

Reinventing Vitae: A Phenomenological Inquiry on Career Shifters' Decision Influences, Challenges, and Learning Experiences

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Abstract— The primary purpose of the present study was to explore and analyze the career transition from the industry to the academe. Lived experiences are particular to the influencing drivers that triggered career shifters' decisions, the challenges encountered, and the meaningful insights they learned. Employing a phenomenological inquiry approach, the researchers utilized an expert-validated interview protocol formulated according to the study's objectives. Accomplished audio-taped online semi-structured interviews among purposively-selected participants (n=14) who have changed careers from industry to academe were performed. Based on the interpretative phenomenological analysis approach and themes' validation through focus group discussion, decision influences were grounded on professional and personal growth, a sense of fulfillment, passion for the teaching profession, and the return of service. The findings also highlighted the common challenges experienced by the participants, such as overwhelming workloads, varied work ethics in the academe, lack of knowledge and skills—particularly in classroom management, instruction, and assessment, and compliance with the profession's requirements set by the regulatory organizations. The findings also provided insights and salient learning among the career shifters. To successfully reinvent the transition in working from the industry to the academe, the study recommends collaborative actions, workflow evaluations and policy reviews on recruitment, training, and faculty development.

Index Terms— Career Shifters, Challenges, Decision Influences, Learning Experiences, Phenomenology

I. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary world of the labor market is considered and defined by continuous and unpredictable changes. Schlossberg's theory states that transition changes relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles. Work transitions become customary because employees desire to learn innovative and new skills [1]. Career growth is a lifelong and continuous process. Furthermore, in this rapidly moving world of work, it is no longer ordinary that workforces will embrace one life-long occupation because people search for the best fit that matches their character, likes and dislikes, and diverse perspective of their life [2].

Moreover, to understand the meaning of a transition for an individual – considering the impact must be regarded [3]. Job change occurs frequently and is viewed as a standard feature of career progress [4]. When considering appropriateness and relevance, it is evident that people make career moves to the academe within their academic disciplines and specializations. Out of the plethora of career opportunities available, haven't you questioned why your teachers chose the profession they are in? After all, teaching is undeniably one of the most back-breaking occupations. For the Department of Education, any educational system's success

relies on its teachers' competence and commitment [5]. Teaching requires a certain degree of knowledge and profound expertise in complex competencies. The hiring standard was recognized as an assurance of proficiency and quality [6]. Transitions from industry to academic institution denote a phenomenon of a career change because it requires expertise, pledge, professional development, and effective teaching strategies. A career in the academe entails investment in the teaching-learning process, personal and professional identities, and time of formation and transformation [7]. The displaced applicants will need TESDA Certification, Trainer's Methodology Certificate, and time to pass the licensure examination for professional teachers.

There are several factors affecting choices of career transitions. Workers change careers from industries to any growing labor market because it gives a chance to improve their economic position and outside opportunities continuously improve [8], [9]. Satisfaction, career advancement, promotion, fit for skills and interests, time for family, job security, compensation, self-efficacy, conscientiousness, and personal direction are just a few thoughts and reasons influencing an employee to consider changing jobs. The study is anchored to three kaleidoscope

career mirrors which emphasized authenticity, balance, and challenge as facets of infinite patterns of career choice. Authenticity is when a person makes choices that allow him to be realistic and accurate to himself. Balance denotes choosing a career that will guide an individual to equilibrium between work and non-work demands, such as time for family, relatives and friends, and other personal interests. Lastly, a challenge represents a stimulus that motivates and fuels an individual's desire for career advancement and elevation [10]. In context, the researchers believe that exploring and understanding experiences on career transitions from industry to academe will help teachers be more reflective, competent, and outstanding. Faculty development plans and evaluation schemes will likewise be established more accurately and effectively, especially for those who chose to enter the academe for whatever reasons. If the institution is willing to put effort into interpreting these lived experiences of career transitioning to teaching from any industry, there are huge benefits and significance to be realized [11].

Consequently, a new level of basic education, the Senior High School, was launched in 2016 as approved in the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. The enactment became a vital reform to improve the country's educational system [12]. With this, the educational organization encountered a teacher recruitment and retention crisis. There is a growing pressure to find ways of hiring new teachers from outside the academe and traditional pathways. This predicament provides access to those seeking the opportunity to make a career change from a different industry to a teaching profession [13], [14]. In the past four years, the rate of professionals changing their job and moving into teaching careers has increased. However, recruiting competent and skilled candidates is still demanding and challenging. In early 2015, the Department of Education called on skilled and highly-qualified teachers, experts, and practitioners from different industries interested in teaching subjects in the SHS. Employment guidelines with standards and evaluation criteria for teaching positions were released in D.O. #3, s— 2016, which ensures that highly competent entities with the appropriate qualifications and specializations will be appointed.

In the context of the University of Perpetual Help, which is the locale of the present study, the prevalence of faculty members who came from industry to academe is very evident. For instance, faculty members who are handling Technical, Vocational, and livelihood courses were industry practitioners. The same is true for faculty members handling Accountancy, Business, and Management-related courses. Those aforementioned courses are highly-technical and skill-based; thus it requires industry professionals for efficient and effective delivery of instruction. However, this scenario also posed issues relative to the requirement of the Department of Education that all teachers in Basic Education must possess a teaching license. Industry professionals who are non-

education graduates must take additional education units in order to be qualified to take the Board Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (BLEPT). If not addressed, this issue may pose challenges to accreditation and certification endeavors of the University, which in turn may compromise the quality services offered by the institution.

The study focuses on three aspects of career change: influences, challenges, and learning experiences. Before taking up the teaching profession, career changers impact and control their job performance. The decision to enter the academe represents a thrilling and daunting life challenge for industry professionals [4]. It is a dynamic, complex, and continuous developmental process. Effective navigation on this career transition can be best understood after acquiring and engaging in the teaching and learning process. The shortage of all suitably qualified, competent, and experienced teachers has excellent potential to make education less weak. Institutions must make a significant shift and consider how to develop different but equitable career pathways for industry professionals who choose to shift to a teaching career [9]

Ultimately, this study was conducted to better understand the transitional experiences, and challenges of faculty members who shifted from industry to academe. The present research also aimed at shedding light on the issues and concerns that need to be addressed in order to ensure and uphold quality education through competent and effective faculty members who shifted careers from the industry to academe. Despite the multitude of literature relative to career shift, scarce amount of literature exist in the context of industry professionals migrating to the academe. Moreover, the specific locale of the study, which the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA makes the study novel.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In response to the limited literature on career shifts and the problem arising on qualified and competent teachers, this study investigated the career transition experience among industry professionals who decided to shift their careers in the academe.

Specifically, it also sought to answer the following questions:

1. What factors influenced the participants' career shift from industry to academe?
2. What challenges do industry professionals experience as they shift from industry work to the teaching profession?
3. What are the participants' salient learnings and realizations as career shifters from industry to academe?

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the University of Perpetual Help – System DALTA Campuses in Las Pinas, Calamba, and Molino.

Qualitative Design was used to explore and understand the lived experiences of career shifters from industry to academe. Meanwhile, the phenomenological inquiry was employed to

explore and deeply understand the context and essence of the 'lived experiences' of the co-researchers. Phenomenology analyzes the essences perceived by consciousness concerning individual experiences such that reduction becomes the central theme [15].

The participants were comprised of fourteen (14) Senior High School (SHS) faculty members of the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA Las Pinas, Molino, and Calamba campuses, who have all experienced comparable phenomena (Greening, 2019). They were purposively selected based on the following criteria:

- a. faculty members who are not education majors;
- b. who obtained a bachelor/M.A. degree relevant to any strand/track;
- c. who understand Filipino and English;
- d. who have been teaching for three years and above in the SHS department;
- e. who have passed any TESDA-related certification and program; and
- f. willing to participate in the study to share their experiences as career shifters from industry to academe.

Before data collection, a letter of informed consent was signed by the participants. Necessary data were collected via online semi-structured interviews guided by an expert-validated interview protocol. The questions were formulated according to the study's objectives, such as exploring the influences of a career change, challenges encountered during the transition period and while teaching, and learning experiences in moving to academe as a teacher. The interview was audio-taped and transcribed verbatim and was returned to the co-researchers for checking and validation.

The researchers employed an interpretive phenomenological analysis approach (IPA) to analyze the data. As a qualitative research approach, IPA can understand and interpret in detail the 'lived experiences' of research participants [16]. The general data analysis procedures comprised transcribing answers verbatim, validation and analysis, reducing the data in a phenomenological way, engaging in the creative and critical distinction of reduced data, and revealing the essence of the lived experiences using themes or codes. Discovered and coded themes were validated through a follow-up focus group discussion (FGD).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following results emerged anchored on the gathered data.

I. Factors that influenced the participants' career shift from industry to academe

1. Professional and Personal Growth. It was revealed that professional growth is one of the main reasons that encouraged them to shift to teaching. As shared by a participant:

"I left the creative industry because I can see that there is no more room left for me to grow." – Participant 4

This is in accord with the literature where it was noted that workers were most likely to change careers if they failed to see advancement opportunities at their current employer [4], [8]. Similarly it was pointed out that employees leave jobs for career growth more than for money [9]. In connection, the participants expressed:

"For a while, it was both sustainable and lucrative. Exhausting, and I got to drown in money, but because I was spending 20 hours a day working, I couldn't enjoy spending the money..." – Participant 14

"For me, I decided that being in the industry wasn't a way to live. No amount of salary is worth my freedom or my authenticity..." – Participant 11

Furthermore, the desire to have time for family, and a good work/life balance [17], were pivotal in the career growth and possible shift decision for the participants. A participant expressed a similar sentiment:

"I literally didn't have time for anything else. I barely got to see my daughter because I was never at home." – Participant 9

2. Self-fulfillment and Passion for Teaching. It can be gleaned that the participants value self-fulfillment and passion for teaching as reasons for shifting to the academe. This is parallel to the previous literature that some career changers were interested in teaching as a career because they wanted more personal fulfillment in their lives [18], [11]. A participant shared the same sentiment:

"Working in the industry was good, but I felt that I am missing something in terms of self-fulfillment." – Participant 12

Additionally, a participant shared that they shifted to the academic field to contribute to society by imparting relevant experiences to the learners.

"I want to contribute something positive to society by sharing my experiences with the young students – Participant 13

The same findings were evident in the study of Ahn (2016), which posited that desire to shape the futures of children and adolescents and make a social contribution was some salient factor of a career change. Consequently a study averred that prior experience gave the career changers the perception that they had the skills and disposition for a teaching career and would enjoy teaching [9]. The participants expressed that their passion for education and prior experience fueled career change.

"My passion and love for teaching. When I was asked to do some substitute teaching as guidance personnel, I really enjoyed teaching, so I asked to be moved from GCO to CASED. – Participant 12

"During my career in FMCGs, I've realized how effective I am during our learning sessions." – Participant 5.

3. Return of Service. Contrary to the factors mentioned above, where the participants voluntarily shifted their career from industry to academe, one of the participants shared that

their reasons were mainly because of a mandate to teach to give back to the institution that funded their education. A participant shared:

"As part of my return of service for the Scholarship grant of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), I am mandated to teach at a Senior High School closest to my residence. As part of our contract, I must teach a total of 3 school years, the same duration as the scholarship grant from DOST..." – Participant 9

II. Challenges that industry professionals experienced as they shift from industry work to the teaching profession

1. Nature of Work. The participants claimed that working in the industry is very different from working in the academe in terms of the following aspects:

1.1. Overwhelming Workload. Various participants expressed their challenges in dealing with overwhelming workloads such as paper and clerical work. A participant also noted that communication in the academe relies on too much paper trail, unlike in other industries where electronic communication is preferred.

"...too many meetings, too much paper works, uses too much paper communication instead of email..." – Participant 1

The environment and the pace of work were also a challenge, as highlighted by a participant.

"Very different in terms of workload and environment and pace of work." – Participant 6

A participant also emphasized that the overwhelming workload is part of the nature of the work in the academe. Preparing for classroom teaching, such as the preparation of instructional materials, really requires more time.

"There are also time constraints and challenges built into the profession like taking home some work or grading and coming up with teaching materials that take up a significant amount of time." – Participant 14

These findings are congruent with the study of several studies where it was emphasized that new teachers and even the tenured faculty face workload issues which affect both their well-being and teaching performance [17], [19], [20]. In the context of the present study, career shifters can be considered as "new" in the profession.

1.2. Different Work Ethics. The participants also encountered challenges relative to different academic work ethics. One participant voiced out that the industry is more liberal than the academe, which is very conservative—considering that the locale of the study is a Catholic-oriented institution.

"The production industry is very liberal, so I'm also adjusting to, in comparison- a very conservative and religious workspace. I understand the WHYS and the justifications, of course. It's just something I'm still adjusting to." – Participant 14

The disparity of work ethics can also be gleaned in discipline, language use, and approach to the community. As experienced by Participant 12:

"Industry discipline is stricter. I had difficulty transitioning from the industry to the academic discipline... Also, the use of language and vocabulary. There is a big difference in the use of language in the industry to that of the academic environment, which is more formal and tamer. I also had to hurdle many complaints, accusations, and discrimination regarding approaches utilized in the industry environment with that of the academic space. Probably, practitioners share the same sentiments when it comes to approaches." – Participant 8

In addition, the participants also noted that a different approach to dealing with the learners is needed as utmost patience and understanding are necessary for molding the personality of the young learners.

"Adjustment in the practices from industry to academe is one of my struggles since we are dealing with the young learners that requires patience and understanding." – Participant 7

2. Lack of Prior Knowledge and Compliance with the requirements of the Teaching Profession. Since the participants are shifters from different industries, there are instances when they need more knowledge and experience to deliver the required skills and content. However, supportive and compassionate colleagues helped them cope with the difficulties by providing guidance. As Participant 3 voiced out:

"There are many difficulties I encountered. The one that I remember was teaching the subject of literature. I do not know the subject, but I am grateful to my colleagues and coordinators because they are supportive and compassionate."

Another salient challenge career shifters encounter is satisfying the requirement of a Professional Teacher's license. A participant shared:

"I had difficulties in complying with the requirements of passing the LET... we were advised that we cannot stay at the department unless we can secure our PRC license..." – Participant 5.

"My challenges were adjusting to the rudiments of teaching... and getting the license, studying and teaching at the same time..." – Participant 13.

Having a teaching license is crucial in the academe. Aside from being a requirement for accreditation by different accrediting bodies, it is also mandated by law. As stipulated in RA 9293, SEC. 26, "No person shall engage in teaching and act as a professional teacher as defined in this Act, whether in the preschool, elementary or secondary level, unless the person is a duly registered professional teacher, and a holder of a valid certificate of registration and a valid professional license or a holder of a valid special/temporary permit."

III. Salient learnings and realizations acquired by career shifters from industry to academe

It is evident from the gathered data that the participants learned numerous things relative to the "values" aspect more

than the "knowledge" aspect.

1. Values

1.1. Patience. It was found that students consider patience as their most desired teacher personality trait out of six personality items [21]. Thus, patience is an essential element of effective teaching. In connection, the participants claimed that they developed the value of patience after quite some time in the academe. The participants expressed that patience is vital when dealing with misbehaving students and imposing discipline.

"A lot of patience is needed, especially in dealing with students who misbehaved..." – Participant 11

"Patience is important when teaching—discipline in becoming better in your craft. Never give up on any student no matter what challenge you face." – Participant 1.

1.2. Lifelong Learning. Uy (2021) stated that every individual needs lifelong learning for both their occupational and personal needs; they also specified that changing world conditions and developing technology make lifelong learning indispensable for all individuals, especially educators. Contingent to the earlier idea, the participants realized that lifelong learning is fundamental in the academic field. Educators are expected to possess a great deal of knowledge and wisdom as facilitators of knowledge. As shared by the participants:

"Teaching profession pushes me to upgrade my knowledge and develop my skills to share and adapt to the changing demand in the teaching field. In terms of technological changes, it helps upgrade my skills in teaching strategies. It reminds me that to be able to give and share, you must have it. As an academe, we have incorporated values such honesty, respect, and responsibility that will guide our learners and simultaneously be the role model to them." – Participant 10.

It can also be noted that the participants also acknowledge the role of experience, peers, and colleagues as contributors to lifelong learning.

"Teaching is a noble profession/cause - it's difficult and challenging, but the more experience you have and the more open-minded you are to do things a certain way, there's always an avenue for improvement. I am a continuous learner, and I try to learn as much from what I have seen or experienced and from the experiences of others such as my co-colleagues and even my students." – Participant 13.

"That you learn every day. In the industry, you have a daily routine, though, in teaching you also do, but in here you meet different types of people with different perspectives and ideas that add up to your discussion in which you also learn." – Participant 8

1.3. Perseverance. Since the teaching profession is demanding but fulfilling, the participants shared that they acquired the value of perseverance in their undertakings. It was also stressed that a career shift per se is challenging.

"Career change is not an easy task. It entails a lot of hard work, resilience to the new environment, and perseverance in self and career development." – Participant 7

"Teaching is indeed a vocation, and it needs a lot of effort to enhance the skills to help develop the learning of students." – Participant 12

2. Skills. Aside from the values, the participants also developed and enhanced their skills as they shifted to the academe.

"I learned many things while working at the university. Now, I can develop my reading habits. I can develop my drawing and painting skills. I can appreciate the school as a platform for learning. I can try to be kind and polite to others. I can improve my communication skills." – Participant 4

The participants also claimed that they had developed their skills in dealing with different types of learners, such as those with special needs.

"I gained more courage and being innovative in dealing/teaching students with special and unique characters..." – Participant 2

As the cited literature supported, teachers must be prepared and skilled to set the example of accepting and valuing every classroom member [4], [9]. Teachers should embrace and love the diversity of every child in their classroom.

3. Realizations – The following are some of the realizations of the participants as they became immersed in the teaching profession.

3.1. Being an educator is influential. The influence of an educator never stops. An educator must be someone who molds and develop future leaders. Beyond the intellectual aspects, one should also focus on skills, values, and moral formation. As a participant stressed:

"Being an educator transcends every aspect of life. What you teach your learners may create the best or worst leaders; instilling them with best practices paves a long way." – Participant 6

Consequently, a study averred that to address different societal problems; one must look at morals/ value education as an integral part of the education system [22].

On the other hand, a participant highlighted that if educators want a positive change, they should also not neglect the intellectual or academic aspect of the child. It is also as important as the values and moral elements.

"...if we really, truly want things to change and become better, we cannot be complacent in educating; even the "low academic performers" among the students." – Participant 16

V. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that career shift is contingent on factors such as Professional and Personal Growth, Self-fulfillment and Passion for Teaching, and Return to Service. Shifting into the academic field from the industry brought about different challenges, such as an Overwhelming Workload, Different Work Ethics, and Lack of Prior Knowledge and Compliance with the requirements of the Teaching Profession. Despite these challenges, the participants also gained salient learnings and realizations based on their experiences, such as the values of patience, being a lifelong learner, and perseverance. The

participants also developed their skills, like dealing with different types of learners, such as those with special needs. Ultimately, the participants realized that as influential educators, one should focus on developing not just the intellect but also the moral aspect of the learners.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

The current research has provided an interesting result on influences, challenges, and realizations of career shifters from industry to academe. To successfully navigate and reinvent industry practitioners with their career change to the academe, with the validation through focus group discussion, the researchers recommend the following:

1. Academic leaders should make special provisions for faculty training and development programs to mitigate uncertainty and problems relative to work ethics, prior knowledge of classroom management, curriculum delivery, and provision of quality instruction and assessment. The design must be aligned and appropriate to the concerns and needs of the faculty before and during their transition.
2. On the teaching profession's compliance and requirements, the human resource department should review and enhance the ranking and promotion policy. Prearrangement and consideration of industry experiences, portfolio, affiliations, and other professional qualifications can be given considerable weight in the ranking contract.
3. Lastly, a support system strategy may be executed to help career changers in the overwhelming workloads and paper works. Program chairpersons and tenured faculty with commendable performance appraisals can significantly assist. Peer mentoring, team teaching, and a professional learning community are essential strategies to ease possible work fatigue among career shifters.

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