

# Non-Education Graduates as Public High School Teachers

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Teachers play a vital role in the Philippine educational system as they serve not only as facilitators of learning but also as role models who inspire students to pursue their dreams, aspirations, and passions. They are entrusted with the responsibility of motivating learners to reach their full potential and become productive members of society.

In the Philippines, becoming a teacher typically requires the completion of a four-year bachelor's degree in education (BEED or BSED) or a related field, followed by passing the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). However, due to the high demand for teachers, the promise of stable income, and associated benefits, many non-education graduates have entered the profession. This pathway has been made possible through the Certificate in Professional Education (CPE) program, introduced in 1984. The CPE is a non-degree program that offers at least eighteen (18) units of professional education courses, qualifying non-education degree holders to teach in elementary or secondary schools as required by the Department of Education (DepEd). Despite this opportunity, concerns remain regarding the preparedness and capability of non-education graduates compared to those with formal education degrees.

According to Somosot and Relox (2023), non-education graduate teachers in higher education institutions face various challenges, including managing diverse learners, handling heavy workloads, limited instructional resources, and meeting academic requirements. In response, they develop coping mechanisms to navigate these difficulties. In the District of Balete, where this study was conducted, all six public high schools employ at least one non-education graduate teacher, which highlights the relevance of this issue in the local context.

### **Challenges, Adaptation, and Professional Commitment of Nontraditional Teachers**

Non-education graduates who become senior high school teachers bring with them distinct and meaningful lived experiences. Many encounter challenges in the teaching process, particularly as they navigate the demands of the profession without formal training in education (Diamas-Palo, 2025). These difficulties include technical, individual, institutional, and domestic constraints. Despite these barriers, they demonstrate adaptability by exploring various teaching strategies, enhancing their skills, and seeking support and motivation through collaboration with colleagues and co-learners. At the same time, they recognize several advantages in their transition to teaching, such as bringing diverse perspectives, practical knowledge, and innovative approaches that can enrich the learning environment. However, they also acknowledge limitations, including challenges in pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, learner engagement, time constraints, insufficient institutional support, and gaps in professional preparation.

Notwithstanding these challenges, non-education graduates who enter teaching through alternative pathways exhibit strong determination and a clear commitment to completing their professional journey. Their experiences as

nontraditional entrants into the field shape how they navigate academic and professional demands, underscoring the need for structured support systems that can enhance their success.

Similarly, Du Plessis et al. (2015) highlighted that novice out-of-field teachers often face challenges related to confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging within the school environment. Teachers are closely influenced by school leadership practices, which play a crucial role in shaping how these educators interpret their roles and integrate into the teaching profession.

### **Challenges Encountered by Non-Education High School Teachers**

According to Somosot and Relox (2023), non-education high school teachers encounter several persistent challenges, including managing diverse learners, coping with overloaded teaching responsibilities, dealing with insufficient instructional materials, and complying with various academic requirements. Among these, handling diverse students emerges as one of the most prominent difficulties. Effective teaching requires the ability to address variations in students' backgrounds, abilities, and learning needs (Bayani & Guhao, 2017; Kin et al., 2022). However, many non-education teachers find this challenging due to limited pedagogical training. Classroom management, in particular, remains a major concern, as a teacher's competence is often reflected in their ability to maintain a safe and conducive learning environment. This challenge is further intensified by cultural and linguistic diversity in classrooms (Malgapo & Ancheta, 2020), making it more demanding for novice teachers without formal training in education (Andreasen, 2016).

In addition, non-education graduate teachers frequently experience heavy workloads. Teaching responsibilities extend beyond classroom instruction to include administrative tasks and extracurricular involvement

(Jomoad et al., 2021). As a result, these teachers must juggle multiple roles, which can be overwhelming, especially for those still adjusting to the profession. Despite these demands, such experiences may also contribute to their professional growth and adaptability.

The lack of instructional materials further complicates their teaching experience. Adequate resources are essential for effective lesson delivery and improved student learning (Bayani & Guhao, 2017). However, insufficient materials create barriers to achieving instructional goals and increase teacher stress (Wakoli, 2013). Alongside this, non-education teachers also struggle with academic requirements, including preparing syllabi, constructing assessments, and computing grades. These tasks are particularly challenging for those who lack formal training in curriculum design and assessment practices, highlighting significant gaps in preparation and the need for structured support and professional development.

Similarly, Arayan and Abapo (2024) identified key challenges faced by non-education graduate teachers during classroom observation, such as performance-related stress and burnout, gaps in knowledge and resources, logistical constraints, and uncertainties in reflective practice. Despite these difficulties, non-education teachers demonstrate resilience by using these experiences as opportunities for growth and self-improvement.

### **Coping Mechanism of Non-Education High School Teacher**

According to the study of Somosot and Relox (2023), several key coping mechanisms emerge from the experiences of non-education high school teachers, including peer support, the use of technology-driven and creative teaching strategies, and effective time management. These strategies demonstrate how teachers actively respond to the challenges they encounter in their professional environment. One significant coping mechanism is the

integration of technology into classroom instruction. By utilizing digital tools, teachers are able to design more engaging and interactive lessons that enhance student interest and participation. Creating a stimulating learning environment not only benefits students but also supports teachers in managing classroom dynamics more effectively (Bayani & Guhao, 2017). In addition, peer support plays a crucial role in helping novice teachers adjust to the demands of teaching. Through collaboration, mentoring, and shared experiences, teachers gain practical insights into instructional strategies, student diversity, and classroom management (de Jong et al., 2022; Wijarwadi et al., 2025). Engagement in a community of practice allows novice teachers to gradually develop competence and confidence in their roles (Besar, 2018; Wang & Fan, 2025).

Administrative support further strengthens teachers' coping capacity. Supportive leadership fosters a positive working environment, promotes collaboration, and ensures the fair implementation of school policies (Ertürk, 2023). Such institutional support helps reduce stress and enables teachers to focus more effectively on their instructional responsibilities. Moreover, effective time management serves as an essential coping strategy for non-education graduate teachers (Rodriguez & Andrade, 2025). The ability to organize and prioritize tasks allows them to balance teaching responsibilities, administrative duties, and professional development activities. Effective time management reflects teachers' commitment and enhances their overall teaching effectiveness.

Despite the absence of formal pedagogical training, non-education high school teachers demonstrate resilience by adopting these coping mechanisms. Their capacity to adapt, collaborate, and continuously improve highlights their dedication to the profession. These findings emphasize the importance of institutional support, ongoing professional development, and

innovative teaching practices in enabling non-education graduate teachers to succeed and positively influence student learning outcomes.

## **Understanding the Complex Experiences of Non-Education Teachers Through the Situated Learning Theory**

The Situated Learning Theory by Lave and Wenger (1991) posits that learning occurs through active participation in authentic contexts and social interaction. This perspective is particularly relevant in understanding both the challenges and coping mechanisms of non-education high school teachers. Since these teachers often enter the profession without formal pedagogical training, they are immediately immersed in real classroom environments where they must navigate complex teaching demands. As a result, many of the challenges they face, such as managing diverse learners, handling classroom dynamics, addressing instructional gaps, and meeting institutional expectations, stem from their initial position as peripheral participants within the teaching community.

Situated Learning Theory explains that novice teachers begin at the margins of professional practice and gradually move toward full participation as they gain experience and interact with more knowledgeable peers. For non-education teachers, this transition can be particularly demanding because they must simultaneously learn content delivery, classroom management, and assessment practices in real time. The absence of prior training intensifies these challenges, as their learning is largely experiential and context-dependent rather than formally structured. At the same time, the theory provides a strong framework for understanding how these teachers cope with such challenges. Through continuous engagement in the school environment, non-education teachers learn by doing, observing, and collaborating. Participation in a community of practice allows them to acquire practical

knowledge, refine their teaching strategies, and develop confidence over time (Besar, 2018). Peer support, mentoring, and collegial interactions become essential mechanisms through which they interpret experiences, solve problems, and adapt to classroom realities. These social interactions not only facilitate skill development but also help reduce feelings of isolation and uncertainty.

The theory highlights the importance of context in shaping teachers' coping strategies. As non-education teachers engage more deeply in their professional environment, they begin to adopt effective practices such as integrating technology, employing creative teaching approaches, and managing their time efficiently. These strategies are not learned in isolation but are developed through participation in shared activities, observation of experienced colleagues, and reflection on their own teaching experiences. Over time, this process enables them to move from basic survival in the classroom to more confident and competent teaching.

While the lack of formal training initially places them at a disadvantage, their active participation in authentic teaching contexts, combined with collaborative support, allows them to gradually build professional competence. This progression reflects the dynamic nature of teacher development, where learning is continuously shaped by experience, interaction, and engagement within the educational community (Besar, 2018).

## **RESEARCH FOCUS: Stories of the Non-Education Graduates as Public High School Teachers**

The present study explored the experiences, emotions, challenges, support systems, and coping strategies of non-education graduate public high school teachers through a qualitative research design using narrative inquiry. This approach enabled the collection of in-depth personal stories through

interviews, allowing the researcher to understand participants' challenges and coping mechanisms within their teaching context.

The research was conducted in the municipality of Balete, Aklan, involving seven teachers selected from six public high schools. Data were gathered using a researcher-developed, expert-validated semi-structured interview guide consisting of questions on experiences, challenges, and coping strategies. Prior to data collection, permissions and informed consent were secured, and interviews were conducted individually, recorded, and transcribed for analysis.

Narrative analysis was used to interpret the data, focusing on how participants described and made sense of their experiences. The analysis examined both the content and expression of their narratives, enabling the identification of key themes and deeper insights into their professional journeys.

### ***Positive Experiences of Non-Education Graduates as High School Teachers***

Participants described their teaching experiences as both difficult and challenging, yet ultimately rewarding and fulfilling. Despite encountering various struggles, they found a deep sense of satisfaction in their new profession. One participant shared, *“It is hard and challenging but once you have a heart of a teacher, you will be happy teaching. Gradually, you can adjust and adapt to the career and profession you have chosen.”* This reflects how prioritizing learners brings a sense of joy and purpose.

Another participant emphasized the dual nature of teaching: *“Challenging because you must handle diverse learners with different personalities. Rewarding in a sense that teaching has given me a sense of purpose, knowing that I have contributed to my students' learnings, and witnessing their growth, progress and seeing them succeed is truly*

*rewarding.*” These accounts highlight that while challenges are inevitable, fulfillment comes from witnessing students’ development and success.

Participants shared a common realization: teaching, even for non-education graduates, is both demanding and meaningful. Their experiences pushed them beyond their comfort zones, allowing them to grow, adapt, and discover their capabilities. This aligns with Ellingson et al. (2021), who emphasized that professional growth leads to improved teaching practices and better student outcomes.

### ***A Productive Outcome***

Participants also expressed fulfillment through the appreciation they received from students and parents. One teacher shared, *“The most unforgettable experiences I have in teaching were during the times that my students showed their love and appreciation of what I’m doing for them. Some of them would give me flowers and gifts during special occasions.”* Such gestures affirmed their effectiveness as educators. Similarly, Teacher Rose shared, *“One touching experience was having a student that refused to be absent simply because I am their subject teacher. Knowing that I had inspired someone learning lift me deeply flattered and fulfilled.”* Another participant added, *“As a non-education graduate teacher, it feels fulfilling when I know that my learners gained something from me not only the intellectual aspect but also from other aspect such as emotional and spiritual aspects.”*

These statements demonstrate that non-education graduate teachers possess the capability to make meaningful impacts on their students. This is supported by Somosot and Relox (2023), who found that teachers feel successful when they see their students succeed, as well as by Beteille and Evans (2019), who emphasized the role of teachers in shaping students’ knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

Participants identified several key challenges, including limited pedagogical knowledge, classroom management difficulties, adapting to a new environment, teaching outside their specialization, and lack of instructional materials.

### ***Limited Knowledge in Teaching Pedagogy***

Many participants admitted their lack of formal training in teaching methodologies and classroom management. One stated, *“I really admit that I have limited knowledge of teaching methodologies and classroom management...”* while another shared, *“I even asked myself if I am capable of being a teacher... classroom management and choosing teaching strategies were the most difficult part.”* These responses highlight the gap in pedagogical preparation among non-education graduates.

### ***Understanding and Adjusting to the Environment***

Participants also struggled to adapt to new school environments and cultures. One teacher shared, *“My most unforgettable experience being a teacher in an Indigenous People Community is that I need to adapt local customs, language and lifestyle...”* Another recalled responding to a student’s medical emergency due to their previous profession. These experiences illustrate the need for flexibility and cultural sensitivity in teaching.

### ***Teaching Outside Specialization***

Teaching subjects beyond one’s field of expertise posed another major challenge. One participant noted, *“One of the challenges... is the current subject that I am teaching which is very far from my undergraduate course.”* Another added that teaching unfamiliar subjects required *“extra time and effort”* to prepare. This reflects the common issue of out-of-field teaching

(Nakar & Du Plessis, 2023; Hobbs et al., 2026; Sengschmid et al., 2025; du Plessis et al., 2014).

### ***Classroom Management***

Managing diverse learners was consistently identified as difficult. Teachers highlighted challenges in maintaining discipline, addressing emotional needs, and minimizing disruptions. However, they also developed strategies such as setting clear expectations and establishing classroom routines.

### ***Lack of Teaching Materials***

Limited resources further complicated teaching. One participant shared, “*Not enough teaching supplies... teaching that time was not easy when you do not have enough resources.*” Another noted that the absence of materials required additional effort to deliver lessons effectively. This aligns with findings that adequate resources are essential for quality education (Bayani & Guhao, 2017).

To overcome these challenges, participants employed several coping strategies, including mentorship, continuous preparation, and the use of online resources.

### ***Mentorship***

Seeking guidance from experienced colleagues was a key strategy. One participant stated, “*Asked for the guidance and mentorship of the seasoned teachers...*” while another shared how colleagues helped them adapt and improve. This reflects the importance of peer support in professional growth.

### ***Constant Preparation***

Participants emphasized the value of continuous learning. One teacher shared, *“I did a lot of research and readings... I borrowed books from the library about teaching strategies almost every day.”* Others invested time and personal resources to prepare instructional materials, demonstrating dedication to improving their teaching practice.

### ***Incorporation of Online Resources***

The use of technology also played a significant role. Teachers accessed platforms such as YouTube, DepEd Tambayan, and other educational websites to enhance their lessons. One participant noted, *“I visit websites... for references,”* while another shared how video lessons helped improve student understanding. These strategies allowed teachers to become more creative and effective in their instruction.

Their stories showed that while non-education graduate teachers face substantial challenges, they demonstrate resilience, adaptability, and a strong commitment to their profession. Through continuous learning, collaboration, and innovation, they transform their limitations into opportunities for growth and meaningful impact in the classroom.

### **Conclusion**

The challenges faced by non-education graduate teachers can be addressed through proper planning and stronger institutional support from the Department of Education. In response, a program on enhancing the knowledge and skills of educators through a capability enhancement initiative is highly recommended. Designed to support non-education graduate teachers in their professional development, this can improve the overall quality of their teaching.

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