



From industry to classroom: Lived experiences of non-education graduates as professional teachers in the senior high school level

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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study examines the experiences of non-education graduates who transitioned into senior high school teaching roles in the Philippines. Amid teacher shortages and the need for industry-aligned instruction, individuals from diverse academic and professional backgrounds are increasingly recruited. Although Republic Act 10533 supports their inclusion, limited research explores how these non-traditional educators navigate their roles, particularly in private schools. Using purposive sampling, eight licensed teachers with at least two years of experience were selected from a private school in Baguio City. Data were collected through focus group discussions and narrative surveys and analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step method. The study identified key themes: (1) motivations for career transition, (2) pedagogical and administrative challenges, (3) coping and adaptation strategies, (4) institutional support, and (5) influence of prior academic and professional background. Findings show that while non-education graduates contribute valuable content knowledge and real-world perspectives, they often face difficulties in instructional planning, classroom management, and administrative tasks. Their success is shaped by resilience, peer support, and access to professional development. Although limited to one institution, the findings offer insights for policy and practice aimed at improving teacher preparation. Recommendations include context-specific onboarding, formal mentorship programs, and bridge training for career-changers to enhance retention and instructional quality. By centering the voices of non-traditional teachers, this study underscores the importance of inclusive, practice-informed pathways that integrate content expertise with pedagogical competence in senior high education.

Keywords: *non-education graduates, senior high school teaching, career shifters, teacher identity, teacher induction, pedagogical adaptation*

Article History:

Received: May 27, 2025

Accepted: August 18, 2025

Revised: August 16, 2025

Published online: August 30, 2025

Suggested Citation:

Diamas-Palo, J.K.S. (2025). From industry to classroom: Lived experiences of non-education graduates as professional teachers in the senior high school level. *International Journal of Educational Management and Development Studies*, 6(3), 186-210. <https://doi.org/10.53378/ijemds.353248>

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1. Introduction

The evolving landscape of education has led to a diversification of pathways into the teaching profession. One notable trend is the growing presence of non-education graduates who transition into teaching roles, particularly in response to teacher shortages and a rising demand for industry-aligned instruction. This shift is especially visible in countries like the Philippines, where the implementation of the K–12 program in 2016 created new teaching opportunities within the senior high school level, encouraging the entry of professionals from diverse academic and industry backgrounds.

In response to this development, the Philippine government has instituted policies to facilitate the integration of non-education graduates into the teaching force. Republic Act 10533, known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, provides a legal foundation for the inclusion of professionals from various disciplines, provided they obtain appropriate qualifications, including passing the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) and completing necessary certification programs. These individuals often bring specialized knowledge, real-world experience, and practical skills that enrich classroom instruction and bridge academic learning with industry applications (Ching, 2022).

Despite these advantages, non-education graduates face substantial challenges when transitioning into teaching. Without formal pedagogical training, many struggle with core teaching competencies such as instructional design, classroom management, student engagement, and curriculum alignment, a struggle echoed in both higher education and basic education research (Frianeza et al., 2024). This lack of structured preparation means they have not received explicit training or experience in educational psychology, curriculum development, student assessment, inclusive education, or classroom discipline. Moreover, they often enter the classroom for the first time without supervised teaching experience or field exposure to differentiated instructional methods. As a result, their early teaching years are marked by a trial-and-error approach to lesson planning, behavior management, and evaluating student learning outcomes, areas that formal teacher education programs are specifically designed to address. This struggle is also reflected in the study by Somosot and Relox (2023), who found that non-education teachers in higher education institutions in the Philippines frequently encounter difficulties due to insufficient exposure to foundational teaching theories and practices. These findings highlight a persistent disconnect between content expertise and effective pedagogy, an issue that is often overlooked in policy discussions.

The process of professional identity formation poses an additional layer of difficulty for non-traditional educators. As Johnson and Birkeland (2003) and Lefebvre et. al., (2022) suggest, transitioning into the teaching profession requires not only acquiring new skills but also undergoing a personal and professional transformation, which includes internalizing the norms, expectations, and values of educators. This process can be particularly disorienting for individuals whose prior careers were situated in industry or non-academic environments. While these difficulties are evident, they coexist with strong intrinsic motivations among career shifters. Recent works by Caseros (2020) and Salvador (2025) have highlighted both the motivations and challenges faced by non-education graduates entering the teaching field, including a sense of unpreparedness in handling students, overwhelming paperwork, and pressure to meet institutional expectations. At the same time, many of these individuals pursue teaching due to a personal sense of calling or encouragement from peers and family, motivations that Reyes et al. (2024) emphasize in their study on neophyte senior high school teachers.

Globally, countries like the United States and the United Kingdom have responded to similar trends by offering structured alternative certification programs that allow mid-career professionals to enter the teaching workforce while receiving pedagogical support. These models reflect a growing appreciation for inclusive and flexible pathways into education (Nghia & Kien, 2018). However, the successful integration of these professionals relies heavily on institutional readiness, tailored training programs, and continuous mentorship.

In the Philippine setting, although there are existing policies meant to help non-education graduates enter the teaching profession, how these are put into practice varies from school to school. Many still struggle due to the lack of ongoing mentoring, limited access to free continuing professional development (CPD), and the heavy administrative workload. Ancheta and Ancheta (2020) emphasized how school-based systems often fail to provide practical, day-to-day support for new teachers navigating unfamiliar roles. Similarly, Ching (2022) noted that bureaucratic procedures and lack of follow-through in CPD initiatives contribute to early frustration and burnout.

These existing studies contribute important insights, but many of them focus on higher education or combined general findings across school levels. As a result, there is still a lack of detailed, local research that really looks into the experiences of non-education graduates teaching in basic education, particularly in senior high school, where an increasing number of

non-education graduates are now teaching. What has yet to be fully captured is how these non-education graduates actually navigate their day-to-day work, develop their teaching identity, or deal with the practical challenges of pedagogy and school integration, particularly in private institutions where resources and support systems can vary widely. Much of the current literature tends to group their experiences into a single narrative, often overlooking the specific struggles they face without formal teacher training, proper induction, or sustained support from their institutions.

It is within this context that a significant research gap emerges. While existing literature acknowledges the value and challenges faced by non-traditional educators, there is still a noticeable lack of localized, in-depth, and qualitative research exploring how non-education graduates in the Philippine senior high school system experience this career transition. Most studies have focused on general teacher preparation, college-level faculty, or policy implementation, with minimal attention to the day-to-day realities, struggles, coping strategies, and long-term aspirations of those teaching at the basic education level, particularly in private institutions (Ching, 2022; Somosot & Relox, 2023). This gap underscores the need for research that captures their voices directly and examines their lived experiences within the specific context of senior high school teaching in the Philippines.

The purpose of this study is to address that gap by exploring the lived experiences of non-education graduates who have become professional teachers in senior high school settings. Specifically, it seeks to examine their motivations for entering the teaching profession, the challenges they face, the strategies they employ to overcome these difficulties, and the unique contributions they make to their students and institutions. By centering these teachers' own narratives, the study aims to provide empirically grounded insights that inform the design of targeted induction programs, structured mentorship systems, and differentiated professional development frameworks. These may include phased teaching loads, school-based pedagogical training, and tailored administrative guidance to strengthen both instructional quality and teacher retention. Ultimately, this research contributes to both academic discourse and educational policy by advocating for inclusive, practice-informed pathways that balance content expertise with pedagogical competence in Philippine senior high education.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Transformative Learning Theory. Transformative Learning Theory, developed by Mezirow (1997), explains how adults shift their perspectives through critical reflection, particularly when facing disorienting dilemmas. For non-education graduates entering the teaching profession, the sudden immersion into classroom realities—without formal pedagogical training—creates an environment that challenges their assumptions, professional identity, and sense of competence. Baumgartner and Birden (2003) further support this idea by showing that adult learners undergoing career shifts often require reflective spaces to reframe their sense of professional identity, particularly when moving into fields that challenge their existing belief systems. In this study, the theory is used to understand how participants make sense of their transition by reflecting on their past roles, adjusting their expectations, and forming a new understanding of themselves as teachers. This theory helps interpret the identity shift as a lived transformation. It also supports the use of personal narratives and reflective accounts as valid data sources for accessing those internal shifts.

Career Construction Theory. Career Construction Theory, introduced by Savickas (2005), emphasizes how individuals actively shape their careers through meaning-making and adaptability. In this research, the theory frames how non-education graduates reconstruct their professional path within the unfamiliar structure of formal education. Many participants draw from their past industry experiences to redefine their teaching roles and manage the challenges of adapting to school systems and academic expectations. Lee and Lee (2022) found that second-career teachers' career satisfaction is closely tied to how well their adaptability traits are supported by institutional systems, a finding that resonates with the participants in this study who cited mentorship and peer collaboration as key support mechanisms. The theory conceptualizes the teacher identity not as fixed or inherited, but as actively built in response to new environments. It also justifies the interpretation of participants' career decisions and coping strategies through their own explanations and stories.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). Social Cognitive Career Theory, developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett, explains how career interests and decisions are influenced by self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and support systems. In this study, SCCT helps analyze how non-education graduates' belief in their ability to teach often shaped by informal feedback, mentoring, or lack thereof impacts their persistence and professional growth. It also

accounts for how institutional support or lack of it influences their expectations of success or failure in the role. Lateral entry teachers often face identity conflicts due to mismatches between prior professional norms and educational expectations, an issue also evident in the Philippine context. SCCT identifies the internal and external factors that shape how participants perceive and perform their role as teachers. The SCCT framework guides how these influences are captured and interpreted through the participants' own words and reflections on their school environment and career motivations (Međugorac et al., 2020).

Communities of Practice (CoP). Wenger's (1998) theory of Communities of Practice explains learning as a social process that occurs through participation in group interactions, shared practice, and informal mentorship. In this study, CoP provides a framework for understanding how non-education graduates gradually learn and adapt to teaching not through formal education but through their engagement with colleagues, school norms, and peer collaboration. Many participants rely heavily on co-teachers, informal advice, and everyday observation to navigate their teaching responsibilities. This theory supports the idea that becoming a teacher is a social experience shaped by interaction and belonging. CoP validates the analysis of professional growth as something observable in the descriptions of day-to-day workplace relationships and learning from others (Vangrieken et al., 2017).

Each of these theories contributes a different but connected layer to how this study understands the experiences of non-education graduates transitioning into teaching. Transformative Learning Theory captures the internal identity shift; Career Construction Theory focuses on how participants make meaning and adapt to their new professional context; SCCT highlights the role of self-efficacy and support systems in shaping their teaching behavior; and Communities of Practice frames their informal learning and integration into school culture. Together, these frameworks support the study's aim of not just exploring what non-education graduates go through, but also how their experiences can be systematically interpreted to inform school-level practices and human resource policies or programs that are currently missing or underdeveloped.

2.2. Non-Traditional Pathways into the Teaching Profession

Globally, the demand for qualified teachers has prompted governments and institutions to create alternative certification programs that allow non-education graduates to enter the profession. Research by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasizes that such pathways diversify the teaching force and help alleviate teacher shortages. In the Philippines, Republic

Act 10533 allows non-education degree holders to teach in the K–12 system after passing the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) and completing pedagogical training (Ching, 2022).

Studies show that mid-career professionals bring unique content expertise and real-world perspectives that can enrich classroom learning (Nghia & Kien, 2018). However, they often lack training in instructional methods and classroom management, which are essential for effective teaching (Somosot & Relox, 2023). While alternative pathways have improved recruitment, the lack of structured onboarding programs continues to be a challenge for teacher retention in basic education. In a local study, Demapendan (2024) highlighted that teachers often experience a mismatch between their academic preparation and the pedagogical demands of K–12 education, underscoring the need for targeted support and training. Addressing this mismatch requires more contextualized professional development and practicum experiences to help teachers effectively adapt to their assignments, particularly in challenging school environments.

2.3. Teacher Identity Formation and Professional Transition

The transition from industry or other professional fields into teaching requires not only the acquisition of pedagogical skills but also the reconstruction of professional identity. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) argue that becoming a teacher involves internalizing the norms, expectations, and responsibilities associated with the role, a process that can be particularly challenging for career-shifters unfamiliar with educational culture. Lefebvre et. al. (2022) further emphasize that identity formation is as much an emotional and social journey as it is a professional one, requiring adjustment to new relationships with students, colleagues, and administrators.

In the Philippine context, Albino and Panganiban (2022) highlighted that career-shifters often experience tension between their former professional identity and their emerging role as teachers, leading to feelings of self-doubt and uncertainty. Similarly, Hogg et. al. (2024) found that the shift to teaching in private schools requires significant adaptation, as teachers must reconcile prior work habits with the demands of classroom instruction and administrative responsibilities. Moreover, studies such as Reyes (2025) show that institutional support systems, including mentoring, collaborative practices, and feedback, play a central role in shaping professional identity during the early years of teaching. Without these supports, many

non-education graduates struggle to develop confidence in their new roles, which can affect both teacher retention and instructional quality. This underscores the importance of identity-focused interventions alongside technical training to ensure smoother transitions into the teaching profession.

2.4. Challenges and Coping Mechanisms

Non-education graduates face multiple challenges upon entering the teaching profession. These include mastering lesson planning, classroom discipline, documentation, and curriculum alignment (Somosot & Relox, 2023). Administrative workloads and a lack of initial pedagogical training can overwhelm these teachers, leading to stress and burnout. To address these issues, studies recommend institutional mentoring programs, access to CPD, and collaborative learning communities (Nychkalo et al., 2021; Teise & Februarie, 2024; Tenha & Makamure, 2024).

Reyes (2025) examined the coping strategies of career-shifters in basic education, noting that peer mentorship and informal communities of practice were among the most effective supports. In another study, Omran and Abo-Thabet (2024) stressed the importance of adaptive leadership within school environments in helping novice teachers, particularly those without education degrees, navigate institutional and instructional complexities. Previous studies have documented the realities faced by non-education graduates transitioning into teaching. Caseros (2020) examined the plight of non-education major graduate senior high school teachers and identified multiple challenges, including limited instructional resources, difficulties in lesson planning, and classroom behavior management. These challenges were linked to the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), highlighting areas such as pedagogy, learning environment, curriculum planning, and assessment. Similarly, Salvador (2025) found that while neophyte non-education graduates demonstrated strong personal commitment to the profession, often going beyond their duties and fostering deep care for students, they also encountered significant difficulties with paperwork, particularly in preparing daily lesson logs, and relied heavily on mentorship from experienced colleagues. These findings provide a comparative lens for understanding the motivations, struggles, and adaptive strategies reported in the present study.

2.5. Implications for Policy and Practice

Both international and local studies underscore the need to revisit teacher preparation models. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) call for policy frameworks that recognize non-linear teaching pathways while ensuring quality through support mechanisms. In the Philippines, the Department of Education and educational institutions must develop tailored interventions to assist non-education graduates, such as flexible CPD programs and mentoring by experienced educators (Ching, 2022). As institutions become more inclusive in recruiting educators from varied backgrounds, the teaching profession stands to benefit from greater interdisciplinary integration, enhanced student engagement, and innovative instructional practices. This study responds to the call for context-specific solutions, as echoed by del Rosario and Vargas (2021), who advocated for localized teacher development models that align with the realities of private education systems.

Policy reforms must not only allow entry but also ensure retention by developing institutional frameworks that value non-traditional teachers' contributions. Alternative teacher development pathways should include multi-modal training programs with both pedagogical theory and practical mentorship and recommended integrating teaching practicums into post-baccalaureate teacher certification for professionals, allowing smoother transitions and better preparedness for classroom realities. Hogg et al. (2024) examined how career-shifters developed teacher identity and found that while institutional support played a role, much of the transformation was self-driven and lacked structural backing, reflecting gaps also identified in this current research.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using a general phenomenological approach to investigate the lived experiences of non-education graduates who have transitioned into professional teaching roles at the senior high school level. The phenomenological method was chosen because it provides a means to explore how individuals interpret and make sense of a specific phenomenon, in this study, their shift from industry-based professions into the teaching field. Rather than adhering to a specific philosophical tradition, the study adopted a practical, descriptive orientation to surface the shared meanings and experiences of the participants. This design allowed the researcher to focus on their subjective experiences,

perceptions, and meaning-making processes, which are critical for understanding the depth and complexity of their professional transitions. Through this approach, the study was able to reveal the common themes and unique insights that characterize the participants' adaptation to their new roles as educators.

3.2. Participants of the Study

This study involved eight licensed professional teachers who graduated from non-education degree programs and are currently teaching in a private basic education institution in Baguio City, Philippines. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, with the intention of including individuals who could provide relevant, firsthand insights into the experience of transitioning from a non-teaching profession into the senior high school teaching workforce. To qualify for inclusion in the study, participants were required to meet three specific criteria: first, they must have completed a bachelor's degree in a non-education field; second, they must have passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET); and third, they must have accumulated at least two years of teaching experience specifically at the senior high school level. These criteria ensured that participants had undergone the formal transition into the teaching profession and had adequate experience to meaningfully reflect on their role and challenges in the classroom.

In contrast, individuals were excluded from participation if they had earned a degree in education, regardless of any prior non-teaching employment; if they had not yet passed the LET; or if they had less than two years of experience teaching in senior high school. Likewise, teachers currently working in grade levels outside the senior high school bracket were not considered for this study. The group of selected participants came from varied academic and professional backgrounds, including Psychology, Philosophy, Political Science, and Management. This diversity added depth to the data while remaining within the scope of the study. Data saturation was reached when responses became repetitive and no new themes were identified, indicating that the number of participants was sufficient for the research objectives.

3.3. Instrumentation and Data Gathering Process

To collect data, the study used two primary instruments: a semi-structured interview guide for the focus group discussion (FGD) and an online narrative survey questionnaire. The FGD was conducted virtually through a video conferencing platform and lasted between 30 to

60 minutes. This method encouraged dynamic exchange among participants, fostering shared insights and reflective dialogue. The semi-structured format provided flexibility, allowing the researcher to explore key questions while remaining open to new themes that emerged during the discussion. In addition to the FGD, participants completed a narrative survey that allowed them to reflect individually on their transition experiences. This written method provided an additional layer of insight, particularly for those more comfortable expressing themselves in writing. The combination of oral and written instruments enabled data triangulation, strengthening the credibility and reliability of the study's findings.

3.4. Data Analysis

The qualitative data in this study were analyzed using Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step method, which is widely used in phenomenological research for its structured approach to uncovering the essence of lived experiences. Each step was carefully applied to ensure the credibility, depth, and trustworthiness of the findings, while also acknowledging and minimizing possible methodological limitations.

The first step was familiarization with the data. The researcher immersed in the raw data by reading and re-reading transcripts from the FGD and the online narrative surveys. This step was not just about exposure to the text but was used to build an initial sense of the tone, emotional depth, and context behind each participant's responses. Repeated engagement helped the researcher approach the data with sensitivity and attentiveness, which was necessary for accurate interpretation later in the process.

In the second step, significant statements that were directly related to the research phenomenon, the transition from industry to teaching, were identified and extracted from the transcripts. The statements were selected through a line-by-line coding process. The researcher highlighted any passages that revealed meaningful insights about participants' motivations, challenges, emotional reactions, and professional growth. To ensure only essential and relevant content was retained, each statement was reviewed multiple times in the context of the overall narrative.

In the third step, the researcher formulated meanings from the significant statements. Here, extra caution was taken to reduce the risk of researcher bias, as this step involved interpreting and paraphrasing participants' words. While the goal was to uncover underlying meanings, the researcher recognized the potential for personal assumptions to influence

interpretation. To counter this, reflexivity was maintained throughout the process, constant self-checks were applied to ensure that the paraphrased meanings did not deviate from the participants' original intentions. Statements were interpreted in light of both their immediate context and their placement in the broader narrative, and where ambiguity was present, multiple interpretations were considered before finalizing a meaning.

After meanings were formulated, the fourth step involved clustering them into themes. These theme clusters reflected shared experiences among participants, such as “Motivations to Transition,” which included financial needs and personal calling, and “Challenges in Practice,” which included issues like lesson planning, student discipline, and paperwork. During this step, the researcher cross-validated themes against raw data to ensure internal consistency. Themes were not constructed in isolation; they were examined relationally to determine how one experience might inform or overlap with another.

The fifth step was to construct an exhaustive description based on the thematic clusters. This narrative aimed to capture both the common patterns and individual nuances of each participant's experience. Rather than just summarizing themes, the exhaustive description told a coherent story of what it meant to transition from a non-teaching profession to the classroom, emphasizing how external expectations and internal adjustments intersected.

The sixth step was the identification of the fundamental structure of the experience. This stage posed the challenge of balancing individual differences with a generalized structure that could represent the essence of the shared phenomenon. The researcher acknowledged the difficulty in this step, as simplifying lived experiences into a unified description risks erasing important context. To address this, individual narratives were revisited repeatedly to ensure that no single experience was reduced or misrepresented in the distillation process. The resulting fundamental structure highlighted a transformative process shaped by personal doubt, institutional learning, informal mentorship, and eventual self-recognition as a teacher.

Lastly, the seventh step involved member checking. Participants were given a summary of the findings and asked to confirm whether the analysis accurately represented their experiences. While most participants affirmed the findings, the researcher recognized the limitations of this step, some participants provided minimal feedback, which may have reflected power dynamics, time constraints, or discomfort with critiquing the interpretation. To address this, the researcher actively encouraged honest feedback and clarified that revisions

based on their comments would be welcomed and valued. Any clarifications provided were incorporated into the final themes and descriptions to improve accuracy.

By applying Colaizzi's method while remaining critically aware of its limitations, the researcher ensured that the analysis remained systematic, grounded in participant voices, and reflective of the complex realities faced by non-education graduates teaching in senior high school.

3.5. Research Ethics

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Approval to conduct the research was obtained from the school principal prior to data collection. All participants were fully informed about the nature, objectives, and procedures of the study through a detailed informed consent form. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants were assured that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. To protect participants' safety and welfare, the researcher maintained a respectful and non-threatening environment during the data collection process, both in the online group discussion and in the narrative survey. Confidentiality was upheld through the use of pseudonyms, and all personal data were securely stored and will be retained only for five years before being permanently deleted. The recordings, transcripts, and survey responses were accessible only to the researcher and were used solely for academic purposes. These measures ensured that participants' identities and personal information remained protected, and that their involvement in the study posed no risk to their professional or personal well-being.

4. Findings

The data collected from the focus group discussion and narrative surveys were analyzed using Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological method. To organize and manage the analysis process, Microsoft Excel was used. This allowed the researcher to manually encode significant statements, paraphrased meanings, and emerging themes in a format that was easy to sort, compare, and validate. While no specialized qualitative software was employed due to the manageable volume of and the depth of qualitative data, Excel was practical and sufficient for this study's needs.

A codebook was created and developed alongside the analysis process. It included working definitions of each code, sample quotes, and notes on inclusion and exclusion criteria.

This helped maintain consistency and reduce subjectivity in clustering meanings into themes. The codebook was especially helpful in keeping track of similar ideas that came from different participants but expressed the same underlying concern or pattern.

Data saturation was determined during the process of coding and theme development. By the sixth participant, the same core ideas began to be repeated across multiple data sources. After analyzing the seventh and eighth participants, no new codes or unique experiences were identified. At this point, the researcher concluded that saturation had been reached, as additional data no longer contributed new insights relevant to the study's objectives.

Table 1 presents the key themes that emerged from the participants' lived experiences. Each theme is supported by direct participant insights, which were drawn from both the focus group and the written narratives. These findings reflect the participants' motivations, challenges, coping mechanisms, the influence of their academic background, and their professional aspirations.

Table 1

Emerging themes from the lived experiences of non-education graduates in the teaching profession.

Core Theme	Sub-Themes	Sample Insights
Motivations for Career Change	Financial stability, dissatisfaction with past job, purpose	<p>“It was a decision driven by survival.”</p> <p>“I needed a more stable income.”</p> <p>“I found purpose in helping young people understand themselves.”</p>
Challenges in Transition	Classroom management, lesson planning, paperwork, pedagogy	<p>“The paperwork behind the scenes was overwhelming.”</p> <p>“Hard to align with high school expectations.”</p> <p>“No formal teaching background.”</p>
Coping and Adaptation	Learning by doing, observing others, joining webinars	<p>“Experience is the best teacher.”</p> <p>“I watched my co-teachers closely.”</p> <p>“I signed up for free webinars just to learn more.”</p>
Institutional Support	Peer support, mentoring, feedback from colleagues	<p>“It was the encouragement from colleagues that kept me going.”</p> <p>“I learned from feedback and adjusted gradually.”</p>
Academic Background Influence	Psychology, Philosophy, Political Science, HRM application	<p>“I use group activities from my HR background.”</p> <p>“I emphasize mental health and behavior strategies in class.”</p>

The table summarizes the five major themes that emerged from the participants' lived experiences as non-education graduates who transitioned into teaching at the senior high school level. Each theme was developed through Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological method by identifying significant statements, formulating meanings, and clustering them into recurring categories. The sub-themes reflect more specific elements within each major area, such as financial motivation, documentation challenges, or peer-based learning. Sample quotes are included to illustrate how participants articulated their experiences in their own words. These themes offer direct insight into the personal, instructional, and institutional realities faced by non-traditional teachers, providing a basis for improving support mechanisms within schools.

The following five themes emerged from the data: motivations for career change, challenges encountered, coping and adaptation strategies, institutional support, and influence of academic background. These themes were developed through Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological method, informed by significant statements and line-by-line coding.

Theme 1: Motivation for Entering the Teaching Profession

Participants cited both practical and personal motivations for entering the teaching field. Financial stability was one of the most common reasons. Several participants mentioned that their previous jobs offered limited security or career growth, which prompted them to pursue teaching. In addition to financial considerations, many were drawn to the teaching profession by a desire to influence and help students. Psychology and Political Science graduates emphasized the importance of contributing to society, helping learners grow intellectually, and creating meaningful connections in the classroom. Meanwhile, HRM graduates expressed a desire for a more balanced and purposeful work environment compared to their previous roles in hospitality and service-oriented industries.

One participant stated, *"It was a decision driven by survival. I needed a more stable income."* For others, teaching was seen as an opportunity to find deeper personal fulfillment and to contribute meaningfully to society. A Psychology graduate shared, *"I found purpose in helping young people understand themselves and navigate life."*

Theme 2: Challenges in Transitioning to Teaching

Despite their motivation and passion, participants encountered numerous challenges during the transition. One of the most frequently mentioned difficulties was the lack of formal

training in pedagogy. Participants struggled with various teaching responsibilities such as lesson planning, classroom management, curriculum alignment, and assessment preparation. HRM graduates noted the difficulty in converting hands-on experiences into structured academic lessons. Political Science graduates reported challenges in breaking down complex political theories and legal concepts into digestible content for senior high school learners. Moreover, several participants expressed frustration with the volume of paperwork and documentation required in teaching, describing it as time-consuming and mentally draining.

One participant reflected, *“There were so many templates to learn. Everything had a format and a deadline.”* Another explained, *“I was used to practical tasks—not writing lesson plans or teaching theories.”* Others shared that adapting complex subjects for high school learners was particularly demanding. As one participant described, *“It’s not easy simplifying topics like constitutional law or political ideologies without losing accuracy.”* The volume of paperwork also emerged as a challenge: *“Teaching isn’t just talking in front of students. The paperwork behind the scenes was overwhelming.”*

Theme 3: Coping Mechanisms and Adaptation Strategies

To overcome these challenges, participants employed a range of coping strategies. A common approach involved learning by doing, adapting through daily classroom experience. Many participants relied on peer mentoring and the guidance of more experienced teachers. They also reported seeking out professional development opportunities, including webinars, in-service training sessions, and independent study. One Psychology graduate shared that their background helped them create positive classroom environments by understanding student behavior and applying motivational strategies. HRM graduates applied interactive teaching techniques such as role-playing and real-life simulations, while Political Science graduates incorporated current events to make lessons more relevant and engaging.

One participant shared, *“Experience is the best teacher. I learn from what works and what doesn’t every day in class.”* Another emphasized the value of observation: *“I watched my co-teachers closely, especially how they handled disruptions or explained hard topics.”* Others often applied hands-on learning techniques: *“I use group activities and real-life scenarios to make lessons engaging—something I picked up from hospitality training.”*

Theme 4: Institutional Support and School Integration

Institutional support was found to play a critical role in easing the participants' adjustment into the teaching profession. Mentorship programs, peer collaboration, and administrative encouragement helped participants feel more confident and included. Although some initially felt insecure about their qualifications, sustained support from colleagues and school leaders improved their self-perception and professional identity. Participants who engaged actively in school activities and community projects reported stronger integration into the school environment. These findings align with previous studies on the value of school-based learning communities and peer support systems in promoting teacher development.

Overall, participants highlighted that being part of a collaborative and respectful teaching community contributed to their growth. *"It was the encouragement from colleagues that kept me going during those first months," one remarked.*

Theme 5: Influence of Undergraduate Background on Teaching Style

Participants' academic backgrounds shaped their instructional approaches in the classroom. Psychology graduates emphasized empathy, behavior management, and mental health awareness. They also demonstrated a sensitivity to individual differences and learner-centered methods. Philosophy graduates, though fewer, utilized reflective questioning and discussion techniques to develop critical thinking among students. HRM graduates used their customer service background to promote professionalism and practical skill-building, often organizing collaborative tasks and real-world simulations. Political Science graduates incorporated social and civic education into their teaching, encouraging debates and discussions on current issues and governance. These unique contributions highlight the value of interdisciplinary teaching in senior high school education.

Psychology graduates focused on emotional support and developmental understanding. *"I'm more aware of their mental health needs. Sometimes, what they need most is someone who listens."* Philosophy graduates, although few, emphasized reflective learning. *"I let them question things. It's not about right or wrong answers, but how they think."*

Assessment practices and student feedback. Most participants expressed confidence in their ability to assess student performance and provide feedback. They emphasized the use of rubrics, project-based assessments, and informal evaluations to monitor student learning. One participant rated their ability to give feedback as "8 out of 10," reflecting a positive self-

assessment. However, challenges were also noted. A participant remarked: “*Non-compliance of learners affects timely assessment.*” This suggests that while the teachers felt competent in evaluating learning outcomes, external factors such as student behavior and participation could still hinder the effectiveness of assessment practices.

Career satisfaction and future aspirations. All participants reported high levels of job satisfaction despite the challenges they encountered. They described teaching as a meaningful and rewarding career. Several participants indicated a desire to stay in the profession and pursue further studies or leadership positions. Some expressed plans to enroll in graduate or doctoral programs, while others aspired to become school principals or curriculum developers. These goals reflect a long-term commitment to the teaching profession and a desire for professional advancement. All participants reported overall satisfaction with their transition into teaching. They did not view the profession as a fallback or temporary job, but as a meaningful long-term career. “*This is where I see myself for the long haul,*” said one participant.

This study found that non-education graduates bring practical experience, diverse academic backgrounds, and applied knowledge that contribute meaningfully to senior high school teaching. Coming from fields such as psychology, philosophy, political science, and hospitality management, participants introduced teaching styles influenced by their original professions. Their varied backgrounds allowed them to connect classroom content with real-life situations, promote critical thinking, and respond to students’ personal and social needs.

At the same time, participants faced clear challenges during their transition into teaching. The most common difficulty was the lack of formal training in teaching methods, which made it harder to prepare lesson plans, manage student behavior, and meet curriculum standards. Many also struggled with the volume of paperwork and reporting requirements. These challenges often left them feeling unsure of themselves and under pressure, especially in their early years in the classroom. Despite these struggles, participants showed resourcefulness and persistence. They learned through classroom experience, sought help from more experienced teachers, and took part in free training sessions and webinars to improve their teaching. These efforts helped them gradually build confidence and improve how they handled their responsibilities. Support from the school community also made a difference. Encouragement from fellow teachers, informal mentoring, and guidance from school leaders

helped participants adjust to their new roles. Those who felt supported were more likely to stay motivated and feel part of the school environment.

Participants' college degrees also influenced how they approached teaching. Psychology graduates paid close attention to students' behavior and emotional well-being. Philosophy graduates encouraged discussions and helped students think deeply about questions. HRM graduates used group tasks and real-life activities to keep students engaged, while Political Science graduates linked lessons to current issues and social topics. These teaching practices showed that non-education graduates have strengths that can add value to classroom instruction.

The study shows that with the right support, non-education graduates can succeed in teaching. Their presence challenges the idea that only those with formal education degrees can become effective teachers. Schools and policymakers are encouraged to recognize their needs and build programs that help them adjust, so they can continue to grow and contribute to education.

5. Discussion

This study shows that non-education graduates bring valuable skills and perspectives to senior high school teaching, but their transition is marked by both strengths and challenges. Their varied backgrounds, such as psychology, philosophy, political science, and hospitality management, allow them to connect lessons to real-life situations, promote practical skills, and encourage critical thinking. These contributions support Reyes et al.'s (2024) view that teachers from non-traditional paths can make learning more engaging by showing how classroom lessons apply outside school.

In the context of the K–12 program, where applied learning is a key goal, these strengths are especially relevant. However, the findings also show that the lack of formal teacher training makes it harder for them to fully use these strengths. Without preparation in lesson planning, classroom management, or student assessment, they often struggle to adapt complex concepts for senior high school learners. This reflects Caseros' (2020) findings on the plight of non-education major graduate senior high school teachers, who face persistent challenges with limited instructional resources, lesson planning, and behavior management, issues closely tied to competencies outlined in the PPST. The challenge is not only about learning new skills but also about shifting their professional identity from an industry role to

that of an educator. The absence of structured training programs forces many of them to learn through trial and error. As Frianeza et al. (2024) and Somosot and Relox (2023) have found, this can affect both teacher confidence and instructional quality. The workload of paperwork and reporting adds to the pressure, echoing Salvador's (2025) observation that neophyte non-education graduates often struggle with daily lesson log preparation and rely heavily on guidance from experienced colleagues, reflecting Ching's (2022) warning that administrative demands can take time away from lesson preparation and student support.

Support from schools plays an important role in helping teachers overcome these difficulties. Participants who received guidance from mentors, collaborated with peers, and felt encouraged by administrators adjusted more easily and gained confidence. This finding is in line with Johnson and Birkeland (2003) and Lefebvre et al. (2022), who emphasize the value of professional networks for new teachers. In this study, support systems were not just helpful, they were often the deciding factor in whether teachers felt they could succeed.

The motivations that led participants into teaching, such as financial stability, personal fulfillment, and the desire to help students, also shaped how they responded to challenges. Strong personal motivation helped them persevere despite steep learning curves and heavy workloads. This aligns with Salvador's (2025) findings that, despite facing substantial administrative and instructional challenges, committed neophyte non-education graduates often go beyond their formal duties to foster strong connections with students.

By focusing on the senior high school setting in the Philippines, this study addresses a gap in research that often centers on higher education or general teacher preparation. It provides a local and detailed look at how non-education graduates adjust to teaching in senior high school, highlighting the connection between their professional backgrounds, their learning needs, and the support they receive.

The findings suggest clear steps for improvement. Induction programs tailored to non-education graduates, coupled with practical training on completing school forms and managing other administrative requirements, can help ease the adjustment period. These would complement pedagogical training and mentoring, ensuring that both instructional and administrative competencies are addressed. These should be paired with ongoing, accessible professional development focused on translating disciplinary expertise into effective teaching strategies. Policies and school-based initiatives that include structured mentoring, phased teaching loads in the first year, and targeted pedagogical training modules can further support

career shifters in navigating the transition smoothly. Embedding these supports within institutional systems not only enhances teaching quality but also strengthens teacher retention by reducing early career stress and building confidence in their new professional identity.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the lived experiences of non-education graduates who transitioned into teaching at the senior high school level in the Philippines. Using a phenomenological approach, it examined their motivations, the challenges they encountered, their coping strategies, and the institutional factors that shaped their journey.

Findings showed that these teachers bring distinct strengths to the classroom, including real-world knowledge and varied instructional approaches rooted in their previous fields. However, their lack of formal pedagogical training made the transition difficult, especially in lesson planning, classroom management, and handling administrative tasks. Despite these barriers, participants adapted through mentoring, professional development, and observation of peers.

The study concludes that alternative pathways into teaching can be successful when supported by responsive school environments. These non-traditional educators demonstrate commitment, creativity, and a strong sense of purpose. Their presence challenges the traditional view that only education graduates can be effective teachers. With the right support systems, they can thrive and contribute meaningfully to the education sector.

To better support non-education graduates transitioning into teaching, schools and policymakers should consider implementing structured mentorship programs, providing targeted professional development focused on pedagogy and classroom management, and guidance on school-related documentations and forms. Additionally, future policies, such as teacher onboarding protocols, induction programs, and in-service training, should be shaped by school-level research that documents the actual experiences, challenges, and support needs of non-traditional educators. By grounding policy in firsthand accounts and localized evidence, institutions can design more practical, relevant, and sustainable support systems that directly address what these teachers encounter inside and outside the classroom especially in their first years of teaching.

While the study offers detailed insights into the experiences of non-education graduates in teaching, its scope was limited to a small group of participants within a single educational

institution. Future studies may consider including a wider range of school settings and incorporating the perspectives of students and school administrators to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the transition process.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This work was not supported by any funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines set by Benguet State University and University of Baguio. The conduct of this study has been approved and given relative clearance(s) by UB high school principal.

Declaration

The author declares the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in writing this paper. In particular, the author used QuillBot, Grammarly, Claude, and ChatGPT in searching appropriate literature, summarizing key points, paraphrasing ideas, and ensuring the overall coherence of the paper in terms of grammar, spelling, and logical flow of thought. The author takes full responsibility for reviewing, editing, and validating the accuracy and academic integrity of all AI-assisted content included in the manuscript.

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