Narratives of Non-Teaching Degree Professionals Engaging Online Teaching Jobs

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the narratives of non-teaching degree professionals engaging in online teaching jobs, focusing on their motivations, challenges, strategies, and advice. Using a qualitative research design, data were gathered through interviews with 8 participants who shared their lived experiences and analyzed using Colaizzi's method by identifying common themes. The findings reveal that flexibility and personal benefits are key motivators for non-teaching degree professionals to pursue online teaching positions. Participants cited work-life balance, competitive salaries, and opportunities for global engagement as compelling reasons. However, technical and operational challenges such as unstable internet connections, power outages, and unfamiliarity with teaching tools emerged as significant barriers. To address these issues, participants demonstrated resourcefulness by investing in backup technologies, improving digital literacy, and embracing personal growth strategies such as patience and adaptability. They also emphasized the importance of being open to new opportunities and engaging in training programs for skill development.

This study recommends that online teaching platforms provide robust technical support systems and tailored training programs to assist non-teaching degree professionals in overcoming challenges. Policymakers may consider developing certification pathways to validate their expertise and address gaps to ensure equitable access to reliable technology. By supporting these educators, the online education sector can better harness their diverse skills and perspectives to enrich virtual learning experiences globally.

Keywords: Online teaching, non-teaching professionals, motivations, challenges.

INTRODUCTION

The growing demand for online education has created new opportunities for professionals without formal teaching degrees to engage in online teaching. This trend has expanded the traditional boundaries of education, allowing individuals from diverse professional backgrounds to share their expertise through virtual platforms. Online teaching roles are not limited to traditional educators but include professionals with specialized skills in areas such as language, technology, and business. These roles allow for flexibility and accessibility, making them attractive to non-teaching degree holders seeking alternative career paths. The rise of digital learning technologies and the increasing need for remote education during the COVID-19 pandemic have further accelerated this shift, highlighting the potential of non-teaching degree professionals to contribute meaningfully to the field of online education.

Despite these opportunities, several gaps and challenges remain in understanding the experiences of non-teaching degree professionals engaging in online teaching. Existing studies often focus on teachers transitioning to online platforms but rarely address the unique narratives of those without formal teaching credentials. For instance, a study explored why teacher education graduates choose non-teaching careers but did not include how non-teaching professionals navigate online teaching roles [11]. Challenges faced by non-teaching personnel in adapting to webinars were examined but did not investigate their transition into teaching roles [2]. These gaps highlight the need for research that captures the lived experiences of non-teaching degree professionals who take on online teaching jobs.

In the Philippine context, studies provide valuable insights into related phenomena but do not directly address the narratives of the non-teaching degree professionals [2][11]. It was revealed that teacher education graduates often pursue non-teaching jobs due to factors like competitive income and flexibility, suggesting parallels with why non-teaching degree holders might opt for online teaching [11]. Non-teaching personnel adapt to digital tools during webinars, which could inform an understanding of how they might approach online teaching roles [2]. Addressing this gap is crucial for developing policies and programs that support non-traditional educators in maximizing their potential within the online education landscape. This research improves online education's quality and diversity, benefiting Filipino educators and learners, and challenges policymakers to consider online teaching programs.

Objectives

Generally, the objectives were sought to unravel the narratives of non-teaching degree professionals engaging online teaching jobs.

Specifically, it aimed to:

1. to explore the various factors that influence non-teaching degree professionals 'decisions to accept online teaching jobs, providing insight into their motivations and aspirations.

2. to examine the specific challenges and difficulties faced by non-teaching degree professionals in online teaching roles, thus, understanding the obstacles encountered in this field.

3. to assess the strategies employed by non-teaching degree professionals to overcome challenges in online teaching, and to gather actionable advice for future non-teaching degree professionals entering this domain.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a phenomenological research design to qualitatively analyze the narratives of non-teaching degree professionals engaging in online teaching jobs.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Valencia City, Province of Bukidnon, Philippines, from January to March of the year 2025. The participants involved in this study were non-teaching degree professionals engaging in online teaching jobs from different companies across the Philippines.
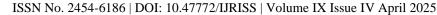
Participants of the Study

An inclusion criterion was prepared for selecting the participants of the study. First, the participant must be a graduate of any university program excluding education programs in the Philippines. Second, the participant may be a licensed or non-licensed graduate. Third, the participant must be an online teacher.

The participants were chosen by snowball sampling enabling the researcher to have access to participants who fit the inclusion criteria. There were eight participants involved in the study.

Research Instrument

To explore the narratives of non-teaching degree professionals engaging in online teaching jobs, semi-structured interviews were employed as the primary research instrument. Interview guide questions were developed and content validated by experts. Open-ended questions were designed to encourage participants to narrate their experiences in depth and allow flexibility to follow-up questions based on their responses. The introductory questions were:

1. What motivated you to accept a position in online teaching?

2. What challenges and difficulties did you encounter while working in this role?

3. What strategies did you implement to address these challenges?

4. What advice would you offer to non-teaching degree professionals considering online teaching positions?

Data Gathering Procedure

The research interview was conducted via Zoom on a scheduled date that was mutually agreed upon by the participant and the researcher. It was audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis. This approach ensured that the data collection process was both systematic and adaptable to the nuances of individual experiences. Primarily, participants were identified if they met the inclusion criteria. Before the start of the interview, the researchers informed the respective prospective participant of the study's objectives, purpose, and benefits to the community.

Additionally, their rights as participants were elucidated, including the confidentiality of the interview and the data collected. To initiate the interview, preliminary questions were posed to gather essential information, including the individual's name, age, alma mater, workplace, company affiliation, and their length of service. Then, the introductory questions were asked.

Data Analysis

The researcher employed the phenomenology data analysis model proposed by Colaizzi (1978) a known method in psychology including health sciences. The analysis process involved several key steps, each closely tied to the data. The result provides a concise and comprehensive overview description of the phenomenon under study [10].

Initially, the researcher engaged in data familiarization by reading participants' accounts multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. Following this, the researcher identified relevant statements within the accounts that directly related to the phenomenon under investigation. Next, meaningful interpretations were developed by carefully considering these fundamental statements to uncover the underlying meanings of the phenomenon. To ensure adherence to the phenomenon as experienced, the researcher employed presupposition bracketing, setting aside any preconceived notions during the analysis. The identified meanings were then grouped into themes that emerged from the analysis, ensuring their consistency across different accounts. This was followed by crafting a comprehensive description of the phenomenon, encompassing all the identified themes. The constructed descriptions were subsequently condensed into concise statements that encapsulated the essential aspects of the phenomenon. Finally, significant structured statements were returned to all participants for feedback, allowing the researchers to validate whether these statements accurately captured the participants' actual experiences or merely reflected their interpretations based on their responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Motivation in the Acceptance of Online Teaching Position

Theme – Flexibility and Personal Benefits

The theme of flexibility and personal benefits emerges as a significant motivator for non-teaching degree professionals engaging in online teaching jobs. Several participants highlighted the convenience and flexibility that online teaching provides.

This theme is supported by the following responses:

"*The opportunity to have lesser working hours and competitive salary*" (Participant 1).

"*The flexibility of online teaching also allows me to connect with learners from different cultures and backgrounds, making every lesson a unique experience. Plus, online teaching provides a great balance between work and personal life while allowing me to make a meaningful impact globally*" (Participant 2).

"*I was motivated by the opportunity to work in a relaxed environment, with fewer working hours and minimal hassle*" (Participant 3).

"*It's very convenient and flexible because I can work from home, and I do not need to travel to work*" (Participant 4).

"*It was because I was looking for a job that would not require me to go to offices but rather just work at home. Which suites the online job I have right now*" (Participant 8).

Participants revealed that online teaching enhances work-life balance, provides personal growth, and offers global engagement. Online teaching platforms may prioritize flexibility and can be a fulfilling career path that aligns with personal values and goals.

Studies have revealed that flexibility in work arrangements plays a pivotal role in enhancing job satisfaction and fostering employee retention [5]. Furthermore, it is significance to maintaining a harmonious work-life balance in fostering overall well-being [7]. In the context of online teaching, flexibility allows educators to reach a broader audience and create personalized learning experiences, which can be highly motivating [3]. More recent studies emphasize the role of technology in facilitating flexible work arrangements, which has become particularly relevant during the pandemic [6].

Challenges and Difficulties Encountered while Working as an Online Teacher

Theme – Technical and Operational Challenges

The theme of technical and operational challenges is a significant difficulty faced by non-teaching degree professionals engaging in online teaching jobs. Supporting responses from participants highlight various issues, including unreliable internet connections, power outages, unfamiliarity with teaching materials, and adapting to new teaching strategies

This theme is supported by the following responses:

"*The most common difficulties would be losing internet and power outages. Other than that, it would be just trying to familiarize your way with the materials and applications used to teach online*" (Participant 1).

"*Internet issues, keeping students engaged, communication barriers, scheduling across time zones, and the lack of face-to-face interaction*" (Participant 2).

"*Technical difficulties, power outage and internet service interruption*" (Participant 4).

"*Frequent power interruptions*" (Participant 5).

"*Unstable internet connection, power interruption, and teaching equipment*" (Participant 7).

" *Problems on electricity interruption and internet instability*" (Participant 8).

Technical challenges like unstable internet and frequent power outages disrupt lessons and reduce efficiency. Operational difficulties, such as unfamiliar teaching tools and adapting to diverse student levels, add complexity. Online teaching platforms may invest in technical support, provide comprehensive training, and offer resources for adapting to diverse learning environments. Addressing these challenges improves online education quality and makes it a viable career option for non-teaching professionals.

Studies emphasizes the importance of stable technological infrastructure in ensuring the success of online education during disruptions like COVID-19 [1]. Similarly, technical barriers such as poor internet connectivity can negatively impact both educators and learners in virtual environments [4]. Studies also stress the need for professional development programs to help teachers adapt to new technologies [14]. Furthermore, educators who are proficient in digital tools are better equipped to engage students and manage online classrooms, which can lead to improved job satisfaction and reduced feelings of isolation during remote instruction [8].

Strategies Implemented by Non-Teaching Degree Professionals Engaging Online Teaching Jobs

Theme – Adaptation and Resourcefulness

The theme of adaptation and resourcefulness is a key strategy employed by non-teaching degree professionals to address challenges in online teaching roles. These responses show that participants relied on both technical solutions and personal development strategies. This adaptability is crucial for success in online teaching roles.

This theme is supported by the following responses:

"*Acquiring back-up internet and generator is a quick fix for losing internet and power outages but it is still unpredictable. And being an adaptive teacher ensuring you can keep up with the technology being used in teaching online*" (Participant 1).

"*I addressed online ESL teaching challenges by ensuring a stable setup, using interactive lessons, simplifying communication, managing time zones effectively, and encouraging student participation*" (Participant 2).

"*To overcome these challenges, I focused on turning my weaknesses into motivation for growth. I made an effort to improve my skills in online teaching, learned better ways to handle kids, and worked on developing patience*" (Participant 3).

"*I bought back up power supply for both my computer and the internet router*" (Participant 4).

"*I acquired and invested in a new laptop and generators to enhance my preparedness and ensure uninterrupted delivery of my lessons, even in the event of power outages*" (Participant 5).

"*Presence of mind and prepared templates for small talks for different levels*" (Participant 6).

"*I bought backups, such as a generator*" (Key informant 7).

"*The strategies I used are, buy a generator and back up WIFI to support my work even though there is no electricity and WIFI. In terms of material, I was able to familiarize it with the help of our trainers and workmates*" (Participant 8).
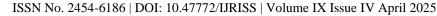
This theme reveals that adaptability is essential for professionals transitioning into online teaching roles. Participants relied on technical solutions, such as backup internet connections, generators, and upgraded equipment, to mitigate disruptions caused by power outages or unstable internet connections. Additionally, they emphasized personal development strategies like improving teaching skills, learning new technologies, and developing patience to handle diverse student needs. This suggest that online teaching platforms may prioritize providing technical resources and training programs to support educators. Institutions must also promote a culture of collaboration where teachers can share best practices for overcoming challenges. Furthermore, governments and organizations may invest in infrastructure improvements to reduce digital inequities that hinder effective online education.

Studies emphasized the importance of creating immersive learning environments through advanced instructional technologies and comprehensive faculty support systems [12]. Similarly, technical barriers like poor internet connectivity can disrupt lessons, stressing the need for backup solutions such as generators or alternative internet sources [4]. Professional development programs are needed that equip educators with the skills needed to navigate digital tools effectively [14]. Additionally, educators who exhibit exceptional adaptability are better equipped to manage the challenges inherent in remote teaching. This adaptability enables educators to create an effective learning environment, even amidst the inherent difficulties of online education [13].

Insights from Non-Teaching Degree Professionals in the Online Teaching Industry

Theme – Embracing Opportunities and Personal Growth

The theme of embracing opportunities and personal growth emerges as a key piece of advice offered by non-

teaching degree professionals considering online teaching positions. These responses underscore the multifaceted potential of online teaching as a pathway to not only a fulfilling career but also personal growth and skill development. Participants emphasize the significance of seizing these opportunities to enhance public speaking abilities, cultivate flexibility, and expand professional connections.

This theme is supported by the following responses:

"*Speaking from experience, being an online teacher means doing your best every day. Teaching students online can have their own challenges but it sure is fun and lovely. As long as you have fun with being an online teacher, it is never dull*" (Participant 1).

"*If you don't have a teaching degree but want to teach online, focus on your expertise and look for subjects that don't require formal teaching credentials... Gain experience through tutoring platforms and improve your online teaching skills*" (Participant 2).

"*My advice is to research and learn in advance to better understand the role. Be open to feedback and constructive criticism, stay polite and patient, and treat every day as a learning experience*" (Participant 3).

"*If you like teaching but worry about daily commutes, stressful duties, and being away from your family, then this job is the perfect fit for you*" (Participant 4).

"*Online teaching positions provide a unique opportunity to gain valuable experience while enjoying the convenience of working from home, flexible scheduling, and an enriching firsthand engagement with students—all within a dynamic and evolving digital landscape*" (Participant 5).

"*Online teaching isn't just a job. It actually helps other aspects of your life. You learn how to be flexible to different needs of students and you become a better public speaker*" (Participant 6).

"*I would advise you to not be afraid and to open yourself for new opportunities. Also, you can try to go out of your comfort zone. I would also, like you to grab all the opportunities there is such as trainings because it will widen your horizons*" (Participant 8).

Participants highlighted how online teaching encourages adaptability, confidence, communication skills, and flexibility. These benefits extend beyond career advancement, influencing broader aspects of life such as public speaking abilities and self-confidence. Individuals contemplating online teaching may approach it with an open mind and a willingness to learn. With this, online platforms may highlight these benefits during recruitment efforts and provide resources such as training programs to support skill development. Promoting a growth mindset among educators can help them thrive in this dynamic field.

Research emphasizes the role of a growth mindset in overcoming challenges in online education. For instance, educators who adopt a growth mindset are better equipped to handle setbacks and difficulties in their teaching. They tend to persist in the face of challenges, which can inspire similar resilience in their students [9]. Online learning encourages flexibility, time management skills, and confidence-building through self-directed learning. Online courses also promote personal development by offering opportunities for networking and skill enhancement in a stress-free environment [4]. Furthermore, professional development programs in equipping educators with tools to adapt effectively to digital teaching environments is important [12].

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study explored the narratives of non-teaching degree professionals engaging in online teaching jobs, focusing on their motivations, challenges, and strategies. The findings reveal that flexibility and personal benefits are significant motivators, attracting professionals seeking better work-life balance and opportunities for global engagement. However, these individuals face technical and operational challenges, including unstable internet connections and unfamiliarity with teaching tools, which can disrupt their teaching effectiveness. To address these challenges, they demonstrate adaptation and resourcefulness by investing in backup technology and focusing on personal development strategies. Overall, the experiences of non-teaching degree professionals in

online teaching highlight the need for tailored support and resources to facilitate their success in this evolving educational landscape.

Non-teaching degree professionals prefer online teaching due to its flexibility and personal benefits. Despite technical and operational challenges, they adapt and resourcefully overcome them. This highlights the need for online teaching platforms and policymakers to support these educators with targeted training, technical resources, and policies promoting their integration into online education. By addressing challenges and promoting adaptability, non-teaching degree professionals can fully contribute to online education.

The implications of this study extend to various stakeholders within the online education ecosystem. For online teaching platforms, there is a need to invest in top-notch technical support and training programs to assist non-teaching degree professionals in navigating the online landscape. Policymakers may consider developing accreditation pathways that recognize and validate the expertise of these professionals, while also addressing issues of digital equity to ensure reliable access to technology. Additionally, institutions may promote a collaborative environment that encourages the sharing of best practices and provides mentorship opportunities. By addressing these implications, the online education sector can better enhance the diverse skills and perspectives of non-teaching degree professionals, thus enriching the learning experiences for students worldwide.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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