Lived Experiences of Teachers During Their Career Transitions from Beginning Teachers to Highly Proficient Teachers

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Abstract

Aim: This study explored the lived experiences of teachers transitioning from beginning teachers to highly proficient teachers. Understanding the difficulties, self-perceptions, support networks, coping mechanisms, and achievements teachers experienced during their professional development was its main goal.

Methodology: A qualitative, phenomenological approach was employed to capture the subjective experiences of educators. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with eight master teachers from the National Capital Region and DepEd Region III, selected through purposive sampling. Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes in their career progression.

Results: Findings revealed that teachers encountered significant challenges, including curriculum adaptation, inappropriate teaching assignments, financial constraints, and emotional struggles. Despite initial self-doubt and professional insecurity, they gradually developed confidence, resilience, and leadership qualities. Mentorship, institutional support, collegial collaboration, and professional development played crucial roles in their career advancement. Teachers employed strategies such as problem-solving, career planning, continuous learning, and work-life balance to navigate their transition. Their success was marked by academic and research excellence, leadership roles, recognition, and financial stability.

Conclusion: The study concluded that structured institutional support, mentorship programs, and professional development opportunities are vital in ensuring a smoother transition for teachers. Recommendations included enhancing the Teacher Induction Program, strengthening mentorship initiatives, integrating growth mindset training, expanding professional learning communities, and implementing structured career pathways.

Keywords: *Teacher Career Transition, Professional Development, Mentorship, Teacher Well-being, Leadership Development, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Doctor of Education Management*

INTRODUCTION

The transition from a beginning teacher to a highly proficient teacher is a crucial phase in an educator's career, shaping their professional identity, instructional competence, and overall effectiveness in the classroom. Career progression is closely linked to professional development (PD), which plays a fundamental role in enhancing teachers' skills, personal growth, and commitment to the profession (Tantawy, 2020). However, teacher development is a complex process requiring continuous learning, mentorship, and institutional support. In response to the global push for higher teaching standards, the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) has established the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) to guide educators in their career growth, emphasizing different levels of proficiency across multiple teaching domains (DepEd, 2017). Despite these structured frameworks, many teachers encounter challenges in career advancement, including heavy workloads, administrative responsibilities, and limited access to professional development opportunities (Okpalauwaekwe et al., 2024). While previous research has shown that mentorship and professional learning communities are important for teachers' growth (Bourke et al., 2024; Gunn & McRae, 2023), a lot of it has focused on quantitative measures of teachers' effectiveness rather than qualitative

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studies of their real-life experiences (Davin & Donato, 2024). There remains a gap in understanding how teachers perceive their professional journey, the struggles they face, and the coping strategies they employ while progressing within the PPST framework (Lindqvist et al., 2022; Fitzgerald et al., 2024). This study aimed to fill that gap by exploring the personal narratives of teachers transitioning from Beginning to Highly Proficient status. Through a qualitative phenomenological approach, this research sought to provide a deeper understanding of the professional, emotional, and institutional factors that influenced teacher career progression. This study will help educational policymakers, school administrators, and teacher training institutions by showing what real teachers' experiences are like. This will lead to better support systems, professional development programs, and mentorship programs that will help teachers stay in their jobs, be happy at work, and be good at their jobs

Objectives

This research identified and explored the intricacies and fruition of teachers in their career transition from beginning teachers to highly proficient teachers to develop a policy enhancement framework on the career pathways and to improve overall teacher retention, job satisfaction, and instructional effectiveness.

Specifically, this study addressed the following questions:

1. How do the informants describe their situations during their career transitions from beginning teachers to highly proficient teachers?
2. How do the informants describe their self- perception as they transition from beginning teachers to highly proficient teachers?
3. What support do informants receive during their career transitions from beginning teachers to highly proficient teachers?
4. What strategies are used by teachers to manage their career transitions?
5. How do the informants describe their successes during their career transitions from beginning teachers to highly proficient teachers?

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized a phenomenological approach within a qualitative research framework to examine teachers' career progression. Qualitative research was chosen to capture teachers' subjective experiences, acknowledging career development as a complex and personal journey (Pandey, 2024). This design enabled an in-depth exploration of real-world experiences, incorporating multiple perspectives on teachers' transitions, challenges, and growth.

Phenomenology was deemed the most suitable approach, as it seeks to describe and interpret lived experiences. In educational research, it provides insight into professional growth from teachers' perspectives, emphasizing the subjective nature of career transitions (Bonyadi, 2023; Guisasola et al., 2023). This method facilitated a deeper understanding of teachers' insights, emotions, and career paths, aligning with prior studies that highlighted its effectiveness in examining significant career shifts (Varadharajan & Buchanan, 2021). Furthermore, qualitative research fosters meaning- making through narrative inquiry, making it valuable for documenting professional journeys (Ronkainen & McDougall, 2024).

Population and Sampling

This study selected eight master teachers from the National Capital Region and Region III using purposive sampling, ensuring participants had firsthand experience with career progression. Master teachers were chosen for their comprehensive professional journey, transitioning from novice to highly proficient educators. Given the phenomenological nature of the study, a small sample size was appropriate, prioritizing depth over breadth in exploring lived experiences (Dodgson, 2023). Research suggests that phenomenological studies typically include 5 to 25 participants, depending on data depth and study scope (McInally & Gray-Brunton, 2021).

Purposive sampling allowed for the deliberate selection of educators who could provide rich insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Solorzano-Barrera et al., 2024). Criterion sampling further ensured data authenticity and validity (Guisasola et al., 2023; Bouzioti, 2023). Participants met specific criteria, including strong subject expertise, leadership in mentoring and professional development, adaptability to educational challenges, commitment to lifelong learning, active engagement in research, professionalism, and contributions to school and community initiatives. Their recognition for excellence and career advancement reinforced the study's ability to capture meaningful insights into teachers' professional transitions.

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Instrument

This study utilized a semi-structured interview guide as the primary research instrument, designed to elicit in-depth insights into teachers' career transitions. Grounded in Schlossberg's Transition Theory, the guide ensured theoretical alignment with the study's objectives. It included sections on demographics, career transition experiences, self-perception, support networks, coping strategies, and career transition success, with open-ended questions facilitating rich, detailed responses (Sadeq, 2023).

To enhance validity and reliability, qualitative research and education experts reviewed the guide for coherence and clarity. Structured questions covered key areas: career circumstances (Q1–4), self-perceptions (Q5–9), support systems (Q10–14), coping strategies (Q15–18), and career transition success (Q19–21). Interviews were audio-video recorded and transcribed verbatim, ensuring accurate documentation and enhancing research validity (Sabnis & Wolgemuth, 2023). This rigorous approach strengthened the study's credibility and depth in capturing participants' lived experiences.

Data Collection

To guarantee the collection of rich, thorough, and accurate accounts of teachers' career transitions, the data-generation process was carefully planned. The main technique for data collection was one-on-one interviews, which participants could conduct in-person or virtually for flexibility and convenience. In order to promote openness and trust and enable participants to freely share their experiences, it was crucial to conduct interviews in a quiet, relaxed setting. Individual interviews preserved the authenticity of the participants' lived experiences by ensuring that their personal narratives were unaffected by other people's responses.

Open-ended questions were used in the interviews, and they were specifically crafted to entice participants to think deeply about their professional paths. Teachers were able to express their ideas, emotions, and perceptions about the difficulties they faced, their professional development, and the elements that shaped their journey from inexperienced to highly skilled educators by answering these questions. Participants were free to describe their experiences in their own words because open-ended questions guaranteed that they were not limited by predetermined response options. Likewise, open-ended questions aid in identifying knowledge gaps and encourage in-depth discussions, allowing teachers to interact more critically with the course material (Sadeq, 2023).

With the participants' permission, audio recordings of the interviews were made in order to guarantee data collection accuracy. A deeper comprehension of the narratives was made possible by the researcher's ability to record every detail of the interviews, including tone, pauses, and emotions.

To enhance data accuracy, interviews were audio-recorded with consent, capturing verbal nuances. Verbatim transcription ensured a precise record, enabling systematic thematic analysis. This rigorous approach preserved authenticity and depth in understanding teachers' career transitions.

Data Analysis

A popular technique in qualitative research for finding, classifying, and interpreting patterns in data, thematic analysis was used to examine the gathered information. The six-phase framework for thematic analysis developed by Byrne (2021) was employed to guarantee a methodical and exacting approach. The researcher first became acquainted with the data by reading the transcribed interviews several times over to get a general sense of what was being said. Next, important statements and phrases pertaining to teachers' career transitions were identified, and these significant segments were given labels as part of the coding process.

After the coding process, themes were identified by looking for patterns in the codes to create more comprehensive themes that captured the core of the participants' experiences. These themes were then examined and improved to make sure they were clear, logical, and adequately backed up by the data. Following the completion of the theme development process, each theme was given a descriptive name that appropriately reflected its content. The final step of the procedure was writing the report, where the researcher provided a thorough interpretation of the data by synthesizing the findings and relating them to previously published works.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were paramount in ensuring the integrity, confidentiality, and moral soundness of the research process. In qualitative research, ethical standards such as obtaining informed consent and protecting participant privacy are sometimes overlooked, highlighting the need for national consensus on ethical guidelines (Zhang et al., 2024). This study adhered to core ethical principles, including autonomy, beneficence, non-

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maleficence, and justice, ensuring informed consent, minimizing harm, maximizing benefits, and promoting fairness (Andreassen et al., 2024). The researcher followed the ethical guidelines set by the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP)-Open University System, securing ethical clearance from the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC).

Following university approval, study permits were obtained from the Department of Education's (DepEd) Schools Division Offices (SDOs), where the participants were employed. A formal request detailing the study's objectives, methodology, and ethical safeguards was submitted alongside the university's approval, leading to the SDOs' authorization to conduct teacher interviews. Before participation, each teacher was provided with a written informed consent form explaining the study's purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality measures, and the right to withdraw at any time. The researcher ensured participants fully understood their rights and responsibilities through in-person or virtual briefings. Signed consent forms were collected before interviews to uphold confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. In compliance with Republic Act 10173, the Data Privacy Act of 2012, participants were assured that their personal data and institutional affiliations would remain confidential. As a gesture of appreciation, participants received a small token of gratitude after the interviews, reinforcing ethical standards of respect and recognition.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section presents the analyses and interpretation of data obtained from the participants of the study. The information is presented in themes with interpretation and implication. The presentation is organized based on the order of the problems in the statement of the problem

1. Situations of Teachers During Their Career Transitions from Beginning Teachers to Highly Proficient Teachers

This study explores the challenges faced by teachers during career transitions, including curriculum changes, financial issues, professional growth, and emotional struggles, to understand support systems for successful career progression.

Themes
Curriculum and Pedagogical Challenges
Financial and Job Stability Issues
Professional Growth and Development Needs
Emotional and Psychological Struggles

1.1 Curriculum and Pedagogical Challenges

Aligning teachers' expertise with their subjects enhances instructional effectiveness, while non-specialist teachers face challenges in lesson planning, assessment, and instructional strategies. These issues are reflected in the following insights.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 1: "I'm not an education graduate so I'm not familiar on ano designing lesson plan. I'm not familiar also yung paggawa ng Tos tapos ahmm yung different strategy na ginagawa in every subjects hindi ko po alam yun"*
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 2: "Pinaka greater challenge is that yung pagtuturo ko ng hindi mo major"*
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 3: "Hindi pa ako adjusted with chemistry and physics... medyo masakit"*

The transition from novice to highly proficient educator poses significant curriculum and pedagogical challenges, especially for teachers without an education degree. These educators often struggle with unfamiliar content, leading to knowledge gaps and reduced instructional confidence. Research highlights that "teaching out-of-field" exacerbates these difficulties due to limited subject expertise and pedagogical strategies (Hobbs & Quinn, 2020; Carpendale & Hume, 2020). Additionally, adapting to evolving curriculum standards remains a challenge, as policy shifts often outpace teacher preparation. Structured support systems are crucial to easing these transitions (El-Hamamsy et al., 2023).

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1.2 Financial and Job Stability Issues

Teachers face financial and job stability challenges beyond classroom instruction, affecting their well-being and performance. Testimonies reveal difficulties in contract renewals, financial concerns, and job security in the education sector.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 4: "Salary difference talaga so pagdating ng time nayun challenge talaga siya."*
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 5: "Hindi mo alam kung marerenew ka... wala talaga akong self-confidence"*

Financial concerns and job security significantly influence teachers' career transitions. Salary disparities between novice and experienced educators contribute to financial hardship, reducing motivation and job satisfaction. Higher salaries lower teacher attrition, especially among highly educated professionals (Elyashiv & Navon, 2021). Contractual teachers face employment uncertainty, leading to stress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced confidence (Fynes-Clinton et al., 2022). Financial barriers also limit access to continuing education, highlighting the need for alternative funding sources (Rauseo & Bregoli, 2024)

1.3 Professional Growth and Development Needs

Professional growth and development are crucial for teachers to effectively navigate the evolving demands of the classroom. The following insights from highly proficient teachers highlight the need for continuous learning, mentorship, and support systems to enhance teaching practices and ensure effective classroom management.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 6: "Adapting the complexity of the classroom environment... continuous learning"*
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 7: "Wala sayo gaanong mag-guide pag bago ka sa public school... ikaw lang mag-isa"*

Continuous professional development (CPD) enhances teachers' competence and confidence, even without experienced mentors. Ongoing training, peer feedback, and updated literature contribute to skill improvement (Pannekoeke et al., 2023). However, limited mentorship and structured training often lead to professional stagnation, hindering adaptation to modern educational demands (Precellas & Bauyot, 2025). Career advancement opportunities also drive lifelong learning, as educators recognize its role in adapting to technological changes and maintaining teaching quality (Bolat & Kıyak, 2024; Koç, 2024).

1.4 Emotional and Psychological Struggles

Teaching is not only a profession but also an emotional and psychological journey. The following experiences from highly proficient teachers shed light on the emotional struggles they encounter, emphasizing the need for support, resilience, and self-assurance in their professional journey.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 8: "From being unsure and hesitant... biggest challenge"*
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 5: "Nawala talaga akong self-confidence na laging may doubt sa sarili ko, I am not good enough"*

Teachers face significant emotional and psychological challenges during career transitions, often experiencing self-doubt and reduced confidence. Self-efficacy is a key factor in overcoming these challenges, as it directly influences teacher performance, job satisfaction, and overall educational quality (Zhang et al., 2024). Feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt are particularly prevalent among beginning teachers, negatively affecting their mental health. Higher self-efficacy buffers stress, enhances psychological resilience, and improves overall life satisfaction (Von Muenchhausen et al., 2021)

2. Self- Perceptions of Teachers During Their Career Transitions from Beginning Teachers to Highly Proficient Teachers

Transitioning from beginning teachers to highly proficient teachers involve emotional sensitivity, resilience, leadership, optimism, and a strong work ethic, fostering adaptability, confidence, and dedication to excellence.
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Themes
Emotional Sensitivity and Resilience

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Leadership and Influence
Optimism and Growth Mindset
Professional Confidence and Self-Efficacy
Work Ethic and Professional Commitment
Challenges and Overcoming Weaknesses

2.1 Emotional Sensitivity and Resilience

Emotional sensitivity plays a significant role in a teacher's professional journey, influencing their confidence, motivation, and overall well-being. The following insights from highly proficient teachers highlight the challenges of emotional sensitivity and the transformative power of resilience in their teaching careers.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 1: "Napaka maramdamin ko yan yung mga pag may narinig po ako na negative ahm medyo diyan po talaga din ahh nanghihina ako."*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 5: "As beginning teacher I was too sensitive no ahm masyado akong sensitive dinadamdam ko lahat... lahat nung mga bagay kaya ang-- ang nangyayari nagkakaroon ako ng self- pity sa sarili ko."*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 8: "The advancement and satisfaction I gained have made me more optimistic and resilient and have deepened my spiritual outlook."*

Navigating emotional sensitivity and resilience is essential for novice teachers transitioning to proficiency. Early career challenges often lead to heightened stress (Bidi et al., 2024) but developing emotional intelligence (EI) enhances well-being and stress management (Pozo-Rico et al., 2023). Higher EI fosters work engagement, improving classroom performance and student outcomes (Correa et al., 2024).

2.2 Leadership and Influence

Leadership in education goes beyond holding a title—it involves influence, mentorship, and the willingness to take risks for growth. The following insights from highly proficient teachers showcase their journey from being novices to becoming influential figures who inspire and support their colleagues through dedication, expertise, and bold decision-making.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 2: "Lagi kong nilalagay 'yong self ko sa iba parang I'm a leader na kung saan mas marami ang servant leader."*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 8: "I transitioned from seeing myself as a novice to viewing myself as an expert who can guide others."*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 3: "Yung mismong ako, risk taker kasi sir ako."*

The transition from novice to proficient educators involves developing leadership identities, shifting from an individual focus to a collaborative, service-oriented role. Teacher leadership is fostered through professional development, peer collaboration, and mentoring, shaping both learning environments and leadership identities (Park et al., 2024). Establishing teacher leader roles promotes collective professionalism and mentorship, crucial for teacher development (Abrahamsen & Helstad, 2024; Arnsby et al., 2023). Risk-taking and adaptability are essential leadership traits, while integrated instructional and transformational leadership approaches enhance satisfaction, mediated by collaboration and professional growth (Baharuddin et al., 2023).

2.3 Optimism and Growth Mindset

Optimism and a growth mindset are essential traits that empower teachers to navigate challenges and seize opportunities for improvement. The following insights from highly proficient teachers highlight their commitment to resilience, perseverance, and the belief that every challenge presents an opportunity for growth.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 1: "Pagiging, yung having a positive view po na, lahat po ng bagay, pag may mga opportunity or kaya may mga challenges, kailangan nating ano hanapin positive way kumbaga."*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 2: "Ako talaga from the very beginning sabihin ko na I'm thriving, I will describe it as a thriving one, keep on progressing."*

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A growth mindset and optimism empower teachers to view challenges as opportunities for innovation and professional growth. This perspective enhances pedagogy and student engagement (Waskita et al., 2024) while fostering adaptability and inclusivity (Rissanen & Kuusisto, 2023). Optimism boosts motivation, resilience, and instructional effectiveness, contributing to overall well-being (Oladrostam et al., 2024).

2.4 Professional Confidence and Self- Efficacy

Professional confidence and self-efficacy are developed through time, experience, and continuous learning. The following reflections from highly proficient teachers highlight their journey toward developing confidence, embracing their roles, and fulfilling their duties with assurance and competence.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 6: "I may have doubted my abilities and felt unsure of my effectiveness in the classroom, however, through time and experience, I developed a greater sense of confidence in my teaching skills."*
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 5: "Naging highly proficient na so, ang nangyari sakin ay nagkaroon ako ng ano ng.. nagkaroon ako ng tiwala sa sarili ko na these are my duties these are my responsibilities."*

As teachers gain experience, their self-confidence and efficacy strengthen, enhancing instructional quality and classroom management (Burić et al., 2024). Successful teaching experiences reinforce pedagogical confidence (Cirocki et al., 2024), while self-efficacy helps educators manage stress and navigate professional challenges (Steigleder et al., 2023).

2.5 Work Ethics and Professional Commitment

Work ethics and professional commitment are key qualities that define an educator's dedication to their responsibilities. The following insights from highly proficient teachers emphasize the importance of hard work, perseverance, and maintaining a strong professional ethic in their teaching careers.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 5: "Yung pagiging hard working yun lagi kasi nilang pinupuri sakin na masipag, yung walang inaayawan na trabaho."*
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 6: "Effective communication kasi napakahalaga po nyan diba adaptability meron ako sir strong work ethic yan."*

Work ethic and professional commitment are crucial for teachers' progression, fostering diligence, perseverance, and recognition. A strong work ethic enhances professional development and classroom management (Osias & Ladica, 2024), while motivation and effective communication sustain long-term success (Madani et al., 2024).

2.6 Challenges and overcoming Weaknesses

Every teacher faces personal and professional challenges, but growth comes from recognizing and overcoming weaknesses. The following insights from highly proficient teachers highlight their personal challenges and the strategies they employed to overcome them.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 1: "Weaknesses ko naman Kase Yung ano time management, Yan ang weaknesses ko Talaga"*
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 4: "Dati nahihiya pa ako pagka lumalapit yung mga master teachers"*

Teachers face significant challenges during career transitions, with resilience and professional growth essential for overcoming obstacles. Balancing multiple responsibilities contributes to burnout, exacerbated by mental health factors like depression, anxiety, and stress, necessitating institutional support (Liu & Wang, 2024). Continuous learning through Online Teacher Professional Development (OTPD) programs enhances instructional effectiveness via feedback and collaboration (Stavermann, 2024). A growth mindset fosters resilience, enabling teachers to navigate challenges with perseverance and transform weaknesses into strengths (Hejazi et al., 2024).

3. Supports Received of Teachers During Their Career Transitions from Beginning Teachers to Highly Proficient Teachers

This study highlights the importance of teacher support systems in fostering professional growth, resilience, and well-being, as well as enhancing their skills and professional development opportunities.

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Themes
Mentorship and Leadership Guidance
Collegial Support and Collaboration
Emotional and Family Support
Institutional Support and Professional Development

3.1 Mentorship and Leadership Guidance

Mentorship and leadership guidance play a vital role in shaping a teacher's professional growth and confidence. The following reflections from highly proficient teachers highlight the impact of mentorship in their journey, emphasizing the value of guidance, training, and professional development opportunities.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 1: "Nakita niya po kung gaano ako ka dedicated sa work, kaya ginawa niya po talaga, inalalayan nya po ako yung mga dapat kong malaman… thankful po ako kasi na train po ako"*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 6: "Yung aking principal, yung school administrator po, have provided syempre mentorship, professional development opportunities, and guidance to navigate new responsibilities and leadership roles."*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 4: "Pagdating ng school admin, medyo ma-swerte tayo pagdating ng mga sa school admin kasi kahit na teacher 2, teacher 1 tapos sila mismo yung nag-pupursue"*

Mentorship is vital in teachers' career transitions, shaping experiences, job satisfaction, and long-term growth (Virtič et al., 2021; Hulme, 2022). Strong mentorship and administrative support enhance instructional skills and leadership readiness. Coaching programs further boost academic performance, motivation, and professional engagement (Okoye et al., 2021).

3.2 Collegial Support and Collaboration

Collegial support and collaboration are essential in fostering a positive and motivating work environment for teachers. The following insights from highly proficient teachers highlight the importance of teamwork, mutual support, and a collaborative spirit in the teaching profession.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 2: "Co-teachers, actually sila talaga yung malaking bumuo sa career ko kasi, they became the source of motivation… kahit mahirap yung trabaho basta maayos yung co-workers mo"*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 7: "Encouragement nila sa akin, with co-teachers ganito mino-motivate ka nila"*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 8: "My fellow teachers supported me by providing feedback, sharing resources, and offering encouragement."*

Collegial support fosters motivation, collaboration, and career satisfaction, mediating job crafting and work engagement (Oubibi et al., 2022). Collaborative learning enhances knowledge-sharing, confidence in innovative teaching, and responsiveness to student needs, promoting teacher retention and professional growth (Zhao & Wei, 2024).

3.3 Emotional and Family Support

Emotional and family support plays a crucial role in a teacher's resilience and success. The following reflections from highly proficient teachers highlight the invaluable role of family and emotional support in their personal and professional journeys.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 2: "Sakin talaga sa asawa ko sobrang supportive… even in my parents"*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 3: "Yung mga friends ko din dito even dun sa church… yung promotion; sinabi nga nila kasi sila din kasama ko during pandemic and may prayer warrior"*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 5: "Family moral, emotional, number one talaga… number 1 fan mo yung partner mo, yung nanay mo, anak mo na, kaya mo yan ma, magaling ka"*

Emotional and family support enhance teachers' motivation, resilience, and well-being. Family encouragement fosters resilience, reducing burnout and improving job satisfaction (Diomampo & Quines, 2023). Social and spiritual support further aid stress reduction, while strong support systems mitigate mental health struggles and secondary traumatic stress (Jiaxin, 2022; Prout et al., 2022).

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3.4 Institutional Support and Professional Development

Institutional support and professional development are essential in helping teachers grow and excel in their careers. The following insights from highly proficient teachers emphasize the importance of administrative backing, collaborative learning, and structured professional development in shaping their journey toward mastery in teaching.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 7: "School head na ikaw ay gumagawa and then talagang full support naman sila sa mga kailangan mo"*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 6: "the most influential forms of support in becoming a master teacher were mentorship, collaboration with colleagues, and ongoing professional development opportunities"*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 8: "The school employs professional development workshops, mentoring systems, and regular performance assessments to aid career development."*

Institutional support structures enhance teachers' career progression by providing resources, training, and encouragement. Administrative support boosts engagement and self-efficacy, reducing emotional exhaustion (Pressley, 2023). Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) foster collaboration and technology integration, leading to sustainable teaching improvements (Krabonja et al., 2024).

4. Strategies for Teachers to Manage Their Career Transitions from Beginning Teachers to Highly Proficient Teachers

This study highlights the importance of strategic approaches in managing career transitions for teachers, including faith, emotional support, adaptability, collaboration, professional development, and work-life balance.

Themes
Faith, Emotional Support, and Social Well-Being
Adaptability, Problem-Solving, and Resilience
Collaboration and Professional Development
Strategic Career Planning and Goal Setting
Work-Life Balance and Self-Care
Time Management and Organizational Skills

4.1 Faith, Emotional Support, and Social Well-Being

Faith, emotional support, and social well-being play a significant role in helping teachers navigate the challenges of their profession. The following reflections from highly proficient teachers highlight the importance of faith, emotional resilience, and social interactions in maintaining balance and well-being in their careers.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 2: "I hold on to our ano eh our Lord, talagang ayan for lalo na nung pandemic… sya talaga ang lahat ano eh yan talaga ang coping mechanisms ko talaga."*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 2: "My faith in our Almighty God has been the most effective factor in helping me handle such transitions in my career. Additionally, the support of my family has been invaluable."*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 5: "Gala, travel with friends, bonding with family—number one yan."*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 3: "Yung mga friends ko din dito even dun sa church… sinabi nga nila kasi sila din kasama ko during pandemic and may prayer warrior."*

Faith and social support help teachers navigate career transitions by providing emotional stability. Spiritual health enhances resilience in high-stress environments (Chiang et al., 2021), while faith serves as a coping mechanism for academic anxiety (Lazaro-Quilang & Palattao-Dayawon, 2023). Socialization, relaxation, and leisure activities reduce stress and anxiety, especially during social isolation (Cheong et al., 2024).

4.2 Adaptability, Problem- Solving and Resilience

Adaptability, problem-solving, and resilience are essential traits that enable teachers to overcome challenges and thrive in their careers. The following insights from highly proficient teachers highlight the importance of resilience in facing obstacles, adapting to change, and continuously evolving in their professional journey.

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Highly Proficient Teacher 3: "I usually try to see the situation na makuhanan ko ng solution para hindi sya magtagal na manatiling problema."

Highly Proficient Teacher 6: "I embrace flexibility and adaptability, remaining open to new challenges and opportunities for growth as I navigated my career transition."

Highly Proficient Teacher 7: "I also embrace a broad mindset. Viewing challenges as opportunities for learning and development rather than obstacles"

Adaptability and resilience are key for teachers transitioning to proficient roles, fostering problem-solving and professional growth. A strategic mindset enhances efficacy, self-regulation, and innovation (Ng et al., 2023), while a positive outlook improves job performance (Chen & Jiang, 2023). Adaptability supports classroom management and well-being (Davis et al., 2024), while resilience reduces burnout and enhances career satisfaction (Prout et al., 2022).

4.3   Collaboration and Professional Development

Collaboration and professional development are crucial for teachers striving for continuous growth and excellence. The following reflections from highly proficient teachers highlight the significance of learning from experienced professionals, seeking feedback, and leveraging professional development opportunities to refine their skills and adapt to evolving educational demands.

Highly Proficient Teacher 2: "The personal experiences shared by my professors in the doctoral program have been invaluable… Their insights provided a wealth of knowledge on dealing with challenges"

Highly Proficient Teacher 7: "Seeking feedback from colleagues and mentors as well as engaging in ongoing professional development helped me continually refine my skills and adapt to new expectations."

Highly Proficient Teacher 8: "I utilized professional development opportunities and built a strong support system."

Collaboration and professional development are vital for teachers transitioning into proficient roles. Group mentoring and collaborative knowledge modeling foster continuous learning by facilitating expertise exchange (Kurtz, 2024). Learning from expert practitioners' bridges research and practice, ensuring effective teaching strategies (Anderson, 2024). Co-teaching and structured mentorship programs reduce professional isolation and resource constraints for early-career teachers (Nikoi, 2024), while mentor feedback enhances teaching practices and career success (Okumu et al., 2022).

4.4 Strategic Career Planning and Goal- Setting

Strategic career planning and goal- setting are essential for teachers aiming for long-term success and professional fulfillment. The following insights from highly proficient teachers emphasize the importance of having well-defined goals and preparing for future responsibilities to ensure continuous growth and career advancement.

Highly Proficient Teacher 1: "I have to equip myself muna kasi hindi ka maliligaw then settles your priorities and ano po eh dapat may goal ka, kung walang goal di mo alam kung saan direction ka."

Highly Proficient Teacher 8: "I adapted by staying proactive and planning ahead for any changes in responsibilities."

Strategic career planning and goal setting enhance teachers' motivation, productivity, and job performance by providing clarity and direction (Tovkanets, 2024). Structured career guidance supports long-term professional self-determination (Shakurova et al., 2022), while a well-defined career path fosters commitment and perseverance. Goal setting also strengthens professional self-development, as pre-service teachers with clear objectives demonstrate greater readiness for growth (Asafova & Vashetina, 2022). Aligning personal and professional goals with achievement motivation improves job satisfaction and dedication (Haryanto et al., 2024).

4.5 Work-Life Balance and Self-Care

Maintaining a healthy work-life balance and prioritizing self-care are essential for teachers to sustain their well-being and effectiveness in the classroom. The following reflections from highly proficient teachers highlight their strategies for balancing professional responsibilities with personal well-being, ensuring long-term success and fulfillment in their careers.

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Highly Proficient Teacher 5: "Unahin muna syempre ang health bago ang lahat… natutunan ko rin po yung wag abusuhin ang katawan"

Highly Proficient Teacher 6: "I prioritized self-care by maintaining a healthy work-life balance and seeking support from friends and family. I engage in continuous learning through professional development opportunities"

Maintaining work-life balance and self-care is essential for teachers' well-being. Resilience buffers job stress and prevents burnout (Jung et al., 2024), while effective emotion regulation improves job satisfaction (Wang et al., 2024). Teachers use self-care strategies such as mindfulness, self-compassion, and stress management to enhance resilience and reduce occupational stress (Awwad-Tabry & Levkovich, 2024). Techniques like deep breathing, visualization, and muscle relaxation further support emotional well-being (Al-Jarf, 2024).

4.6 Time Management and Organizational Skills

Effective time management and organizational skills are essential for teachers to handle multiple responsibilities while maintaining productivity and job satisfaction. The following insights from highly proficient teachers emphasize the importance of balancing workload efficiently while enjoying the teaching journey.

Highly Proficient Teacher 7: "I adapted to changing demands and responsibilities by prioritizing, organizing, and managing my time effectively to balance multiple tasks."

Highly Proficient Teacher 4: "Enjoy lang siguro… kapag di mo ineenjoy yung ginagawa mo kahit sabihing konte o madami yung trabaho mo, kung hindi mo naman ineenjoy wala rin yun"

Effective time management enhances teachers' productivity, work-life balance, and stress reduction. Prioritizing tasks and structured scheduling improve efficiency and reduces stress (Sharma, 2024; Febriani et al., 2024). Setting boundaries fosters a supportive learning environment and helps manage stress (Lannon et al., 2024). Work-life balance directly influences teachers' well-being, job performance, and satisfaction (Sabuero, 2024).

5. Successes of Teachers During Their Career Transitions from Beginning Teachers to Highly Proficient Teachers

Transitioning from novice to proficient educator involves significant achievements, leadership, academic excellence, confidence, resilience, and recognition, demonstrating their commitment to advancing knowledge and best practices in education.

Themes
Professional Growth and Leadership
Academic and Research Excellence
Confidence and Influence in the Profession
Overcoming Struggles and Career Milestones
Recognition, Awards, and Financial Stability

5.1 Professional Growth and Leadership

Professional growth and leadership are integral to a teacher's journey toward excellence. The following insights from highly proficient teachers highlight the significance of lifelong learning, readiness for new challenges, and the fulfillment that comes with professional advancement.

Highly Proficient Teacher 1: "Since na Master Teacher ka, you have to equip myself po talaga diba? So ngayon nasa PhD naman na ako, so professionally talaga Sir nagiging successful naman."

Highly Proficient Teacher 2: "Fulfilling saka I believe na, ano na that, in the process yun kasi di'ba kapag nasa proseso ka, napansin ko yan e, at baka na-didiscern ng mga tao na 'pag yung underwent ka rin in the process."

Highly Proficient Teacher 4: "Kailangan lang maging ready, ready din sa lahat kasi nga ano additional sa position, additional na trabaho."

The transition to a highly proficient teacher involves continuous growth and leadership development. Achievement recognition enhances adaptability and performance, especially for new teachers (Meng & Briscioli, 2024). Professional development fosters competency, career growth, and student success (Tantawy, 2020). Early

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leadership engagement reduces attrition and strengthens influence in education (Lovett, 2023). Supportive environments are crucial for overcoming career barriers (Fitzgerald et al., 2024). Mentorship by faculty leaders broadens participation and enhances professional growth (Francis & Askew, 2022).

5.2 Academic and Research Excellence

Academic and research excellence play a crucial role in shaping an educator's professional identity and impact. The following reflections from highly proficient teachers showcase their achievements in research, publication, and academic recognition, highlighting the value of scholarly pursuits in their careers.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 2: "Hindi ko rin akalain na makagagawa ako ng libro."*
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 5: "Nakilala ka na ahh… dahil nananalo ka sa mga contest, nananalo ka sa research. You are recognized by different people ahm. Na magaling ka sa research."*
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 7: "Nagconduct ako ng research, yun ay napili sa division level and then naawardan din ako as outstanding master teacher district and division level."*

Academic achievements and research contributions are crucial for teachers' professional growth and expertise. Publishing enhances knowledge dissemination and scholarly reputation (Sánchez-García et al., 2024). Research involvement boosts self-efficacy, innovation, and teaching quality (Safi et al., 2024). Recognition from research validates expertise and supports educational policy development through evidence-based recommendations (Caingcoy, 2020).

5.3 Confidence and Influence in the Profession

Confidence and influence are vital attributes that empower educators to make a lasting impact in their profession. The following insights from highly proficient teachers highlight their journey from self-doubt to professional recognition, showcasing how stepping out of their comfort zones has enabled them to shape the future of education.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 2: "Yung to talk to the people, you will become the speaker, when I go out in my comfort zone… nabigyan kami ng opportunity na mag-talk sa National, kaya sabi ko 'ahh, kaya pala'*
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 8: "I went from a novice who doubted my abilities to a Master Teacher who is recognized for my contributions to student success and teacher development."*
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 6: "Nagme-mentor ka sa kanila pero nandoon po yung respeto. Ayan so, para sa akin po accomplishment na kaagad po yun at yung makita ko yung mga co-teachers ko na nag-iimprove because of you."*

Confidence and influence are crucial for teachers' professional growth, with public speaking enhancing self-assurance and classroom engagement (Syafruddin et al., 2023). Positive feedback from school leaders boosts self-efficacy, improving classroom management and student outcomes (Zeb et al., 2024). Self-affirmation exercises reinforce leadership beliefs, encouraging teachers to take on leadership roles (Bolat, 2023).

5.4 Overcoming Struggles and Career Milestones

The journey toward professional success is often marked by challenges, perseverance, and significant milestones. The following reflections from highly proficient teachers illustrate their unique paths filled with obstacles, determination, and accomplishments highlighting how perseverance and focus lead to meaningful professional growth.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 3: "Yung success na mayroon ako as of this ay… parang pang… pang grand slam ko na to eh… kung saan hindi sya madali, talagang ang daming kumbaga daming tinik along the road."*
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 5: "Actually hindi ko pa masabing success… Although na-achieve ko yung gusto kong mangyari na maging Master Teacher, pero I cannot say that I am already successful because I am just starting."*
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 7: "Talagang ano tong success to no… napakabilis. Naggraduate ako ng MA 2010, then Teacher 3, and then after that 2013 MT1, and then 2019 MT2… parang napakabilis lang basta nakafocus."*

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Teachers' career success is shaped by resilience, professional growth, and strategic planning. Resilience helps manage stress, prevent burnout, and sustain job satisfaction (Duan et al., 2023). A growth mindset fosters lifelong learning and adaptability, enabling teachers to embrace challenges (Wolcott et al., 2021). Career progression is influenced by exploration, engagement, and interpersonal relationships, with strategic planning playing a key role in shaping professional trajectories (Jia, 2023).

5.5 Recognition, Awards, and Financial Stability

Recognition, awards, and financial stability serve as significant markers of an educator's dedication and impact. The following insights from highly proficient teachers highlight how their hard work and commitment have led to career fulfillment, financial stability, and the ability to inspire future educators.

> *Highly Proficient Teacher 3: "I was awarded 'Teacher of the Year' for my innovative teaching practices and contribution to the school's success."*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 5: "Pag Master Teacher na tayo, magi-increase ang ating salary. Opo. So, isa rin yun sa aking achievements. Nagkaroon po ako ng… Nakapagpaggawa ako ng bahay… Nakabili ng konting gamit katulad ng motor."*
>
> *Highly Proficient Teacher 7: "Achieving a high student pass rate on national exams and being selected to mentor new teachers were important milestones."*

Recognition, awards, and financial stability are key motivators that enhance teachers' dedication and growth. Structured recognition programs boost morale, productivity, and retention (Mishra, 2024), while awards improve motivation and collaboration when backed by strong institutional support (Aranguez, 2024). Financial stability significantly impacts job satisfaction and retention, with higher compensation reducing turnover, especially amid teacher shortages (Zhou et al., 2024). Financial incentives also strengthen resilience and commitment, particularly for early-career teachers (Gunn & McRae, 2023). Competitive salaries and well-structured incentives foster a positive work environment (Chen, 2024).

Conclusions

The study highlights the challenges faced by teachers during their career transition from Beginning Teachers to Highly Proficient Teachers, emphasizing the need for well-organized institutional support systems. It emphasizes the importance of building resilience and confidence through professional development and psychological support. Teachers adopt a growth mindset, viewing setbacks as opportunities for growth and learning. Schools should establish formal mentorship programs, offer clear pathways for professional development, and recognize the importance of outside support networks. Teachers use strategies such as career planning, problem-solving, mentoring, continuous learning, and time management. They actively participate in professional development initiatives and seek feedback. Schools should promote a culture of ongoing professional development through workshops, research incentives, and seminars. Highly proficient teachers view their achievements as perseverance, adaptability, and lifelong learning. Educational institutions should set up award programs, career advancement opportunities, and financial incentives to recognize teachers' contributions.

Recommendations

The study recommends strengthening structured programs to support teachers transitioning from Beginning to Highly Proficient levels. Key strategies include addressing challenges such as inappropriate teaching assignments, financial limitations, and emotional stress through peer-buddy systems, organized mentoring, and school-level psychological support. Increased funding for teaching materials and workload adjustments is advised. Professional development should focus on growth mindset training via Learning Action Cells (LAC) and Leadership Enhancement Seminars by NEAP. Reflective practices like journaling and goal- setting can boost self-awareness and confidence. Strengthening mentorship programs under NEAP ensures systematic monitoring and guidance. Collaboration through Professional Learning Communities and monthly consultations can address teachers' concerns. Time management and work-life balance workshops should be integrated into professional development. Financial incentives, self-care programs, and career pathways for leadership roles, including trainers and supervisors, are also recommended.

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