

## Revealing perspectives of teachers on straight teaching: The case of secondary teachers

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### **Abstract**

The study aimed to explore the perspective of public elementary school teachers in Grade 5 or Grade 6 who taught all the subjects in a single class. This is a qualitative-case study which participated with three (3) participants were identified using the purposive sampling method. Thematic analysis was utilized to generate the results from the participants' perspective. Overall, the participants closely shared the same stories in straight teaching. In the interviews, they highlighted the succeeding significant themes: (1) common challenges in straight teaching; (2) ways of coping in straight teaching; (3) application of non-traditional teaching practices; (4) application of classroom management practices; (5) lessons and insights gained from straight teaching; and (6) the need to provide support to the teachers who handled all subjects in a single class. From these findings, it is implied that plenty of support and assistance should be provided to them by the concerned authorities such as the officials of the Department of Education (DepEd). Another, ways of coping and classroom practices should be emulated by all teachers in the service. Likewise, future researches are also encouraged to further validate the results found in this narratological study. Most importantly, the study is expected to contribute more information on the literature related to straight teaching and aboriginal education.

**Keywords:** public elementary school teachers, straight teaching, case study, Philippines

## Revealing perspectives of teachers on straight teaching: The case of secondary teachers

### 1. Introduction

There are mountains of responsibilities by the teachers that they should embrace during and even after their respective hours of duty. In fact, there are elementary school teachers that are still teaching all subjects in a class section within the intermediate grade levels. They must formulate 40 lesson plans per week, prepare innovative learning strategies and learning materials that cater all of their learners' needs, as well as shape and monitor the behavior of 20-40 learners in a class. Notably, these are among the few plights faced by most public school teachers that are teaching all subjects in a class. In Rwanda, as mentioned by Atieno and Nkurunziza (2019), the Ministry of Education has recently announced the plan to implement the system wherein only one instructor and an assistant will teach all subjects in each class comprising of 70 learners. According to them, it would be hard to find well-rounded teachers who can teach all subject areas within one class preparing more than five lessons on a daily basis.

In the Philippines, particularly in Zamboanga, elementary teachers have also experienced the practice of straight teaching in the lower elementary years in private schools amidst the new normal. Some of them expressed that it is indeed difficult to handle all subjects within one class. Aside from lesson preparations, these teachers were also 2 confronted with the extra challenge of distributing modules, conducting assessment, and undergoing online classes to teach their young learners. What keeps them around is their sincere passion in teaching, which drives and motivates them amidst the challenges and the pandemic nowadays (Pabalate, 2020).

This study, they may be given the voice to speak out their plights and suggestions. Moreover, this study can also become a basis for the concerned educational sectors to create programs and policies which would help lessen the heavy loads of these teachers. The stories of the public elementary school teachers on straight teaching has been evident for it still existing problem in our educational system. Though there were already studies conducted about teachers teaching all subjects, these only focused on the issue of differentiating departmentalization and no studies were done yet to probe the lives of 3 public elementary school teachers. Thus, this prompted me to conduct this inquiry to explore and understand their personal perspective with respect to the phenomenon being studied in this undertaking.

#### 1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case to explore the narratives of public elementary school teacher. It focused on the stories of three (3) elementary school teachers from different public schools in Talaingod District. At this stage of research, straight teaching was generally defined as a type of teaching where a public elementary school teacher with permanent employment status was teaching all subjects in Grade 5 and/or in Grade 6. This study is an important research topic to invest one's time with, as it is visible that many elementary teachers have experienced this Herculean task of teaching all subjects within one class section.

#### 1.2 Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

- How do you describe your experiences as a teacher who handles all subjects within a class?
- What are the lessons and insights that can you share to others regarding your experiences in straight teaching?

### *1.3 Theoretical Lens*

This study was anchored to the Functionalism Theory which explains how mental activities helped an individual fit into its environment where mental processes function in a more systematic and accurate manner wherein learners should learn at the level for which they are developmentally prepared. Also, it signified that introspection could serve as one means by which someone might study mental activities, so with the teachers, though their expertise is not within the norm, but through mental activities, learning and mastery of the subject matter is possibly put in place (Ross et al., 1977).

As used in the study, the Theory of Functionalism illustrated the capacity of humans to adapt to their new environment. Thus, terms like flexibility and versatility were being tested and exemplified in situations wherein an individual was exposed to new surroundings and environment. Like the teachers who teach multiple subjects in class, their capacity of adjusting with their new roles and ever demanding challenges were being tested as they have to prepare to teach multiple subjects to their learners on a regular basis. This study was also seen through the Theory of Role. This posited that individuals play a role which comprises a collection of expectations that accompany a particular social position. Typically, it is said that humans play multiple roles in their lifetime. For example, they could play the role of being a student, a friend, or an employee. Role conflict happens among multiple roles when the expectations in these separate roles contradict one another. There could be a case when a social expectation is accepted in one role but rejected in the other (Marks & MacDermid, 1996).

Employing straight teaching results into causing stress to some teachers especially in the higher-grade level. Thus, in summary, this study was anchored to the above cited theories that supported how teachers feel and how they cope with their experiences associated to straight teaching. The Theory of Functionalism mentioned that mastery can be possibly put in place. Also, role theory stressed that straight teaching requires multiple roles among the concerned teachers. Stress Theory asserted that individuals such as the teachers were prone to stress as they perform mentally demanding activities such as teaching all subjects within in one class.

### *1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study*

This case study covered the stories and experiences of five (3) public elementary school teachers who teach all subjects in Grade 5 and/or Grade 6 from the different schools in Talaingod District who possessed the preferred criteria as the research participant in this inquiry. Data collection was done through an in-depth interview (IDI) to each participant. Despite the scope covered by the study, results in this inquiry could not be generalized to a broader set of population since the study only included a few number of individuals as research participants. Hence, the study was only limited to the imparted 6 perspective of the selected participants. These perspective become a good starting point to describe their rich experiences, without suggesting that these descriptions were capable of representing the collective experiences of all teachers in the region or the whole country.

### *1.5 Importance of the Study*

This inquiry is regarded as important since this would assist various individuals and agencies in addressing the prevailing problem of this inquiry. First, this study is expected to benefit the teachers as they can gain knowledge from the study on how many teachers who teach all subjects in Grade 5 and/or in Grade 6 learners would manage to survive in their situation. This study would serve as a basis for the other teachers to get ideas on what are the strategies and interventions that they can utilize to help them have a more pleasurable teaching experience in the field. Additionally, this research endeavor is acknowledged as valuable to the principals or school heads as this would provide them in-depth knowledge and information with regards to the lives of the public elementary school teachers who teach all subjects in Grade 5 and/or in Grade 6 learners. This can become their reference material in making instructional decisions and in developing interventions that specifically cater those issues concerning the class schedules of teachers in the field. Moreover, this study was attributed to the

officials and administrators of Department of Education as it creates a new point of perspective in formulating and laying memoranda which may aim to improve the teaching conditions of teachers. This can also become a reference for the educational leaders as they create programs that would be more effective in innovating the curriculum system that would benefit mostly the public elementary school teachers who taught all subjects in a class.

### *1.6 Definition of Terms*

The term below is defined conceptually and operationally to attain easy and common understanding.

**Public Elementary School Teacher.** This term conceptually refers to a teacher who has already completed an internship to gain practical experience under the supervision of a qualified teacher. As utilized in this study, it pertains to a teacher who teaches in the elementary level of a public school, specifically in the 5th to 6th grade level

**Straight Teaching.** This term is synonymous to the term ‘self-contained classroom.’ This happens when elementary teachers utilize an arrangement wherein they teach all subjects to the same group of students for an entire school year (Dymond, 2017). As utilized in this inquiry, it pertains to the arrangement of the teacher to teach all subjects in an intermediate grade level class specifically in the 5th and 6th grade level class within the study’s immediate research setting.

## **2. Review of related literature**

The following studies, articles, and concepts are presented in this chapter to shed light and understanding on the experiences of public elementary school teacher teaching all subjects. This encompassed the obstacles they usually encountered, the motivation behind their unwavering will to teach the young learners, and their desire for support from various concerned agencies.

Straight-line teaching process where one teacher provides instruction in all subject areas, few teachers have reported difficulties in gaining skills in multiple subject areas while meeting the increasing demands of the government. This is in lieu of the nationally imposed accountability mechanisms which necessitates the varied and increasingly demanding behavioral requirements among the students. Teachers continue to focus on the requirements for more quality professional development. They dedicate more preparation time to make sure the effective implementation of the Common Core Principles (Scholastic, 2014; Swars & Chestnutt, 2016).

Teaching requires a deep understanding of all the aspects of the content area, not merely on what one is teaching on a particular day. We have to know more than what our students will be learning so that we can enhance our instruction for those who are ready for it. We must know how to differentiate learning so that those who have special learning needs can understand the content despite their learning disabilities. It is like teaching one content to three or four different grade levels all at the same time, and you must make it interesting, engaging, and relevant (Allred, 2018). On the other side, Nelson (2014) stressed that among the challenges that go with having a one teacher for all subjects, boredom is one of the highlighted issues in this regard. This mode of classroom dynamics presents a systematic autonomy which can decrease excitement and attention. The advocates of conventional classrooms argue that departmentalized formats do not promote good student-teacher relationships and that social-emotional growth is better fostered in a class with one teacher (Baroody, 2017).

The teacher creates a classroom for children who have more peer connections and positive emotional climates. Children are therefore able to possess stronger social networking threads. With this, the teacher develops the learners’ interpersonal relationships among their peers which can influence the level of academic success experienced by the learners. As learners develop and mature, their insights on social acceptance about academic achievement will also change (Thomas, 2014; Cappella et al., 2012). Teachers giving straight instruction found to spend most of their time in school. The teacher acquires the opportunity to get to understand

the child in a variety of subject areas and social circumstances. With this, proponents of self-contained classroom models stress the importance of connectivity and continuity that is offered by a single classroom teacher. It is also known as a self-contained classroom that is a conventional model for elementary education. It is rooted in history that research into its practice and effect is practically non-existent (Baroody, 2017; Jack, 2014; Lee et al., 2016).

Straight teaching has been a longstanding teaching practice being implemented across various countries around the world. This is evident as studies and literatures suggest that this has been adopted in many classroom contexts worldwide. Moreover, opposing literature has been vocal enough on the corresponding advantages and disadvantages of the said teaching arrangement. It has been said in some studies that learning outcomes are improved as a result of employing one teacher to teach all subject areas in one group of students.

### 3. Methodology

This part deals with the research design, role of the researcher, research participants, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness and the ethical consideration.

**Research Design** - This investigation employed qualitative case study which aimed at knowing the perspective faced by the informant in this research and the insights shared that can be very beneficial in the academic community. Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, either single case or multiple cases over time through detailed in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information such as interviews, observations, audio-visual material, documents, reports and generates a case description and case themes (Creswell, 2013).

**Role of the Researcher** - The role of the researchers in a qualitative study is an important matter to be considered in the pursuit of investigation of any social phenomena. The researcher is highly qualified to pursue this investigation because as teacher, straight teaching in education is an academic phenomenon that confronts the teaching. In this study, the researcher played the role in terms of the purpose of the study.

**Research Participants** - In this case study, the participant came from one of the schools in Davao Del Norte who is teaching in an Elementary who experienced straight teaching in grade 5 and grade 6. The informant was chosen through purposive sampling technique. In line with the selection of the participants, the researcher considered Creswell's suggestion on the selection of the participants. Further, the informant must possess the quality that this research proposes and observes in the careful selection of the participant.

**Data Collection** - The main method used in data collection was personal interview supplemented with thorough description and comprehensive narration of all aspects of the data collection process. Data Collection component of research is common to every phase of the study.

**Data Analysis** - This study made use of the content and thematic analysis in analyzing the collected data. Content analysis and thematic analysis are two common approaches in data analysis.

**Trustworthiness** - Qualitative research entails a variety of disciplines, paradigms, epistemologies, embraces multiple standards of quality. Trustworthiness as suggested by Cuba and Lincoln includes credibility, transferability and confirmability (Morrow, 2005).

**Ethical Consideration** - To establish ethical considerations, we followed the ethical steps as suggested by (Boyatzis, 1998) such as respect for persons, beneficence, justice, consent and confidentiality.

### 4. Results

This case study aimed to explore the perspective of teaches and to look into the insights of the teacher in the a straight teaching that can be shared to the academic community. The participant in this study was chosen using

the purposive sampling technique. The researcher was prompted to conduct this investigation in order to voice out the perspective of the teacher who experienced intricacies in their tasks such as straight teaching. Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, either single case or multiple cases over time through detailed in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information such as interviews, observations, audio-visual material, documents, reports and generates a case description and case themes (Creswell, 2013).

The findings of this study enabled me to gain insight into the perspectives of secondary teachers regarding the conduct of straight teaching. I also had the opportunity to learn about the various challenges and difficulties and the teachers' perspectives on the participants' in engaging straight teaching. As a result, the solutions that must be implemented apply to everyone in the field. The contribution of this study is entirely dependent on the revelations made by participants during the interviews, their current perceptions of discipline, their challenges, difficulties encountered, their coping mechanisms and strategies, and their insights and learning's into their experiences as a science educator in the new normal.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

As I first conceptualized my qualitative research, I felt reluctant about it. I thought of the contention that it would give me. At first, I just formulated a simple title for my study. Being in the field of education, I have known the sentiments of teachers facing challenges in their instruction. I felt motivated to conduct this study because this is very timely issue that confronts the education system at present. In our world today, it is very evident that teachers experience the same sentiments in facing different challenges in giving instruction during online class especially the science teachers. Many teachers complain about the different problems that they faced specifically in delivering their instructions in doing experiments. Even students have difficulty in doing the said tasks. How they are going to perform and meet the expected results. Appropriate strategies should be implemented for learning is of utmost importance and impacts largely the performance of the learners. Education experts have confirmed through their worldwide research that young learners who are motivated with the different strategies used by the teachers are more apt to develop their understanding, motivation and learning. Determination, interest and motivation established a strong foundation for improved learning and performance.

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