VMC ANALYTIKS

Career Shifters to Teaching: Experiences of OFWs in the Eastern Province of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

This study investigates the career transitions of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in the Eastern Province of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia who shifted from non-academic professions into teaching. Employing a phenomenological approach, it explores the lived experiences of these career shifters, focusing on the motivations, challenges, and adaptive strategies that shaped their entry into the education sector. The research examines their prior occupations, the internal and external factors influencing their decision to pursue teaching, and the personal qualities and professional competencies they bring to the classroom. It also highlights the obstacles encountered during the transition and the ways in which these individuals negotiated identity reconstruction and professional realignment. By situating the phenomenon within the broader discourse on second-career teachers, this study contributes to understanding how OFWs navigate career reinvention in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment, particularly in the context of global labor mobility and the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings underscore the transformative potential of teaching as a second career and provide insights into the resilience, adaptability, and social support systems that enable OFWs to thrive in their new professional roles.

Keywords: Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), career shifters, teaching profession, phenomenology, professional identity, VUCA environment, global labor mobility, COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the International Philippine School in Al Khobar, in partnership with Saint Paul University of Manila (SPUM), launched the first modular graduate program designed specifically for career shifters entering the teaching profession. Supported by Rex Bookstore Incorporated, this initiative opened pathways for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Saudi Arabia to pursue formal teacher preparation while working. Over the past three years, including the years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher, as a beneficiary of this program, has observed a notable rise in individuals transitioning into education. This trend motivated the researcher to further investigate this phenomenon as part of a thesis-to-dissertation bridging program.

A review of existing literature reveals substantial research on teaching as a viable second career. However, there is limited focus on OFWs in the Eastern Province of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) who are shifting from diverse non-academic professions into teaching. This context merits attention, particularly as teaching remains one of the most stable and attractive career paths, characterized by high employment security and increasing enrollment in teacher education programs. Many aspiring educators now pursue graduate studies or work as assistant teachers while completing their credentials. Despite differences between their original careers and the teaching profession, second-career teachers bring a wealth of life experiences that enhance their adaptability and problem-solving skills in the classroom.

Career shift is defined as the transition from one professional field to another, and this may be driven by job dissatisfaction, the search for new opportunities, or evolving personal priorities. In today's global labor market, career

changes have become more common, and teaching has emerged as a prominent destination for those seeking meaningful work. Individuals who pursue this transition often undergo a period of planning, skill development, networking, and, in many cases, additional academic training. While shifting careers poses numerous challenges, it can also be a deeply rewarding process that enables individuals to align their work with their values.

Theoretical Framework. In this study, the researcher interjects minimal idea on the transcendental phenomenology where there is also the intersubjectivity from a sociological viewpoint of Edmund Husserl (1931), the principal founder of phenomenology and one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century. Transcendental phenomenology, as defined by philosopher Edmund Husserl, is a philosophical inquiry that tries to identify the fundamental structures and principles that underpin all human experience. In this phenomenology, there is a thorough and systematic study of consciousness that seeks to characterize the underlying patterns of subjective experience without assumptions about the existence of an external reality.

To achieve authentic knowledge of reality, Husserl maintained that a career shifter must suspend views about the outside world and focus entirely on the immediate experience of consciousness. By removing the prejudices and biases, career shifters can engage in a "phenomenological reduction" process that allows them to reach the raw experience of awareness.

Husserl sensed that by going through this process, a career shifter may learn about the fundamental structures of consciousness, such as intentionality, time, and the link between subject and object. Phenomenology tries to identify the universal principles governing all human experience and provide insight into the essence of reality by investigating these structures.

In general, transcendental phenomenology is a philosophical method that seeks to discover the fundamental principles of human experience and consciousness, resulting in a more profound understanding of reality as it examines the intersubjective nature of our experiences, emphasizing the ways in which our perception of the world is shaped by our interactions with others.

According to Husserl, intersubjectivity is an important aspect of this process since our interactions with others affect our understanding of the world and influence how we view reality. The intersubjectivity constitutes objectivity and the case for "transcendental idealism".

To put these ideas into simple terms, Husserl emphasized that all the immediate experiences, activities, and contacts that make up the world of an individual or corporate life is part of a whole experience. It is constituted intersubjectively, referring to a shared perception of reality between two or more individuals. It is called intersubjective because it was influenced by another person.

Therefore, there is that relationship between transcendental phenomenology, intersubjectivity, and transcendental idealism that is based on the recognition career shifters' experiences are shaped by their interactions with others as well as the consciousness structures that mediate their perception of reality. This interconnectedness emphasizes the need of comprehending the social and relational components of their experiences in order to get a more complete grasp of consciousness and reality.

Conceptual Framework. The Career Shifter Transformation Framework was developed from the researcher's own journey into teaching and further validated through insights drawn from the focus group discussion participants. This framework outlines five interconnected stages – dissonance, acceptance, generating and evaluating alternatives, learning, and resettlement. Across these stages, an individual navigates personal disruption while leveraging social networks and environmental support systems that ease the transition. Within

the learning phase, discourse and critical reflection take place, representing a liminal period in which the career shifter negotiates identity reconstruction and professional realignment.

The initial phase, labeled the "Old Profession," captures the instability in a career shifters' mental structure as motivation begins to erode and the desire for change intensifies. During this period, individuals experience dissonance as they confront disorienting events prompting them to question the viability of their prior career. Upon acknowledging this discomfort, they gradually accept the need for transition and begin gathering information to evaluate alternatives. Once an individual identifies a desirable profession – in this case, teaching – the learning process begins, eventually leading to resettlement, where the new career path becomes internalized and stable. The transition emphasizes that moving into teaching requires not only a shift in occupation but a cognitive and emotional realignment toward new professional identities.

A key component of this transformation is the influence of social networks and the surrounding environment. Social networks provide valuable connections to mentors, peers, and professionals, offering guidance, emotional support, and access to professional opportunities essential for successful transitions (Heine, 2023). Organizational culture similarly shapes decisions to shift careers, particularly when prior workplaces fail to align with one's values or well-being (Truss, 2023). Broader contextual forces, including socioeconomic changes, may also open new job pathways, making teaching a promising option. Thus, social and environmental factors supply the resources and relational scaffolding necessary for an effective and informed shift into a new profession.

The ease of learning is another vital factor influencing the transition to teaching. As noted by Laker et al. (2022), adaptability, resource availability, and the nature of the role significantly affect how smoothly individuals learn the expectations of a new job.

Recommended steps include assessing current circumstances, identifying career goals, exploring potential career paths, determining transferable skills, and planning concrete actions toward necessary competency development (Coursera Staff, 2023). Because career change is a significant undertaking, career shifters benefit from structured learning supports such as online courses, mentorships, and networking. A positive outlook and psychological resilience further enable them to navigate the challenges associated with entering the teaching profession.

Discourse and critical reflection also play central roles in career transition. Discourse involves articulating the rationale behind career change and making one's trajectory comprehensible to others (Clark, 2023). This includes explaining the motivation for leaving a prior profession, acknowledging the difficulties involved, and setting pragmatic expectations regarding the transition timeline. Critical reflection deepens this process by allowing individuals to examine their thoughts, emotions, and past experiences to make informed decisions about their future career direction. Reflection supports reduction of negative thinking, strengthens self-belief, enhances critical thinking, clarifies intentions, and guides professional goal setting (Heine, 2023). Together, discourse and reflection equip career shifters with clarity, purpose, and readiness to enter the teaching profession.

Finally, the liminal period represents the transformative space between the old and new professional identities. Drawing from Turner's application of liminality, this phase consists of separation, transition, and reaggregation. Separation involves detaching from the previous career, confronting dissatisfaction, and making the deliberate choice to pursue teaching. The transition margin marks the threshold where individuals engage in self-assessment, skill-building, and adaptation as they prepare to fully enter the new profession (Amitabh, 2021). Reaggregation occurs when individuals integrate their past experiences with their emerging professional identity, ultimately gaining confidence and stability in

their new teaching role (Stanley, 2023). This process is influenced by experiences of tolerance (Malik, 2021), cognitive dissonance, and the attractiveness of the prospective profession – including teaching's appeal as identified in prior research (Sauermann, et al., 2012). Through learning, support from educators, and the development of emotional, social, and adversity intelligence, career shifters successfully reach resettlement, demonstrating that career transition requires not only skill acquisition but also the restructuring of one's mindset.

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of OFW career shifters who transitioned into teaching in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Specifically, it examines the experiences of both current students and graduates of the Professional Teachers Certificate (PTC) and Master of Arts in Education programs offered by Saint Paul University of Manila (SPUM). The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What were the career shifters' previous occupations before entering the teaching profession?

2. What factors influenced their decision to pursue teaching in terms of:
   2.1 Internal factors
       2.1.1   Personal aspects
       2.1.2   Emotional aspects
   2.2 External factors
       2.2.1   Social aspects
       2.2.2   Economic aspects

3. What challenges did the career shifters encounter during their first year of teaching?

4. How did they address and overcome these challenges?

5. What motivated them to remain in the teaching profession?

LITERATURES

Challenges of Changing Careers to Teaching. Transitioning from a previous career into teaching is often challenging and demands substantial time, effort, and personal investment. Aspiring teachers must obtain formal credentials, typically involving additional coursework, examinations, and supervised teaching, which can take several years to complete, particularly in contexts where certification and practicum hours are required. Beyond meeting these qualifications, new teachers must also adapt to the unique demands of classroom management, build effective relationships with students and colleagues, and navigate the stresses associated with instructional and behavioral challenges. The profession also differs significantly from many other fields in terms of compensation, benefits, workload, and work–life balance, which may require considerable adjustment for those accustomed to different employment conditions. Moreover, teaching often operates within rigid curricular and bureaucratic structures, posing a stark contrast to careers that offer greater autonomy and flexibility.

Ways to Overcome Obstacles in a Career Change to Teaching. Several strategies can help individuals navigate the challenges of shifting to a teaching career. A key initial step is to understand the certification requirements, regulations, and expectations of the teaching profession in the region where one intends to work, including the qualifications, work conditions, and compensation structures. Obtaining the necessary education and credentials, such as completing a teaching degree or certification program, is essential for a successful transition. Additional professional development opportunities can further strengthen pedagogical knowledge, instructional techniques, and familiarity with diverse teaching approaches, while mentorship programs designed for career changers can provide valuable guidance and support. Finally, a gradual transition, such as starting with part-time tutoring or related roles, can ease the shift by allowing individuals to gain experience and confidence before fully committing to a teaching position.

VUCA(D) and Career Shifting. The concept of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and

Ambiguity) originated from the U.S. Army to describe rapidly shifting and unpredictable battlefield conditions and has since been adopted across sectors to characterize modern organizational environments. In the field of education, VUCA is particularly relevant for individuals undergoing significant career transitions, such as moving from corporate roles to teaching. The volatile and fast-changing landscape of education, shaped by technological advancements, online learning, and automation, heightens the unpredictability of job security, curriculum reforms, and professional expectations. This environment requires educators and career shifters alike to remain adaptable and continuously informed about evolving trends and demands.

Uncertainty within the educational context is intensified by shifting government policies, economic fluctuations, and global changes that influence job availability and institutional stability. Prospective teachers may experience increased anxiety as they navigate unclear career prospects and an evolving educational system whose future direction is not always transparent. Complexity further compounds these challenges, as educators must juggle multiple responsibilities, such as meeting diverse learner needs, managing classrooms, collaborating with stakeholders, and integrating emerging technologies. For career shifters, this multifaceted environment can be overwhelming; however, their prior professional experiences often equip them with transferable competencies in organization, communication, and problem-solving that can enrich their teaching practice.

Ambiguity, driven largely by the rapid pace of technological and systemic change, can leave aspiring teachers uncertain about the expectations and direction of their new profession. Establishing clear goals and a strong sense of purpose can help mitigate this ambiguity, enabling individuals to better navigate the transition. As the twenty-first-century workforce continues to evolve due to automation, artificial intelligence, and shifting industry needs, many professionals find themselves reconsidering their career trajectories. Teaching has emerged as a viable and meaningful alternative, driven by increased demand for qualified educators. Although career changes are challenging, those who transition into teaching can find the process both fulfilling and empowering, especially when they understand the nature of the VUCA environment and adopt strategies to manage its demands effectively.

The Changing Career Landscape in the Twenty-First Century. The workforce of the twenty-first century is changing rapidly. People used to choose a profession and stick with it for the rest of their life. Today, however, things are different. Many forces are altering the working environment, including technological developments such as automation and artificial intelligence. Many old jobs are being phased out, while new ones emerge. While some professionals can adapt and conform to this new reality, others are left behind and must look for new prospects. Shifting career to teaching is one of the best options to take. Teaching professions does not phase out.

The Necessity of Skilled and Qualified Teachers. While technology advancements have impacted many traditional professions, education has mostly remained unaffected. With more students enrolling in schools, colleges, and universities, there is a greater need for experienced and trained teachers. According to the National Center for Education Statistics from the study of Irwin et al. (2023), over 50 million students will be enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools by 2028. Because of the rise in student enrollment, qualified teachers will surely be in high demand.

Advantages of Teaching as a Career. Teaching is an enticing career choice for many people because it provides a sense of fulfillment and the potential to make a positive difference in the lives of students. Furthermore, teaching is a stable and secure job with benefits like health insurance and retirement plans. As a result, teaching offers flexible work schedules as well as opportunities for professional development and advancement.

The Motivation to Become a teacher. Typically, being a teacher entails completing a teacher education program and receiving a teaching credential. Some states demand a bachelor's degree in education, while others allow any degree with a teaching credential. Experienced professionals may qualify for a temporary or emergency certificate and begin teaching immediately in specific instances. There are also non-traditional routes to teaching in Saudi Arabia, such as the hiring of non-education parents or OFW wives to be an assistant teacher in the class and the offering of Online Teacher Certificate programs by colleges and universities such as Sienna College in the Philippines as well Saint Paul University Manila (SPUM), which provide accelerated teacher certification programs for persons with no prior teaching experience.

Teaching as a Promising Career Change. Teaching appeals to many career shifters because it offers clear pathways for professional growth and personal fulfillment. As technological innovations reshape educational practice, teachers with expertise in emerging tools and instructional methods can advance into roles such as curriculum specialists, instructional designers, or technology coaches, opening opportunities both within schools and in related industries. Beyond career advancement, teaching provides a deep sense of purpose, allowing individuals to make meaningful contributions to their students, families, and communities. This impact is especially evident among teachers working abroad, who help transform the lives of children and young adults by equipping them with knowledge and skills that empower their future.

METHODS

Population and Sampling. This study employed a qualitative research design using focus group discussions (FGD) as sources of data. A combination of sampling strategies was applied to select participants. Purposive sampling was used to ensure alignment with the study's objectives, supported by criterion sampling based on predetermined qualifications relevant to the research focus. Elements of convenience

and snowball sampling were also incorporated, as the researcher relied on participant availability and referrals to identify additional eligible respondents. The FGDs involved five (5) career shifters from different schools in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and were organized into two sessions due to scheduling constraints: one with teachers from the International Philippine School in Al Khobar and another schedule with teachers from the International Schools Group. All participants were based in Al Khobar, Dhahran, Dammam, and Jubail. Discussions centered on their previous career experiences and the differences they observed between their former professions and their current roles in teaching.

Instrumentation. A semi-structured interview questionnaire was employed as the principal research instrument in this study, recognizing that the careful selection of an appropriate tool is critical for obtaining valid and reliable data (Collins, 2021). Semi-structured interviews combine the flexibility of open-ended inquiry with the consistency of predetermined questions, thereby enabling the researcher to explore participants' perspectives in depth while maintaining alignment with the study's objectives. This format allowed both the researcher and participants to engage in reciprocal questioning, clarifying issues related to the problem statement and ensuring that nuanced insights, contextual experiences, and emergent themes were systematically captured.

Data Gathering Procedure. In this phenomenological study, data were collected through purposeful sampling of individuals who have directly experienced the phenomenon under investigation. The primary method involved in-depth, semi-structured focus group discussions, allowing participants to share their experiences openly, with all sessions recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. Additional techniques, including observation, recording, and controlled uploads to private platforms, were employed to enhance data reliability. Ethical considerations were rigorously observed, which include obtaining informed consent and maintaining

confidentiality to protect participants' identities and sensitive information. This comprehensive approach ensured that the data were rich, detailed, and reflective of the participants' authentic experiences, providing a solid

Data Analysis. The researcher employed a phenomenological procedure for data analysis, which emphasizes allowing the phenomenon to "reveal itself" through participants' lived experiences. The primary data source was descriptive interviews conducted via focus group discussions, recorded on video and transcribed verbatim. Interviews were conducted in English and Filipino (Tagalog), based on participant preference, and consent was obtained for all recordings. After the interview session, which lasted 45 minutes to an hour, the researcher transcribed the discussion verbatim and conducted a thematic analysis to identify patterns and connections among participants' experiences. Multiple tools supported this process, including Zoom's audio-video recording features, pen-and-paper notes for bracketing and clarifications, and the interview guide, all of which contributed to producing rich and comprehensive data. Translations from Filipino to English were performed by the researcher using personal judgment and contextual understanding. Transcripts were then organized and categorized according to shared experiences, with opportunities given to participants to verify, clarify, or amend their responses, ensuring accuracy and richness of the data. Thematic phenomenological analysis was subsequently applied to identify patterns and themes that capture the essence of the participants lived experiences. This systematic and thorough examination of the data enabled the researcher to uncover commonalities, distinctions, and insights, providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

RESULTS

Career shifter's previous work before pursuing teaching. The data revealed that a significant proportion of the respondents were wives of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and parents of children enrolled in the school where the study was conducted. Their decision to transition into teaching or assistant teaching roles was shaped not only by the opportunity for gainful employment but also by the added benefit of being able to closely monitor and support their children's academic progress within the school environment. This dual advantage underscores the socio-familial motivations behind career shifting, where professional engagement intersects with parental responsibility, thereby reinforcing both economic stability and active participation in their children's educational development.

Factors that influenced the career shifter's decision to teach. Shifting to a new career is often a complex and transformative decision, especially for individuals considering a teaching profession. While many are driven by a genuine passion for education and a desire to positively influence others, research shows that career shifts into teaching are shaped by a mix of motivations beyond personal interest. Factors such as prior professional experience, job conditions, perceptions of the teaching role, and financial considerations were found to be key influences in this transition (Siostrom et al., 2023). Likewise, Bauer et al. (2017) highlight perceived teaching competence, aspirations to impact youth, social engagement, and positive prior experiences as major motivators in career-change decisions toward teaching.

Internal factors, especially personal and emotional influences, play a central role in guiding individuals who decide to redirect their career paths. Several participants described feeling "destined" to become teachers due to strong family influences or early exposure to school environments. Participants 1, 2 and 4 shared stories of being surrounded by educators, with Participant 1 recalling growing up in a school canteen and eventually realizing, "Mother knows best"; Participant 2 becoming a teacher after initially following her father's wish to pursue accounting; and Participant 4 being inspired by her mother and sibling who were both teachers. Others, like Participants 3, 4 and 5 emphasized more practical and personal considerations, such as wanting work schedules that aligned with their children's

needs and finding teaching conducive to family life, especially while living abroad.

Emotional aspects also shaped the participants' decisions, particularly feelings of attachment to their children, the desire for stability, and the emotional impact of teaching itself. Participant 3 explained that limited job opportunities for women in Saudi Arabia made teaching the most viable option. Participant 2 shared her initial hesitation to teach accounting, but eventually realized that supporting her son's academic shift inspired her to help other students as well. She expressed how teaching later became a source of joy, saying she "fell in love" with the profession after witnessing her students' reactions and growth. These emotional experiences validated their choices and strengthened their commitment to teaching.

External factors (social and economic influences) also shaped the participants' transition into teaching. Socially, many were encouraged or "pushed" by peers or family members who were already in the field, creating a sense of belonging and purpose within the teaching community. Participant 1 described how siblings and colleagues persuaded him to pursue teaching and later complete his graduate studies, which eventually led to leadership opportunities. Economically, job availability and career stability played significant roles, particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia where opportunities for women are limited. Teaching provided accessible employment and pathways for advancement, as seen in Participant 1's rapid promotion from Professor 1 to Assistant Professor 4. Overall, the participants' stories show that career shifters are influenced by an interplay of personal values, emotional motivation, social support, financial considerations, and contextual opportunities, which are factors that collectively shape their transition into a meaningful profession like teaching.

Challenges of the career shifter face in the first year of teaching. A study examined how novice teachers' perspectives evolve during their initial year and highlights the role of experience in addressing instructional, classroom management, and emotional challenges (Ergunay et al., 2019). Their work also discussed the unique experiences of career shifters entering teaching, noting issues related to adapting to school environments, managing student behavior, and balancing professional responsibilities, especially for those coming from alternative teacher preparation routes (Ergunay et al., 2019). Participants in this study shared similar struggles, with Participant 1 describing difficulties such as poor classroom facilities, the challenge of teaching multiple classes in a hot gymnasium, and concerns about job security due to contractual employment and changes in school leadership. Overall, career shifters commonly face obstacles in their first year, ranging from classroom adjustment to administrative demands, but with persistence, adequate support, and a willingness to learn, they successfully navigate these challenges and positively impact their students' lives.

Approaches of the career shifter in overcoming challenges. Shifting careers can be daunting, especially for individuals who have long worked in a single profession, as it requires adapting to new environments, acquiring unfamiliar skills, and demonstrating resilience and determination. This study observed that most participants were women, reflecting how many female career shifters rely on systematic strategies, such as mentorship, proactive planning, and continuous learning, to navigate career transitions (Deshpande et al., 2023). Their experiences reveal a mix of resilience and a desire for meaningful work, with some leaving stable careers to pursue roles aligned with their passions and values. Participant 2, for instance, described the overwhelming challenge of teaching multiple subjects without formal teacher training, managing lesson plans, addressing diverse student needs, and creatively engaging learners, yet she also emphasized how student appreciation made these struggles rewarding. Overall, participants demonstrated how dedication, persistence, and personal motivation enable career shifters to overcome early obstacles and find fulfillment in teaching, echoing the findings of Mussagulova et al. (2023) who emphasized that successful

career transitions depend on acquiring new skills, adapting to new roles, receiving support, overcoming instability, and leveraging prior experience - factors consistent with the transition journeys shared in this research.

Motivations to stay in the teaching profession. Teaching is widely regarded as a challenging yet deeply fulfilling profession, offering educators the opportunity to shape young minds and create lasting impact despite daily obstacles. The participants shared that their motivation to remain in teaching stems from meaningful connections with students and supportive school communities. Participant 2 emphasized the joy of influencing students' lives and the sense of belonging at IPSA, describing colleagues as a "second family" who help sustain her commitment to the profession. Participant 5 highlighted dedication and genuine love for children as the core reasons she stays, noting that teaching requires daily devotion, energy, and a strong sense of responsibility. Inspired by this, Participant 1 reflected on his personal equation (mission plus dedication equals passion) explaining that passion fuels longevity in teaching, even if the profession is not financially enriching. Overall, the participants' experiences illustrate that teachers remain in the field because of the meaningful relationships they build, the fulfillment of contributing to students' growth, and the personal sense of purpose that teaching provides.

DISCUSSION

The detailed transcript was examined to clarify the study's objectives, and the findings both reinforced much of the literature review and contributed new insights into why Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) transition into teaching. Analysis showed that many career-shifting professionals genuinely find enjoyment in their new roles and express no dissatisfaction with their current duties. Before entering the classroom, most must complete formal requirements such as a teaching certificate program, a Master of Arts in Education, a Master of Education, or continuing education while already employed. Although

their career paths vary, many still discover a clear connection to their passion for teaching. Some graduates from Saint Paul University – Manila (SPUM) pursued the Teaching Certificate Program (TCP) or a master's degree after recognizing opportunities in the teaching field, eventually qualifying to take the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). Through thematic phenomenological analysis, the researcher identified patterns that highlight what influences professionals to switch careers, the initial challenges they face, how they cope, and what motivates them to remain in the profession.

The first major theme involves factors that influenced their shift to teaching. Family influence played a central role, with several participants noting that teaching was encouraged by parents or that many relatives were also educators. For some, motherhood heightened the desire to become more involved in their children's schooling, while others saw teaching as a stable career with abundant opportunities locally and abroad. Participants also expressed that their previous training aligned naturally with teaching; for example, a pediatric nurse found it easy to apply her medical background to working with young learners, while others with artistic inclinations were encouraged to explore teaching roles. Additionally, some opted to teach after experiencing stress in their previous workplaces, viewing teaching as a more meaningful and sustainable alternative.

Participants also shared recurring challenges during their first year in the classroom. Issues included inadequate school facilities, particularly overcrowded or shared spaces, which made classroom management difficult. Teachers also reported pressure from parents, especially when expectations were high or when parents were in denial about their children's behavior. Motivating learners proved challenging, particularly in subjects that students found intimidating. Workload concerns, such as teaching multiple subjects, creating lesson plans, and adjusting to school policies, were also major stressors. For many career shifters, the abrupt transition into a

demanding role without sufficient training and the lack of job security intensified the difficulty of their first year.

Despite these struggles, teachers reported several coping strategies that helped them adapt. Many relied on voicing their concerns to immediate supervisors, while others drew strength and motivation from their students. The sense of purpose they experienced, the impact they had on students' lives, and the fulfillment that came from seeing learners grow were central to their decision to stay. Participants emphasized passion, commitment, and resilience as key factors that sustained them. Supportive relationships with colleagues and the school community, along with adequate compensation and benefits, further influenced their decision to continue teaching.

Overall, the study shows that career shifters enter teaching for a combination of personal, familial, economic, and emotional reasons. Their first year is marked by significant challenges, yet these difficulties also present opportunities for professional growth. With the right preparation, mindset, mentorship, and support systems, transitioning into teaching can be a deeply rewarding experience. The study concludes with recommendations, such as evaluating the pros and cons of the profession, pursuing professional development, seeking mentorship, leveraging prior work experience, and preparing for the challenges ahead, to help future career shifters navigate the transition more successfully.

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