

Challenges and Coping Mechanisms of Newly Hired Teachers assigned in Far-Flung Schools in Relation to Their Performance

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ABSTRACT

Newly-hired teachers face challenges when assigned in far-flung places due to the difficulty of transportation and accessibility in reaching the assigned schools. This study aimed to seek the challenges encountered and coping mechanisms of the newly-hired teachers in relation to their performance in the Schools Division of Himamaylan City. This effort offered an opportunity to enhancing school program plans to address teachers' concerns assigned in the far-flung schools. The study variables included the teachers' age, status, and length of service. Results showed that the challenges encountered by the Newly- Hired Teachers according to the areas Mode of Transportation, Physical Facilities/Water and Food Supplies, and Learning Environment/Resources were of high extent. On the level of coping mechanisms of the newly-hired teachers according to the area Mode of Transportation, it was interpreted as High Level, while both Physical Facilities / Water and Food Supplies, and Learning Environment/Resources were of Very High Level. The level of performance of the newly-hired teachers was also Very Satisfactory. Newly-hired teachers are expected to face challenges when they are assigned in the far-flung areas. Thus, they experienced, both personal and professional coping interventions which somehow helped them to endure the situation and to survive the everyday challenges.

Keywords: *Challenges, Coping, Far-Flung School, Newly-Hired Teachers*

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education continues its goal of implementing the RA 10533 known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 in creating a functional basic system that will produce productive and responsible citizens equipped with the essential learning and employment (IRR Republic Act No. 10533, September 4, 2013). With schools everywhere, teachers become in demand. Now that our country adopts the K to 12 Program, many college students consider Education courses.

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DepEd Order No. 02, s. of 2015, Guidelines on the Establishment and Implementation of the Results-based Performance Management (RPMS) and the Philippine Professional Standard for Teachers (PPST) of the Department of Education serve as the guidelines on the establishment and implementation to measure teachers' performance anchored on the thrust of the Department of Education in the provision of quality education.

Hence, newly-hired teachers face challenges and struggles when they are assigned in far-flung places due to the difficulty of transportation and accessibility in reaching their respective assigned schools.

In this study, the researcher sought answers to the challenges and coping mechanisms of the newly-hired teachers in relation to their performance. The researcher foresees the importance of research since the researcher himself has also served for almost four (4) years in a far-flung school and faced series of challenges not only in terms of the distance of the schools, but also during occurrence of natural calamities considering that there are limited availability of transportation and accessibility of locations.

With the above-mentioned scenarios, this study was conducted to help enhance school program plans to address teachers' concerns assigned in the far-flung schools.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aimed to determine the extent of challenges encountered and level of coping mechanisms of the newly-hired teachers in far-flung schools in relation to their performance during School Year 2019-2020.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of the following variables:
 - a. Age;
 - b. Civil Status;
 - c. Length of Service?
2. What is the extent of challenges encountered by the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools according to the following areas:
 - a. Mode of Transportation;
 - b. Physical Facilities/Water and Food Supplies;
 - c. Learning Environment/Resources?
3. What is the level of coping mechanisms of the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools according to the aforementioned variables?
4. What is the level of performance of the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools when they are grouped according to the aforementioned variables?
5. Is there a significant difference in the extent of challenges encountered by the newly-hired teachers in the far-flung schools when they are grouped according to the aforementioned demographic profile?
6. Is there a significant difference in the level of coping of the newly-hired teachers in far-flung schools when they are grouped according to the aforementioned demographic profile?
7. Is there a significant difference in the level of performance of the newly-hired teachers assigned in far-flung schools when they are grouped according to the aforementioned demographic profile?

8. Is there a significant relationship between the extent of challenges and level coping mechanisms of the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools?

METHODOLOGY

The design used in this study was descriptive-correlational which aimed to describe the relationship between the selected demographic profile of the respondents and the extent of challenges and level of coping mechanisms as they were assigned in far-flung schools. The respondents were the N= 62 newly-hired teachers assigned in far-flung areas in 10 districts in the Schools Division of Himamaylan City. Total enumeration of the newly-hired teachers as described were utilized. These were those teaching three (3) years and below with permanent plantilla and appointment. A self-made questionnaire was instituted to gather the data needed in this undertaking. This instrument was subjected to the jury for validation which obtained a validity index of 4.40, which was interpreted as “very good” and a reliability coefficient of 0.70 which was considered “acceptable” in most research situations. A trial-run was administered to 30 newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung areas of the Division of Kabankalan. The researcher asked permission from the School Heads in the 10 districts in the Schools Division of Himamaylan City, as well as the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS). Frequency and percentage distribution was used to determine the profile of the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools in terms of the following variables: Age, Sex, and Length of Service. The mean was used to determine the extent of challenges encountered by the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far flung schools according to the areas: Mode of Transportation, Physical Facilities/Water and Food Supplies and Teaching Environment/Resources, the level of coping mechanisms by the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools according to the aforementioned areas, and the level of performance of the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools when they were grouped according to the aforementioned variables. Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine whether or not significant differences occurred in the extent of challenges encountered by the newly-hired teachers in the far-flung schools when they were grouped and compared according to the aforementioned demographic profile, whether two independent samples had been drawn from the same population, whether or not significant differences existed in the level of coping of the newly-hired teachers in the far-flung schools when they were grouped and compared according to the aforementioned demographic profile, and whether or not significant differences occurred in the level of performance of the newly-hired teachers assigned in far-flung schools when they were grouped and compared according to the aforementioned demographic profile. Spearman Rho was also utilized to determine whether or not significant relationship exists between the extent of challenges encountered and the level of coping mechanisms by the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. *Profile of the Respondents in terms of variables*

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Younger (below 27 years old)	33	53.20
	Older (27 years old and above)	29	46.80
	Total	62	100
Civil Status	Single	46	74.20
	Married	16	25.80
	Total	62	100
Length of Service	Shorter (below 3 years)	22	35.50
	Longer (3 years and above)	40	64.50
	Total	62	100

Table 1 presents the profile of the respondents. As for the age, there are 33 or 53.20 percent of the respondents who are of younger age or below 27 years old and 29 or 46.80 percent who are of older age or 27 years old and above.

In terms of civil status, those who are single comprise 46 or 74.20 percent higher than the married ones with only 16 or 25.80 percent.

Meanwhile, for the length of service, 22 or 35.50 percent are novice in the service or below three (3) years while 40 or 64.50 percent have longer experience in service or 3 years and above.

Based on the findings of the study, teachers who are assigned in the study-locale, which is a far-flung school are usually neophytes in teaching, young and single but dedicated, committed and passionate as they serve for a long period of time to provide the needed educational services to the schools. The lived experiences of teacher-participants are consistent with other teachers' experiences noting that as they age, they also gain more relevant services and experiences in the delivery of education in the far-flung area, (Quejada & Orale (2018).

Table 2. *Extent of challenges encountered by the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools according to the areas Mode of Transportation, Physical Facilities/Water and Food Supplies, and Learning Environment/Resources*

Areas	Mean	Interpretation
A. Mode of Transportation		
1. Riding in "habal-habal" just to reach the station.	3.84	High Extent
2. Rent out vehicles everyday just to reach the school.	3.37	Moderate Extent
3. Using "Balsa" / Boats to cross the rivers.	2.98	Moderate Extent
4. Riding on a personal vehicle.	2.79	Moderate Extent
5. Walking for almost 20-25 kilometers.	4.26	High Extent
6. Riding on a truck with sugarcane sometimes because of unavailability of vehicles.	3.47	Moderate Extent

7.Waiting a vehicle for almost 1 hour.	4.21	High Extent
8.Riding on a carabao, horses and etc. to reach the station.	4.21	High Extent
9.Walking for almost 1-3 hours just to reach the school.	4.23	High Extent
10.Climbing hills and carrying bags and supply of foods.	4.35	High Extent
Overall Mean	3.77	High Extent
B.Physical Facilities/Water and Food Supplies		
		Moderate
1. Poorly maintained comfort rooms.	3.29	Extent
2. Having poor lighting.	3.94	High Extent
3. Inadequate chairs and tables in schools.	3.65	High Extent
4. Inadequate materials and equipment for the SBM Wins Program.	3.77	High Extent
5. Using candles and “king-ki” and other lighting materials.	3.82	High Extent
6. Electricity is available but usually experienced power interruption.	3.98	High Extent
7. Lack of classrooms.	3.85	High Extent
8. Having poor ventilation in each classroom.	3.81	High Extent
9. Insufficient water supply.	3.81	High Extent
10. Going to some rivers just to seize water supply and use for cooking.	3.60	High Extent
Overall Mean	3.75	High Extent
C. Learning Environment/ Resources		
		Moderate
1. Handling Multi-Grade group of students/ Pupils.	3.48	Extent
2. Mismatch of the subject taught.	3.45	Moderate
3. Some of the people are on the low level of literacy.	3.95	Extent
4.Experience culture shock and adapting to a new set of cultural expectations and social norms.	4.05	High Extent
5. Difficult to understand different language.	4.06	High Extent
6. Adjusting the topic on the level of the students.	4.32	High Extent
7. Students combined in one class.	4.05	High Extent
8. The school is vulnerable in floods and landslides.	3.90	High Extent
9. Having poor attendance of the students.	3.66	High Extent
10. Lack of Modules or books.	3.71	High Extent
Overall Mean	3.86	High Extent

Table 2, shows the respondents’ perception on the Extent of Challenges Encountered of the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools according to the areas: Mode of Transportation, Physical Facilities/ Water and Food Supplies, and Learning Environment/ Resources.

Learning Environment/Resources has the over-all mean of 3.86 and interpreted as High Extent. In this area, “Difficulty in understanding various dialects” got the highest mean of 4.06 and interpreted as High Extent, and the item with the lowest mean was “Mismatch for the subject taught” which got 3.45 with the interpretation of Moderate Extent.

Results of the study implied that all of the areas are of high extent. It indicates that the degree, to which something exists, happens as to the perception of teachers on various challenges.

In such cases, the teacher does not have enough opportunity for grade-to-grade training, whereas in single-grade (regular) classes, students are the same in a grade and similar to each other in terms of age and sex having fewer differences in terms of abilities and skills and a full-time teacher is assigned to teach them (Mortazavizadeh, 2014).

Furthermore, the nature of these classes is designed in such a way that the teacher divides the time for a training session into the number of grades in the class, and students are involved in self-learning, peer-learning, and individual and group teaching-learning processes more than they are exposed to teacher's teaching.

Teaching in a remote school is a huge challenge. Teachers would encounter variety of uncomfortable means of transportation like "banka of the traditional wooden ferry boat", "habal-habal or motorcycle taxi," and even the use of animals as modes of transportation such as horse or carabao just to reach their station (Barcena, 2018).

Table 3. Level of coping mechanisms by the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools according to the areas Mode of Transportation, Physical Facilities/Water and Food Supplies, and Learning Environment/Resources

Areas	Mean	Interpretation
A. Mode of Transportation		
1. Ride with only light materials to carry/ bring.	4.18	High Level
2. Rent a vehicle you are comfortable in. Choosing an owner who you can trust on.	4.06	High Level
3. Ride with life jacket provided or floatation devices that can be used in case of emergency.	3.55	High Level
4. Ride in a squad together with the co-teachers.	3.35	Moderate Level
5. Bring supply of water, food, umbrella, and coat.	4.65	Very high Level
6. Carefully chose drivers who are trust worthy and ride together with the group.	4.39	High Level
7. Preparing ahead of time and manage the time.	4.63	Very high Level
8. Choosing an owner who you can trust on.	4.77	Very high Level
9. Have some rest, bring water and walk together with the co-teachers.	4.65	Very high Level
10. Walk/ Ride with only light materials to carry or bring.	4.58	Very high Level
Overall Mean	4.28	High Level
B. Physical Facilities/Water and Food Supplies		
1. Educating students/ pupils about the cleanliness and maintenance of the comfort	4.37	High Level
2. Asking support from the LGUs and private individuals to cope up with the lighting at school.	4.63	Very high Level
3. Tap the parents and other stakeholders to make provisional chairs, tables, and classroom or even ask support from LGUs.	4.56	Very high Level
4. Ask assistance from stakeholders and parents to make some provisional program for SBM Wins.	4.50	Very high Level
5. Procure candles and king-ki from the MOOE budget. Asking help from the LGUs and other stakeholders to support solar flashlights.	4.50	Very high Level
6. Raise the problem to the school head and always prepare candles or even "king-ki" all the time.	4.63	Very high Level

7. Make improvised classrooms by asking support from private individual, LGUs or even parents.	4.45	High Level
8. Asking support from private individuals and LGUs to address with the ventilations in school.	4.66	Very high Level
9. Raise the problem to the school head and make some action plan and pass it to the LGU to address the problem.	4.47	High Level
10. Getting water in the rivers together with the squad or co-teachers for safety.	4.35	High Level
Overall Mean	4.51	Very high Level
C. Learning Environment/ Resources		
1. Establishing strategies and activities in multi-grade pupils or students.	4.18	High Level
2. Learning from other subjects and make some research and techniques. Preparing ahead of time doing instructional planning and details on how to meet the needs of the students.	4.27	High Level
3. Respect and deal them with passion and sincerity.	4.71	Very high Level
4. Learning as much as you can their way of life and their culture at the same time.	4.66	Very high Level
5. Adapting and respecting to different language.	4.65	Very high Level
6. Adjusting the topic on the level of the students.	4.69	Very high Level
7. Considering the level of understanding of the different students.	4.76	Very high Level
8. Staying in the evacuation center and safe areas if possible.	4.61	Very high Level
9. Home Visitations every month if possible.	4.61	Very high Level
10. Inform the school heads, make some plan, ask support from the DepEd and stakeholders.	4.53	Very high Level
Overall Mean	4.57	Very high Level

Table 3 shows that “Asking support from the private individuals and LGU’s to improve ventilation in each classroom” obtained the highest mean of 4.66 or Very High Level. Moreover, Physical Facilities/Water and Food Supplies got the mean of 4.57 and interpreted also as Very High Level. Meanwhile, “Fetching water in the rivers in group with safety measures” got the lowest mean of 4.35 interpreted as High Level. It implies that establishing relationship is an important value that teachers should consider. They must develop connection with their environment, above all, connection to their students.

It explains further that regardless of respondents’ age, they all experienced challenges in reaching their assigned schools. Based on the findings of the study, teachers who are assigned in the study-locale, in far-flung schools are usually neophytes in teaching, young and single but dedicated, committed and passionate as they serve for a significant period of time to provide much needed educational services to these schools. The lived experiences of teacher-participants are consistent with other teachers’ experiences especially as to their age increases more relevant services are being offered in the delivery of education in the far flung areas (Quejada & Orale (2018).

Table 4. Significant difference in the extent of challenges encountered by the newly-hired teachers in the far-flung schools when they are grouped and compared according to the aforementioned demographic profile

Variable	Category	N	Mean	Mann Whitney U-test	p- value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	33	3.91	379.50	0.160		Not Significant
	Older	29	3.81				
Civil Status	Single	46	3.91	256.00	0.070	0.05	Not Significant
	Married	16	3.73				
Length of Service	Shorter	22	3.91	360.000	0.236		Not Significant
	Longer	40	3.84				

Table 4, shows the significant difference in the extent of challenges encountered of the newly-hired teachers in the far-flung schools when they are grouped and compared according to the aforementioned demographic profile

As to age, it obtained a p-value of 0.160 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance resulting to the interpretation of Not Significant (the Hypothesis is Accepted). It means that the extent of challenges encountered by the newly-hired teachers in the far-flung schools had no significant difference.

It implies that age has no effect in the extent of challenges encountered by the newly-hired teachers in the far-flung schools.

Meanwhile, in terms of Civil Status, the computed p-value obtained 0.070 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance resulting to the interpretation of Not Significant (the Hypothesis is Accepted). It means that significant difference does not exist in the extent of challenges encountered by the newly-hired teachers in the far-flung schools. It implies that their status has no influence on the extent of challenges encountered by the newly-hired teachers.

Finally, for length of service, it has a p-value of 0.236 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance resulting to the interpretation of Not Significant (the Hypothesis is Accepted). It means that significant difference does not exists in the extent of challenges encountered of the newly-hired teachers in the far-flung schools. It implies that length of service has no influence on the extent of challenges encountered by the newly-hired teachers.

Geographically isolated communities are usually poor (Reliefweb, 2014). The study area lacks so many things. Most households served by the school are very poor, parents have low educational background, and some have not gone to school. Other students walk going to the school for kilometers on daily basis. Some of the teachers, regardless of civil status were teary-eyed when sharing the stories of their students. It lacks the needed resources for teachers to deliver the kind of education described in the Philippine constitution. Most of the time, the teachers need to provide classroom paraphernalia from their own pockets just to deliver the kind of education needed by learners.

Table 5. Significant difference in level of coping mechanisms by the newly-hired teachers in the far- flung schools when they are grouped and compared according to the aforementioned demographic profile

Variable	Category	N	Mean	Mann Whitney U-test	p- value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	33	4.30	458.00	0.770		Not Significant
	Older	29	4.26				
Civil Status	Single	46	4.27	307.00	0.320	0.05	Not Significant
	Married	16	4.32				
Length of Service	Shorter	22	4.28	436.000	0.952		Not Significant
	Longer	40	4.28				

Table 5, shows the significant difference in the level of coping mechanisms of the newly-hired teachers in the far-flung schools when they are grouped and compared according to the aforementioned demographic profile.

As to age, it has a p-value of 0.770 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance resulting to the interpretation of Not Significant (the Hypothesis is Accepted). It means that significant difference does not exist in the level of coping mechanisms of the newly-hired teachers in the far-flung schools. It implies that age has no effect in the level of coping of newly-hired teachers in the far-flung schools.

Furthermore, on Civil Status, the computed p-value obtained 0.320 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance resulting to the interpretation of Not Significant (the Hypothesis is Accepted). It means that significant difference does not exist in the level of coping of the newly-hired teachers.

Finally, for length of service, it has a p-value of 0.952 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance resulting to the interpretation of Not Significant (the Hypothesis is Accepted). It means that significant difference does not exist in the level of coping of the newly-hired teachers.

Their first year of teaching was a challenge. According to Moir (1990) there are phases of first-year teaching. The first phase is the Anticipation Phase. It begins during the student-teaching portion of pre-service preparation. This phase, student teachers are excited and anxious about their first teaching position. In the first week of school of newly-hired teachers, excitement filled them. Survival is the second phase. This phase states that school is overwhelming for newly-hired teachers in the first month of teaching. They are learning at a rapid pace but are encountering many problems.

Table 6. Significant Difference in the Level of Performance by the newly-hired teachers assigned in far -flung Schools when they are grouped and compared according to the aforementioned demographic profile

Variable	Category	N	Mean	Mann Whitney U-test	p- value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	33	4.27	321.000	0.026		Significant
	Older	29	4.45				
Civil Status	Single	46	4.37	331.500	0.557	0.05	Not Significant
	Married	16	4.33				
Length of Service	Shorter	22	4.32	371.000	0.310		Not Significant
	Longer	40	4.38				

Table 6, shows the significant difference on the level of performance of the newly-hired teachers in the far-flung schools when they are grouped and compared according to the aforementioned demographic profile.

As to age, it has a p-value of 0.026 which is less than 0.05 level of significance resulting to the interpretation of Significant (the Hypothesis is Rejected). It means that significant difference exists on the level of performance of the newly hired teachers in the far-flung schools. It implies that the age by the newly-hired teachers in the far-flung schools has an effect on their level of performance.

Furthermore, on Civil Status, the computed p-value obtained 0.557 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance resulting to the interpretation of Not Significant (the Hypothesis is Accepted). It means that significant difference does not exist on the level of performance of the newly hired teachers in the far-flung schools. It implies that the newly-hired teachers' status in the far-flung schools have no influence on their level of performance.

Finally, for length of service, it has a p-value of 0.310 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance resulting to the interpretation of Not Significant (the Hypothesis is Accepted). It implied that length of service has no influence on the level of performance by the newly-hired teachers in the far-flung schools.

Table 7. Relational analysis between the extent of challenges and level of coping mechanisms of the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools

Variable	rho	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Challenges Encountered Coping Mechanism	0.299	0.018	0.05	Significant

The table 9 shows that there is a significant relationship between the extent of challenges and level of coping of the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools with the p-value of 0.018 which is less than 0.05 level of significance (the Hypothesis is Rejected).

It implies that significant relationship exists between the extent of challenges and level of coping mechanisms by the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools.

It further implies that the extent of challenges has an influence in the level of coping of the newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools. It means that challenges go with the level of coping mechanisms by the newly-hired teachers. It further implies that somehow the coping they applied helped them to overcome those challenges they encountered and helped them improve their performance as a classroom teacher.

CONCLUSIONS

In view of the above findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

The struggles encountered by the newly-hired teachers in the far-flung areas are normal experiences, considering that they are assigned in the mountainous areas. Basically, their struggles as newly-hired teachers are already part of their profession from the time they accepted their assigned area.

Newly-hired teachers responded that the Mode of Transportation was one of their problems. Moreover, the mountainous setting of the school is the main factor that contributed to their struggles and difficulties that made their daily work tasks.

Furthermore, it can be surmised that the newly hired teachers experienced both personal and professional problems like transportation, relationship in the community and dealing with students' attitude.

Newly-hired teachers assigned in the far-flung schools in the area of Learning Environment/Resources have coped with and established relationship in their assigned area. In dealing with students, "patience is a virtue". It is the most important quality that a teacher should possess because a great teacher shows understanding and lets the students feel they are loved.

Learning Environment/Resources is one of the areas that teachers came up with different coping that enabled them to cope with their environment and situation. These coping both personal and professional, helped them endure the situation they are presently experiencing in order to survive the everyday challenges

To have an outstanding performance, teachers need to engage themselves in attending seminars, trainings and other preparatory exercises that would really help them enhance and improve their performance.

Furthermore, as they face their life's challenges in the area they are currently employed, they are able to develop a fighting spirit to survive whatever challenges that may encounter along their way in fulfilling their duty as teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings and conclusions derived from the study, the following recommendations and plan of actions were formulated.

Newly-Hired Teachers who are aging 27 years old and above, single, and are in the service or three (3) years and above should be motivated even though challenges and difficulties may be experienced in the assigned area. Therefore, newly-hired teachers deserve opportunity to attend to seminars and trainings.

Department of Education under the Schools Division should provide trainings and enhancement programs for the teachers like attending in seminars and conferences related to teaching that will help improve the performance of the teachers.

Newly-hired teachers should plan and address their problems to the school head, or even in the Division Office. They may also look for a partnership that would help improve the facilities of the school.

Local Government Unit should also take time to visit the far-flung areas and allocate budget to help teachers on the enhancement of the Physical facilities and in providing learning resources in order to realize the Vision and Mission of the Department of Education.

Teachers should also create a plan and organize programs like team building activities to continuously improve the relationship of teachers, students, parents and stakeholders and build relationship and continue to have a passion as a teacher.

School heads in the far-flung areas should continuously motivate the teachers to have the dedication to teach by giving them opportunities to attend to seminars and conferences, consistently guided by the School Improvement Plan, In-Service Training for Teachers and other preparatory exercises to motivate newly hired teachers in order to improve and enhance their performance.

A follow up of the current study should be conducted on the extent of challenges encountered and the level of coping mechanisms of newly hired-teachers assigned in far-flung schools with the use of reflection as an effective support to the interview.

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