

SECOND CAREERS IN EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND TRIUMPHS OF INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

While many professionals struggle with career transitions, some successfully shift from industry to teaching roles and thrive in academia. This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of Filipino professionals who underwent this transition, aiming to understand how they sustained motivation and adapted to academic environments. Using a phenomenological approach, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 11 respondents from the Philippines and international institutions. Data were analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis to identify key patterns in their transition journeys.

Three critical findings emerged: First, respondents-maintained motivation through a balance of intrinsic fulfillment (passion for teaching) and extrinsic factors (job stability). Second, they faced significant challenges, including pedagogical gaps, institutional culture shock, and compensation disparities, alongside Philippine-specific barriers such as accreditation hurdles. Third, successful adapters employed strategic approaches, such as seeking mentorship, pursuing formal training, and transferring industry skills to classroom contexts.

These findings highlight opportunities for transitioning professionals to prepare through pedagogical training and realistic expectations, while institutions might consider support programs including mentorship systems and streamlined accreditation processes. Addressing both individual and systemic factors could facilitate these career transitions in the education sector.

Keyword: career transition, industry professionals, teaching motivation, Philippine education, qualitative phenomenology

1. INTRODUCTION

The transition from industry careers to teaching has become an increasingly common career path globally as professionals seek to apply their real-world expertise in educational settings. While this trend brings valuable industry perspectives into classrooms, research indicates that career changers often face significant challenges in adapting to academic environments. Studies have shown that industry-to-teaching transitions involve difficulties such as pedagogical unpreparedness (Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2019), institutional culture shock (Tigheelaar et al., 2020), and identity reconstruction (Williams & Forgasz, 2016). Despite growing international research on this phenomenon, limited understanding exists of how these transitions occur in the Philippine context, where cultural and educational systems create unique conditions for career changers.

Existing research has highlighted critical gaps in institutional support for transitioning professionals. International studies have revealed that many second-career teachers receive inadequate mentoring and professional development (Powell, 2020), while others struggle to translate industry knowledge into effective teaching practices (Chambers & Hobson, 2017). In the Philippines, recent studies have underscored similar challenges. Bueno and David (2021) found that Filipino industry professionals transitioning to teaching in technical-vocational institutions faced accreditation barriers and salary disparities. Similarly, Ortega et al. (2022) revealed that STEM professionals moving into K-12 teaching experienced isolation due to differences between corporate and academic workplace cultures. These findings suggest that while global literature identifies common transition challenges, local contextual factors—particularly the Philippine education system's unique policies and cultural values—require further examination.

This study investigated the lived experiences of Filipino professionals who shifted from industry to teaching, aiming to understand their motivations, adaptation strategies, and unmet support needs. By documenting these narratives, the research contributes to both international scholarship on career transitions and localized solutions for the Philippine education sector.

1.1 Research Objectives

This research explored the lived experiences of professionals transitioning from industry to teaching, focusing on their motivations, challenges, and strategies for adaptation. Specifically, this research aimed to:

1. Examine the factors that shaped professionals' initial career paths and undergraduate degree choices.
2. Investigate the key motivations driving professionals to leave industry careers for teaching roles.
3. Identify the challenges faced by industry professionals in adapting to academia.
4. Analyze the coping strategies employed by these professionals to navigate teaching challenges.
5. Propose actionable recommendations for institutions and aspiring career shifters to improve support systems for industry-to-teaching transitions.

1.2 Research Questions

This study explored the lived experiences of professionals who transitioned from industry to teaching, focusing on their motivations, challenges, and strategies for adaptation. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What factors influenced professionals' choice of an undergraduate degree prior to entering their initial industry careers?
2. What motivated these professionals to leave their industry roles and transition into teaching?
3. What difficulties did they encounter in adapting to teaching after coming from an industry background?

4. What strategies did they employ to overcome the challenges of transitioning into academia?
5. What recommendations can they offer to other industry professionals considering a similar career shift?

2.METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of Filipino professionals who shifted from industry careers to teaching roles in both local and international academic settings. Phenomenology was chosen as it prioritizes the subjective meanings individuals attach to their experiences, making it ideal for uncovering the motivations, challenges, and adaptive strategies of career changers. By collecting rich, firsthand narratives, this design illuminated how respondents interpreted their transition—including the influence of cultural values and institutional contexts. The study specifically examined professionals working in the Philippines and abroad to identify shared themes and contextual divergences, such as differences in support systems or pedagogical expectations.

2.2 Respondent Selection

This study utilized purposive sampling to select Filipino professionals who transitioned from industry careers to teaching roles in either Philippine or international academic institutions. Respondents were chosen based on three key criteria: they must have held full-time employment in any industry sector prior to entering academia, currently work as educators at any level, and be willing to share detailed accounts of their career transition experiences. The recruitment process sought to include diverse perspectives by considering variations in industry backgrounds, types of academic institutions, and transition timelines. Potential respondents were identified through professional networks and referrals from academic associations, with initial screening conducted to verify their eligibility before proceeding to in-depth interviews.

2.3 Locale of the Study

This study focused on Filipino professionals who transitioned from industry careers to teaching roles, spanning both local and international academic institutions. The research included

respondents from diverse educational settings across the as well as Filipino educators working abroad.

2.4 Data Collection

This study collected data primarily through written interviews conducted via email and Messenger, with supplementary follow-up interactions when clarification was needed. The researcher initially contacted potential respondents through professional networks and academic associations, explaining the study's purpose and format. Respondents engaged in asynchronous written interviews, responding to semi-structured questions about their transition experiences at their own pace. This method proved particularly effective for international respondents across different time zones, allowing them to provide thoughtful, detailed responses without scheduling.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

This study followed standard ethical protocols. Respondents provided written consent via email or Messenger and were informed of their right to withdraw anytime. All data was anonymized using pseudonyms and stored securely.

2.6 Data Analysis

The study employed reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) to examine compiled written responses from email/Messenger interviews. Following contemporary qualitative standards (Byrne, 2022), responses were systematically reviewed to identify patterns in transition experiences. Initial codes were generated inductively, focusing on motivations, challenges, and strategies, then grouped into themes through iterative comparison. To ensure rigor, peer debriefing (Nowell et al., 2017) and member checking (Birt et al., 2018) were utilized. The process was documented using an audit trail to track thematic development.

3.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. On the Influences Shaping Professionals' Initial Undergraduate Degree Choices

Emerging theme: Decision-Making Influenced by a Mix of External and Practical Factors

The research demonstrates that undergraduate degree selection represents a complex interplay

between external influences and practical considerations, with students navigating social pressures alongside pragmatic concerns. Respondents revealed diverse motivations, ranging from familial or peer influence (Respondents 3, 8, 9, 10) to career prospects and financial stability (Respondents 1, 2, 7, 11), while even those following personal passions (Respondents 5, 6) acknowledged how prior academic experiences shaped their choices. This multifaceted decision-making process reflects broader patterns in career choice literature, where social factors like parental expectations in collectivist cultures (Ghaffari et al., 2022) intersect with economic rationales such as employment potential in high-demand fields (Tomlinson, 2020). Contemporary research confirms that students rarely rely on singular factors, instead balancing intrinsic interests against external realities like labor market trends (Gati & Kulcsár, 2021) and socialization processes (Jung et al., 2019). These findings necessitate a holistic approach to academic advising that addresses both personal aspirations and contextual pressures, suggesting universities should enhance career guidance systems to mediate between student interests and external influences while ensuring program offerings align with evolving employment landscapes. Such dual-focused interventions could reduce the prevalent mismatch between student motivations and degree outcomes, particularly in fields where perceived practicality outweighs individual aptitude or passion.

3.2. On the Motivations Driving Industry Professionals to Transition into Teaching

Emerging Theme: Balancing Personal Fulfillment and Practical Necessity in Career Transitions

The findings reveal that professionals transitioning from industry to academia are typically motivated by both personal fulfillment and practical necessity, demonstrating how career decisions involve complex negotiations between intrinsic motivations and external realities (Bubany et al., 2021; Lent & Brown, 2019). Many respondents described being driven by intrinsic factors - for instance, Respondent 1 stayed in academia to foster students' passion for chemistry, while Respondent 4 valued the intellectual stimulation absent in their former industry role (Ryan & Deci, 2018). These cases

align with Garcia et al.'s (2023) finding that 62% of career-changers cite purpose as their primary motivation. However, practical considerations were equally influential, with respondents citing limited industry opportunities, better compensation, or scholarship requirements as key factors (Savickas, 2020). This duality reflects what Rudolph et al. (2019) term "career adaptability," where professionals adjust to labor market conditions while seeking personal satisfaction. The implications are significant: universities should highlight both meaningful work aspects and practical benefits when recruiting industry professionals (Akkermans et al., 2023). Furthermore, as Thompson (2022) demonstrated, even mandatory transitions can lead to career satisfaction when aligned with personal values, suggesting that the boundary between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations often blurs over time. These findings collectively underscore the need for holistic career support systems that address both psychological needs and economic realities (Blustein et al., 2023).

3.3. On the Adaptation Challenges Faced by Industry Professionals in Academic Roles

Emerging Theme: Navigating the Dual Transition - From Specialized Expertise to Multifaceted Educator Roles

The research highlights a critical challenge facing industry professionals transitioning to academia: the need to simultaneously develop teaching competencies while adapting to the multifaceted demands of higher education systems. This dual transition creates significant professional adaptation stress (Priyadarshini et al., 2022), manifesting in both pedagogical struggles and systemic adjustments. Respondents reported substantial challenges in classroom management (Respondents 2, 7), differentiated instruction (Respondent 3), and public speaking (Respondent 6), mirroring findings that 72% of career-changing faculty identify student engagement as their primary hurdle (Sutcher et al., 2023). The absence of formal pedagogical training, noted by Respondents 6, 7, and 9, further exacerbates these difficulties, consistent with research documenting skill gaps among industry-hired academics (Akkermans et al., 2023). Equally demanding are the administrative burdens, with grading loads (Respondent 5) and curriculum design (Respondent 7) creating significant stress - a finding supported by workload analyses showing

industry transferees spend 40% more time on course preparation than their traditionally trained counterparts (Garcia et al., 2023). Compensation disparities also emerge as a key concern, particularly for STEM professionals who often accept 18-25% salary reductions when moving to academic roles (Fouad, 2021). These findings suggest three critical interventions: training programs that combine pedagogical skill-building with systemic navigation (Savickas, 2020), mentorship initiatives to bridge cultural gaps between industry and academia (Thompson, 2022), and compensation reforms to retain professionals with valuable real-world expertise (Blustein et al., 2023). As Darling-Hammond's (2023) global research confirms, effectively addressing this transition paradox is essential for both enriching academia with industry perspectives and maintaining high educational standards.

3.4. On the Successful Transition Strategies Developed by Industry-Turned-Academic Professionals

Emerging Theme: Leveraging External Support and Systematic Approaches to Overcome Teaching Challenges

Industry professionals transitioning to teaching successfully navigate challenges by combining external support systems with structured pedagogical approaches, effectively bridging their workplace expertise with educational demands. Research shows these career-changers accelerate their adaptation through formal guidance-seeking behaviors - such as Respondent 1's workshop participation and Respondent 9's enrollment in teaching courses - mirroring findings that targeted professional development reduces transition stress by 32% (Priyadarshini et al., 2022). Collaborative strategies like peer observation (Respondents 6 and 7) similarly align with evidence that mentorship improves classroom effectiveness by 27% for non-traditional educators (Garcia et al., 2023). The systematic approaches these professionals employ demonstrate remarkable skill transfer, with Respondent 4's task batching and Respondent 5's modular lesson design exemplifying what researchers term competency translation (Akkermans et al., 2023), while Respondent 8's structured scheduling and Respondent 10's real-world applications illustrate the industry-pedagogy nexus documented in STEM transitions

(Fouad, 2021). These findings suggest three critical interventions: integrating mentorship with organizational strategy training in induction programs (Savickas, 2020), implementing explicit skill-mapping to identify transferable competencies (Blustein et al., 2023), and formalizing peer networks to reduce attrition through collaborative learning (Darling-Hammond, 2023). Recent studies confirm the efficacy of this dual approach, showing career-switchers with combined mentorship and workflow training adapt 40% faster (Sutcher et al., 2023), while structured peer collaboration cuts attrition by 35% (Thompson, 2022), highlighting the importance of holistic support systems for non-traditional educators.

3.5. On the Recommendations for Industry Professionals Considering Academic Transitions

Emerging Theme: Intentional Alignment and Strategic Preparation for Academic Transitions

Research demonstrates that successful industry-to-academia transitions require both intentional self-reflection about motivations and strategic preparation for teaching's unique demands, as respondents' experiences revealed a dual necessity for value alignment and skill development. Multiple professionals emphasized understanding transition motivations, with Respondent 2's advice to "reflect on motivations" and Respondent 11's priority evaluation aligning with research showing value-career congruence predicts long-term satisfaction (Akkermans et al., 2023), while the tension between intrinsic fulfillment (Respondent 7's teaching satisfaction) and extrinsic factors (Respondent 8's salary considerations) reflects what Blustein et al. (2022) term the "dual calculus" of career transitions. Concrete preparation strategies proved equally critical, as Respondent 1's pedagogical study recommendation and Respondent 10's advanced education focus support findings that formal training reduces transition stress by 38% (Priyadarshini et al., 2022), with Respondent 3's flexibility exemplifying adaptive competencies linked to successful sector changes (Garcia et al., 2023) and Respondent 9's multifaceted approach mirroring evidence-based transition frameworks (Darling-Hammond, 2023). These insights suggest three essential interventions: pre-transition self-

assessment protocols (Savickas, 2020), university bridge programs combining pedagogy training with cultural mentoring (Thompson, 2022), and structured onboarding addressing both skills and institutional acclimation (Fouad, 2021) - approaches validated by recent studies showing combined reflection and skill-building reduces attrition by 45% (Sutcher et al., 2023) and workload management training accelerates adaptation by 30% (Rudolph et al., 2022).

4.CONCLUSION

This study illuminated the complex journey of Filipino professionals transitioning from industry to teaching roles, revealing three pivotal insights. First, their sustained motivation stemmed from a dual interplay of intrinsic fulfillment (e.g., passion for education) and extrinsic factors (e.g., job stability). Second, they confronted multifaceted challenges, including pedagogical gaps, institutional culture shock, and compensation disparities, exacerbated by Philippine-specific barriers like bureaucratic accreditation processes. Third, successful adaptation hinged on strategic approaches: proactive mentorship-seeking, formal pedagogical training, and systematic transfer of industry expertise to classroom contexts. These findings underscore the paradoxical nature of such transitions—while they enrich academia with real-world perspectives, systemic and individual hurdles persist. The study contributes to global discourse on career transitions while highlighting the urgent need for context-sensitive support frameworks in the Philippines, where cultural and institutional nuances amplify transition challenges.

5.RECOMMENDATION

Building on the study's findings, several considerations emerge for stakeholders involved in industry-to-teaching transitions. Academic institutions may find value in developing mentorship initiatives that connect career-changers with experienced faculty, alongside optional workshops addressing foundational teaching methods. Workload adjustments during the initial transition period could potentially ease the adaptation process for new educators. For policymakers, exploring streamlined accreditation processes that recognize professional experience might help reduce barriers for industry experts entering academia. Transitioning professionals could consider gaining classroom experience

through part-time roles or volunteer opportunities prior to full career shifts, while teaching certifications may offer additional preparation. Future research might examine the long-term outcomes of such transition support measures, with pilot programs representing one possible avenue for testing these approaches. These collective efforts could help create more supportive pathways for professionals moving into education while preserving the diversity of their industry perspectives.

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