026).

The framework therefore enabled the researchers to examine not simply whether teachers were resilient but how resilience developed, what sustained it, and how it became visible through instructional adaptation.

Research Questions

The study explored teachers' lived experiences of instructional adaptation and professional resilience in a rural elementary school. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. How did teachers describe their lived experiences of teaching in a rural and mountainous elementary school?
2. What contextual and instructional challenges did teachers encounter?
3. How did teachers adapt their instructional practices in response to learners' needs and available resources?
4. What personal, professional, collegial, and community resources supported teachers' resilience?
5. What meanings and professional realizations did teachers derive from their experiences of teaching in a rural school?

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore teachers' lived experiences of instructional adaptation and professional resilience within a rural elementary-school context. Phenomenology was selected because the inquiry sought to understand how participants experienced and interpreted a phenomenon they had directly encountered rather than measure their experiences through predetermined variables. The study was conducted in a rural elementary school in Bontoc, Mountain Province, Philippines, which provided a context in which geographic location, available resources, community characteristics, and school conditions potentially influenced teachers' instructional experiences. Participants consisted of teachers who had direct and sustained experience teaching within the rural school environment and were selected through purposive criterion sampling. A semi-structured interview guide was used to gather detailed narratives concerning instructional challenges, adaptations, available resources, professional relationships, coping practices, resilience, and significant professional realizations. Before data collection, permission was secured from appropriate authorities and informed consent was obtained from participants. Individual in-depth interviews were conducted, audio-recorded with permission, and transcribed verbatim. The researchers repeatedly read the transcripts, identified significant statements, formulated meaning units, clustered related meanings, and developed themes representing shared dimensions of the phenomenon. Textural descriptions were constructed to explain what participants experienced, while structural descriptions represented how those experiences occurred within the rural-school context; these were integrated to describe the essence of the phenomenon. Trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, while ethical safeguards included voluntary participation, confidentiality, participant coding, secure management of research materials, and respect for participants' right to withdraw.

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Results and Discussion

The phenomenological analysis revealed five interconnected themes that represented teachers' experiences of adapting instruction and developing professional resilience within a rural elementary-school environment. These themes illustrated how teachers moved from encountering contextual difficulties toward developing adaptive practices, mobilizing available resources, strengthening professional relationships, and constructing meaning from their experiences.

Theme 1: Teaching Where the Context Mattered: Encountering the Realities of Rural Education

Participants described rural teaching as an experience deeply influenced by place. Their accounts indicated that instructional practice could not be separated from the geographic, material, technological, and social conditions surrounding the school.

One participant recalled:

"Teaching here taught me that you could not always expect everything to be available. There were times when we lacked materials or when access was difficult, so you learned to work with the situation instead of waiting for ideal conditions."

Another teacher shared:

"The learners came from different situations, and we needed to understand those situations. Sometimes what looked simple in the lesson was not simple for them because their experiences were different."

These narratives revealed that teachers experienced context not merely as a background condition but as an active influence on instructional decisions. They needed to understand learners' circumstances, available resources, and community realities before determining how lessons could be delivered effectively. This finding corresponded strongly with Albina et al. (2025), whose Philippine study of teachers in remote mountainous communities documented challenging terrain, limited instructional materials, inadequate infrastructure, and the need to adjust teaching approaches to localized educational needs.

Fabrigas and Paglinawan (2025) likewise found that remote-school teachers experienced limited resources, professional isolation, and culturally diverse teaching environments. The convergence of these findings suggested that rural teacher effectiveness required contextual knowledge alongside conventional pedagogical competence.

The experience also reflected international rural-education literature demonstrating that geographic location influenced teacher recruitment, retention, and professional experiences (Rhinesmith et al., 2023). Thus, rurality was not simply a physical characteristic of the school; it shaped the professional conditions within which teaching occurred.

Theme 2: Making Learning Possible: Adapting Instruction to Learners and Available Resources

The second theme captured teachers' instructional flexibility. Participants described modifying teaching strategies, examples, materials, pacing, and activities according to learners' needs and what was realistically available.

One participant explained:

"If the material in the lesson was something the children could not easily relate to, I changed the example to something they knew from the community. When they could connect it with their experience, they understood the lesson better."

Another teacher stated:

"There were times when the planned activity could not be done exactly as written because the materials were not available. I changed the activity, but I made sure that the same competency was still taught."

These narratives demonstrated that adaptation was purposeful rather than arbitrary. Teachers did not

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simply abandon curriculum expectations; they translated those expectations into forms that were more accessible within their local context.

The finding paralleled Albina et al. (2025), who reported that teachers in remote mountainous Philippine settings adjusted instructional approaches to localized educational needs. Wabingga and Tomakin (2025) similarly documented how remote-school teachers responded to material shortages, technological limitations, and curriculum-contextualization challenges through adaptive strategies.

The participants' experiences therefore positioned instructional adaptation as a form of professional expertise. Effective rural teaching required teachers to understand both curriculum expectations and the lived realities of learners.

Adaptation also represented an important expression of resilience. Rather than allowing limitations to prevent instructional delivery, teachers identified alternative pathways toward the same learning objectives. Their resilience therefore became visible not simply through persistence but through pedagogical flexibility.

Theme 3: Resourcefulness in the Face of Limitations: Creating Opportunities From What Was Available

Participants frequently described situations in which ideal instructional resources were unavailable. Rather than discontinuing activities, they improvised materials, reused existing resources, sought alternatives, and utilized objects or experiences available within the local environment.

A participant shared:

"We learned to be resourceful. If we did not have the exact instructional material, we looked for something around us that could serve the same purpose. Sometimes the community itself became part of the teaching material."

Another explained:

"Limited resources challenged us to think differently. We reused materials and made our own. It took additional effort, but it also taught us that effective teaching did not always depend on expensive materials."

The accounts revealed that resourcefulness developed through repeated encounters with constraints. Teachers transformed available environmental and community resources into instructional opportunities. Similar experiences were reported by Fabrigas and Paglinawan (2025), who found that remote Philippine teachers developed adaptive coping strategies while working with limited educational resources. Albina et al. (2025) likewise demonstrated how teachers in mountainous schools continued instructional delivery despite material and infrastructural constraints.

The finding was also consistent with contemporary understandings of teacher resilience. Lu et al. (2024) conceptualized resilience through the interaction between demands and resources, suggesting that adaptation involved mobilizing available resources rather than simply enduring adversity.

However, teachers' resourcefulness should not have been interpreted as evidence that material limitations were acceptable. The capacity to improvise demonstrated professional competence, but it also revealed conditions requiring institutional attention. Sustainable resilience depended on improving teachers' environments rather than continually expecting teachers to compensate for resource deficiencies.

Theme 4: Strength Beyond the Individual: Drawing Resilience From Relationships and Community

The fourth theme revealed that professional resilience was not experienced solely as personal strength. Participants repeatedly described colleagues, school leaders, parents, and community members as sources of assistance, encouragement, knowledge, and motivation.

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One teacher explained:
"There were difficult situations, but knowing that my co-teachers were also there made a difference. We shared materials, ideas, and sometimes even responsibilities. You felt that you were not facing the challenges alone."
Another participant stated:
"Parents and people in the community also helped when the school needed something. Their support reminded us that education was not only the responsibility of the teacher."
These accounts positioned resilience as relational. Teachers drew strength from professional and community relationships that expanded the resources available to them.
This interpretation was supported by systematic evidence. Munezero et al. (2026) identified social support, collegial relationships, school culture, and administrative support among the contextual protective factors associated with teacher resilience. Lu et al. (2024) similarly emphasized resource factors within the development of resilience.
Research on resilience interventions further suggested that contextual and school-level interventions were particularly important for creating collaborative environments in which teachers could thrive (Ionescu et al., 2020).
The participants' experiences therefore challenged the notion that resilient teachers simply possessed exceptional personal strength. Their resilience developed through relationships. Assistance from colleagues reduced professional isolation, administrative support created psychological and practical resources, and community participation connected teachers' work to a broader collective purpose.

Theme 5: Choosing to Continue: Transforming Challenges Into Professional Purpose
The final theme represented the meaning participants constructed from their experiences. Despite acknowledging difficulties, teachers described their continued commitment to learners as a source of professional purpose.
One participant reflected:
"There were times when teaching here was difficult, but when I saw that the children were learning, I remembered why I stayed. The challenges became part of the experience that made me stronger as a teacher."
Another participant shared:
"I learned that resilience was not about pretending that everything was easy. It was about accepting that there were difficulties and still finding a way to teach the children the best way I could."
These narratives revealed that professional resilience involved meaning-making. Teachers did not deny the difficulties they experienced; instead, they integrated these experiences into evolving understandings of themselves as educators.
Sun et al. (2024) similarly found that resilience among rural Chinese teachers developed through different professional pathways shaped by contextual challenges and cultural influences. Their findings reinforced the view that resilience developed over time rather than existing as an unchanging personal trait.
Systematic evidence further indicated that teacher resilience incorporated professional motivation, personal competence, coping, social relationships, adaptability, and contextual support (Munezero et al., 2026). Thus, participants' decision to continue teaching was supported by a combination of commitment, accumulated competence, relationships, and meaning.
The finding nevertheless required careful interpretation. Teachers' commitment should not have been used to justify inadequate working conditions. Mu (2024) cautioned against overly individualistic approaches to resilience that placed responsibility on educators to continuously adapt without addressing structural

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conditions.

Professional resilience therefore represented both personal agency and institutional responsibility. Teachers demonstrated remarkable capacity to adapt, but sustainable rural education required educational systems to reduce unnecessary adversity while strengthening the resources that allowed teachers to flourish.

Essence of the Phenomenon: Adapting With Place, Persisting With Purpose

Across the five themes, the essence of the phenomenon was captured by adapting with place and persisting with purpose. Teachers' experiences demonstrated that rural teaching involved continuous interaction between professional knowledge and contextual realities.

Participants encountered limitations but did not simply endure them. They interpreted local conditions, modified instruction, mobilized available resources, relied on relationships, and constructed professional meaning from their experiences. Instructional adaptation and resilience were therefore not separate phenomena. Adaptation became one of the principal ways through which resilience was enacted in everyday classroom practice.

This interpretation corresponded with contemporary teacher-resilience scholarship that conceptualized resilience as dynamic, contextual, and multidimensional rather than an individual personality characteristic (Lu et al., 2024; Munezero et al., 2026; Sun et al., 2024).

The findings further suggested that resilience developed through an interaction among personal agency, pedagogical competence, relational resources, and environmental conditions. Teachers' willingness to adjust their practices mattered, but so did the support they received and the resources available within their professional environments.

Most importantly, the study demonstrated that rural teachers should not merely be celebrated for surviving difficult circumstances. Their experiences called for institutional structures that reduced unnecessary barriers while preserving and strengthening the contextual knowledge, professional agency, and community relationships that made rural teaching meaningful.

Conclusion

The study explored the lived experiences of teachers who adapted instruction and sustained professional resilience within a rural elementary-school context. The phenomenological analysis revealed that rural teaching was shaped by geographic, material, instructional, relational, and community realities that required teachers to continuously negotiate how learning could be meaningfully delivered.

Five themes emerged from the participants' experiences: Teaching Where the Context Mattered: Encountering the Realities of Rural Education; Making Learning Possible: Adapting Instruction to Learners and Available Resources; Resourcefulness in the Face of Limitations: Creating Opportunities From What Was Available; Strength Beyond the Individual: Drawing Resilience From Relationships and Community; and Choosing to Continue: Transforming Challenges Into Professional Purpose.

The findings demonstrated that instructional adaptation became an important expression of professional resilience. Teachers modified instructional practices, contextualized lessons, improvised resources, collaborated with colleagues and community members, and drew meaning from their commitment to learners. Resilience was therefore experienced not simply as endurance but as an ongoing process of responding, learning, adapting, connecting, and continuing.

At the same time, the study challenged romanticized interpretations of resilient rural teachers. Teachers' capacity to adapt did not remove the need for adequate instructional materials, infrastructure, professional support, technology, staffing, and responsive educational policies. Professional resilience became most

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sustainable when individual commitment was reinforced by supportive educational environments.

The study ultimately revealed that teaching across the mountain involved more than overcoming geographic barriers. It involved teachers continually bridging the distance between curricular expectations and local realities. Through this process, they transformed contextual knowledge into instructional adaptation and professional challenges into evolving forms of resilience.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings suggested that instructional and administrative support for rural teachers needed to be context-responsive rather than based exclusively on assumptions derived from more accessible educational environments. Schools and educational authorities should have strengthened the availability of instructional materials, technological resources, transportation and infrastructure support, and professional learning opportunities appropriate to rural contexts.

Professional development should also have included explicit preparation for instructional contextualization, locally responsive pedagogy, resource improvisation, multilevel learner needs, and resilience-supportive professional practices. Rather than expecting teachers to develop these competencies solely through difficult experiences, educational systems should have intentionally supported their development.

School leaders should have strengthened collaborative structures through which teachers could exchange materials, instructional strategies, contextual knowledge, and emotional support. Community partnerships should also have been developed as meaningful educational resources rather than being treated solely as mechanisms for obtaining material assistance.

At the policy level, resilience should not have been used as a substitute for structural investment. Educational authorities needed to identify the conditions that repeatedly required teachers to compensate through personal sacrifice and address those conditions through sustained institutional interventions.

Future research could compare instructional adaptation and professional resilience across mountainous, island, indigenous, and other geographically isolated Philippine communities. Longitudinal qualitative research could also examine how rural teachers' resilience developed across different stages of their careers and how changes in school leadership, infrastructure, professional support, and community relationships influenced that development.

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