

Bridging Two Systems: A Comparative Study of the Philippine and Swiss Education Systems Through the Lived Experiences of 1.5 Generation Filipino Students

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the educational transitions of Filipino students who have experienced both the Philippine and Swiss education systems. Specifically, it examined their transition experiences, adaptation challenges, coping strategies, and the factors influencing their academic, social, and cultural adjustment. Using a qualitative research design, the study gathered data from 10 to 15 participants classified as 1.5-generation Filipino students—those born in the Philippines but who migrated to Switzerland during their school-age years. Data were collected through interviews and narrative accounts to capture in-depth personal experiences. Furthermore, the study found that support systems—particularly peers, family, and schools—played a crucial role in facilitating successful transitions. The transition experience significantly influenced students' academic performance, confidence, and overall well-being.

Keywords: 1.5 Generation Filipino students; Philippine education system, Swiss education system, educational transition, comparative education

INTRODUCTION

Global migration has led to an increasing number of students experiencing cross-border educational transitions, bringing both opportunities and challenges in their academic journeys. Among these are 1.5-generation Filipino students—those born in the Philippines and who later migrated during their school years—who must navigate the transition between two distinct educational systems. The transition from the Philippine education system to the Swiss education system presents significant differences in curriculum, pedagogy, support systems and resources. Studies on transnational Filipino families emphasize the challenges faced by children living abroad. Research shows that migrant children often encounter cultural, linguistic, and academic adjustments when entering foreign education systems (Pastor & Doronio, 2025; Aquino, 2019).

Globally, universities view study abroad as an important avenue for students to enhance intercultural competence, broaden their horizons, and gain potential benefits for future employment (Dall'Alba & Sidhu, 2015). Across the globe, education systems share common elements, such as structured progression from foundational to secondary stages and growing recognition of early childhood education. However, the approaches vary significantly. Understanding and analyzing global education systems is essential to identify effective strategies and best practices. It bridges the gap between academic knowledge and practical skills, addressing workforce needs and enhancing employability (Confederation of Indian Industry, 2024). Eugenio (2025) states that while studying abroad offers numerous benefits, several challenges and barriers often prevent students from

participating. Research indicates that students with immigrant backgrounds often experience educational transitions differently because of language barriers, cultural adaptation, and varying levels of institutional support (Makarova & Kassis, 2022). Despite these challenges, migrant students frequently demonstrate high educational aspirations and resilience as they strive for upward mobility within the Swiss educational system (Tjaden & Scharenberg, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to address the differences between the Philippine and Swiss education systems that affect the academic performance of 1.5-generation Filipino migrant students.

Thus, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences and strategies of 1.5-generation Filipino students in managing the transition from the Philippine education system to the Swiss education system?
2. What challenges do they face in adapting to the Swiss education system?
3. What factors influence their adjustment in academic, social, and cultural aspects within the Swiss educational context?
4. What are the effects of the transition on their academic performance, confidence, and well-being?
5. What support systems (school, family, peers, and community) assist them in their educational transition?

Scope and Delimitation

This study focuses on the lived experiences of Filipino students who have experienced both the Philippine and Swiss education systems. It aims to investigate the two systems by examining students' perspectives on teaching approaches, assessment practices, cultural adaptation, and overall academic adjustment. The study will underscore how these systemic differences shape their educational journeys and influence their personal and academic development. Data will primarily be gathered through qualitative methods, such as interviews and narrative accounts, to capture the depth of participants' experiences. It is limited to Filipino students who have studied at the secondary level in both the Philippines and Switzerland. It does not include the perspectives of Swiss students, teachers, or administrators, nor does it attempt to generalize the findings to all Filipino students abroad. The research is bounded by the participants' willingness to share their experiences, and data collection before 2025 is not included. The study's focus is qualitative, experience-based narratives. Hence, quantitative comparisons such as test scores or standardized achievement metrics are beyond the scope of this study.

Review of Related Literature

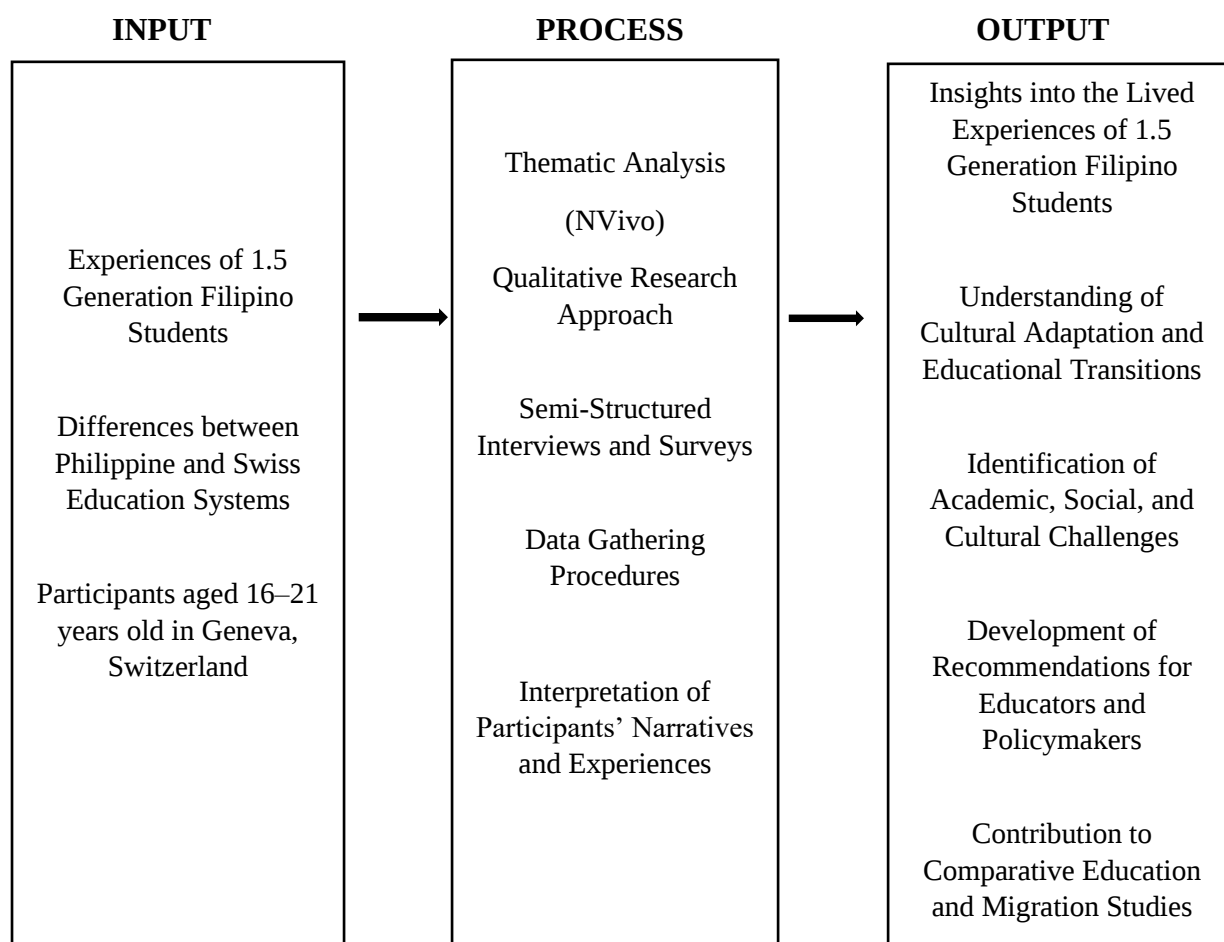
Migration has a profound influence on the structures and practices of educational institutions ([Torres-Zaragoza & Llorent-Bedmar, 2024](#)), exposing tensions between the formal commitment to safeguarding migrant students' right to education and the persistent social,

cultural, and pedagogical barriers that undermine equitable participation. Studies on transnational Filipino families emphasize the challenges faced by children living abroad. Research shows that migrant children often encounter cultural, linguistic, and academic adjustments when entering foreign education systems (Pastor & Doronio, 2025; Aquino, 2019). For 1.5-generation Filipino students—those born in the Philippines but who migrate during childhood or early adolescence—navigating between Filipino cultural values and host-country norms can result in hybrid identities and both academic and social challenges. These students often rely on family support, peer networks, and school resources to adapt and succeed (Findlay et al., 2010; Roh & Chang, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Comparative Education Theory served as the primary framework for examining the similarities and differences between the Philippine and Swiss education systems. The theory emphasizes that educational systems vary across social, cultural, political, and economic contexts, shaping curriculum design, teaching practices, assessment methods, and students' learning experiences.

Conceptual Framework



Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of 1.5-generation Filipino students transitioning from the Philippine education system to the Swiss education system. Data and responses were collected through in-depth interviews and survey questionnaires. Qualitative research is appropriate because it allows the researcher to explore participants' personal experiences, perceptions, challenges, and coping strategies within their natural contexts. According to John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth (2018), qualitative research focuses on understanding how individuals interpret and make meaning of their experiences.

The participants of the study consisted of 1.5-generation Filipino students—those who were born in the Philippines but migrated to Switzerland during their school-age years and are currently enrolled in secondary or tertiary institutions within Geneva. These participants were selected because they have direct experience with both the Philippine and Swiss education systems, making their perspectives vital in understanding the challenges and adjustments associated with cross-system educational transitions. A total of 10 to 15 participants, aged 16 to 21 years old, were targeted for this study.

Two research instruments were used in collecting data in this study: a semi-structured interview guide and a survey questionnaire. The semi-structured interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via online platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet, depending on the participants' availability and comfort level. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour. For participants who were not comfortable participating in interviews or preferred written responses due to time, language, or privacy concerns, a survey questionnaire was provided as an alternative, administered online via Google Forms.

Although the present study employed a qualitative descriptive design, NVivo software was used as an analytical tool to systematically organize, code, and analyze textual data. All interview transcripts were imported into NVivo to facilitate the identification, categorization, and quantification of recurring concepts and thematic patterns.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOP 1: What are the experiences and strategies of 1.5-generation Filipino students in managing the transition from the Philippine education system to the Swiss education system?

The findings revealed that students employ a range of adjustment strategies to facilitate their successful integration into a new educational and cultural environment. A prominent strategy identified is social integration, in which participants actively engage with their surroundings by making friends, observing social behaviors, and participating in community- and school-based activities. Another key finding was the use of personal and emotional strategies, particularly self-patience and confidence. Participants acknowledged the importance of being patient with themselves as they adapt to new academic and linguistic demands. The data also highlighted behavioral and self-regulation strategies, such as self-pacing and gradual adjustment. In addition, institutional awareness emerged as an important adjustment strategy. Furthermore, participation in extracurricular activities was identified as a significant strategy for

integration. Overall, the findings suggested that students' adjustment strategies are multifaceted, combining social engagement, emotional resilience, self-regulation, and institutional understanding. These strategies collectively support students in adapting to the demands of a new educational system and promote smoother academic and social integration.

SOP 2: What challenges do they face in adapting to the Swiss education system?

The findings revealed that the French language emerged as the most significant barrier to social integration. Participants described feelings of social exclusion, as language difficulties made it challenging to build relationships with peers. It also revealed the importance of cultural adaptation in the integration process. Participants observed several differences between the cultural norms of their home country and those of their host society. The findings also revealed substantial differences in teaching approaches and pedagogical practices between the Philippine and Swiss education systems, which significantly influence students' learning experiences and adjustment, as well as their academic, psychological, and social difficulties during their transition to the Swiss educational and cultural environment. These experiences illustrate a decline in motivation, competitiveness, and emotional stability during the adjustment process.

SOP 3: What factors influence their adjustment in academic, social, and cultural aspects within the Swiss educational context?

The findings revealed that proficiency in French contributed significantly to participants' academic adjustment and educational progress. It suggested that the availability of modern facilities, educational technologies, and comfortable learning environments in Switzerland contributes positively to students' academic focus, participation, and overall learning experience. Moreover, it suggested that prior academic exposure plays a significant role in easing students' transition, boosting their confidence, and enhancing their academic success. It serves as an advantage that allows students to adapt more quickly to the new educational environment.

SOP 4: What are the effects of the transition on their academic performance, confidence, and well-being?

The findings demonstrated that educational transition positively influenced students' academic performance by fostering not only cognitive and academic skills but also essential life skills, including independence, resilience, adaptability, communication, and intercultural understanding. It suggested that educational transition influences not only academic performance but also students' motivation and goal-setting behavior. The shift from a competitive to a more uniform grading system played a key role in reducing achievement motivation and reshaping students' academic aspirations.

SOP 5: What support systems (school, family, peers, and community) assist them in their educational transition?

The findings revealed that family support plays a crucial role in students' adjustment during educational transition, serving as a primary source of motivation and emotional strength and that supportive peer relationships contributed significantly to students' social integration and smoother transition into the new educational setting. While the teacher's supportive and responsive teaching approach fosters a learning environment where students feel comfortable seeking clarification, thereby enhancing their understanding and confidence in academic tasks.

SUMMARY

1.5-generation Filipino students employed various adjustment strategies to support their integration into the Swiss educational and cultural environment. These strategies included social integration through making friends and participating in school and community activities, as well as personal and emotional approaches such as patience, confidence, and resilience. Students also practiced self-regulation strategies like gradual adjustment and self-pacing while learning new academic and linguistic demands. Participation in extracurricular activities and understanding school systems and expectations further contributed to smoother academic and social adaptation. They identified the French language barrier as the most significant challenge affecting their social interaction, classroom participation, and relationship-building with peers. Students also faced differences in teaching approaches and learning environments that contributed to academic, emotional, and psychological challenges, including stress, reduced motivation, and feelings of social exclusion during the transition process.

Access to modern school facilities, educational technologies, and supportive learning environments in Switzerland positively influenced students' engagement and academic experiences. The transition also contributed to students' personal and academic growth by enhancing critical thinking, independence, adaptability, resilience, communication skills, and intercultural understanding. Overall, the transition demonstrates that despite facing linguistic, cultural, emotional, and academic challenges, students were able to adapt successfully through resilience, support systems, language development, and active engagement in their new environment.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that 1.5-generation Filipino students faced significant academic, linguistic, cultural, and emotional challenges when transitioning from the Philippine to the Swiss education system, with the French language barrier identified as the most dominant difficulty. Despite these challenges, students gradually adapted through coping strategies such as self-directed learning, language practice, time management, and social integration. Their adjustment was influenced by factors including language proficiency, supportive school environments, peer relationships, teaching approaches, and strong family support. Although the transition initially caused stress, homesickness, and reduced confidence, it also fostered resilience, independence, adaptability, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding. Overall, support systems from family, peers, schools, and communities played a vital role in helping students successfully adjust academically, socially, and emotionally within the Swiss educational system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that Swiss schools strengthen transition and language support programs for migrant students through orientation activities, study skills training, bilingual resources, tutorial classes, and inclusive learning environments that provide both academic and emotional support. Philippine schools may better prepare students for international educational transitions by promoting balanced workloads, critical thinking, analytical and application-based

learning, foreign language development, and resilience-building activities. In addition, schools, families, and communities in both countries may collaborate to support students through language training, cultural awareness programs, peer support, and activities that enhance confidence, adaptability, communication, and interpersonal skills during the transition process.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researcher would like to express sincere gratitude to Almighty God for His guidance, strength, and blessings throughout the completion of this study. Deep appreciation is extended to the thesis adviser, panel members, and critic readers for their valuable guidance, constructive suggestions, and support. Special thanks are also given to the study participants for sharing their experiences and insights, as well as to the researcher's family, friends, professors, and classmates for their encouragement, understanding, and unwavering support throughout this research journey.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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