

Exploring the Whys of Non-Practicing Licensed Professional Teachers in BPO Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of Licensed Professional Teachers (LPTs) in San Isidro, Davao Oriental who opted to work in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry rather than practice teaching. Specifically, it sought to identify the reasons behind their career decision and examine how these reasons affected their personal and professional identities. Employing a qualitative phenomenological research design, data were gathered from purposively selected participants through in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion and were analyzed using Ritchie and Spencer's Framework Analysis. Findings revealed that the decision to work in the BPO industry was shaped by interconnected financial, employment-related, professional, social, and personal factors, including financial and socioeconomic pressures, barriers in teacher recruitment, anticipated burnout, negative work environment and societal perception, career opportunities outside teaching, and personal readiness and motivation. While teaching was still viewed as meaningful, BPO employment was perceived as more accessible, financially responsive, and manageable. The study further found that working outside teaching weakened participants' teaching self-efficacy, created identity uncertainty, and reduced motivation to enter the profession. However, it also helped them develop communication skills, confidence, adaptability, and a broader sense of professional growth. The study concluded that choosing BPO did not necessarily represent a permanent rejection of teaching, but a practical and identity-shaping response to present realities. It was recommended that teacher education institutions and concerned education agencies strengthen post-licensure career guidance, employment assistance, and transition support for LPTs.

Keywords: Licensed Professional Teachers, BPO industry, career decision-making, professional identity, non-practice

INTRODUCTION

The Problem and Its Setting

In the Philippines, becoming a Licensed Professional Teacher (LPT) is commonly associated with the expectation of entering the teaching profession. However, not all individuals who pass the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) proceed to classroom teaching. Some LPTs choose to work in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry instead of practicing their profession. This situation presents an important concern because these individuals are professionally qualified to teach, yet their actual employment belongs to a different occupational field. It raises questions about the factors that shape their career decisions and how such decisions affect their personal and professional identities as teachers.

The concern over LPTs who do not enter classroom teaching may be understood within the broader issue of teacher workforce participation. In the *Global Report on Teachers: Addressing Teacher Shortages and Transforming the Profession*, UNESCO and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024) emphasized that issues affecting the teaching workforce are shaped not only by the number of qualified teachers, but also by recruitment, support, retention, and working conditions. This suggests that professional qualification alone does not automatically lead to active participation in the profession, especially when institutional demands, employment opportunities, and workplace realities influence career choices.

In the Philippine context, teaching remains a respected and socially meaningful profession. However, passing the LET does not guarantee immediate employment in schools. Licensed applicants still undergo recruitment, ranking, assessment, and appointment processes before they can be hired. DepEd Order No. 007, s. 2023 and DepEd Order No. 020, s. 2024 show that entry into public school teaching involves documentary evaluation and selection procedures. For some LPTs, these processes may create uncertainty, especially when combined with financial needs and pressure to secure work immediately.

Studies show that education graduates may pursue non-teaching careers for practical and personal reasons. Laher (2024) found that teacher education graduates may choose non-teaching jobs because of income considerations, career satisfaction, personal circumstances, and opportunities for growth. In relation to this, the BPO industry has become a visible alternative pathway for Filipino graduates. According to the IT and Business Process Association of the Philippines (IBPAP, 2025), the Philippine IT-BPM industry recorded 1.82 million jobs and USD 38 billion in revenue in 2024, showing its continuing role as a major source of employment in the country.

In Davao Oriental, employment outcomes among education graduates have also been examined. Apostol and Susada (2022), in their tracer study of Bachelor of Elementary Education graduates of Davao Oriental State University–Cateel Extension Campus, explored the employment profile and competencies of education graduates in the province. Although their study did not focus on LPTs working in the BPO industry, it highlights the need to examine how education graduates in Davao Oriental transition from academic preparation to employment.

Despite existing discussions on teacher workforce participation, recruitment procedures, graduate employability, and non-teaching careers, limited localized qualitative research has examined the experiences of LPTs in San Isidro, Davao Oriental who chose to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching. This gap is significant because these individuals are professionally licensed to teach, yet they pursued a career path outside teaching. Their experiences may reveal how post-licensure career decisions are shaped by financial, institutional, professional, and personal factors.

Given this context, this study sought to explore the lived experiences of LPTs in San Isidro, Davao Oriental who opted to pursue employment in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching. Specifically, it aimed to identify the reasons behind their decision and examine how these reasons affected their personal and professional identities. By focusing on LPTs who pursued BPO employment as an alternative career pathway, this study aimed to contribute insights into post-licensure career decision-making, professional identity formation, and possible support mechanisms for LPTs who may still consider entering the teaching profession.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of LPTs in San Isidro, Davao Oriental who opted to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching. Specifically, it aimed to find answers to the following queries:

1. What are the reasons why Licensed Professional Teachers opt to work in the BPO industry rather than practice their profession?
2. How do these reasons affect their personal and professional identities?

Objectives of the Study

The study investigated the lived experiences of LPTs in San Isidro, Davao Oriental who opted to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching. Specifically, it sought to:

1. identify the reasons why LPTs opt to work in the BPO industry rather than practice their profession.
2. examine how these reasons affect their personal and professional identities.

Related Literature and Studies

This section presents and discusses the related literature and studies relevant to the present study. It focuses on the career decisions of LPTs after licensure, BPO employment as an alternative career path, perceptions of teaching work and professional readiness, and the personal and professional identity of LPTs who work outside teaching. These sources help explain the experiences of LPTs in San Isidro, Davao Oriental who chose to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching.

Post-Licensure Career Decisions of LPTs. Career decisions after graduation or licensure are shaped by personal, economic, and professional considerations. Although passing the LET qualifies an individual to practice teaching, it does not automatically determine the career path that the individual takes. For some education graduates and LPTs, the period after licensure becomes a stage of reassessment in which they consider whether teaching is financially, emotionally, and professionally suitable for their current circumstances.

Diokno and Erojo (2025) examined the reasons why some education graduates did not pursue teaching after graduation. Their study revealed that the decision not to enter teaching may be influenced by the perceived demands of the profession, salary concerns, limited flexibility, and other practical considerations. This supports the view that career decisions among education graduates are not simply determined by academic preparation or professional eligibility. Instead, these decisions may be shaped by how graduates compare teaching with other available opportunities.

Laher (2024) supported this view. His study found that teacher education graduates may choose non-teaching careers due to competitive income, personal circumstances, career satisfaction, and opportunities for growth. His study suggests that employment outside teaching should not automatically be interpreted as a rejection of the profession. Rather, choosing another field may reflect the graduate's attempt to respond to financial needs, personal goals, and available career opportunities.

Career readiness is also important in understanding why some graduates delay or avoid entering their expected profession. Azhenov et al. (2023) emphasized that career decision-making readiness is linked to students' confidence in making career choices and their ability to evaluate possible career paths. This suggests that career entry is not only a matter of qualification, but also of perceived readiness and self-efficacy. In the case of LPTs, having a license may not immediately translate into confidence or willingness to enter the classroom.

From another perspective, Liu et al. (2024) highlighted the role of career decision-making self-efficacy in shaping individuals' career-related choices. Although their study focused on senior high school students, it supports the broader idea that confidence, perceived capability, and clarity of direction influence how individuals approach career decisions. For LPTs who choose BPO employment, the decision may therefore reflect their assessment of where they feel more capable, prepared, or practically situated at a particular point in their lives.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology used in conducting the study. It discusses the research design, participants, sampling design, research instrument, data gathering procedure, data analysis, analytical framework, and ethical considerations of the study. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of Licensed Professional Teachers in San Isidro, Davao Oriental who opted to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching.

Consistent with qualitative inquiry, the study utilized in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion to generate rich and detailed narratives from the participants. This approach was appropriate because the study sought to understand how the participants interpreted their post-licensure career decisions and how these decisions affected their personal and professional identities. The interviews explored individual experiences, while the focus group discussion examined shared meanings and common patterns among LPTs employed in the BPO industry.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design. Phenomenology was appropriate because the study aimed to explore the lived experiences of LPTs in San Isidro, Davao Oriental who opted to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching. Phenomenology focuses on understanding the meaning of individuals' lived experiences and how they make sense of a particular phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016). In this study, the phenomenon examined was the decision of LPTs to work in the BPO industry rather than enter the teaching profession after obtaining their license.

The study was also guided by the philosophical assumptions of qualitative inquiry, namely ontology, epistemology, axiology, and rhetoric. In qualitative research, these assumptions shape how the researcher views reality, understands knowledge, recognizes values, and presents findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ontologically, the study recognized that multiple realities existed because the participants interpreted their decision to work in the BPO industry in different ways. These realities were shaped by their financial situations, family responsibilities, employment experiences, personal readiness, motivation, and expectations about teaching.

Participants

The participants of this study were ten LPTs from San Isidro, Davao Oriental who were employed in the BPO industry rather than practicing teaching. Specifically, the participants were working at VXI SM Ecoland in Davao City. The participants were selected because they had direct experience with the phenomenon studied. In phenomenological research, participants are chosen because they have personally experienced the phenomenon and can provide rich descriptions of it (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, the participants had completed a degree in education, passed the LET, held a valid professional teaching license, and were employed in the BPO industry instead of working as classroom teachers. Their experiences were considered relevant because they provided meaningful insights into the reasons why LPTs chose BPO employment and how this decision affected their personal and professional identities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented in tables corresponding to the two research questions. Table 1 presents the reasons why Licensed Professional Teachers opted to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching, while Table 2 presents the effects of working in the BPO industry on their personal and professional identities.

Table 1. Reasons Why LPTs Opted to Work in the BPO Industry Rather than Practice Teaching

Emergent Themes	Core Ideas	Significant Narratives
Financial and Socioeconomic Pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low salary in teaching positions • Delayed compensation • Family responsibility and personal needs • Financial practicality and sustainability 	<p>“Though teaching is a passion, regardless it’s the bills that talk.” [IDI2]</p> <p>“Kung mag teach ka ug private school, dili jud siya ingon ana kadako ug suweldo.” (If you teach in a private school, the salary is really not that high.) [IDI3]</p>
Employment Barriers in the Teaching Profession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backer system and favoritism • Complicated hiring procedures • Requirements for additional 	<p>“Backer system gyud.” (The backer system is really a factor.) [IDI3]</p> <p>“Hiring system sa DepEd kay disappointment jud.” (The hiring system in DepEd is really</p>

	<p>qualifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed employment opportunities 	disappointing.) [IDI4]
Reality Gap and Anticipated Burnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gap between expectations and actual teaching experiences • Excessive workload and paperwork • Emotional and physical exhaustion • • Difficulty balancing work and personal life 	<p>“Actually dili man siya hard, kapoy lang gyud siya.” (Actually, it is not necessarily hard; it is just really exhausting.) [IDI2]</p> <p>“Pag OJT nako, kay nakita nako nga ang work sa teacher dili lang diay about teaching.” (During my OJT, I realized that the work of a teacher is not only about teaching.) [IDI4]</p>
Negative Work Environment and Societal Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental pressure and public criticism • High expectations toward teachers • Feeling undervalued and unappreciated • Emotional and social demands of teaching 	<p>“Malagot ka kay tao raman pud ang teachers, dili man sila dili kapuyon.” (You become frustrated because teachers are also human; they also become tired.) [FG4]</p> <p>“Karon kay murag ang parents na ang mag buot unsay buhaton sa teachers.” (Nowadays, it feels like the parents are the ones deciding what teachers should do.) [FG5]</p>
Career Opportunities Outside Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher salary and incentives in BPO • More manageable workload • Opportunity for personal and professional growth • Skill development outside teaching 	<p>“Training ground pud ang BPO kay ma improve imong communication skills.” (The BPO industry is also a training ground because your communication skills improve.) [FG1]</p> <p>“Aside sa sweldo, naka tabang pud siya sa akoo personally kay naka try ko ug new environment ug experiences outside teaching.” (Aside from the salary, it also helped me personally because I was able to try a new environment and experiences outside teaching.) [IDI1]</p>
Personal Readiness and Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of readiness to teach • Declining motivation or passion for teaching • Self-doubt and uncertainty in pursuing the profession • BPO as a practical or temporary path 	<p>“Dili pako ready mag tudlo.” (I am still not ready to teach.) [FG2]</p> <p>“Sa una ganahan kaayo ko mag tudlo pero karon murag natapol nako.” (Before, I really wanted to teach, but now I feel like I already lost the motivation.) [IDI5]</p>

Reasons Why LPTs Opted to Work in the BPO Industry Rather than Practice Teaching

To explore the reasons why LPTs opted to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching, participants were asked about their experiences after becoming Licensed Professional Teachers, the factors that influenced their decision to work in the BPO industry rather than teaching, and how they compared the opportunities and experiences between teaching and BPO employment.

Reality Gap and Anticipated Burnout

Reality gap and anticipated burnout emerged as one of the key factors that influenced the participants’ decision to choose employment in the BPO industry rather than enter the teaching profession. This theme reflects how the participants’ earlier expectations of teaching changed after exposure to the actual demands of the profession. Their narratives revealed concerns about excessive workload, paperwork, emotional and physical exhaustion, lack of work-life balance, and the realization that teaching involved responsibilities beyond classroom instruction.

Negative Work Environment and Societal Perception

Another key factor that shaped the participants’ decision was their perception of the negative work environment and societal treatment associated with teaching. This theme reflects how participants perceived teaching as a profession marked by parental pressure, public criticism, high expectations, limited appreciation, heavy responsibilities, and emotional demands. These experiences and observations shaped how they viewed the emotional and social demands of entering the teaching profession. These perceptions became evident in the participants’ accounts as they described teaching not only as instructional work, but also as a profession exposed to pressure from parents, the public, and the wider community.

Table 2. Effects of Working in the BPO Industry on the Personal and Professional Identities of LPTs

Emergent Themes	Core Ideas	Significant Narratives
Declining Professional Confidence and Teaching Self-Efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-doubt in teaching abilities • Fear of returning to teaching • Perceived decline in teaching competence • Loss of confidence due to non-practice 	<p>“Nawala akong salig sa sarili.” (I lost confidence in myself.) [IDI3]</p> <p>“Naga self doubt nako kung makaya paba nako ug tudlo.” (I already experience self-doubt if I can still teach.) [FG2]</p>
Professional Identity Uncertainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling disconnected from the teaching profession • Perception of wasted education and license • Loss of professional recognition • Uncertainty about professional identity 	<p>“Lahi man gyud pag dili nimo ma practice imong profession.” (It is really different when you are unable to practice your profession.) [IDI3]</p> <p>“Murag ma expire nalang akong lisensya nga wala gyud nagamit.” (It feels like my license might expire without ever being used.) [IDI2]</p>
Loss of Teaching Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradual loss of passion for teaching • Discouragement due to the teaching system • Emotional exhaustion and frustration • Reduced interest in pursuing teaching 	<p>“Niaabot sa akona nga murag dili nalang ko mag tudlo tungod sa sistema sa teaching profession.” (There came a point where I felt like I no longer wanted to teach because of the system in the teaching profession.) [IDI1]</p> <p>“Loss motivation to teach labaw na tungod sa backer system.” (I lost motivation to teach especially because of the backer system.) [IDI3]</p>

<p>Identity Reorientation Outside Teaching</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal growth outside teaching • Development of communication and interpersonal skills • Recognition of opportunities beyond the profession • Redefinition of career priorities and goals 	<p>“Murag naka realize ko nga naa pud diay koy mahimo ug ma develop outside sa teaching profession.” (I realized that I can also do and develop something outside the teaching profession.) [IDI1]</p> <p>“Self growth kay miski asa ka ibutang, naa man jud gihapon kay ma learn.” (It contributed to my self-growth because wherever you are placed, you still learn something.) [IDI4]</p>
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The findings also show that non-practice created professional identity uncertainty. Participants experienced tension between being licensed teachers and working in a different field. Social judgment, comparisons with practicing teachers, comments about wasted education, and the loss of recognition attached to being called “ma’am” or “sir” contributed to feelings of sadness, self-criticism, and diminished professional value. However, the participants’ experiences were not entirely negative. BPO employment also allowed them to reorient their identities by developing communication skills, confidence, adaptability, responsibility, and a broader understanding of professional growth. For some, BPO work became a space for stability, self-development, and career exploration rather than a complete abandonment of teaching.

Viewed through Social Cognitive Career Theory, the findings suggest that the participants’ professional identity was strongly shaped by self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and environmental conditions. As their confidence in teaching weakened, returning to the profession became associated with fear, difficulty, and the need for renewed preparation. At the same time, BPO work created new learning experiences that strengthened other skills and allowed participants to recognize growth outside teaching. Through Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, the participants’ identity struggles may be connected to the loss of recognition, professional status, and motivating experiences associated with teaching, while BPO employment provided alternative sources of growth, achievement, and stability. In relation to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, their narratives show that needs for security, belonging, esteem, confidence, and self-development influenced how they understood themselves as professionals.

Overall, the findings suggest that the participants’ personal and professional identities were not erased by their decision to work in the BPO industry, but were reshaped by it. Non-practice weakened some aspects of their teacher identity, particularly confidence, motivation, and sense of belonging to the profession. At the same time, BPO employment opened opportunities for identity reorientation, allowing participants to recognize new skills, redefine professional worth, and remain open to teaching as a possible future path. Thus, the effect of working in BPO was not simply identity loss, but an ongoing process of identity negotiation between the teacher they were trained and licensed to become and the professional they were becoming through their current work.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study explored the lived experiences of LPTs in San Isidro, Davao Oriental who opted to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, data were gathered from ten participants through in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion. The following summarizes the key findings:

1. The study found that the participants’ decision to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching was shaped by several interconnected reasons. These included financial and socioeconomic pressures, barriers in recruitment and entry, reality gap and anticipated burnout, negative work environment and societal perception, career opportunities outside teaching, and personal readiness and motivation.

2. The findings showed that BPO employment was perceived as more accessible, financially responsive, and manageable compared to immediate entry into teaching. Participants viewed BPO work as a source of income, incentives, structured employment, and skill development. Although teaching remained meaningful to many participants, the demands and uncertainties associated with entering the profession made BPO employment a more practical option at the time.
3. The study revealed that working in the BPO industry affected the participants' personal and professional identities. Some participants experienced declining teaching confidence and self-efficacy, especially in lesson planning, classroom management, instructional delivery, and learner engagement. Others experienced identity uncertainty because they remained LPTs but were not practicing in the classroom.
4. The findings also showed that the participants' motivation to teach changed over time. For some, motivation weakened because of distance from classroom practice, fear, self-doubt, and discouraging perceptions of the teaching profession. However, BPO employment also contributed to identity reorientation by helping participants develop communication skills, confidence, patience, adaptability, independence, and a broader understanding of professional growth.

Implications

The study yielded the following implications:

1. LPTs' decision to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching reflects the influence of practical and economic realities after licensure. This implies that becoming licensed does not automatically lead to entry into teaching, especially when immediate income, family responsibilities, and employment accessibility become urgent concerns.
2. The participants' hesitation to enter teaching suggests that the profession may be perceived as demanding, uncertain, and emotionally exhausting. This implies the need for stronger preparation and support for newly licensed teachers, particularly in relation to recruitment procedures, classroom readiness, workload expectations, and professional confidence.
3. BPO employment served as an alternative career pathway for the participants. This implies that work outside teaching should not always be viewed as professional failure or rejection of teaching, since participants were able to develop transferable skills such as communication, adaptability, patience, emotional regulation, and confidence.
4. The participants' experiences show that professional identity is shaped not only by licensure but also by actual practice, work experiences, and social expectations. This implies that LPTs who work outside teaching may experience identity tension, but they may also reorient their identity through the skills and growth gained in another field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the study offered the following recommendations:

1. Teacher education institutions should strengthen post-licensure career guidance and professional readiness programs for education graduates. These may include sessions on teaching employment processes, classroom readiness, career decision-making, and professional identity development to prepare graduates not only for licensure but also for actual entry into the teaching profession.
2. Accessible information on application requirements, ranking procedures, documentary compliance, and teaching preparation may help LPTs better understand the process of entering the teaching profession and make informed career decisions after licensure. These may be provided through easy-to-understand

guidelines in the form of infographics, orientation materials, or multimedia presentations to make the information more accessible to newly licensed teachers.

3. Preparatory support programs should be developed for LPTs working outside teaching who may still consider entering the profession. These programs may include refresher sessions on lesson planning, classroom management, instructional strategies, learner engagement, and confidence-building to help reduce fear and self-doubt in returning to teaching.
4. Guidance counselors and career advisers should provide responsive career support to LPTs experiencing uncertainty, self-doubt, or identity conflict. Career counseling may help them process their decisions, recognize transferable skills gained from BPO employment, and clarify whether they wish to pursue teaching or continue developing in another career path.
5. Future researchers may conduct similar studies in other municipalities, provinces, or regions. Further studies may examine whether the experiences of LPTs in San Isidro, Davao Oriental are similar to those of LPTs in other contexts. Quantitative or mixed-method studies may also be conducted to determine the prevalence and patterns of LPTs choosing BPO employment after licensure.

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