

REVIEW ARTICLE

Teaching Far from Home: A Narrative Review of Cultural Immersion among Non-Local Teachers in Indigenous Communities

Kenjei Retherford^{1,*}

¹ Department of Education-Davao Oriental Division, Philippines

*Corresponding author: kenjei.retherford@deped.gov.ph

Keywords: community partnership, cross-cultural competence, IPed integration, social isolation, teacher well-being

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66074/A7B2C9D4E1>

Received: 29 Mar 2026

Accepted: 10 Aug 2026

Revised: 20 Jul 2026

Published: 30 Aug 2026

ABSTRACT

Background: Non-local teachers assigned to indigenous and geographically remote schools must often adapt at once to unfamiliar languages, community expectations, cultural protocols, limited professional networks, and demanding travel or living conditions. In the Philippines, these pressures intersect with the Indigenous Peoples Education Program, which requires culturally responsive, community-grounded instruction. **Objective:** This narrative review examined how cultural immersion shapes the work of non-local teachers in Indigenous communities, with particular attention to Davao Oriental and four interrelated domains: social isolation, cross-cultural competence, IPed integration, and teacher well-being. **Methods:** A structured narrative search prioritized peer-reviewed literature published from 2019 to 2025, supplemented by older foundational Philippine policy and Mandaya language sources when essential to contextual accuracy. ERIC-indexed studies, major publisher platforms, and official Department of Education repositories were searched, and citation chaining was applied. **Results:** The evidence converged on four patterns. Social and professional isolation intensified when teachers lacked local ties and context-specific support. Cross-cultural competence developed most effectively through sustained relationships, cultural mentoring, language learning, and reflexive practice rather than short orientation sessions. IPed integration was strongest when curriculum contextualization involved Indigenous knowledge holders and community participation. Teacher well-being depended on the balance between contextual demands and relational, organizational, and professional resources. **Conclusion:** Cultural immersion should be treated as a structured professional process rather than an individual burden. Place-based induction, community mentorship, protected collaboration, language support, and well-being safeguards can strengthen teacher adaptation, culturally responsive practice, and retention in remote Indigenous schools.

I. INTRODUCTION

A first teaching appointment can determine how a novice educator understands the profession, the school, and personal capacity for sustained work. For teachers who begin their careers away from their home communities, however, entry into the profession also becomes entry into a new social and cultural environment. The teacher may have to learn where and with whom to live, how to travel to school, which local relationships matter, what linguistic forms learners use outside formal lessons, and how community expectations shape classroom authority. These demands can be especially pronounced when an urban-trained teacher receives an initial appointment in a remote Indigenous community. The conventional tasks of beginning teaching, such as lesson preparation, assessment, classroom management, record keeping, and professional evaluation, then coexist with a second task: learning how to teach responsibly in a place whose language, history, social organization, and knowledge traditions may differ from the teacher's own.

This problem is particularly relevant to geographically dispersed provinces such as Davao Oriental. The province includes Indigenous communities in which Mandaya language and culture remain central to local identity, yet Mandaya itself is not linguistically uniform. Galvez (2018) documented lexical variation across Mati City, Tarragona, Manay, Caraga, Baganga, Cateel, and Boston, while Pasion and Sandoval (2013) identified phonological variation across selected municipalities. The Department of Education Division of Davao

Oriental also developed a Mandaya dictionary for early-grade use, which reflects an institutional effort to support local language knowledge (Department of Education, 2018). For a non-local teacher, therefore, cultural adaptation cannot reasonably be reduced to memorizing a short list of greetings or acquiring a generic image of Mandaya culture. Local speech, community practice, and meanings attached to place may vary within the same province, and effective adaptation requires learning from the particular community in which the school is situated.

The Philippine Indigenous Peoples Education Program provides the policy setting for this professional challenge. DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011 established a rights-based Indigenous Peoples education framework founded on participation, inclusion, empowerment, continuous dialogue, and partnership with Indigenous communities (Department of Education, 2011). A decade later, the Department of Education (2021) reported that the program had served 2.529 million Indigenous learners in 42,176 public schools and identified curriculum contextualization, local language use, elders as teachers and mentors, ancestral domains as learning spaces, and the orientation of newly assigned teachers and school heads as continuing priorities. Miele (2024) describes Philippine IPed policy as a cultural interface in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems meet through continuing negotiation rather than simple incorporation into an unchanged mainstream curriculum. Colicó (2024), from a philosophical perspective, likewise argues that integration of Indigenous

knowledge systems and practices must confront questions of epistemic authority and the terms under which knowledge enters formal schooling.

These policy commitments place a demanding responsibility on teachers who do not come from the communities they serve. A teacher may be professionally qualified yet still lack the language competence, historical knowledge, cultural confidence, relational legitimacy, or local network required for culturally responsive practice. Philippine evidence from teacher education shows that immersion and exposure matter to culturally responsive teaching competence (Caingcoy et al., 2022). Navas et al. (2023) identified a wider set of attributes for beginning teachers of Indigenous learners, including knowledge of Indigenous systems, cultural empathy, respect, communication, adaptability, character strength, knowledge of cultural heritage, and competence in Indigenous pedagogy. At classroom level, Aporbo (2022) documented how teachers in an Indigenous setting in Davao de Oro relied on code-switching, translation, student-centered strategies, and cultural immersion as they responded to language and curriculum challenges. These studies shift attention from cultural knowledge as an optional enrichment topic to cultural competence as part of basic professional readiness.

International indigenous education research reinforces the relational character of this competence. Macdonald et al. (2023) found that Indigenous leadership, collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators, professionally relevant learning experiences, and authentic engagement with Indigenous standpoints contributed to positive cultural competency experiences among pre-service teachers. Burgess and Harwood (2023) place Indigenous cultural educators in the role of expert mentors for non-Indigenous teachers, a structure that reverses the common assumption that professional expertise must flow only through conventional school hierarchies. Lembit and Burgess (2024) further show that relational responsiveness requires teachers to understand curriculum through Indigenous standpoints rather than treat Indigenous content as a detached addition. Systematic review evidence likewise emphasizes purposeful school-community engagement and the need for partnerships grounded in trust, local authority, and reciprocal participation (Lowe et al., 2019).

Cultural distance also intersects with the social conditions of remote work. Beginning teachers depend on networks for instructional advice, emotional reassurance, access to tacit school knowledge, and a sense of professional belonging. Thomas et al. (2019) showed that the structure and diversity of beginning teachers' professional support networks correspond with differences in job attitudes and access to support. In rural contexts, Erawan (2019) identified personal, social, and professional support needs that extend beyond what pre-service preparation can readily provide. Fatima and Wolf (2020), in a longitudinal study of newly qualified teachers in rural Ghana, found that cumulative personal and professional risk was associated with lower motivation and personal accomplishment. Although the geographic and cultural contexts differ from Mindanao, the mechanism is relevant: relocation, weak local ties, resource constraints, and the strain of early-career teaching can accumulate rather than operate as isolated difficulties.

Teacher well-being is therefore not peripheral to IPed implementation. Hascher and Waber's (2021) systematic review identified social relationships as a pivotal correlate of teacher well-being, while Viac and Fraser (2020) proposed a multidimensional framework in which occupational, cognitive, subjective, and physical-mental functioning are shaped by working conditions and school context. Kingsford-Smith et al. (2023) found that workload and student behavior stress predicted poorer well-being across rural, regional, and metropolitan settings, whereas teacher collaboration predicted better well-being; the rural group also showed a distinctive association between irrelevant professional development and strain. Turner et al. (2022) similarly demonstrated the protective importance of social support in teachers' accounts of well-being. These findings suggest that a non-local teacher's capacity to remain effective in an Indigenous community is influenced by whether cultural learning, collegial support, community integration, and work demands are organized as a coherent support system.

The literature nevertheless tends to separate these concerns. Rural teacher studies often focus on staffing, workload, induction, or retention without close analysis of Indigenous epistemologies and local cultural authority. Cultural competency research often examines teacher education or curriculum without tracing how relocation, social isolation, and well-being affect a novice teacher's capacity to enact what has been learned. Philippine IPed scholarship has clarified the policy's rights-based foundations and the importance of community participation, yet fewer syntheses place the non-local teacher at the center of the analysis. This leaves a practical gap for school divisions that assign novice

teachers to remote Indigenous communities: the system needs to know not only what culturally responsive teaching should look like, but also what conditions allow a newly deployed outsider to develop the relationships, competence, and well-being required to practice it.

This narrative review addresses that gap by examining cultural immersion as a professional adaptation process for non-local teachers in Indigenous communities, with Davao Oriental used as the principal contextual lens. The review integrates four domains that are often treated independently: social isolation, cross-cultural competence, IPed integration, and teacher well-being. It asks how the literature describes the demands faced by non-local or early-career teachers in remote settings, what experiences and relationships support cross-cultural competence, which conditions strengthen meaningful IPed integration, and how these processes interact with teacher well-being. The review also considers what the combined evidence implies for place-based induction and continuing professional support in schools that serve Mandaya and other Indigenous communities.

II. METHODS

Review Design and Quality Framework

A narrative review design was used because the question required integration of heterogeneous evidence across teacher induction, rural education, Indigenous education, cultural competence, language adaptation, school-community partnership, and teacher well-being. These literatures use different designs and endpoints, which makes a single pooled effect estimate neither necessary nor conceptually appropriate. Narrative reviews permit theoretically informed synthesis across such evidence when the search logic, source selection, and reasoning process are made explicit (Sukhera, 2022). To strengthen transparency, the review was organized around the quality domains emphasized by the Scale for the Assessment of Narrative Review Articles, particularly the statement of importance and aims, description of the search, appropriate referencing, scientific reasoning, and presentation of relevant evidence (Baethge et al., 2019). The review did not claim the exhaustiveness of a systematic review and did not use meta-analytic pooling.

Search Strategy and Information Sources

The literature search was conducted and updated in March 2026. The search prioritized peer-reviewed material published from 2019 through 2025 because the review aimed to represent current evidence on teacher well-being, culturally responsive practice, rural induction, and Indigenous education. Older sources were retained only when they supplied a necessary policy, linguistic, or local foundation that newer work could not replace. Search routes included ERIC-indexed records, major scholarly publisher platforms, journal repositories, and official Department of Education repositories. Backward and forward citation chaining from highly relevant reviews and empirical studies was used to locate additional work that connected the four target domains.

Search terms were combined in concept blocks rather than applied as one fixed database string because the evidence base crossed several fields. The teacher adaptation block used terms such as beginning teacher, novice teacher, non-local teacher, newly qualified teacher, rural teacher, remote school, induction, social support, isolation, and well-being. The cultural practice block used Indigenous education, IPed, culturally responsive teaching, cross-cultural competence, cultural competency, Indigenous knowledge, cultural mentoring, community engagement, and relational curriculum. The local-context block used Mandaya, Davao Oriental, Indigenous Peoples Education Philippines, local language, and curriculum contextualization. Searches were refined iteratively when a high-value source introduced a more precise term, such as cultural interface, epistemic mentoring, or community integration.

Eligibility and Source Selection

Sources were eligible when they met at least one of four relevance criteria: they described social or professional isolation among beginning, rural, remote, or relocated teachers; examined cross-cultural or Indigenous cultural competence in teachers or teacher candidates; addressed implementation of Indigenous curriculum, policy, language, or school-community partnership; or analyzed teacher well-being in relation to social support, context, workload, or rural practice. Empirical qualitative, quantitative, mixed-method, review, and policy

studies were eligible. Philippine sources received priority for IPed policy and Mindanao context, while international sources were used when they offered a transferable mechanism, such as cultural mentoring, relational responsiveness, rural professional support, or context-specific well-being resources.

Sources were excluded when they focused only on student outcomes without a clear teacher-process component, addressed higher education without a transferable teacher-education or cultural-competence mechanism, discussed multiculturalism in purely generic terms, or offered opinion without a scholarly or official policy basis. Duplicate versions were consolidated in favor of the publisher, indexing service, or official repository record. Local studies published before 2019 were retained when they provided direct evidence about Mandaya linguistic variation or the policy architecture that governs IPed. The final corpus comprised 30 substantive sources and two narrative-review methodology sources.

Evidence Appraisal and Extraction

Appraisal was fit for the purpose of a narrative review rather than a formal risk-of-bias rating. Priority was given to systematic or scoping reviews, peer-reviewed empirical studies with transparent methods, and official policy documents. For context-specific evidence that was scarce in large indexed journals, local peer-reviewed sources were retained when they directly addressed Mandaya language, Philippine IPed, or culturally responsive practice in Indigenous classrooms. Each source was assessed for directness to the review question, methodological transparency, sample or evidence base, setting, and the plausibility of transferring its mechanism to a Davao Oriental school context. International findings were not treated as interchangeable with Philippine Indigenous experience; they were used to identify recurring mechanisms that could be compared with Philippine evidence.

A structured extraction matrix recorded citation, country or institutional setting, participant or evidence base, study design, focal construct, principal findings relevant to the review, and directness to one or more of the four domains. Policy documents were extracted for stated principles, implementation mechanisms, and expectations for schools or teachers. Linguistic sources were extracted for evidence of Mandaya variation and the instructional relevance of local language resources. To preserve a clear boundary between evidence report and interpretation, descriptive source findings were first organized for the Results section, after which their combined meaning for non-local teachers was developed in the Discussion.

Narrative Synthesis

Synthesis followed a domain-based and cross-domain procedure. First, evidence was coded deductively into social isolation, cross-cultural competence, IPed integration, and teacher well-being because these domains were specified before synthesis. Second, within each domain, recurrent mechanisms were identified through constant comparison across settings and designs. Examples included professional network access, cultural mentoring, local language learning, Indigenous leadership, curriculum contextualization, collaboration, community belonging, workload, and relevance of professional development. Third, cross-domain links were charted when the same mechanism appeared in more than one evidence cluster. Community integration, for example, could appear as a response to isolation, a pathway to cultural learning, a condition for IPed co-construction, and a resource for well-being.

The final synthesis used Davao Oriental as a contextual lens rather than as a claim that all reviewed studies originated in the province. Philippine policy and Mandaya linguistic evidence supplied place-specific constraints, while international rural and Indigenous education studies supplied comparative mechanisms. Conclusions were restricted to propositions that could be supported by convergence across source types or by highly direct Philippine evidence. No primary participant data were collected, no effect sizes were pooled, and no statistical significance tests were performed for the review itself.

III. RESULTS

Evidence Profile

The evidence base contained systematic and scoping reviews, longitudinal and cross-sectional quantitative studies, mixed-method and qualitative studies,

teacher-education research, Indigenous education policy analysis, official Philippine policy and learning resources, and local linguistic studies. The sources covered the Philippines, Australia, Ghana, Thailand, Norway, and broader international teacher well-being literature. Philippine sources supplied the policy and cultural context for IPed and Mandaya education, while international studies supplied evidence on rural induction, social support, cultural mentoring, relational curriculum, and contextual demands. Table 1 summarizes representative evidence that directly informed the synthesis.

Table 1
Representative Evidence Informing the Narrative Synthesis

Source	Setting and design	Evidence reported for this review
Department of Education (2011, 2021)	Philippine IPed policy and program reporting	Rights-based participation, dialogue, local language, contextualized learning, elders as mentors, and orientation of newly assigned staff are identified as implementation features.
Galvez (2018)	Davao Oriental; ethnographic linguistic analysis	Mandaya lexical forms varied across seven localities, with morphological, phonological, and orthographic differences linked to geography and social identity.
Pasion & Sandoval (2013)	Davao Oriental; descriptive Indigenous and linguistic methods	Phonological variation in Mandaya was documented across Caraga, Manay, Baganga, and Cateel.
Fatima & Wolf (2020)	Rural Ghana; longitudinal study of 135 student teachers and newly qualified teachers	Higher cumulative personal and professional risk was associated with lower motivation and lower personal accomplishment.
Thomas et al. (2019)	Primary schools; mixed-method social network study	Beginning teachers differed in support-network structure and content; the teacher with stronger job attitudes had a more central network position and more diverse support.
Erawan (2019)	Remote rural schools; exploratory mixed-method needs analysis	Beginning teachers reported personal, social, and professional development needs that extended beyond pre-service preparation.
Kingsford-Smith et al. (2023)	Australia; multigroup structural equation model using rural, regional, and metropolitan teacher groups	Workload and student behavior stress predicted poorer well-being, while collaboration predicted better well-being across locations; professional development irrelevance had a distinct association with rural strain.
Turner et al. (2022)	Australia; phenomenological teacher study	Teachers described social support as a protective resource for well-being and stress management.
Lemon & Harris (2025)	Regional, rural, and remote placements; qualitative analysis	Five reported enablers were structured support, personal well-being management, community integration, environmental adaptation, and professional resilience.
Caingcoy et al. (2022)	Philippines; 191 practice teachers	Culturally responsive teaching competence was examined across several dimensions, and the study emphasized exposure and immersion as relevant to competence development.
Navas et al. (2023)	Philippines; qualitative curriculum-framework development	Nine beginning-teacher attributes were identified, including Indigenous knowledge, cultural empathy, respect, communication, adaptability, and competence in Indigenous pedagogy.
Aporbo (2022)	Davao de Oro; phenomenological inquiry with seven language teachers	Teachers reported code-switching, translation, student-centered strategies, cultural immersion, and curriculum and language challenges in Indigenous classrooms.
Burgess & Harwood (2023)	Australia; collaborative cultural mentoring program	Aboriginal cultural educators were positioned as cultural and educational experts who mentored non-Aboriginal teachers.
Macdonald et al. (2023)	Australia; mixed-method pre-service teacher study	Indigenous leadership, Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff collaboration, relevant learning experiences, and authentic engagement with Indigenous standpoints were linked with positive learning experiences.
Lembit & Burgess (2024)	Australia; Indigenous standpoint and relational curriculum study	Teachers' understandings of curriculum were examined through relational responsiveness and Indigenous standpoint.
Lowe et al. (2019, 2021)	Australia; systematic review and synthesis of culturally nourishing schooling	Community engagement, Indigenous languages and cultural practices, epistemic mentoring, and negotiated whole-school approaches were recurrent components.
Miole (2024)	Philippines; policy case study using interviews and documents	IPed was described as a cultural interface that requires continuing state-community dialogue and participation in policy and curriculum work.
Hascher & Waber (2021)	Systematic review of 98 teacher well-being studies	Social relationships were among the most consistent contextual correlates of teacher well-being; the review also identified heterogeneous definitions and predictors.

Note. The table presents representative sources rather than every item in the corpus. Source-specific findings are reported descriptively; interpretation is reserved for the Discussion.

The substantive sources distributed across all four pre-specified domains, with several studies contributing to more than one domain. Teacher well-being studies consistently reported social support, collaboration, workload, contextual resources, and professional relevance as work-related factors. Indigenous education sources repeatedly reported Indigenous leadership, community partnership, culturally responsive curriculum, local language, and mentorship. Beginning-teacher and rural evidence reported personal, social, and professional support needs during transition to practice. Philippine IPed sources described contextualization and continuous dialogue with Indigenous communities as core implementation expectations.

Social Isolation and Professional Embeddedness

The rural and beginning-teacher literature described isolation as both a social and professional condition. Fatima and Wolf (2020) followed 135 teachers from pre-service preparation into newly qualified teaching in rural Ghana and reported a cumulative-risk pattern in which personal and professional risks corresponded with lower motivation and personal accomplishment. Erawan (2019) reported that teachers in remote rural schools required support across personal, social, and professional domains, including needs that pre-service programs did not fully address. Thomas et al. (2019) found that beginning teachers differed in the structure and content of their professional support networks and that the teacher with stronger job attitudes occupied a more central network position and received more diverse support.

The teacher well-being literature also recorded social connection as a work resource. Hascher and Waber (2021), across 98 studies, identified social relationships as a pivotal correlate in the teacher well-being literature. Turner et al. (2022) reported that teachers described social support as protective in relation to stress and well-being. In regional, rural, and remote professional experiences, Lemon and Harris (2025) identified structured support and community integration among five recurrent well-being enablers. Across these sources, support was reported through collegial, organizational, community, and personal relationships rather than through one source alone.

Kingsford-Smith et al. (2023) compared rural, regional, and metropolitan teacher groups and found that workload and student behavior stress negatively predicted well-being across all three groups, while teacher collaboration positively predicted well-being across all three. The study also reported that irrelevant professional development had a distinctive relationship with strain in the rural group.

Cross-Cultural Competence and Cultural Learning

Philippine teacher-education sources described cross-cultural competence as multidimensional. Navas et al. (2023) identified nine attributes for beginning teachers of Indigenous peoples, including knowledge of Indigenous systems, cultural empathy, unity, respect, communication, character strength, adaptability, knowledge of Indigenous pedagogy, and knowledge of cultural heritage. Caingcoy et al. (2022), in a study of 191 practice teachers, assessed culturally responsive teaching competence and emphasized the role of relevant exposure and immersion in competence development. Apombo (2022) reported that language teachers in an Indigenous classroom context used cultural immersion, translation, code-switching, and student-centered strategies in response to language and curricular demands.

International studies reported competence development through direct engagement with Indigenous expertise. Burgess and Harwood (2023) described a collaborative cultural mentoring program in which Aboriginal cultural educators acted as experts for non-Aboriginal teachers. Macdonald et al. (2023) reported that pre-service teachers valued authentic engagement with Indigenous standpoints and identified Indigenous leadership, collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff, professionally relevant activities, and engagement with Indigenous perspectives through assessment as positive features of their learning. Lembit and Burgess (2024) examined non-Indigenous teachers' curriculum understandings through relational responsiveness and Indigenous standpoint, with attention to relationships and the epistemic position from which curriculum decisions are made.

Curriculum-focused work supplied additional components of competence. Murray (2022) described authentic materials, avoidance of stereotyping, dialogue, multiple Indigenous voices, and attention to power as practical elements in the development of intercultural competence when teaching Indigenous topics. D'Aietti et al. (2020) documented a teacher's attempt to reconcile explicit instruction with culturally responsive pedagogy in a Torres

Strait Islander classroom. Suarta et al. (2022), in a quantitative study of 536 Indonesian students, reported positive relationships between students' perceptions of teachers' Indigenous knowledge and cultural competence and students' learning outcomes, with student engagement serving as an intervening mechanism.

IPed Integration, Language, and Community Partnership

Philippine policy sources consistently located IPed within a rights-based and community-participatory framework. DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011 defined shared accountability, continuous dialogue, engagement, and partnership with Indigenous communities as policy principles (Department of Education, 2011). The Department of Education's 2021 program report identified contextualized lesson plans, local language use, elders as teachers and mentors, ancestral domains as classrooms, recruitment of teachers familiar with local knowledge and culture, and orientation of new teachers and school heads as continuing program practices. Miolo (2024) found that policy development and implementation involved a cultural-interface approach that depends on sustained dialogue between Indigenous communities and state institutions.

Philippine scholarship also documented continuing implementation questions. Colicoll (2024) analyzed the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems and practices in the K-12 IPed program and raised questions about how knowledge traditions are incorporated and whose terms shape the process. Magdadaro and Sacramento (2022), through the case of a Lumad alternative school in Mindanao, reported the centrality of community engagement in Indigenous education discourse. Navas et al. (2023) identified culture-bearer involvement as relevant to preservation of culture and teacher preparation. Burgess and Lowe (2022), in a different national context, documented a policy-practice gap in which formal Aboriginal education policy did not automatically produce meaningful classroom enactment.

Language studies from Davao Oriental reported within-province variation. Galvez (2018) found lexical variation in Mandaya across seven localities from Mati to Boston. Pasion and Sandoval (2013) documented phonological variation across four municipalities. The Department of Education Division of Davao Oriental's Mandaya dictionary provides a basic English-linked vocabulary resource for early-grade users (Department of Education, 2018). These sources record both the existence of institutional language resources and the presence of within-language variation across communities in the province.

Systematic and synthesis evidence from Indigenous education reported community engagement as a recurring condition of curriculum work. Lowe et al. (2019) identified enabling and constraining factors in school-Indigenous community engagement, while Lowe et al. (2021) proposed culturally nourishing schooling around learning from Country, authentic inclusion of cultural practices and Indigenous languages, epistemic and pedagogic mentoring, and professional change negotiated with Indigenous families and communities. Harrison et al. (2019) similarly synthesized curriculum and learning research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and documented the importance of pedagogical and curricular approaches that respond to Indigenous learners and contexts.

Teacher Well-Being under Contextual Demands

The well-being evidence described multiple dimensions rather than a single stress indicator. Viac and Fraser (2020) organized teacher well-being into cognitive, subjective, physical and mental, and social dimensions and linked these to work conditions and educational quality. Hascher and Waber (2021) found substantial heterogeneity in teacher well-being definitions across 98 studies but identified social relationships as a recurring predictor or correlate. Sohail et al. (2023), in a scoping review, reported organizational, interpersonal, and individual factors associated with teacher well-being and burnout across school settings.

Studies of social support and rural work reported both demands and resources. Turner et al. (2022) found that social support featured prominently in teachers' descriptions of well-being. Kingsford-Smith et al. (2023) reported negative associations for workload and student behavior stress and positive associations for collaboration across location groups. Fatima and Wolf (2020) reported lower motivation and personal accomplishment as cumulative personal and professional risk increased among newly qualified teachers in rural Ghana. Lemon and Harris (2025) reported structured support, community integration, adaptation to environment, personal well-being management, and professional

resilience as recurring enablers in regional, rural, and remote teacher-placement narratives.

Evidence that directly connected cultural context and professional practice also contained well-being-relevant conditions. Cultural mentoring studies provided structured access to Indigenous expertise (Burgess & Harwood, 2023), while community engagement reviews described relationships between schools and Indigenous communities as processes that require trust and sustained participation (Lowe et al., 2019). Beginning-teacher network research recorded varied access to professional support (Thomas et al., 2019). These findings were charted together in the extraction matrix because relational resources appeared repeatedly in both cultural-practice and well-being evidence.

Cross-Domain Evidence Pattern

Cross-domain coding identified a recurring set of demands and resources across the four evidence clusters. Relocation and weak local networks appeared in the social-isolation literature; unfamiliar cultural knowledge and language appeared in cultural-competence and IPed sources; workload and context-irrelevant professional development appeared in rural well-being studies. In contrast, collaboration, Indigenous or community mentorship, local language support, authentic community engagement, contextualized professional learning, and belonging to professional and community networks appeared as resources in multiple source groups. Table 2 presents the descriptive cross-domain pattern.

Table 2
Cross-domain Pattern of Demands, Resources, and Reported Proximal Outcomes

Domain	Recurrent demands in the literature	Recurrent resources in the literature	Reported proximal outcomes
Social isolation	Relocation, weak local ties, limited access to informal advice, early-career uncertainty	Collegial networks, school induction, community integration, diverse support ties	Access to advice, job attitudes, motivation, personal accomplishment, sense of support
Cross-cultural competence	Unfamiliar cultural norms, limited Indigenous knowledge, risk of stereotype, unfamiliar language or communication patterns	Cultural mentoring, Indigenous leadership, immersion, authentic materials, reflexive dialogue, local knowledge holders	Cultural knowledge, empathy, adaptability, relational responsiveness, culturally responsive practice
IPed integration	Policy-practice gap, curriculum mismatch, language variation, limited contextual resources, unclear epistemic authority	Community partnership, elders and culture bearers, contextualized materials, local language resources, negotiated curriculum	Contextualized lessons, local-language use, inclusion of Indigenous knowledge, community participation
Teacher well-being	Workload, student behavior stress, cumulative risk, professional isolation, irrelevant development	Collaboration, social support, structured support, community belonging, context-relevant professional learning	Well-being, strain, motivation, personal accomplishment, professional resilience

Note. Outcomes are reported as constructs or findings used by the reviewed sources. The table does not imply causal effects across all settings.

IV. DISCUSSION

The combined evidence suggests that cultural immersion for a non-local teacher is best understood as professional adaptation through relationships, not as a short exposure activity. A newly deployed teacher enters an instructional system and a social world at the same time. Philippine IPed policy already establishes dialogue, participation, empowerment, and community partnership as foundational principles (Department of Education, 2011), while Miole (2024) shows that these principles operate through a cultural interface where Indigenous and state knowledge systems must continually negotiate their relationship. When these policy ideas are read alongside rural induction research, cultural immersion becomes more than an issue of courtesy or cultural awareness. It becomes the process through which a teacher acquires enough relational legitimacy, linguistic sensitivity, local knowledge, and professional support to act competently in a setting where formal qualification alone is insufficient.

This interpretation changes how social isolation should be understood. Isolation is not simply a private feeling that a novice teacher must overcome through resilience. Thomas et al. (2019) demonstrate that beginning teachers occupy different positions in professional support networks and therefore do not have equal access to advice or diverse support. Erawan (2019) likewise shows that remote beginning teachers have personal, social, and professional needs that

exceed what university preparation can anticipate. Fatima and Wolf (2020) add an important cumulative-risk perspective: multiple strains can combine and correspond with lower motivation and personal accomplishment. For a teacher assigned from an urban center to a remote Indigenous community, weak local ties, uncertain transport or living arrangements, unfamiliar language, and novice-teacher workload can therefore operate as a connected set of demands. A support policy that treats each issue separately may miss the way they reinforce one another.

The same evidence indicates that community integration can function as both a cultural-learning pathway and a well-being resource. Lemon and Harris (2025) identify community integration as one of the enablers of well-being in regional, rural, and remote placements, while Turner et al. (2022) show the broader protective role of social support. In Indigenous education, Lowe et al. (2019) find that purposeful school-community engagement depends on trust and reciprocal participation. These strands converge on a practical point: a non-local teacher's relationship with the community cannot be treated as an extracurricular matter. A teacher who knows whom to consult, understands local expectations, and feels socially anchored has better access to the knowledge needed for contextualized instruction and to relationships that may buffer professional strain. Community belonging does not replace formal school support, but it broadens the teacher's resource network beyond the faculty room.

Cross-cultural competence should therefore be conceived as a developmental practice rather than a trait conferred by a one-time seminar. The Philippine framework of Navas et al. (2023) includes knowledge, empathy, respect, communication, adaptability, and Indigenous pedagogy, which already implies a competence that must be exercised across situations. Caingcoy et al. (2022) emphasize exposure and immersion, while Aporbo (2022) shows how teachers adjust language and pedagogy within an Indigenous classroom. International studies strengthen this conclusion. Burgess and Harwood (2023) place Aboriginal cultural educators in the expert role and make mentorship relational and authority-conscious; Macdonald et al. (2023) report value in Indigenous leadership and authentic engagement with Indigenous standpoints; Lembit and Burgess (2024) position relational responsiveness within an Indigenous standpoint rather than a generic multicultural frame. Together, these studies favor repeated, locally guided learning over abstract cultural familiarization.

For Davao Oriental, language makes this developmental model especially important. Galvez (2018) and Pasion and Sandoval (2013) document variation within Mandaya across municipalities, while the Department of Education (2018) provides a dictionary intended to support basic vocabulary. The implication is not that every non-local teacher must achieve full fluency before appointment. Rather, language support should be local enough to prevent a generic orientation from treating Mandaya as a single, uniform speech form. School-specific or community-specific language induction can prioritize classroom phrases, culturally significant terms, kinship and respect forms, common learner expressions, and the vocabulary required for contextualized examples. Local speakers, elders, Indigenous teachers, and language resource persons are better positioned than a centralized module to identify which forms are appropriate in a particular school community. Such an approach also respects language as a carrier of local knowledge, not merely a communication tool.

The review also distinguishes meaningful IPed integration from decorative inclusion. The Department of Education (2021) identifies local language, elders, ancestral domains, and contextualized lesson plans as program practices, while Colicool (2024) questions how Indigenous knowledge systems enter the K-12 framework and under whose epistemic terms. Miole (2024) similarly emphasizes participation and continuing dialogue. International synthesis supports the same direction: Lowe et al. (2021) locate Indigenous language, cultural practices, epistemic mentoring, and negotiated whole-school reform at the center of culturally nourishing schooling, and Burgess and Lowe (2022) show that policy language alone does not guarantee meaningful enactment. For non-local teachers, the strongest safeguard against superficial integration is shared curriculum work with people who hold local cultural authority. Contextualization becomes more credible when the teacher asks not only what Indigenous content can be inserted into a lesson, but who should determine its meaning, when it may be taught, how it should be represented, and whether the material is appropriate for classroom use.

Teacher well-being provides the organizational test of whether such expectations are sustainable. Viac and Fraser (2020) treat well-being as multidimensional and sensitive to working conditions, while Hascher and Waber (2021) emphasize the importance of social relationships. Kingsford-Smith et al.

(2023) show that collaboration is beneficial across locations and that context-irrelevant professional development may carry a particular cost for rural teachers. Sohail et al. (2023) likewise summarize organizational and interpersonal influences on burnout and well-being. These findings imply that cultural competence cannot be demanded as an additional unpaid layer of labor placed on an isolated novice teacher. If IPed requires community consultation, local material development, language learning, and responsive curriculum design, then time, mentorship, collaborative planning, and access to relevant professional learning are part of the implementation infrastructure. Well-being is not an alternative to instructional quality; it is one condition under which sustained instructional adaptation becomes possible.

A place-based induction model follows from this synthesis. Before deployment, the teacher needs a realistic orientation to travel, living conditions, school organization, community history, IPed obligations, and ethical expectations for engagement with Indigenous knowledge. On arrival, the school should pair the teacher with two complementary sources of support: a professional mentor who can guide school procedures and instructional work, and a community or cultural mentor recognized by the local Indigenous community. Burgess and Harwood's (2023) mentoring model supports the principle that cultural expertise should remain with Indigenous educators and knowledge holders, while Thomas et al. (2019) demonstrate why diverse support ties matter to beginning teachers. The teacher also needs protected time for local language development, collaborative planning, and reflection on difficult cultural or pedagogical encounters. These supports should continue across the first year rather than end after an orientation week.

Such an induction model must also preserve boundaries around Indigenous knowledge. Cultural immersion should not be confused with entitlement to access, document, or teach all community knowledge. IPed's rights-based character requires respect for community authority and participation (Department of Education, 2011), and the cultural-interface analysis of Miole (2024) underscores the need for continuing negotiation rather than unilateral curriculum appropriation. Murray (2022) warns against stereotyping and stresses authentic voices and attention to power, principles that transfer directly to local curriculum work. A non-local teacher should therefore learn protocols for consent, attribution, sacred or restricted knowledge, representation of community history, and the use of cultural materials. Competence includes knowing when not to use material and when to defer to a knowledge holder.

The review has implications for teacher preparation institutions as well as DepEd divisions. Pre-service courses can introduce Indigenous education policy, cultural humility, language-awareness strategies, and ethical community engagement, but they cannot teach the full specificity of every community. Macdonald et al. (2023) show the value of Indigenous leadership and authentic engagement in teacher education, while Caingcoy et al. (2022) support the relevance of exposure and immersion. Preparation should therefore build transferable habits: reflexive practice, respectful inquiry, recognition of Indigenous authority, ability to collaborate with community members, and willingness to adapt pedagogy to local evidence. The division or receiving school must then supply place-specific learning that teacher education cannot provide in advance.

For research, the synthesis supports a prospective study of non-local novice teachers assigned to Indigenous schools in Davao Oriental. Such work could follow teachers from pre-deployment through the first academic year and measure social connectedness, perceived cultural competence, IPed integration practices, professional support, and teacher well-being at several time points. Qualitative interviews with teachers, Indigenous elders or culture bearers, school heads, and local mentors could test whether the same relationships identified in this review operate in Mandaya communities. A design of this kind would also clarify directionality. The present evidence suggests that community integration may support well-being and cultural competence, but it is equally plausible that teachers with stronger well-being or cultural confidence are more able to form community ties. Longitudinal local evidence is needed to separate these pathways.

Overall, the literature supports a shift from deployment as placement to deployment as supported cultural and professional transition. Rural teacher research demonstrates that early-career support networks and contextual resources matter. Indigenous education research demonstrates that cultural authority, relationality, community participation, and local language matter. Teacher well-being research demonstrates that collaboration and social support can function as resources when demands accumulate. In Davao Oriental, where Mandaya language variation and IPed obligations create genuinely place-specific instructional demands, these strands should not be administered as

separate programs. A coherent model would treat cultural immersion, induction, community partnership, and well-being as one professional support architecture.

V. LIMITATIONS

This review has several limitations. First, it is a structured narrative review rather than a systematic review, so it does not claim exhaustive retrieval and does not provide a formal risk-of-bias assessment for every source. The search prioritized direct conceptual relevance and high-value policy or empirical evidence, which supports integration across heterogeneous fields but leaves open the possibility that relevant local studies were not indexed or readily discoverable. Second, the evidence base for Davao Oriental itself remains limited. Mandaya language studies and DepEd resources provide strong local context, yet much of the evidence on teacher isolation, cultural mentoring, and rural well-being comes from other Philippine regions or international settings. Transfer was therefore limited to mechanisms that were conceptually compatible with IPed and supported by more than one source type.

Third, the four domains used to organize the review are analytically distinct but empirically intertwined. A study classified under teacher well-being may also describe social support, while a cultural-competence study may also address community belonging or curriculum integration. The review preserved these overlaps through cross-domain coding, but narrative synthesis cannot estimate the relative contribution of each mechanism. Fourth, publication and language availability may favor studies that report formal programs or accessible scholarly outputs, while community-generated knowledge can remain outside indexed literature. For that reason, the review should inform, not replace, direct consultation with Mandaya communities and other Indigenous peoples whose schools are the intended context of application.

VI. CONCLUSION

Non-local teachers who begin their careers in Indigenous communities face a dual transition: entry into professional teaching and entry into a distinct cultural, linguistic, and relational environment. The literature reviewed here shows that the quality of this transition depends less on individual adaptability alone than on the resources surrounding the teacher. Social and professional networks reduce isolation; Indigenous cultural mentors and authentic community relationships support cross-cultural competence; local language resources and knowledge holders strengthen IPed contextualization; and collaboration, relevant professional learning, and community belonging contribute to teacher well-being. In Davao Oriental, documented variation within Mandaya language further supports a place-specific rather than generic model of cultural orientation. A defensible policy response is therefore a sustained, place-based induction system that links school mentoring, Indigenous community mentorship, language support, protected collaborative time, ethical guidance for use of Indigenous knowledge, and routine well-being support. Cultural immersion should not ask a novice teacher to assimilate quickly or to master a community from the outside. It should create a structured process through which the teacher learns with the community, recognizes local authority, builds reciprocal relationships, and develops the competence to teach responsibly in that particular place.

Author Contributions

The author conceptualized the review, defined the review questions, evaluated the evidence base, developed the synthesis, prepared the manuscript, and approved the final version.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Ethics Approval and Informed Consent

Not applicable. This narrative review used published literature and publicly available policy documents and did not involve human participants, identifiable private information, or primary data collection.

Competing Interests

The author declares no competing interests.

Data Availability

No new primary dataset was generated or analyzed. The evidence base is represented by the sources cited in the manuscript, and the review logic is described in the Methods section.

Declaration of AI Use

Generative AI assisted with preliminary drafting, language refinement, source organization, and document formatting. All cited sources were checked against publisher, indexing, journal, or official repository records. Responsibility for final source verification, scholarly judgment, and any submitted version of the manuscript rests with the submitting author.

Acknowledgments

The author acknowledges the work of Indigenous educators, culture bearers, communities, and researchers whose scholarship and public educational resources make culturally responsive teacher preparation possible.

References

- Aporbo, R. (2022). Cultural responsive teaching of language teachers in Indigenous classrooms: A phenomenological inquiry. *International Journal of Research Publications*, 94(1), 149-163. <https://doi.org/10.47119/IJRP100941220222830>
- Baethge, C., Goldbeck-Wood, S., & Mertens, S. (2019). SANRA-a scale for the quality assessment of narrative review articles. *Research Integrity and Peer Review*, 4, 5. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41073-019-0064-8>
- Burgess, C., & Harwood, V. (2023). Aboriginal cultural educators teaching the teachers: Mobilising a collaborative cultural mentoring program to affect change. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 50, 203-220. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-021-00493-1>
- Burgess, C., & Lowe, K. (2022). Rhetoric vs reality: The disconnect between policy and practice for teachers implementing Aboriginal education in their schools. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 30(97). <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.30.6175>
- Caingcoy, M. E., Lorenzo, V. I. M., Ramirez, I. A. L., Libertad, C. D., Pabiona, R. G., Jr., & Mier, R. M. C. (2022). Assessing practice teachers' culturally responsive teaching: The role of gender and degree programs in competence development. *IAFOR Journal of Cultural Studies*, 7(1), 21-35. <https://doi.org/10.22492/ijcs.7.1.02>
- Colicol, F. L. (2024). Pragmatism as basis of the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems and practices in the Philippine K-12 Indigenous Peoples Education Program: Problematising and ways forward. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 56(10), 1021-1033. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2024.2348807>
- D'Aiotti, K., Lewthwaite, B., & Chigeza, P. (2020). Negotiating the pedagogical requirements of both explicit instruction and culturally responsive pedagogy in Far North Queensland: Teaching explicitly, responding responsively. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 50(2), 312-319. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2020.5>
- Department of Education. (2011, August 8). *DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011: Adopting the National Indigenous Peoples (IP) Education Policy Framework*. <https://www.deped.gov.ph/?p=8315>
- Department of Education. (2018, June 27). *Mandaya dictionary*. DepEd Learning Portal. <https://lrmds.deped.gov.ph/detail/14201>
- Department of Education. (2021, October 8). *DepEd marks 1st decade of Indigenous Peoples Education Program (IPEd) with 2.5M learners served*. <https://www.deped.gov.ph/2021/10/08/deped-marks-1st-decade-of-indigenous-peoples-education-program-iped-with-2-5m-learners-served/>
- Erawan, P. (2019). The needs analysis of supporting beginning teachers in schools in remote rural areas. *Journal of Teacher Education and Educators*, 8(2), 115-129. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/jtee/article/589754>
- Fatima, S. F., & Wolf, S. (2020). Cumulative risk and newly qualified teachers' professional well-being: Evidence from rural Ghana. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 15(4), 414-436. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499920926792>
- Galvez, L. S. (2018). Isogloss of Mandaya lexemes: Looking into their linguistic variations. *Davao Research Journal*, 12(1), 28-44. <https://doi.org/10.59120/drj.v12i1.11>
- Harrison, N., Tennent, C., Vass, G., Guenther, J., Lowe, K., & Moodie, N. (2019). Curriculum and learning in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education: A systematic review. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 46(2), 233-251. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-019-00311-9>
- Hascher, T., & Waber, J. (2021). Teacher well-being: A systematic review of the research literature from the year 2000-2019. *Educational Research Review*, 34, 100411. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2021.100411>
- Kingsford-Smith, A. A., Collie, R. J., Loughland, T., & Nguyen, H. T. M. (2023). Teacher wellbeing in rural, regional, and metropolitan schools: Examining resources and demands across locations. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 132, 104229. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104229>
- Lembit, N. D., & Burgess, C. (2024). Non-Indigenous teachers' understandings of relationally responsive curriculum through an Indigenous standpoint. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 44, 337-349. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41297-024-00260-z>
- Lemon, N., & Harris, M. (2025). Understanding regional, rural and remote teacher wellbeing narratives through podcasting: A qualitative analysis of multiple stakeholder perspectives. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 52(6), 4655-4681. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-025-00914-5>
- Lowe, K., Harrison, N., Tennent, C., Guenther, J., Vass, G., & Moodie, N. (2019). Factors affecting the development of school and Indigenous community engagement: A systematic review. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 46(2), 253-271. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-019-00314-6>
- Lowe, K., Skrebneva, I., Burgess, C., Harrison, N., & Vass, G. (2021). Towards an Australian model of culturally nourishing schooling. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 53(4), 467-481. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2020.1764111>
- Macdonald, M.-A., Gringart, E., Booth, S., & Somerville, R. (2023). Pedagogy matters: Positive steps towards Indigenous cultural competency in a pre-service teacher cohort. *Australian Journal of Education*, 67(1), 6-27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00049441221107974>
- Magdadaro, J. M. D., & Sacramento, N. J. J. E. (2022). Community engagement in the Indigenous education discourse: Unravelling policy lessons from Lumad's alternative school in Mindanao, Philippines. *Thammasat Review*, 25(1), 57-81. <https://doi.org/10.14456/tureview.2022.3>
- Miole, G. L. (2024). Cultural interface in action: A case study of Philippine Indigenous educational policy. *IAFOR Journal of Education*, 12(3), 273-298. <https://doi.org/10.22492/ije.12.3.11>
- Murray, H. M. (2022). Teaching about Indigenous peoples in the EFL classroom: Practical approaches to the development of intercultural competence. *TESOL Journal*, 13(2), e645. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.645>
- Navas, E. A., Calinggangan, C. E., Rosete, J. J. G., Siyang, E. B., & Leano, A. J. (2023). A proposed Indigenous Peoples teacher education curriculum framework: Focused on some attributes of beginning teachers of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines. *Asian Journal on Perspectives in Education*, 4(1), 17-31. <https://doi.org/10.63529/ajpe.v4i1.8481>
- Pasion, R. M., & Sandoval, M. A. S. (2013). Varyasyong ponolohikal ng wikang Mandaya sa ilang munisipalidad ng Davao Oriental [Phonological variation of the Mandaya language in selected municipalities of Davao Oriental]. *Davao Research Journal*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.59120/drj.v9i1.30>
- Sohail, M. M., Baghdady, A., Choi, J., Huynh, H. V., Whetten, K., & Proeschold-Bell, R. J. (2023). Factors influencing teacher wellbeing and burnout in schools: A scoping review. *Work*, 76(4), 1317-1331. <https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-220234>
- Suarta, I. M., Noortyani, R., Yarsama, K., & Adhiti, I. A. I. (2022). The role of teachers' Indigenous knowledge and cultural competencies in enhancing students' engagement and learning outcomes. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 9(1), 244-264. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/1025>
- Sukhera, J. (2022). Narrative reviews: Flexible, rigorous, and practical. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 14(4), 414-417. <https://doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-22-00480.1>
- Thomas, L., Tuytens, M., Devos, G., Kelchtermans, G., & Vanderlinde, R. (2019). Beginning teachers' professional support: A mixed methods social network study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 83, 134-147. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.04.008>
- Turner, K., Thielking, M., & Prochazka, N. (2022). Teacher wellbeing and social support: A phenomenological study. *Educational Research*, 64(1), 77-94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2021.2013126>
- Viac, C., & Fraser, P. (2020). *Teachers' well-being: A framework for data collection and analysis* (OECD Education Working Papers No. 213). OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/c36fc9d3-en>