



Not My Subject, Still My Classroom: A Qualitative Case Study Exploring the Experiences of Out-of-Field Teachers in Tanjay National High School

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Abstract

Out-of-field teaching, in which teachers are assigned to subjects outside of their specialization, is a recurring issue at Tanjay National High School. Various factors, such as teacher shortages, administrative decisions, and workload demands, are common causes of this phenomenon. By exploring their challenges, coping strategies, and support systems, this study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences. A qualitative case study design was employed, with data gathered through face-to-face semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes in the participants' experiences. The findings revealed that out-of-field teaching assignments were mainly influenced by institutional factors, including administrative assignment practices, staffing shortages, subject distribution, and workload constraints. Teachers also experienced challenges involving gaps in subject mastery, limited instructional resources, additional preparation demands, emotional pressure, and student-related difficulties. Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated adaptability through self-directed learning, research, online resources, collaboration with colleagues and professionals, and adjustments in their teaching practices. The findings further showed that teachers experienced professional growth and maintained their commitment to their teaching responsibilities despite working outside their specialization. The study highlights the importance of providing out-of-field teachers with adequate instructional resources, professional development opportunities, mentoring, collaboration with colleagues, and institutional support. Overall, the findings suggest that out-of-field teaching is not just the result of teachers' lack of specialization but also the institutional conditions and support available to them. Strengthening these areas may help out-of-field teachers manage unfamiliar teaching assignments more effectively and contribute to improved classroom instruction and educational quality.

Keywords: *Out-of-field teaching, Tanjay National High School, challenges, coping strategies, support system, qualitative study*



Introduction

Teachers play a vital role in delivering quality education. Ideally, they teach subjects that match their academic specialization and professional training in order to be able to have ample and accurate amount of knowledge to share with their students. According to the study of Ortiz (2026), institutional factors such as high teacher–student ratios, heavy workloads, insufficient instructional resources, and limited institutional support significantly contribute to the continuity of out-of-field teaching. To add to these concerns, according to the Second Congressional Commission on Education (2025), 62% of high school teachers who are expected to specialize teach subjects outside their college major. This practice, commonly referred to as teaching beyond specialization or out-of-field teaching, may affect teachers' confidence, instructional effectiveness, workload, and overall teaching experience.

Previous studies, such as those by Ingersoll (2002) that primarily examined the organizational causes and extent of out-of-field teaching. Additionally, Mizzi (2013) found that science teachers assigned outside their specialization experienced lower confidence, increased lesson preparation time, and difficulties in teaching unfamiliar content effectively, while Du Plessis (2015) highlighted its implications for teacher quality and recommended further research on teachers' lived experiences and support systems. While these studies provide valuable insights, there is still limited qualitative research that offers an understanding of the lived experiences of teachers who handle subjects outside their field of specialization, particularly in a local Philippine educational context. Furthermore, there is still no published qualitative research that has specifically tackled out-of-field teaching at Tanjay National High School.

These findings demonstrate that while teachers strive to adapt to their assigned subjects, out-of-field teaching presents challenges that can influence both teacher performance and the quality of education. Out-of-field teaching has become increasingly common due to teacher shortages, staffing needs, and curriculum demands, requiring many educators to teach subjects beyond their academic preparation. Despite their commitment to providing quality education, these teachers often experience increased workload, additional lesson preparation, and the need to continuously learn unfamiliar content. These realities can affect their confidence, teaching practices, and overall professional experience.

This study aims to explore the lived experience of teachers in Tanjay National High School who teach subjects beyond their specialization whether it may be academically or through experience. By exploring their challenges, coping strategies, and support systems, this study seeks to deeply understand their lived experiences and how they adapt to their non-specialization subjects. The data collected about the inconveniences and struggles these out-of-field teachers experience will be brought to light and hopefully be resolved by higher ups in the education department.

This study will first and foremost benefit the out-of-field teachers. This can give them recognition for the efforts and experiences and help alleviate their challenges by receiving better support, training and resources. Students may also benefit from improved teaching quality when teachers receive proper guidance and preparation. Improved teacher preparedness can lead to more effective classroom instruction, better learning experiences, increased student engagement, and ultimately improved academic outcomes. Furthermore, the findings of this study can help school administrators, Department heads, and subject coordinators in identifying the gaps in subject expertise and improving teacher assignments, mentoring, workload distribution, and professional development programs. Additionally, Education policymakers, and the Department of Education can improve pre-service and in-service training programs and develop policies and programs that address teacher shortages and out-of-field teaching assignments based on the challenges identified. The study can also serve as a reference for future researchers who will conduct similar studies. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing efforts to improve educational quality by supporting teachers who play a crucial role in delivering effective and meaningful learning experiences despite the challenges of teaching beyond their specialisation.

Research Questions



This study aims to explore the lived experiences of out-of-field teachers in Tanjay National High School. Specifically, to answer the following questions:

1. Why do teachers teach outside their specialization?
2. What are the challenges that come with teaching beyond their specialization?
3. How do teachers adapt their teaching practices when assigned to teach subjects beyond their area of specialization?

Literature Review

The Studies About Teaching Outside Your Area

The studies that were looked at show that teaching a subject that you are not used to is very hard for teachers. Teachers who teach subjects that're not their specialty often say that they do not know the subject matter very well. They are not confident, they have trouble answering questions from students, and they have a hard time adjusting to the new content and meeting the requirements of the curriculum. This means that teachers who teach outside their area of expertise often feel unsure and under pressure as they try to teach even though they have not been formally trained in that subject.

One thing that the studies have in common is that teachers need to find ways to cope with the challenges of teaching outside their specialty. Teachers use things like planning their lessons, working with teachers, help from mentors, talking to experts, trying different ways of teaching, and always learning and improving to overcome the difficulties of teaching a subject that is not their own. These things help teachers feel more confident, teach better, and get used to teaching subjects that they're not familiar with.

The studies also show that teaching outside your area of expertise is not a problem for individual teachers, but it is also a problem for the whole education system. There are no teachers' schools need to assign, teachers to classes, teachers not always assigned to the subject they are trained in, schools do not always have the resources they need, and teachers do not always get the support they need from administrators. Because of these problems, the researchers think that schools should have programs for helping teachers improve, mentorship programs, assign teachers to classes more fairly, and provide some resources to help teachers teach better and to support teachers who teach outside their specialty.

In general, the studies show that teachers who teach outside their area of expertise have a lot of trouble. They are also very good at adapting and finding ways to work with other teachers. These findings are the basis for this study, which is trying to learn more about what it is like for teachers to teach outside their specialty and to find ways to help teachers be happier and provide good education. Out-of-field teachers, like teachers, want to provide quality education, and out-of-field teachers and their experiences are very important for understanding how to help out-of-field teachers and how to make education better

The Causes and Prevalence of Out-of-field Teaching

Out-of-field teaching is defined as the practice of assigning teachers outside their scope of expertise or specialization. This has become prevalent globally, and the Philippines is no exception, particularly in public school settings. Multiple studies support that this has become recurring and not just isolated cases. Out-of-field teaching has been attributed to the reasons of structural staffing realities and institutional issues such as systemic teacher shortages, unequal distribution of teachers, administrative decisions, scheduling issues in schools, and the expectation of teacher adaptability. These factors will ultimately shape instructional quality, classroom authority, and student learning in those institutions (Gasó, 2025; Hobbs & Porsch, 2021; Javier et.al., 2026). Furthermore, a phenomenological study conducted by Andueza et. al. (2019), interview results reveal that the recurring reasons for English Education Graduates are responding to the needs of a school, the willingness of the EEGs in learning or teaching an out-of-field subject or personal reasons such as the need for a job or being skillful in the out-of-field



subject. Across both Philippine and international contexts, out-of-field teaching is presented as a response to workforce demands rather than a matter of teacher preference and experience.

Although the different studies agree on the attributes that feed the existence of out-of-field teachers, these studies differ on which specific factors they emphasize. Gaso (2025) focuses its emphasis on administrative decisions, teacher shortages, and teacher adaptability expectations as its primary causes for this phenomenon. Additionally, Javier et al. (2026), through a meta-synthesis, consolidate evidence from multiple Philippine studies and conclude that out-of-field teaching is consistently associated with structural issues in teacher deployment, shortages of specialized teachers, and institutional staffing policies.

Likewise, studies of Hobbs & Porsch (2021) and Andueza et al. (2019) acknowledge that these phenomena may stem from broader institutional issues. However, Hobbs & Porsch (2021) tackled this phenomenon from an international policy viewpoint. They focused on the workforce distribution and educational policy decisions, that imply that this is also an international issue. Whereas Andueza et al. (2019) focus on the Philippine context, attributing this issue to organizational staffing realities and persistent mismatches between teachers' specialization and assigned subjects.

In contrast to the previous studies, Co et al. (2021) focus less on the causes but rather on the effects of it through how the teachers experience this assignment. Similarly, Bugwak (2021) delved into the lived experiences of the out-of-field teachers rather than investigating the causes of such assignments, although respondents' recommendations suggest that teacher deployment could be a factor.

Despite some contrasting emphases on the different studies, all have consistently demonstrated to be common different educational settings. Co et al. (2021) and Gaso (2025) focus on Junior and Senior high school. Similarly, Bulwak (2021) examines this phenomenon in tertiary general education teachers. Whereas Javier et al. (2026) synthesize findings from multiple Philippine studies, proving that this issue is widespread throughout the country's secondary education system.

Moreover, Andueza et al. (2019) investigate Filipino teachers experiencing specialization and subject mismatches. Lastly, Hobbs & Porsch (2021) extended their observations internationally, indicating that this issue is not limited to the Philippines. Altogether, these studies support that this phenomenon is not confined to one school level, subject area, or national context but rather is a global challenge experienced by educational systems.

Overall, the reviewed literature has consistently indicated that out-of-field teaching has become a widespread and persistent practice. It is supported that it is driven primarily by systematic and institutional factors rather than the teacher's personal choice. While the studies may differ on their focus, with some highlighting teacher deployment, administrative decisions, and workforce policies, they collectively suggest that out-of-field teaching is due to broader challenges such as educational staffing and resource allocation. These results emphasize the need to further investigate the causes of the prevalence of out-of-field teaching and its impact on the experiences of teachers.

Despite the existing literature, limited studies have examined this phenomenon in the local context of Tanjay City, with no existing published studies particularly on the out-of-field teachers of Tanjay National High School. This creates the need for further research within this context.

Effects on Teaching Quality, Teacher Competence, and Student Learning

The reviewed studies consistently show that teaching outside one's area of specialization can have negative effects on teaching quality, teacher competence, and student learning. The studies *The Challenges Faced by Science Teachers When Teaching Outside Their Specific Science Specialism*, *Teaching Outside Specialization: From the Perspective of Science Teachers*, and the ScienceDirect article all agree that out-of-field teachers often struggle with limited content knowledge, reduced confidence, and increased lesson preparation time. These challenges may reduce instructional quality and make it harder for teachers to engage students effectively.



Similarly, Hobbs and Porsch (2021) emphasize that out-of-field teaching is not only a concern but a global issue that requires continuous professional development, mentoring, and institutional support. Rather than focusing only on the challenges, this study highlights strategies that can help teachers adapt to unfamiliar teaching assignments while maintaining effective instruction.

Although Brooks and Brooks' *In Search of Understanding: The Case for Constructivist Classrooms* does not directly examine out-of-field teaching, it supports the findings of the other studies by emphasizing that teachers need strong subject knowledge to promote meaningful learning, inquiry, and critical thinking. This reinforces the idea that limited content knowledge may affect student learning outcomes.

Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that teaching beyond specialization can reduce teacher effectiveness and student achievement when adequate support is lacking. However, the studies also suggest that these negative effects can be minimized through professional development, collaboration with colleagues, mentoring, and supportive school leadership. These findings support the present study by highlighting the importance of understanding how teachers experience out-of-field teaching and the support they need to maintain quality instruction.

Teacher Adaptation, Coping Strategies, and Professional Identity

According to Dela Cruz et al. (2025), teachers assigned to teach subjects outside their field of specialization experience significant challenges in delivering instruction. Using a phenomenological research design, the researchers explored the lived experiences of non-TLE teachers handling TLE subjects and found that they faced difficulties due to limited subject knowledge and inadequate teaching resources. Despite these challenges, the participants demonstrated resilience through collaborative efforts with colleagues and by viewing their uncertainties as opportunities for professional growth. The themes Teacher Adaptation, Coping Strategies, and Professional Identity emphasize that support systems, teamwork, and a positive mindset enable out-of-field teachers to adapt to unfamiliar teaching assignments while continuously improving their skills.

As stated by Castro et al. (2024), using Thematic Analysis shows that teachers were troubled in teaching multiple subject areas because of the amount of preparation needed and adjustments to different teaching materials and teaching methods. The study shows that subject mastery was insufficient when teachers were teaching multiple subject areas. This study highlights the need to reevaluate teaching assignments and strategies to provide better training so teachers can effectively teach in different subject areas. The themes Teacher Adaptation, Coping Strategies, and Professional Identity emphasize that teachers adapt by adjusting to different teaching materials and their teaching methods, and also highlight the need to re-evaluate teaching assignments and strategies for better training so that teachers can teach in various subject areas effectively.

Overall, both studies reveal that teachers teaching outside their specialization present challenges, including limited subject expertise and the need to adapt instructional strategies. However, both studies show that teachers overcome these challenges through collaboration, ongoing professional development, and a strong sense of resilience.

Methodology

This chapter introduces the research methodology used in conducting the study. It discusses qualitative case study research design, the selection of participants, the data gathering procedures, the research instruments, ethical considerations, and the methods of data analysis. A qualitative case study approach was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of teachers handling subjects outside their field of expertise at Tanjay National High School, allowing the researchers to examine the phenomenon within its real-life context.

Research Design



This study employed a qualitative case study research design to explore the experiences of out-of-field teachers in Tanjay National High School. A qualitative approach was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experiences, perceptions, challenges, and coping strategies, while the case study design allowed for a detailed examination of the phenomenon within the specific context of Tanjay National High School.

Research Locale

The research locale of this study is the Tanjay National High School in Tanjay City, Negros Oriental, Philippines. This school was chosen because it offers the educational setting relevant to the study and provides access to teachers who are assigned to subjects outside their specialization, who serve as the respondents of this study.

Research Participants

The participants of this study consist of out-of-field teachers from Tanjay National High School who are currently teaching subjects outside their field of specialization. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who possess firsthand experience with the phenomenon under investigation. A total of 3 teachers were included in the study, with data collection concluding when data saturation was reached. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative studies on out-of-field teaching because it ensures that participants have direct experience relevant to the research topic.

Participants must meet the following criteria:

1. Currently employed as a teacher at Tanjay National High School.
2. Currently assigned to teach at least one subject outside their college major or field of specialization.
3. Has been teaching an out-of-field subject for at least one school year.
4. Willing to participate voluntarily and provide informed consent.
5. Available to participate in an in-depth interview.

Research Instrument

This study used a semi-structured interview guide as the primary research instrument. The interview guide consists of open-ended questions that allow the participants to freely share their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies as out-of-field teachers. It also included follow-up questions whenever necessary to obtain more detailed responses and gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences. The use of a semi-structured interview guide ensures that all relevant topics related to the study are covered while allowing flexibility during the interview process.

Data Analysis

The researchers used semi-structured interviews to gather data from the participants. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and reviewed several times to ensure familiarity with the data. The researchers then employed thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and interpret recurring patterns and themes in the participants' responses. Similar responses were coded and grouped into categories, which were further organized into broader themes. These themes served as the basis for interpreting the teachers' experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and support systems in handling subjects outside their field of expertise, thereby addressing the research questions of the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers first sought approval from the school principal of Tanjay National High School before conducting the study. Upon receiving approval, a formal letter of permission to conduct the research was submitted along with the informed consent forms that were provided to the selected participants. The purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of all information shared were clearly explained.

The participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on teachers who were currently teaching a subject outside their field of specialization and who met the established inclusion criteria. Those who met these



criteria were invited to participate. Once the participants agreed to participate, the researchers scheduled individual interviews at a time and place that were convenient for them.

Data were gathered through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews using a validated interview guide. The interview guide contained open-ended questions that were designed to encourage participants to freely share their experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and insights as out-of-field teachers. Each interview lasted 11 to 15 minutes. With the participants' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy of the collected data. The researchers also took field notes to document non-verbal cues and other relevant observations.

After the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then carefully reviewed and verified against the recordings to ensure accuracy. Participants were asked to review their interview transcripts to confirm that their responses have been accurately represented (member checking), enhancing the credibility of the study.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-step process of Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) familiarizing with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report. This method allows the researchers to identify recurring patterns and develop meaningful themes that describe the lived experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and insights of out-of-field teachers. (Springer)

Throughout the research process, ethical principles were strictly observed. Participants' identities remained confidential through the use of pseudonyms or codes. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were given a choice to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. All interview recordings, transcripts, and related documents were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative case study, the researchers will adopt the framework of Lincoln and Guba (1985), which consists of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To strengthen the quality of the findings, the study will primarily employ triangulation by gathering data from multiple sources and comparing the information obtained.

Credibility was initiated by recording the interviews with the participants' consent, transcribing their responses verbatim, and checking the transcripts through audio recordings to ensure accuracy. The participants were also asked to review their transcripts to confirm that their responses were represented correctly. These procedures ensured the findings reflected participants' real experiences.

Transferability was supported by describing the research setting, the participants, and their experiences in detail. The study focused on three teachers from Tanjay National High School who were teaching subjects outside their specialization. This helps readers decide if the findings apply elsewhere. However, the results are specific to this school and do not represent all out-of-field teachers.

Dependability was supported by following a systematic research process. The researchers used a semi-structured interview guide, transcribed and reviewed the collected data, and applied Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis process. Similar responses were coded and grouped into categories before developing them into broader themes. This process provided a clear and organized approach to analyzing the participants' experiences.

Confirmability was supported by tracing the findings and themes in the participants' interview responses. The researchers used the participants' statements and identified codes as the basis for interpreting their experiences rather than relying only on personal opinions. Reviewing the transcripts and audio recordings also helped maintain the accuracy of the data and ensure that the interpretations remained connected to the participants' responses.



Ethical Considerations

The researchers adhered to ethical guidelines throughout the conduct of the study by securing the necessary permission from the division superintendent and school principal before data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after explaining the purpose of the study, the interview procedures, and their right to participate voluntarily or withdraw at any time without any consequences. Interviews were scheduled at a time and place most convenient for the participants to ensure their comfort and privacy during the interview process. The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were strictly maintained by using pseudonyms or participant codes instead of their real names. All information gathered was used solely for academic purposes, and the participants' responses were treated with respect, honesty, and confidentiality throughout the research process.

The researchers used Artificial Intelligence (AI) solely for assistance. Using ChatGPT and Gemini was limited only to grammar checking, clarity of words, and the organization of ideas.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1. Thematic map

Codes	Themes
Newer teachers are assigned subjects Suddenly assigned Simply told what subject to handle Principal assigns subjects Shortage of teachers Subjects are divided among teachers Many English teachers Subject distribution Already had an advisory Fewer teaching hours of other teachers Higher number of teaching hours Different subjects assigned	Institutional Factors Shaping Out-of-Field Teaching Assignments
Study Physics Can't refresh what was learned before Did not know much about musical notes Lack of subject mastery Curriculum is new No textbooks Limited resources Need to search for materials Different steps and activities Feel the pressure Students with different attitudes and behaviors Students do not listen Challenging More teaching demands	Navigating the Challenges of Teaching Beyond One's Specialization
Study Physics	



Doing research	
Study and search for information	
Search on YouTube	
Vlogs	
Research how to do procedures	
Ask MAPEH major teachers for help	Adapting Through Self-Directed and Collaborative
Ask colleagues for handouts	Learning
Ask for advice	
INSET/training	
Adapt	
Just adapt and learn to love it	
Accept it	
Adapt to whatever subject is given	
Explore a new field	

Capable of exploring a new field	
Analytical skills	
Learning new subjects	
Continuous learning	
Admit when wrong	
Never regretted the profession	Developing
Love teaching children	Professional Growth and
Love your work	Commitment
Passion for teaching	Amid Out-of-Field Teaching
Maintaining students' trust and confidence	
Complete instructional materials	
Lesson plans	
Reduce paperwork burden	
Training related to assigned specialization	
Better subject distribution	

Institutional Factors Shaping Out-of-Field Teaching Assignments

The theme Institutional Factors Shaping Out-of-Field Teaching Assignments refers to the school-level conditions, administrative decisions, available resources, workload arrangements, and professional support that influence teachers' experiences when they are assigned to teach subjects outside their field of specialization. Instead of viewing out-of-field teaching solely as an individual teacher's deficiency of knowledge on a given subject, this theme highlights how institutional practices—such as teacher allocation, availability of instructional materials, preparation requirements, workload, and training opportunities—can mold how teachers perform and accustom to assignments beyond their specialization.

The statements of the participants show how the school system affects the subjects that teachers are assigned to teach, especially when they are assigned to subjects outside their field of expertise. This can be caused by factors such as school policies, lack of teachers, the way subjects are divided among teachers, and the amount of workload they have. These factors can greatly affect the subject teachers are assigned to teach and can influence their experiences with out-of-field teaching assignments. In the "Administrative Assignment Practices" subsection, participants responded that the "newer ones are the ones usually given" subject areas with vacancies, one was "suddenly assigned," they were "just told," one said that the "principal assigns subjects," etc. In "Staffing Shortages and Subject Distribution," participants reported that there is a "shortage of teachers" and that they had to "divide



the subjects,” and in “Workload and Assignment Constraints,” they mentioned that they had “advisories already,” “fewer hours to teach,” and a “higher” number of teaching hours, respectively. These responses suggest that the school’s out-of-field assignments mainly come from the need to fill available vacancies, divide the subjects among teachers, and balance the teaching hours and workload. This finding aligns with Ingersoll (2002), who found that out-of-field teaching mostly resulted from administrative practices and the organization of the school, such as staffing and assignment methods.

The participants’ responses mirror numerous institutional factors that impacted their experiences. Under complete instructional materials, participants spotlight the weight of having adequate and appropriate resources to assist or support their preparation and delivery of lessons. Their responses suggest that when instructional materials are available, teachers can better comprehend unfamiliar content and provide more organized learning experiences for students. This indicates that institutional provision of teaching resources can diminish some of the difficulties associated with teaching outside one’s specialization.

The code “lesson plans” further reflects the need for institutional and instructional support. Participants indicated that having suitable lesson plans or sufficient time and guidance for lesson preparation can assist them in coordinating unfamiliar subject matter. For out-of-field teachers, lesson preparation may necessitate additional effort because they must first familiarize themselves with content that is excluded from their original specialization. Thus, support in lesson planning can contribute to teachers’ ability to manage their assignments more effectively.

Another institutional concern identified by the participants was the need to cut down the paperwork burden. Their responses suggest that excessive administrative tasks can constrain the time allocated for studying unfamiliar subject matter, preparing lessons, and developing instructional strategies. This insinuates that workload management is one of the key institutional factors because teachers assigned outside their specialization may require additional preparation time to compensate for gaps in subject-specific knowledge.

The code “training related to assigned specialization” highlights the participants’ requirement for professional development that is directly connected to the subjects they are assigned to teach. Participants expressed the value of receiving training that can strengthen their knowledge and teaching competence in unfamiliar subjects. This suggests that institutions can help out-of-field teachers by providing relevant seminars, workshops, mentoring, or other professional learning opportunities rather than expecting teachers to count entirely on self-study.

Lastly, “better subject distribution” emerged as an important institutional factor. The participants’ responses indicate that assigning teachers to subjects that are more closely correlated with their specialization would help lessen the occurrence of out-of-field teaching. When subject assignments are made with greater consideration of teachers’ qualifications and expertise, teachers may experience higher confidence and preparedness in performing their responsibilities. Therefore, proper teacher allocation is not merely an administrative concern but also an important factor in supporting instructional quality.

These findings are consistent with existing literature on out-of-field teaching. Ingersoll (2002) argued that out-of-field teaching is influenced not only by teacher preparation or shortages but also by how schools are organized and how teachers are utilized. His study identified school administration, recruitment practices, class sizes, and leadership as factors associated with the assignment of teachers outside their fields. Similarly, Zhou (2014) found that school organizational characteristics influence the extent to which schools rely on out-of-field teachers, demonstrating that teacher assignment is partly shaped by institutional conditions.

Philippine studies also support the importance of institutional factors. De La Cruz and Alda (2024) emphasized the need for appropriate professional development support for teachers assigned outside their specialization, particularly among senior high school teachers. Gatpandan’s study of public secondary schools in Cavite likewise examined the institutional experiences, processes, and support systems surrounding out-of-field teaching. More



recent Philippine research has also identified administrative support, teacher assignment, and professional development as important dimensions of the out-of-field teaching experience.

The identified thematic category and the supporting subcategories help address the research question of what institutional factors shape out-of-field assignments. The discussion of this theme shows that teachers' experiences of out-of-field teaching mostly come from the administrative practices, such as insufficient staffing, subject distribution resulting from vacancies, and the teachers' workloads. These factors are especially pertinent to the educational environment in the Philippines, as teacher shortages and difficulties with recruitment processes were reported in the study by Mejia et al. (2025) and are suggested to impact the quality of education, teachers' motivation, and students' learning experiences. Therefore, this thematic category is pertinent to the research question as it provides an explanation of why the participants become out-of-field teachers.

Overall, Institutional Factors Shaping Out-of-Field Teaching Assignments demonstrate that teachers' experiences are strongly influenced by the systems and decisions within the school. The availability of instructional materials, support for lesson planning, manageable paperwork, relevant training, and appropriate subject distribution can either ease or intensify the challenges faced by out-of-field teachers. Thus, addressing out-of-field teaching requires not only teachers' personal effort and adaptability but also institutional mechanisms that provide adequate resources, professional support, and more appropriate teacher-subject assignments.

Navigating the Challenges of Teaching Beyond One's Specialization

The theme "Navigating the Challenges of Teaching Beyond One's Specialization" describes the challenges experienced by teachers who handle subjects outside their field of specialization or experience. It also looks at how teachers deal with unfamiliar teaching responsibilities. This theme was organized into three recurring subthemes: (1) Knowledge and Subject-Mastery Gaps, (2) Instructional and Resource Challenges, and (3) Emotional and Workload Pressure. The participants' experiences show that teaching beyond their expertise requires them to adjust to unfamiliar subject content, prepare additional materials, and handle these responsibilities along with their usual teaching workload.

The participants' experiences show that one of their main challenges is the gap between their specialization and the subjects they are assigned to teach. This can be seen in the codes "Study Physics," "Can't refresh what was learned before," "Did not know much about musical notes," "Lack of subject mastery," and "Curriculum is new." These responses show that teachers sometimes have to study topics that they are not familiar with or review lessons they learned in the past. This can take extra time and effort, especially when the subject is far from their specialization.

Another challenge is related to Instructional and Resource Challenges. The codes "No textbooks," "Limited resources," "Need to search for materials," and "Different steps and activities" show that teachers may have difficulty finding enough materials for the subjects they teach. Because of this, they need to search for other resources and adjust the way they prepare their lessons. This can be more difficult when they are still trying to understand the subject themselves.

The participants also experienced Emotional and Workload Pressure. This shows in the codes "Feel the pressure," "Students with different attitudes and behaviors," "Students do not listen," "Challenging," and "More teaching demands." These responses show that the challenges are not only about learning the subject. Teachers also have to deal with different student behaviors and manage the additional demands that come with teaching an unfamiliar subject.

Overall, the participants' experiences show that teaching outside one's specialization can involve learning unfamiliar topics, finding teaching materials, adjusting lessons, managing students, and handling additional responsibilities. These findings are similar to the study of Roxas (2022), who found that teachers who are assigned to subjects outside their field experienced difficulties such as mastering subject content, planning lessons, and preparing instructional activities. Despite these challenges, teachers still have to find ways to continue with their teaching responsibilities.



and meet the needs of their students. Similarly, the participants in the study showed that teachers who are experiencing these difficulties adapted to their teaching responsibilities by finding ways to cope with these difficulties.

Adapting Through Self-Directed and Collaborative Learning

This theme describes the adaptations that out-of-field teachers came to in order to meet the responsibilities given to them despite their lack of initial knowledge or experience of the unfamiliar subject. It also explores how teachers sought to develop their knowledge and skills through self and collaborative learning due to the lack of instructional materials and institutional support for out-of-field teachers. This theme was divided into 3 subthemes: (1) Self-Directed Learning, (2) Peer and Professional Support, (3) Teaching Adaptation. The participants' accounts reveal that teachers go beyond relying on given formal instructional material by taking the initiative of consuming other forms of learning media, seeking assistance from colleagues and other professionals of their out-of-field subject and adapting their teaching practices to fulfill the demands of their unfamiliar subject.

The first theme, Self-Directed Learning, explores the means of the teachers' self-learning in order to effectively teach their unfamiliar subjects. This subtheme emerged from codes such as "Study Physics," "Doing research," "Study and search for information," "Search on YouTube," "Vlogs," and "Research how to do procedures" from participant accounts. This demonstrates that when teachers are given an unfamiliar topic, they often take personal initiative in self-learning, seeking the needed information, and developing the skills necessary for the demands of the subject. For instance, P2 and P3 stated that, "Most of the resources I use are online. Since we do not have books available, especially because the curriculum is new" this reflects how teachers sought alternative learning resources to address the lack of formal instructional materials such as textbooks. In addition, P1 stated, "physical science really requires me to study because I can't just refresh what I learned before." This reflects how teachers resort to self-learning in order to strengthen and refresh their existing knowledge in unfamiliar subjects. Overall, this shows how the self-directed learning of the teachers became a means for addressing their lack of knowledge and inexperience instead of viewing that as the endpoint and something inevitable.

For the second subtheme, Peer and Professional Support, it describes the support teachers seek in order to gain insights and knowledge on their unfamiliar subject with the help of colleagues and professionals who have greater experience or expertise in the field. It also explores the type of assistance they seek and the guides that they received while navigating out-of-field teaching. This subtheme emerged from the following codes: "Ask MAPEH major teachers for help," "Ask colleagues for handouts," "Ask for advice," and "INSET/training" from participant accounts. This illustrates that teachers actively seek support from colleagues and professional development opportunities to compensate for gaps in their subject knowledge and unfamiliarity with the assigned subject.

Lastly, the third subtheme, Acceptance and Adaptability, describes how teachers adjust to their out-of-field subject despite their unfamiliarity with the assignment. It also explores how they accept it through flexibility and their willingness to explore and learn in the new field. This theme came from codes such as "Adapt," "Just adapt and learn to love it," "Accept it," "Adapt to whatever subject is given," and "Explore a new field" from participant accounts. P3 expressed this by stating that, "At work, because people think teachers are superheroes who can do everything, but you just have to do your best to manage it." This reflects that teachers are expected to be flexible and capable of handling different fields despite the difficulties that may come with it. Similarly, the same participant also stated that, "We have gotten used to it. Every year, we expect that we might be given a different subject the following year." This suggests that there is a recurring exposure to out-of-field teaching that has led the teachers to view subject changes as a regular part of their teaching experience.

The findings are consistent with Dela Cruz et al. (2025), who found that teachers handling subjects outside their specialization were able to adapt and remain resilient despite limited knowledge of the subject and their inadequate available resources. This also revealed that teachers treat these challenges as an opportunity for professional development and growth. Similarly, the participants of this present study have shown their willingness to accept,



learn, and adjust to a subject within an unfamiliar field. This shows that having a flexible and adapting attitude helped the teachers cope with the difficulties of teaching outside their field of specialization or experience.

Developing Professional Growth and Commitment Amid Out-of-Field Teaching

The theme of developing professional growth and commitment in the context of out-of-field instruction depicts the process by which teachers build professional proficiency, skills, and even commitment to their career through their experience in teaching classes outside their specialization. Instead of portraying assignments as merely inconvenient circumstances for accomplishing their duties, this theme reflects a process through which teachers develop competence and commitment through steep learning curves and a sense of professionalism that promotes their students' welfare.

Within the identified theme, the participants depicted their lived experience in different settings. When it comes to professional growth and competence, the participants described instances in which they acquired new behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge, saying, "Teaching an unfamiliar subject makes one really think; I am beginning to see that there is nothing I cannot get to understand by studying a new discipline." The participants saw their assignments as a source of perpetual learning since they felt like they had to constantly learn and experience new challenges every day. Therefore, they said, "It helps one realize that he/she is always a student; every day you learn something new about other disciplines, and that makes you a better teacher."

When it comes to professional commitment, the participants demonstrated their efforts in sustaining their commitment to their careers throughout their teaching practices. When dealing with their unpreparedness and lack of mastery of the material, the participants spoke about their willingness to develop a relationship of trust with their students, saying, "When one does not know an answer to a question, it is better to tell the students the truth; by doing that, it becomes easier to establish a relationship of trust with the students as well since they begin to believe in your ability as a teacher." Commitment was sustained through their passion for education, and they said, "Your passion for teaching never fades away even when facing such challenges as teaching an unfamiliar subject; your love for teaching young people never fades away. I love your work, and I have never regretted being a teacher despite the initial challenges."

Finally, when it comes to institutional support needs, the participants identified the factors that would support their efforts to promote professional growth and competence. They said that their willingness to learn and grow as teachers required practical forms of administrative assistance. For instance, they said, "Support may be provided by the administration through providing instructional resources and materials, lesson plans that can be used when teaching unfamiliar subjects, and measures to reduce the paperwork to allow more time for learning." Additionally, the participants identified the need for policy-level interventions, saying, "What we need is relevant training in relation to the area of specialization we choose together with the development of better subject allocation policies."

The concept of scholarship in teacher education encompasses teacher-related research, the relevance of teaching practice, as well as professional skills and ethics. The themes identified above resonate with the concept of scholarship in teacher education. Firstly, Hobbs's (2013) analysis of "out-of-field" assignments and the teacher's professional identity depicts the teacher as someone who constantly crosses professional boundaries in his/her efforts to learn new information, gain new insights, and develop new skills and attitudes. Secondly, Hobbs and Porsch's (2021) analysis of the learning experiences of teachers in the settings of "out-of-field" assignments illustrates the processes through which teachers can continue building their self-understanding while engaging in reflective practice. Finally, Du Plessis's (2019) analysis of the role of professional commitment and student-centeredness aligns with the discussion above on the teacher's efforts to foster their own professional growth as well as the factors that may facilitate this process. Thus, when combined with professional commitment and institutional support, teachers are able to turn administrative limitations into a source of personal and professional empowerment while promoting long-term professional sustainability and commitment.

Conclusion



This qualitative case study concludes that out-of-field teaching in Tanjay National High School is mainly rooted in some institutional premises like administrative assignments, shortage of teachers, subject distribution, and workload. These can force school teachers to teach outside their area of specialization in order to fill the teaching and instructional needs in one school. The results demonstrate the difficulties and challenges of teaching outside one's specialization, such as gaps in mastery and knowledge of content, problems with instructional materials resourcing, or workload and emotional burden. Based on our participants. Teachers need to cover subject matters that are new to them, prepare lesson plans or visual aids, and try to balance learning and teaching at the same time.

However, despite these difficulties, the participants' experiences themselves highlight their flexibility and commitment to continue performing their roles as teachers. In conclusion, this study demonstrates that if teachers are to be placed in out-of-field assignments, the necessary support should be available for them to manage such placements. Institutional support, appropriate resources, professional development, and a reasonable division of labor are also key to out-of-field teachers fulfilling their role effectively. Therefore, targeting both the institutional levers and barriers of out-of-field teaching can help create a more supportive teaching context for teachers and their students.

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