

Being out-of-field: A phenomenological research on the lives of teachers teaching non-major

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the lived experiences of teachers teaching subjects outside their specialization at San Celestino and San Isidro Integrated National High Schools. This study was conducted using a qualitative research design with a thematic approach. The study included 26 senior and junior high school teachers who were all chosen using a population sampling technique. The data for this study was gathered through an in-depth, face-to-face semi-structured interview, group discussion, and creative self-expressive storytelling activities. The research found out that teachers encountered difficulties in handling subjects that are out-of-their expertise in terms of lesson planning, preparing activities and mastering the subjects so that they can provide the learning the students should receive. The participants that they utilize coping mechanisms such employing the aid of ICT like YouTube videos, role playing, board works, and class reporting.

Keywords: non-major, out-of-field teaching, learning difficulties, coping mechanisms, non-major

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1. Introduction

Quality education is central to sustainable development, serving as a powerful catalyst for the creation of more just, humane, and equitable societies. Quality education has become critical in many countries that are rapidly expanding enrollments in order to achieve education for all. Education systems have recently been put under strain, but the assumption that there is a trade-off between access and quality is incorrect. In low-income countries, successful efforts to expand access to primary education have frequently resulted in declining educational quality.

To accomplish this, people need the help of others, specifically teachers. It is the teacher's primary responsibility to transfer knowledge and inspire students to learn more through experience. Teaching is a time-consuming endeavor. It is a multifaceted task that is regarded as the noblest of all professions because it lays the groundwork for any discipline that many people envision. As a result, their efforts are highly valued in order to begin the high-quality education that students deserve. Aside from their actions, teachers' educational backgrounds play an important role in effective teaching. It is argued that a teacher must demonstrate expertise in the subjects that he or she teaches.

As cited by Du Plessis (2017), public school teachers play an important role in society, particularly for students. Quality education necessitates quality teachers. Education quality is directly related to classroom instruction quality, and the availability of qualified teachers is critical in the development of the educational system. The most important factor in improving student achievement is the use of qualified teachers in all schools. Teachers should be given the tools they need to do their jobs professionally, such as content knowledge and skills, as well as teaching methodology (Chin et al, 2022). The competency of teachers has a significant impact on student performance. Furthermore, effective teachers have a broad understanding of the subject matter they teach and frequently have majored in those specialized areas (Villaberde, 2017).

On the other hand, Caylao (2015) stated that teacher quality is a hotly debated topic in education. Teaching outside of their area of expertise, as well as mismatched subject assignments at the elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels, were among the issues that drew attention. The phenomenon of teachers who lack an educational background or training teaching subjects outside of their discipline has gone unnoticed. This is a critical issue, according to Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2015), because highly qualified teachers may become highly unqualified if assigned to teach subjects in which they have little training or education. Unqualified teachers can lower student achievement and harm the educational process. There can be many reasons why teaching out-of-field happens.

Systemic teacher shortages, unequal teacher distribution, scheduling issues in schools, and the teacher education system in a number of countries, where teachers are trained as specialists rather than generalists, all contribute to the out-of-field phenomenon. Schools in some countries are essentially constrained by funding based on the teacher-to-student ratio, so having the right mix of teachers to cover the full spectrum of classes required is not always possible, particularly in small schools. As a result, it is accepted (or tolerated) as a part of the professional lives of teachers. Within such constraints, the question becomes what a person is capable and willing to teach as opposed to what a teacher is certified/approved to teach or specialized in (Hobbs, 2020).

At the school where the researcher is currently assigned as a school head, there are teachers who handle subjects which are out of their expertise. Based on his observation, the main reason behind this is the lack of number of teachers in the system that match the subjects taught. The first response to this must be to increase the

supply of the teachers' academic institutions need and ensure they are distributed fairly. However, this will take time, so teachers in the system will require support and extensive learning opportunities. Nevertheless, teaching outside of one's field presents a challenge for teachers because it presupposes the acquisition of new content, which necessitates not only time and effort during the teaching requirements, but also a thorough understanding of learning strategies. Teachers' self-efficacy, professional identities, beliefs, sense of belonging, and, ultimately, their knowledge of what and how to teach are all affected.

Education is important in human's lives because it allows them to improve their living conditions. Every Filipino believes that education is critical to one's success in life. It has been demonstrated that even low-income parents make an effort to send their children to school. However, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in PISA 2018, the Philippines ranked lowest in reading comprehension among 79 countries and second-lowest in Science and Mathematics among the same countries. Thus, despite everyone's efforts to pursue education, the DepEd emphasized that the problem that severely hampers their pursuit of quality education is primarily attributed to the small number of teacher-education graduates who are specialists or prominent in such subject. As a result, it has been discovered that teachers' performance on knowledge assessments is poor (Demombynes, 2018).

The abovementioned led the researcher to pursue this research. In SCINHS, there are eight (8) teachers handling subjects beyond their area of specialization. The researcher knows that these faculty members are performing well as far as teaching is concerned. However, as research suggests, it is always good if the assigned teacher is well-trained about the contents of the subject because that is really his or her line of expertise. Hence, the purpose of this phenomenological study is to investigate and comprehend the lived experiences and struggles of Out-of-Field teachers in San Celestino Integrated National High School. In addition, the researcher will gather data through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. However, the findings of this study should never be used to make broad generalizations; rather, they should be used to further investigate the phenomenon under investigation.

Moreover, based on a casual discussion the researcher had before formally proceeding with the conduct of this study, this phenomenological research will be focused on three (3) major themes. These are, difficulty in adjusting to the academic content of the subject, difficulty in addressing students' questions, and difficulty in applying the most suitable approach in handling the subject. Along with these issues are strategies for dealing with them, such as careful subject content planning, the use of a variety of teaching approaches and strategies, participation in professional development, peer mentoring, and evaluation/monitoring of learners' development.

2. Citations

Many people used the term out-of-field teaching to refer to teachers who were assigned to teach subjects in which they were not specialized (Ingersoll and Collins, 2018). Furthermore, according to the findings of Mohd. Salleh and Darmawan (2013) discussed the causes of out-of-field teaching. He stated that this phenomenon occurs as a result of teachers being misassigned to the subjects they teach.

One source of contention between administration and teachers is out-of-field teaching. Over the years, the school has been reclassified several times. Nonetheless, when educators inquire about new programs, especially if they are related to their job status, they are frequently labeled as deviants and treated indifferently afterwards. This reaction is both unnecessary and harmful to encouraging change in studies. Such antagonistic relationships between educators and administrators must end if the goal of ensuring that all students graduate from high school and are fully prepared for higher education and the global labor force is to be met. Teachers strive to exceed the expectations of their principals and other superiors in order to gain their trust and confidence (Wilhelm, 2013).

Furthermore, enthusiasm is required. It is among the important and appropriate characteristics and traits of an effective educator. The term passion, which comes from Greek and means "influenced by a divine being," is commonly used in guidance to describe a persuasive, fiery, enthusiastic, and dynamic teaching style. As a result,

in order to be a successful educator, a teacher must be energetic. To instill eagerness, pleasure, and expectation in the session, he should be active in enticing understudies to participate and energizing them to investigate. If the instructor cannot generate affinity and exude energy, he should first learn to pique students' interest and ignite their desire to learn. Such characteristics can result in more positive teaching evaluations and inspirational attitudes toward instructors, improved learners' ability to perform and achieve whatever they desire, and strengthened conduct (Zhang, 2014).

Besides that, Bryant (2016) stated that zeal refers to the educator's ability to allow himself to take the exact eagerness for knowledge to help reveal that zeal and captivation, a limited number of easy-to-read, imaginative strategies can be used. This will pique the interest of your students and encourage them to learn. However, instructors' dissatisfaction in the workplace is the continuation of a long and troubling pattern, with unquestionably negative consequences for students. Educators must face uncertainty and disappointment in their chosen profession. Much more disappointing, educators' dissatisfaction may be influencing the supply of well-trained instructors available to today's students.

Concerns about the practice of non-specialists teaching have been raised in the literature. The presence of non-specialists in the classroom irritates those who advocate for educator proficient principles as a means of ensuring teaching quality or excellence education. Fundamental to these debates, however, are competing ideas about what constitutes efficient and effective teaching and the ability to educate. According to education researchers, having qualified teachers has a direct impact on students' achievement and performance. It has a greater impact than the number of students in the classroom being handled by the teacher, as well as the students' backgrounds (McConney, 2010).

According to Sambe (2015), changing the rules and procedures is one way to address the issue of teachers teaching subjects outside of their expertise. The first step is to create a framework that ensures that all educators can demonstrate all exercises in all evaluation stages at that institution. The following options are to elevate a substitute path to teaching certification. Rather than hiring graduates who took education profession courses, the arrangement could be made so that any student can become an educator if they have a four-year certification in the major fields taught in basic education institutions.

On the other hand, Baldoni (2010) proposed various qualities of teachers that can help them be better educators regardless of whether the field they are handling is within their field of specialization or not. He uttered the first one's resourcefulness. Resourcefulness paves the way for more notable accomplishment. Furthermore, a wise educator always finds a way for professional development and advancement. These are the dependable, compassionate educators who are expected to assist students in the least privileged schools, where students require the consistent consolation of a mindful climate and pedagogy that promotes optimism and confidence.

Moreover, numerous studies have revealed that educators are influenced by teaching outside of their area of expertise, but the administration has yet to address this. In Germany, research has shown that teaching outside of one's field has a negative impact on the teacher's self-efficacy, which in turn has an impact on the learners' performance. According to Porsh and Wendt (2015), students taught by non-specialist teachers have a low self-concept. On the other hand, in the Irish context, the problem can be overcome by providing educators with the kind of professional development program they deserve in order to ensure quality education for students.

Similarly, Hobes (2015) observed that one of the factors influencing teachers' efficacy is the subject they teach. As a result, when teachers teach subjects related to their area of specialization, they create a comfortable learning environment that leads to a quality education. More research has revealed that teachers' sense of identity, overall wellbeing, teaching performance, and knowledge of self-worth are all influenced by the area of specialization in which they teach.

Sharplin (2017) re-conceptualized country teachers' experiences teaching across specializations in Western

Australia. This phenomenon can have an effect on both the teacher's sense of efficacy and teacher attrition. According to the study's findings, communities and schools can assist out-of-field teachers in developing their knowledge and strategies for dealing with the negative effects of mismatch. According to Price (2015), the Western Australian Department of Education and Training's Education Workforce Initiatives Report recommends the use of flexible learning and "expert teachers" to guide the affected teachers. Faculty credentials have been identified by Akareem (2016) as one of the dimensions of quality education. Different curriculum creators have recognized this need and, as a result, have created good programs for years.

In South Korea, there is a clear disparity between the number of qualified teachers and the need for high school students to teach subjects for which they are not qualified (Kim, 2016). However, the Korean government has taken immediate action in response to this by instituting the Minor Qualification, which allows teachers to teach subjects outside of their areas of specialization. This encourages and motivates educators to further their education in order to handle a new subject. The scenario demonstrates unequivocally that the issue of field-teaching must be supported, recognized, and resolved.

Following the united call for a better education, the Philippines has passed laws such as Batas Pambansa Blg. Section IX of the Education Act of 1982, 232, guarantees students' right to competent instruction and relevant quality education. Furthermore, the Law establishes adequate facilities and provides teachers with responsible training. For example, in the United States, there is a law known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that requires those working in the education sector to have a college degree and demonstrate proficiency in the lessons that they teach. Universities and colleges, on the other hand, supervise this proficiency requirement and provide graduate degrees to education students, regardless of the professions they intend to pursue.

More so, Tome asserted that teaching outside of one's field of specialization is a widespread problem in the Philippines, particularly in primary and secondary education. Due to a lack of MAPEH course takers and licensure exam passers, as well as a large number of teachers who are underloaded from other majors, non-major teachers are assigned to MAPEH courses. Similarly, Augusto (2019) discovered in his research that the lived experiences of teachers assigned to teach subjects outside of their field were a mix of struggle, opportunity, positivity, and adaptability.

In the study conducted by Bayani and Guhao, Jr. (2017) entitled "Out-of-Field Teaching: Experiences of Non-Filipino Majors," they emphasized that the phenomenon is present and experienced in all schools here in the Philippines. Thus, it is revealed in the study that Out-of-Field teachers experience diverse situations, including compliance and submission, a lack of aptitude for the language, a lack of administrative and logistical support, and a lack of administrative and logistical support.

In a similar vein, Weldon (2016) reported secondary school teachers teaching subjects outside their comfort zone in his study. It presented new data on the scope of out-of-field instruction. Out-of-field teaching, according to him, is defined as a secondary teacher who has not attended a university for more than a year. They were unable to gain knowledge of teaching methodology. As part of their teaching load, approximately 26% of teachers in years seven (7) to ten (10) teach a subject in which they have not specialized. He also stated that there are more inexperienced teachers teaching than experienced teachers. He demonstrated that 37% of year seven (7) to ten (10) teachers with one-to-two years of experience teaching a subject outside of their field, compared to 25% of teachers with more than five years of experience. In Australia, approximately 16% of class groups in years seven (7) to ten (10) are taught by an Out-of-Field teacher. In remote areas, approximately 26% are taught by an Out-of-Field Teacher, compared to 14% in metropolitan areas.

A study titled Effective Education: Conceptualising the Meaning of Out-of-Field Teaching Practices for Teachers, Teacher Quality, and School Leaders was completed by du Plessis (2015) and is based on conceptualizing the meaning of Out-of-Field teaching practices, teacher quality, and school leaders. As a result, the latter concepts have received international attention. The study made extensive use of an in-depth examination of the implications of Out-of-Field teaching for teacher quality. It revealed intricate teaching and

learning environments. As a result, this study discusses how the Out-of-Field phenomenon defines teachers who teach outside of their field of training or education.

According to the perspectives of educational directors, principals, teachers, and parents from two countries, out-of-field teaching practices are important for content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge. The research was based on qualitative data. Data for this study were collected through interviews, observations, and document analyses on the relationships between real-life experiences, out-of-field teaching practices, and teachers' perceived quality. The study's findings show leadership perceptions, understandings, and decisions, as well as school improvement policies and out-of-field support programs in schools. The study concludes with educational policy recommendations and further research on teacher quality related to the out-of-field phenomenon.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1

Profile of the Participants

Participant Number	Area of Specialization	Subjects Handled Out of Area of Specialization	Number of Years of Service
1	English	Araling Panlipunan	3
2	Araling Panlipunan	PE 1 and 2	4
3	Science	Araling Panlipunan	3
4	English	MAPEH 3 and 4	2
5	Mathematics	MAPEH 3 and 4	1
6	English	MAPEH 1 and 2	5
7	Araling Panlipunan	MAPEH 1 and 2	6
8	ESP	MAPEH 1 and 2	3
9	Mathematics	Araling Panlipunan	7
10	Araling Panlipunan	MAPEH 1 and 2	4
11	English	Filipino	3
12	TLE	Filipino	4
13	ESP	Filipino	7
14	Science	Araling Panlipunan	4
15	Mathematics	MAPEH 1 and 2	3
16	ESP	MAPEH 1 and 2	3
17	TLE	Araling Panlipunan	2
18	TLE	Araling Panlipunan	1
19	TLE	Araling Panlipunan	4
20	ESP	Filipino	3
21	ESP	Filipino	5
22	ESP	Filipino	3
23	English	Filipino	5
24	Filipino	MAPEH 1 and 2	1
25	Araling Panlipunan	ESP	6
26	TLE	ESP	3

4. Discussion of Results

The researchers examined the categories, themes, and findings from the product in the initial data and narrowed his research to one core concept after thorough and rigorous data explication and analysis. After eliminating redundancy, the researchers narrowed it down to three (3) key themes: Learning Difficulties, Challenges Encountered During Lessons Preparation, and Teachers' Coping Mechanisms.

4.1 Theme 1: Teachers' Learning Difficulties of the Handled Subject

The findings revealed that teachers who taught outside of their specialization had difficulties in learning the subject/s. They stated that they considered these difficulties as challenges. They were influenced both positively and negatively. The scope and complexity of challenges vary. According to the participants, they take

challenges positively because they want to be engaged and created an impact in the school.

For example, participant 8 shared that handling and learning the different concepts in MAPEH was difficult at first. He had to spend a lot of time in studying the lessons because he wanted to ensure that the lessons, he would deliver to the class are based on facts and reliable. Furthermore, participants 12 and 13 revealed that dealing with lessons that were unfamiliar to them was incredibly uncomfortable. They understood that as educators, they needed to be adaptable, but they also believed that because they did not take Filipino as a major subject, they struggled to master it during the first few months of teaching it.

Teachers who teach outside their area of expertise face critical issues and challenges. These difficulties are primarily the result of a lack of subject matter knowledge (SMK), which has influenced the teacher's pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which is critical in both preparation and actual teaching. They were unable to generate new activities, were less creative, less confident, and relied on the traditional method in the first few months of teaching the subjects beyond their area of specialization. To ensure learning, teachers must devote a significant amount of time and effort to researching the subject's content and carefully planning activities that are appropriate for the students' abilities. On one hand, their experiences, according to the interview, made them more challenging, versatile, patient, committed, creative, resourceful, and passionate. It was a win-win situation for everyone.

4.2 Theme 2: Challenges Encountered During Lessons Preparation

In terms of lesson preparation, the participants stated that everything seemed difficult at first, but as time passed, they became accustomed to it. Participant 4 and 6 both shared that they opened a lot of books, visited different websites, and reviewed past lessons during their college years when the subject English was given to them. Yes, they admit that they can be said fluent in speaking English, but they believed that this was not enough to give the learning the students deserved to receive. In preparing lesson plans, it took time for her to think of varied activities that can be facilitated in the classroom, as revealed by participant number 7. Same thing was revealed by participants 11 and 12.

4.3 Theme 3: Teachers' Strategy and Coping Mechanisms

Out-of-field teachers employ a variety of teaching strategies and coping mechanisms. Teachers frequently used active and participatory approaches such as reporting, group activity, role-playing, and board work, according to the findings. To supplement students' mastery of their subject matter, YouTube videos were downloaded and played in class. Guide questions were posted prior to the video presentation, and discussion or sharing ensued. In teaching subjects outside of one's area of expertise, technological integration and hands-on exploration of ICT tools appeared to be more beneficial.

According to participant number 5, in order for her to deliver the lessons effectively and motivate students to listen and be attentive in class, she frequently showed videos and held follow-up discussions after the presentation. In this, she noticed that learners pay attention to what were being discussed in class. Moreover, participant 9 revealed that one of the coping mechanisms he utilized is to stop thinking about the difficulties brought about by handling the subject, which is out of his expertise, especially during the first few weeks. Participants generally agreed that strategies such as technology integration and hands-on exploration of ICT tools appeared to be more beneficial for fostering knowledge and technological pedagogical content knowledge.

5. Conclusion

Recommendation - Based on the data gathered, the following are hereby recommended:

- Misaligned teachers should be placed into proper assignments ideally to their unique, specialized subjects, and might be provided support.

- Workshops and training may be provided to develop the competence of out-of-field teachers and to reduce the risk of negative impact on their performance and their students.
- Related research with a wider scope may be conducted in the future.

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