

Career Transition to Teaching: Non-Education Graduates Teaching in San Isidro College

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the career transition experiences of non-education graduates teaching in a private higher education institution, particularly San Isidro College. It examined their reasons for entering the teaching profession, their transition experiences, the challenges they encountered, the coping mechanisms and support systems that sustained them, and the recommendations they offered to other non-education graduates who plan to teach in higher education. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological design to understand the participants' lived experiences. Selected non-education graduate faculty members were chosen through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings showed that non-education graduates entered teaching because they viewed it as a meaningful, purpose-driven, and student-centered vocation. Their transition was described as challenging yet developmental, requiring preparation, adjustment, and continuous engagement with the realities of teaching. The participants encountered difficulties related to limited pedagogical preparation, classroom management, lesson planning, assessment, workload, institutional expectations, and policy-related concerns. Despite these challenges, they sustained their teaching roles through self-directed learning, adaptability, reflection, mentoring, collegial support, seminars, and institutional assistance. They also emphasized that readiness for teaching requires continuous learning, pedagogical preparation, teachability, and structured institutional support. The study concludes that the transition of non-education graduates into teaching is both meaningful and demanding. Their successful adjustment and effectiveness depend on continuous professional development and responsive institutional support, particularly in induction, mentoring, and faculty development programs. These findings highlight the need for institutional environments for non-education faculty in higher education.

Keywords- Career transition, pedagogy, higher education teaching, higher education teaching

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is increasingly being entered not only by graduates of teacher education programs but also by individuals whose initial academic preparation and professional experience were rooted in other disciplines. This shift has drawn growing scholarly and policy attention as education systems continue to confront teacher shortages, changing learner needs, and the demand for educators who possess both strong disciplinary expertise and practical workplace experience. Recent international reports have underscored continuing concerns regarding teacher supply, preparation, and retention, prompting institutions to expand entry pathways and support more diverse entrants into the profession, including career changers and second-career teachers [1] [2]. In this broader context, non-education graduates who transition into teaching are no longer isolated cases but part of an increasingly visible pattern in contemporary education.

In the Philippines, this development is likewise evident. Alternative routes, such as the completion of professional education units and professional teaching certification programs, have enabled graduates from

non-education fields to qualify for teacher licensure, reflecting the country's continuing effort to widen access to the teaching profession. For instance, the University of the Philippines Open University recognizes professional teaching certification as a pathway through which bachelor's degree holders from any discipline may complete the professional education requirements for licensure [4]. Similarly, the Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act of 1994 affirms the State's commitment to strengthening and professionalizing teaching as a field essential to national development [3]. These developments suggest that career transition to teaching is both legally recognized and educationally significant in the Philippine setting.

Despite such recognition, the transition of non-education graduates into teaching remains a complex professional experience. Existing studies have shown that non-education graduates teaching in higher education frequently encounter difficulties related to diverse learners, heavy workloads, limited instructional materials, test construction, syllabus preparation, academic requirements, and classroom management [5] [6] [7] [8]. Additionally, teaching is not merely a career change, but a multifaceted transition shaped by identity development, prior work experience, mentoring, and institutional support [9] [10] [11]. Although existing studies establish that the transition to teaching is both meaningful and demanding, they remain limited in institution-specific analysis, particularly in private higher education institutions. In the case of San Isidro College, there is still a limited understanding of how non-education graduates experience, interpret, and manage their transition within the particular context of the institution.

In light of these considerations, the present study examined the career transition experiences of non-education graduates teaching in San Isidro College. Specifically, it explored their entry into the teaching profession, the challenges they encountered during the transition process, the strategies they employed in adapting to the demands of teaching, and the insights that may inform institutional support for non-traditional faculty members. By investigating these experiences, the study sought to contribute to the literature on career transition to teaching and to provide a basis for strengthening faculty development, mentoring, orientation, and other support mechanisms for non-education graduates in higher education. Given that these faculty members often bring valuable disciplinary expertise, practical knowledge, and professional skills into the classroom, understanding their experiences may help institutions create more responsive environments that support both their professional growth and their effectiveness as educators.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to explore the career transition experiences of non-education graduates who teach in private higher education institutions, particularly at San Isidro College.

Specifically, this study sought to:

1. Examine the reasons of non-education graduates for entering the teaching profession in private higher education institutions;
2. Describe their transition to the teaching profession in private higher education institutions.
3. Determine the challenges they encounter in the course of their teaching experience in private higher education institutions.
4. Identify the coping mechanisms and support systems that help them adjust to and sustain their teaching roles in private higher education institutions; and
5. Formulate insights and recommendations based on their experiences for other non-education graduates who plan to teach in higher education institutions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, to explore and

understand the career transition experiences of non-education graduates teaching in a private higher education institution. Phenomenology was considered appropriate because the study focused on the participants' lived experiences, perceptions, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights as they transitioned into the teaching profession. Through this approach, the study sought to capture the essence of their experiences and to develop a deeper understanding of how non-education graduates make sense of their entry and adjustment to teaching.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at San Isidro College, a private higher education institution in Malaybalay, Bukidnon. The institution served as the setting of the study because it employs faculty members who entered the teaching profession despite having completed non-education degree programs. This locale provided a relevant context for examining the experiences of non-education graduates in higher education teaching.

Participants of the Study

The participants in the study were selected non-education graduates currently teaching at San Isidro College. They were chosen using purposive sampling, specifically criterion sampling, to ensure that the participants possessed the characteristics needed to provide rich and relevant information for the study.

Research Instrument

The instrument used in the study was a researcher-made semi-structured interview guide. This interview guide contained open-ended questions anchored on the statement of the problem. It was designed to elicit detailed responses regarding the participants' reasons for entering teaching, their transition experiences, the challenges they encountered, the coping mechanisms and support systems they relied on, and the advice they could share with other non-education graduates who plan to teach in higher education.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before the conduct of the study, the researcher secured the necessary permission from the appropriate authorities of San Isidro College. After approval was obtained, potential participants who met the inclusion criteria were identified and invited to participate in the study. The purpose of the research was explained clearly to them, and informed consent was secured before the conduct of the interviews.

Data were gathered through one-on-one semi-structured interviews conducted at a time and place convenient for the participants. With their permission, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy of the responses. Notes were also taken during the interview to capture important observations and nonverbal cues. After the interviews, the recorded data were transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. After transcription, the researcher carefully read and reread the interview transcripts to become familiar with the data. Significant statements relevant to the research questions were identified, coded, and grouped according to recurring patterns and ideas. From these codes, themes and subthemes were developed to represent the shared experiences of the participants. These themes were then interpreted in relation to the purpose of the study in order to provide a meaningful understanding of the career transition experiences of non-education graduates in teaching.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and the participants were informed of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Before data collection, informed consent was secured after the purpose of the study, the nature of participation, and the procedures involved had been clearly explained to the participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by withholding the participants' real names and using codes or

pseudonyms in the presentation of the findings. All information gathered was treated with utmost confidentiality and was used solely for academic and research purposes. In addition, the data were securely stored to protect the privacy and identity of the participants and to prevent unauthorized access. The researchers likewise declare that there was no conflict of interest in the conduct, analysis, and reporting of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analyses and interpretation of the data obtained from the participants of the study.

Reasons for Entering the Teaching Profession

Theme: Teaching as a Purpose-Driven and Student-Centered Vocation

The data revealed that non-education graduates entered the teaching profession primarily because they viewed it as a meaningful vocation rooted in service, knowledge sharing, and positive influence on students. This was evident in statements such as Participant 1's description of teaching as a "mission of molding minds," Participant 2's view of it as a "call of service to the youth," and Participant 5's expression of a "passion" for sharing knowledge. Participant 9 likewise emphasized the desire to make a "lasting impact" on students "not only academically but also personally," while Participant 6 expressed the wish to "help students achieve their goals in life." These responses consistently portray teaching as a profession associated with purpose, contribution, and learner development rather than mere occupational convenience.

An examination of these responses shows that intrinsic motives were more dominant than extrinsic ones. Although a small number of participants mentioned employment or extra income, these considerations were less pronounced than those related to helping others, sharing expertise, and inspiring students. The recurring references to "share my knowledge," "inspire students," and "help students" suggest that the participants' entry into teaching was anchored in a learner-centered and service-oriented perspective. This indicates that non-education graduates did not simply move into teaching because an opportunity was available; rather, they entered the profession because they perceived it as personally meaningful and socially valuable.

This theme implies that non-education graduates in San Isidro College entered the profession with a strong motivational foundation that may support commitment, persistence, and openness to professional growth. Their responses suggest that teaching was seen not merely as a source of income, but as a vocation through which they could contribute to the intellectual and personal development of learners. Such a perspective is significant because it may help explain why non-education graduates remain committed to teaching despite experiencing difficulties in their transition. This finding is consistent with the view that non-education graduates in higher education often regard teaching as a meaningful profession through which they can contribute to student growth [7]. Similarly, non-education faculty members derive value from using their disciplinary expertise in ways that benefit learners [5]. Related studies also show that career changers are often drawn to teaching by the opportunity to contribute to society and to engage in meaningful work [12] [13] [11].

Experiences in Transitioning to the Teaching Profession

Theme: Transition as a Challenging yet Developmental Process of Adaptation

The participants described their transition into teaching as a process marked by preparation, struggle, adjustment, and eventual growth. Before entering the profession, several of them prepared through seminars, lesson review, tutoring, reading, and consultation with education graduates. Participant 1 shared, "I attended trainings and seminars related to the teaching profession," while Participant 3 explained that preparation involved translating technical expertise into "pedagogical strategies." Participant 7 stated, "I relearn everything," and Participant 9 noted that tutoring helped in becoming "more patient and better at explaining lessons." These responses show that even before entering the classroom, participants already recognized the need to prepare themselves for the demands of teaching.

The participants' accounts of their early experiences further revealed that the transition was often difficult and emotionally demanding. Participant 6 admitted, "I felt overwhelmed because I don't have proper training in teaching," while Participant 9 described the move from tutoring to formal teaching as an adjustment to "a more structured and demanding role." Participant 5 also narrated the need to shift from "thinking like an engineer to thinking like a teacher," while Participant 3 described the transition as "challenging" and requiring flexibility. These statements indicate that the transition was not simply a matter of starting a new job; rather, it involved substantial changes in identity, expectations, and professional practice. Yet, when reflecting on their overall adjustment, many participants described the process in more positive terms. Participant 5 referred to it as "a gradual but meaningful growth," Participant 8 described it as "very fulfilling," and Participant 9 stated that over time, "I became more adaptable and confident."

The movement from uncertainty to confidence suggests that the transition of non-education graduates into teaching is best understood as a developmental process. In the context of San Isidro College, the participants' experiences indicate that adaptation required time, persistence, and continuous engagement with the realities of teaching. Their growth did not occur in the absence of difficulty, but through responding to those difficulties. This interpretation is supported by the study [5], which observed that non-education faculty members often face initial adjustment struggles before becoming more confident in their roles. Somosot and Relox (2023) likewise described teaching transition as a demanding but meaningful process. Additionally, prior expertise becomes valuable in teaching when institutions provide conditions for its integration [9]. A study by Van Heijst et al. (2025) highlighted the gradual development of professional identity among second-career teachers. Furthermore, the importance of transforming prior professional skills into teaching competence [14].

Challenges Encountered in Teaching

Theme: Navigating Pedagogical Unpreparedness and Institutional Workload Pressures

The findings show that the challenges encountered by non-education graduates were concentrated in two major areas: pedagogical unpreparedness and institutional workload pressures. In the area of instruction, several participants expressed uncertainty regarding lesson preparation, teaching strategies, classroom management, assessment, and addressing diverse learners. Participant 1 asked, "What is the most appropriate material should I use?" and questioned whether presentations, board work, or gamified methods were sufficient. Participant 2 stated that classroom management was the most difficult area because of limited training, while Participant 6 admitted, "I don't know how to do all of it," referring to lesson planning, teaching strategies, and assessment. Participant 7 described the experience as having "no structure in mind," and Participant 11 shared difficulty in using teaching strategies that could address "different learning styles."

Alongside these pedagogical concerns were strong accounts of institutional pressures. Participant 4 referred to "heavy paperwork," Participant 2 described the burden of complying with requirements, and Participant 11 noted the challenge of handling many subject preparations. Participant 9 remarked that "the biggest challenge is the workload," adding that teaching is "definitely not just an 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. job." Participant 1 also pointed to unclear institutional policies, while Participant 7 mentioned the lack of mentorship. These responses show that the participants were not only learning how to teach, but were also managing the structural demands of a private higher education institution.

These findings indicate that the difficulties of non-education graduates extend beyond the lack of formal education training. In San Isidro College, their experiences reflect a dual burden: the need to develop pedagogical competence while simultaneously adapting to organizational expectations, workload structures, and policy-related concerns. This suggests that successful adjustment depends not only on personal effort, but also on the institutional context within which teaching is practiced. This finding is consistent with the studies that non-education faculty commonly struggle with classroom management, lesson design, assessment, and workload [5] [6] [8]. Similarly, non-education faculty are "teachers by accident" who must navigate both classroom and institutional demands [15]. Furthermore, prior professional expertise does not automatically translate into pedagogical readiness, while tensions often arise between a teacher's previous professional identity and the new expectations of the teaching profession [9] [10] [11].

Coping Mechanisms and Support Systems in Adjusting to and Sustaining Teaching Roles

Theme: Sustaining the Teaching Role through Self-Directed Learning and Relational-Institutional Support

The data show that the participants sustained their teaching roles through a combination of personal initiative and support from others within the institution. At the individual level, they coped by studying lessons more deeply, experimenting with teaching strategies, using technology, reflecting on practice, and remaining teachable. Participant 1 described being “*madiskarte*” and said, “I did not just survive, I also thrived.” Participant 5 shared, “I focused on self-improvement,” while Participant 6 mentioned study, faith, adaptation, and seminars as important sources of strength. Participant 9 explained that coping required “enough alone time to rest and recharge,” while Participant 10 pointed to trainings and seminars as important forms of assistance.

At the relational and institutional level, the participants emphasized mentoring, conversations with colleagues, seminars, faculty development programs, and administrative support. Participant 4 referred to “conversations and help from fellow non-educ majors” and “mentoring by educ majors,” while Participant 5 highlighted support from “colleagues, administrators, family, and the institution.” Participant 1 also identified scholarship support as something that “made my burdens lighter,” and Participant 11 emphasized the value of seminars and the “constant guidance and help from colleagues.” These accounts suggest that coping was strongest when personal effort was reinforced by supportive relationships and institutional opportunities for growth.

This theme suggests that sustaining non-education graduates in teaching depends not only on resilience but also on the presence of meaningful support systems. In the context of San Isidro College, the participants’ experiences indicate that self-directed learning becomes more effective when embedded in a supportive environment characterized by mentoring, collegial guidance, and faculty development. Thus, sustaining the teaching role is not solely an individual achievement; it is also a product of institutional responsiveness. This interpretation is supported by Somosot and Relox (2023), who found that non-education graduates often rely on peer support, resourcefulness, and professional learning opportunities to cope with teaching challenges. The role of support systems in helping non-education faculty navigate instructional demands [5]. Mentoring should be responsive to teachers’ actual needs, and mentoring, coaching, and induction remain essential in supporting early-career teachers, while institutional recognition and support are crucial if second-career teachers are to maximize the value of their prior expertise [9] [16] [17].

Recommendations and Advice for Those Who Intend to Teach in Higher Education

Theme: Readiness for Teaching Requires Continuous Learning, Pedagogical Preparation, and Structured Institutional Support

The participants emphasized that readiness for teaching involves both personal preparation and institutional support. In advising other non-education graduates, they highlighted the importance of openness to learning, patience, humility, commitment to students, and willingness to seek help. Participant 1 advised, “Prepare for the best and the worst. Learn as much as you can.” Participant 3 stated, “Be patient and know what your purpose is,” while Participant 11 recommended, “Be teachable, never stop learning, and do not be afraid to ask for help.” Participant 5 added that teaching in higher education requires “dedication, humility, and a genuine passion for helping students learn.” These responses indicate that readiness was viewed as a disposition of continual learning rather than a fixed state achieved before entering the profession.

The participants also identified concrete preparations needed before beginning a teaching career, including pedagogy, lesson preparation, learning assessment, communication skills, and the right mindset. In addition, they recommended that institutions provide seminars, workshops, mentoring, guided teaching demonstrations, onboarding plans, and clearer systems of support. Participant 5 called for “structured orientation, mentoring, and teaching-related training,” while Participant 9 recommended “proper onboarding, practical training, clear guidance,” and competent mentors for teachers coming from non-education backgrounds. These responses indicate that readiness for teaching is not achieved through subject expertise alone, but through a combination of pedagogical preparation and organized institutional assistance.

In the context of this study, this theme suggests that non-education graduates can enter higher education teaching more successfully when institutions intentionally prepare and support them for the role. For San Isidro College, this means that induction, mentoring, and faculty development should be treated as central mechanisms for effective transition. The participants' advice points not only to the importance of personal preparation, but also to the responsibility of the institution to create conditions in which new teachers can translate disciplinary knowledge into effective teaching practice. This finding is consistent with the studies which underscored the importance of pedagogical support, mentoring, and continuing professional development for non-education faculty [5] [15] [7].

Additionally, career changers need support in transforming prior expertise into teaching practice [14]. Furthermore, the value of structured induction and supportive learning environments in strengthening the transition and effectiveness of new [16] [17].

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study indicate that the career transition of non-education graduates into teaching in private higher education institutions, particularly in San Isidro College, is a meaningful yet demanding process shaped by strong intrinsic motivation, gradual professional adjustment, and the need for sustained support. The participants entered the teaching profession primarily out of a desire to share knowledge, contribute to students' growth, and find purpose in a vocation centered on service and learning. However, their transition was accompanied by challenges related to limited pedagogical preparation, classroom management, lesson planning, assessment, workload, and institutional expectations. Despite these difficulties, they were able to adjust and sustain their teaching roles through self-directed learning, adaptability, collegial guidance, seminars, and institutional support. Overall, the study concludes that non-education graduates can become effective and committed educators when their disciplinary expertise is strengthened by continuous professional development, mentoring, and responsive institutional mechanisms that support their transition and growth in the teaching profession.

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