

Out-of-Field Teaching: High School Social Studies Teachers in Focus

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Abstract

Out-of-field teaching, a practice often born out of necessity, raised serious concerns about the integrity of educational standards. This study investigated the phenomenon of out-of-field teaching among Social Studies teachers in junior high schools in the Philippines. Employing a descriptive phenomenological approach, the research explored the lived experiences of out-of-field teachers, examining the challenges they faced and the strengths they exhibited. The study identified significant deficits in pedagogical content knowledge, limited resources, classroom management struggles, and psychological strain as key challenges. On the other hand, it highlighted adaptability, growth, and passion for teaching as strengths demonstrated by these educators. The study emphasized the critical role of professional development, peer collaboration, and targeted support in addressing gaps in content mastery and teaching effectiveness. Although some teachers perceive student success, their lack of confidence suggests potential gaps. This discrepancy necessitates further research to quantitatively assess student learning outcomes under these circumstances. Recommendations included tailored training programs, mentorship initiatives, updated teaching resources, and mental health support systems to mitigate stress and burnout. By addressing these needs, the study aimed to improve teacher performance and student learning outcomes, contributing to the broader discourse on educational quality within the context of out-of-field teaching under the K to 12 curriculum.

Keywords: *out-of-field teaching, social studies, pedagogical content knowledge, classroom management, psychological strain, professional development*

Introduction

High-quality instruction is a linchpin of student achievement. A multitude of research studies underscore that teachers' qualifications, particularly their depth of knowledge and expertise in the subjects they teach, contribute substantially to delivering effective instruction and fostering positive student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Blömeke et al., 2016; Christ et al., 2022). Subject-area expertise enables teachers to provide not only accurate content but also to employ pedagogical approaches tailored to the specific demands of the subject, which is essential for enhancing student understanding and engagement.

However, despite the clear importance of teacher specialization, many educational systems face persistent shortages of qualified educators, particularly in subjects like mathematics, science, and social studies (Luft et al., 2020). This gap has led to a widespread practice known as "out-of-field teaching," in which teachers are assigned to teach subjects outside their formal academic training or area of expertise (Ingersoll, 1998; Du Plessis et al., 2014; Hobbs & Porsch, 2021). This phenomenon has become an enduring issue in both developed and developing countries, where teacher shortages, budget constraints, and uneven distribution of teaching talent compel schools to assign teachers to unfamiliar content areas, causing significant challenges in maintaining educational standards (Ingersoll, 2001; 2003; Hobbs & Torner, 2014; Du Plessis, 2015; Price et al., 2019).

In Australia, a 2007–2008 study in Western Australia found that 28% of teachers were teaching outside their field of specialization (Weldon, 2016). Workforce reports revealed that 39% of urban principals and 42%–66% of rural principals struggled to find qualified applicants, perpetuating out-of-field teaching (Weldon, 2016). Similarly, in the study of Hofmeyer (2015), South Africa faces mismatches between teacher qualifications and educational needs. Despite a high demand for teachers in language and mathematics, many lack subject-specific training, worsening out-of-field teaching and affecting instruction in critical subjects. In Korea, out-of-field teaching in secondary schools is widespread, with a study of 1,410 teachers showing negative impacts on educational quality. Teachers with limited subject knowledge struggle to deliver effective instruction, prompting calls for urgent reforms (Kwak, 2019).

Consequently, the out-of-field teaching in the Philippines is compounded by a confluence of factors. Generalao et al. (2022) asserts that the low passing rates in the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) have limited the pool of qualified educators. From 2010 to 2019, only 28% and 35% of elementary and secondary LET takers passed, respectively (Gatchalian, 2021). This shortage is particularly acute in underserved regions like the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and Zamboanga Peninsula (Generalao et al., 2022). Further, the allure of higher wages and better working conditions abroad has led to significant teacher migration. The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) reported an average of 1,500 Filipino teachers leaving the country annually over the past three years (Reyes, 2024; Real & Flordeliz, 2024). The combined effect of these factors has forced schools to assign teachers to subjects they are not qualified to teach. This practice compromises the quality of instruction, as teachers may lack the necessary pedagogical knowledge and skills. Out-of-field teaching, a practice that, while often born out of necessity, raises serious concerns about the integrity of educational standards (Price, 2017).

The issue of out-of-field teaching in the Philippines represents a significant challenge, particularly in the context of Social Studies education under the K to 12 curriculum. Social Studies is a critical subject that shapes students' understanding of history, society, and their roles as informed, active citizens. However, Pacaña et al. (2019) argue that many teachers assigned to this subject lack formal training or specialization, resulting in compromised instructional quality and negative impacts on students' academic performance, critical thinking, sense of nationalism, and ability to analyze both historical and contemporary issues (Conklin, 2012; Öntaş & Koç, 2020). This challenge is particularly pronounced in Social Studies due to its interdisciplinary nature, which demands expertise in history, geography, political science, economics, and culture. Teachers who lack specialization in these areas may find it difficult to implement essential pedagogical strategies, such as inquiry-based learning, engaging discussions, and resource analysis, which are vital for fostering students' critical thinking skills and promoting civic engagement (Fitchett & Heafner, 2018, as cited in Simsek & Öntaş, 2021). Moreover, there is a dearth of literature that specifically addresses the phenomenon of out-of-field teaching within the Social Studies discipline, further limiting the ability to develop targeted solutions for this pressing issue.

Thus, this research seeks to illuminate the challenges of out-of-field Social Studies teachers in high schools. It examines issues such as lesson planning, selecting effective teaching strategies, addressing student misconceptions, and connecting academic content to real-life contexts. The study also explores the strengths and positive experiences that out-of-field teachers bring to their roles. By analyzing both the difficulties and successes of these educators, the research aims to identify effective strategies for enhancing their teaching practices.

Through a detailed examination of the lived experiences of out-of-field Social Studies teachers, this study provides insights into how they manage their responsibilities and how their students perform. It proposes solutions like professional development and specialized training to improve the effectiveness of these teachers. The findings hold value for educational institutions, policymakers, and teacher education programs, as understanding the unique challenges and strengths of out-of-field teachers can help shape better support systems. Ultimately, this research aims to improve teacher deployment and professional development, ensuring high-quality education for students.

Domain of Inquiry

This research focused on understanding the challenges faced by out-of-field Social Studies teachers in Junior High School. It explored aspects such as lesson planning, teaching strategies, addressing misconceptions, and connecting content to real-life situations. The study also investigated the strengths and positive experiences of these teachers, aiming to identify strategies for improving their teaching effectiveness. Additionally, it examined the impact of professional development and specialized training on their performance, with broader implications for educational institutions, policymakers, and teacher education programs.

Methodology

This chapter encapsulates the research design, environment, respondents, instruments, data collection and analysis, as well as the ethical considerations.

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative approach, utilizing a descriptive phenomenological research design to explore and examine the unique experiences of individuals in specific circumstances. As described by Smith (2018), descriptive phenomenology focused not on objective reality but on how individuals perceived and interpreted their experiences through consciousness. This approach was well-suited for understanding the lived experiences of out-of-field teachers when teaching Social Studies, allowing for a detailed exploration of their perceptions, emotions, and challenges.

Specifically, descriptive phenomenology enabled a deep inquiry into how these teachers perceived their roles and the difficulties they encountered, emphasizing the richness and complexity of their experiences (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Willis et al., 2016). By focusing on their subjective interpretations, this study uncovered the challenges they faced in curriculum delivery, content development, and pedagogical strategies. The phenomenological method also examined

how these teachers adapted to teaching outside their area of expertise, the strategies they employed, and their overall sense of professional identity in this context.

This provided an intricate understanding of how out-of-field teachers navigated their roles, highlighting key themes such as instructional challenges, coping mechanisms, and the implications for both their well-being and student learning outcomes. By capturing these experiences, this study aimed to offer insights into the broader impact of out-of-field teaching on educational quality and the support systems needed to enhance teacher effectiveness in such contexts.

Research Environment

This study was conducted within the Department of Education's City Division in Cebu Province, which was part of a larger system consisting of seven (7) independent schools divisions (Arong, 2023). These divisions served the province's six component cities, each with its own administrative and educational management structure. The research focused specifically on one of these school divisions, providing a localized context for examining the lived experiences of out-of-field teachers assigned to teach Social Studies.

The chosen school division served as the primary research environment due to its diverse population of educators. This setting offered a rich context for exploring the challenges and coping strategies employed by out-of-field teachers, particularly those teaching Social Studies in Junior High School. By situating the research within this division, the study aimed to gain deeper insights into the specific conditions, support systems, and educational policies that influenced the experiences of out-of-field teachers in this region.

Research Informants

The informants in this study consisted of six (6) Junior High School out-of-field teachers assigned to teach Social Studies in a specific division within Cebu Province, Philippines. They were selected from different schools within the division through a purposive sampling technique. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure the inclusion of participants who met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. This technique was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to select individuals who possessed significant experience with out-of-field teaching, ensuring that the data gathered were rich and directly aligned with the study's focus.

The number of informants, set at 6, was based on qualitative research standards that suggested this number was typically sufficient to reach data saturation—the point at which no new themes or insights emerged from additional data collection (Guest et al., 2006). By limiting the number of participants to this manageable size, the study could facilitate an in-depth exploration of the teachers' experiences while ensuring that data collection remained feasible within the study's time and resource constraints.

The criteria to be used in the selection of the research informants were the following: (1) Duration of Teaching Assignment, which meant that informants had to have been teaching Social Studies as an out-of-field subject for at least one academic year by the time of data collection, to make sure that they had substantial experience. (2) Non-Specialization in Social Studies, wherein teachers had to have no formal qualifications or training in Social Studies, which guaranteed that their experiences reflected genuine challenges. Teachers who had DPE units with Social Studies major alignment were excluded from this study. (3) Current Teaching Load, wherein these teachers had to currently teach at least two (2) sections of Social Studies, ensuring that they were actively engaged in delivering the subject content. (4) Willingness to Participate, wherein all informants had to give voluntary consent, understanding the purpose of the study and their role in contributing to the research.

The recruitment of informants was coordinated with the division office and school heads to ensure that the selected participants met the criteria. Additionally, the Public Schools District Supervisor was consulted to verify the eligibility and suitability of the informants for the research. The identities of the informants were kept confidential throughout the study to protect their privacy. Pseudonyms or codes such as P1 (Participant 1), P2 (Participant 2), and so on, were used in reporting the findings. If multiple statements were made by the same participant, a letter was added to their pseudonym (e.g., P1a for the first statement, P1b for the second). By focusing on these criteria, this study ensured that the informants' inputs were rich and reflective of the challenges faced by out-of-field teachers, contributing to a nuanced understanding of their lived experiences.

Table 1
Demographic profile of the participants

Pseudonym	Age	Years of teaching as an Out-of-Field	Field of Specialization
Participant 1	42	4-6 years	English
Participant 2	42	4-6 years	English
Participant 3	32	1-3 years	Filipino
Participant 4	28	4-6 years	Filipino
Participant 5	25	1-3 years	Biological Science
Participant 6	28	Less than 1 year	Filipino

Research Instruments

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with out-of-field Social Studies teachers to explore their lived experiences (Pezalla et al., 2012). Each interview was preceded by a brief questionnaire collecting quantitative data on participants' teaching experience, years teaching Social Studies out-of-field, educational background, and relevant professional development. This contextual information informed the interview process.

A researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide was created to explore the experiences of out-of-field Social Studies teachers. The guide underwent a content validity review by three research professors to ensure it measured the intended constructs effectively. It included open-ended questions about participants' perceptions of teaching Social Studies, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they used. Prompts and probing questions encouraged detailed responses, aligning with the goal of obtaining a "thick description" of the phenomenon (Leech, 2002).

To enhance the accuracy and validity of the findings, participants engaged in member checking after the interviews, allowing them to review and confirm their responses in the transcripts. This process ensured their voices were accurately represented and enriched the data by allowing for clarification or expansion of their initial statements.

Data Gathering Procedure

- A. **Pre-gathering Stage.** The researchers obtained all necessary approvals from relevant school authorities to conduct the research, following ethical protocols required by the institution. Informed consent forms were distributed to all participating teachers through online platforms such as Google Mail and Google Forms. The forms ensured participants were fully aware of the study's objectives, their rights as participants, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Additionally, a teacher background questionnaire was sent to the out-of-field Social Studies teachers to gather pertinent demographic and professional information. This provided essential context for understanding their experiences and qualifications related to the subject they were teaching.
- B. **Actual Data Gathering Stage.** Semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually using Google Meet. The interviews were conducted using a structured interview guide to delve into the teachers' experiences, challenges, and opportunities in teaching Social Studies outside their field of expertise. Each interview is expected to last between 45 and 60 minutes, providing ample time for in-depth exploration of their lived experiences. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants, and the recordings were securely stored. Data confidentiality was strictly maintained, with access restricted to authorized individuals. Transcriptions were generated from the recordings to facilitate detailed analysis of the collected information.
- C. **Post-data Gathering Stage.** Once data saturation had been reached—when no new information or themes emerged from additional interviews—the data collection process concluded. At this stage, the researcher ensured that participants' details were documented for distributing tokens of appreciation. Following the interviews, the transcribed data underwent rigorous analysis using Colaizzi's (1978) data analysis technique to identify key themes, patterns, and clusters of meaning. The recordings were listened to repeatedly to ensure that the nuances of participants' experiences were captured accurately. After the completion of the analysis and the publication of the study, all recordings and sensitive data were securely archived, with steps taken to preserve confidentiality and data integrity.

Data Analysis

After collecting the data, it was analyzed and managed with the help of Colaizzi's (1978) data analysis technique. The Colaizzi technique is a qualitative strategy that ensured the accuracy and reliability of its findings. The study was rigorous and significant because the researcher had a deep understanding of the respondents' real experiences as they were expressed in emergent themes and their interconnected links. Consequently, the researchers utilized a descriptive phenomenological methodology as a straightforward and rational approach to examine the fundamental components of an encounter (Wirihana, 2018).

Each phase of Colaizzi's (1978) unique seven-step method stayed close to the data, allowing for a rigorous analysis. The final product was a succinct but comprehensive account of the phenomenon being studied, verified by the people who contributed to its creation. Rich first-person descriptions of experience were the foundation of the technique; these can originate from in-person interviews, but can be acquired in a variety of additional methods, such as through written accounts, blogs, research journals, internet interviews among others.

Colaizzi's technique in analyzing data included familiarization, identifying significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering themes, developing an exhaustive description, producing the fundamental structure, and seeking verification for the fundamental structure.

1. **Familiarization.** The researchers read through the informants' accounts frequently to completely familiarize with data.

2. *Identifying significant statements.* The researchers filtered all statements of accounts that directly related to the focused phenomenon. This includes any mention of challenges, teaching strategies, professional identity struggles, and student engagement. For example, statements like "I feel less confident teaching history because it's not my expertise" or "I had to develop my own resources since I couldn't find ones suited for my background" were highlighted for further analysis.
3. *Formulating meanings.* The researchers analyzed and made sense of the accumulated data through meaning making. To avoid unconscious bias, the researchers religiously set aside their preconceptions regarding the phenomena. However, achieving complete bracketing is impossible and is acknowledged by Collaizi.
4. *Clustering Themes.* The researchers organized the related meanings by formulating consistent themes across all accounts. To avoid the influence of the existing theories, it is important that researchers set aside their preconceptions.
5. *Developing an exhaustive description.* The researchers integrate the identified clusters to comprehensively describe the phenomena.
6. *Producing the fundamental structure.* The researchers sort out the created cluster into concise and brief descriptions fundamental to the structure of the described phenomena.
7. *Seeking verification for the fundamental structure.* The researchers present the introductory statements of the informants backed up with a more extensive study to verify if it reflects the experiences of a larger group.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers had moral obligations to strictly consider the rights of the informants who were expected to participate in this study. This study adhered to established ethical guidelines to protect the rights and well-being of the informants. It ensured that the research process was conducted with respect for the informants' privacy, confidentiality, and autonomy. The following ethical principles guided this research:

Permission to Conduct the Study. Before the study commenced, the researcher sought and obtained formal approval from relevant authorities within the Department of Education's Naga City Division in Cebu Province. This included permission from school heads and Public Schools District Supervisors to ensure the study aligned with the educational policies and regulations. Each participant was informed of the study's objectives and their role, and written consent was secured from all informants, ensuring they understood their voluntary participation in the research.

Confidentiality and Anonymity. To safeguard participant privacy, all data collected from the interviews and observations were handled confidentially. Identifiable information, such as names or specific schools, was replaced with codes (e.g., P1, P2) to ensure anonymity. No informant's personal information was disclosed or shared with anyone outside the research team. The researcher took steps to ensure that data could not be traced back to any individual, thereby protecting their identity and maintaining confidentiality throughout the research process.

Privacy. Informants were informed of their right to privacy, and the researcher ensured that all information gathered during the study was treated with the highest level of discretion. All interviews were conducted in a private setting to allow informants to express their views and experiences without fear of exposure or judgment. No personal behavior or confidential information shared by the informants was used to embarrass or harm them. The researcher stored all data securely, and access was restricted to only those directly involved in the study.

Right to Withdraw. Informants were given the explicit right to withdraw from the study at any time, without any repercussions. Before the interviews, they were informed of their freedom to discontinue participation, should they feel uncomfortable, and were reminded that their decision would not affect their professional standing. This voluntary nature of participation was reiterated throughout the research process. Even if a participant initially agrees to participate, they can still opt to leave the study before, during, or after the interviews.

Dissemination of Results. Upon completion of the study, the results were shared with relevant educational authorities, such as the Department of Education and participating schools. A summary of the research findings was made available to informants if they expressed interest. In reporting the results, care was taken to ensure that the anonymity of all informants was maintained. Additionally, the findings may have been published in relevant academic journals or presented at conferences to contribute to the field of educational research, particularly regarding out-of-field teaching in Social Studies.

Results and Discussion

An extensive analysis of high school Social Studies teachers' experiences with out-of-field teaching revealed three superordinate themes. These are: (a) challenges faced by out-of-field social studies teachers, (b) strengths and positive experiences, and (c) impact of professional development and specialized training.

Theme 1: Challenges Faced by Out-of-Field Social Studies Teachers

This theme captures the core difficulties responded by teachers who are assigned to teach Social Studies despite lacking specialization in the subject.

1.1 Deficit in Pedagogical-Content-Knowledge (PCK)

Majority of the participants accentuate a critical need for stronger subject matter knowledge among teachers. This aligns with Luft (2020) assertion that robust content knowledge is a cornerstone of effective pedagogy. Such knowledge encompasses not only core concepts but also interdisciplinary connections and contemporary developments within the field. To cultivate rich and meaningful learning experiences for students, teachers must continually deepen their understanding of the subject matter (David, 2024).

"Sometimes I did not feel comfortable in teaching, especially in grade 7 which is about the history of Asia where in fact I hate history and what I did is I kept on reading." Participant 1

"Quite challenging for me especially if you don't have enough learning resources. You also need to study more in order to discuss the lessons well with the class." Participant 2

"I need time to read and study facts and facts and facts." Participant 3

"Not really comfortable [in teaching social studies] but I am doing my best." Participant 4

This lack of foundational knowledge made it difficult for teachers to provide students with comprehensive explanations, answer questions, and facilitate discussions that required a deep understanding of the subject matter. Teachers reported feeling unconfident when presenting complex topics, and as a result, they were unsure how to effectively convey key concepts to students.

Additionally, teachers noted the difficulty of designing activities that motivate and engage students. This indicates a need for pedagogical strategies that make Social Studies more interactive and relevant to learners. Without a solid grounding in the subject, some teachers found it challenging to determine the appropriate scope and sequence for lessons, often relying on general teaching strategies that were not tailored to the specific demands of Social Studies education. Arendain and Limpot (2022) emphasize the significance of developing effective teaching and learning strategies to enhance student understanding. Nuangchalern (2020) supports this view, emphasizing that appropriate teacher strategies are essential for equipping students with the knowledge they need to succeed in the 21st century.

"I find it difficult to create activities or motivation that engage learners to learn." Participant 1

"You need to master the content of the lessons that you want to share with the learners and think more critically in initiating activities related to the lesson." Participant 2

"Designing engaging and meaningful activities is challenging but I have modules in AP [Araling Panlipunan] from other regions and it serves as a guide on meaning activities." Participant 3

These findings highlight the dual need for content mastery and strategic pedagogy. Addressing these areas will empower teachers to confidently deliver lessons, design engaging activities, and foster a deeper understanding of Social Studies among students.

1.2 Hindrances in Classroom Management and Engagement

Classroom management can be particularly challenging when PCK is insufficient (Gess-Newsome et al., 2017; Retnasari, 2021; Kwok, 2021). This is especially evident in subjects like Social Studies, which encompass a wide range of competencies, demanding a deep understanding of the subject matter. A reliance on lecture-based instruction can exacerbate these difficulties by hindering student engagement. When learning experiences lack interactivity and variety, students may lose interest or struggle to maintain focus, thereby increasing the likelihood of classroom management issues.

"I commonly do Think-Pair-Share and Group activities for them to collaborate with others but most of the time is lecturing... because of limited time and some of the competencies are broad." Participant 1

"...somehow, I feel that my learners are interested in the lessons. Most of them are noisy, some fall asleep." Participant 2

These reflections highlight the tension between the need for interactive teaching methods and the practical constraints of time and curriculum demands. While strategies like Think-Pair-Share and group activities foster collaboration, the reliance on lectures due to the breadth of competencies limits opportunities for student

engagement. This approach often fails to capture students' interest, resulting in off-task behaviors such as talking or sleeping during lessons. Addressing these challenges requires a dual focus on strengthening teachers' PCK and equipping them with time-efficient, student-centered instructional strategies. By integrating more engaging and interactive methods into their teaching, educators can better maintain student attention, foster meaningful learning experiences, and reduce classroom management issues.

1.3 Limited Resources and Materials

The testimonies of out-of-field high school Social Studies teachers reveal a significant challenge in accessing appropriate teaching materials, which hampers their ability to effectively deliver lessons. Many teachers noted that while they received learning materials (LMs) aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum, these resources were often unsuitable for the grade level, reducing their effectiveness.

Additionally, the limited availability and accessibility of relevant teaching materials led to increased preparation time, affecting the overall quality of instruction. Some teachers also highlighted that the available resources were outdated or too general, making it difficult to plan engaging and contextually appropriate lessons. The absence of subject-specific teaching guides or curriculum resources left out-of-field teachers relying on unreliable internet sources, which added to their workload as they had to create or search for their own materials.

"We are given learning materials but in the MATATAG Curriculum, it is very hard to find LMs. They only give us activities that are not really suitable for the level of learning for the Grade 7" Participant 1

"I received from the division the access to relevant teaching materials. However, not all resources are available, very limited and it made preparation more time-consuming and affected my ability to deliver lessons as effectively." Participant 2

Olokooba (2021) emphasizes that instructional materials provide learners with authentic learning experiences and cultivate a positive learning disposition. In line with this, Harizaj & Hajrulla (2018) highlight that teaching materials not only serve as resources for ideas and activities but also guide teachers in their instructional decision-making and equip students with essential learning skills. Furthermore, the use of innovative materials, such as animated videos, can significantly enhance learning outcomes. Arif et al. (2023) found that 97% of students responded positively to the use of animated videos in social studies, suggesting their potential to create engaging and effective learning experiences.

1.4 Emotional and Psychological Strain

The challenges faced by out-of-field Social Studies teachers have led to significant emotional and psychological strain which they candidly expressed. Teachers reported feeling stressed, overwhelmed, and anxious about their ability to teach a subject for which they were unprepared. The pressure to perform well, meet expectations for positive student outcomes, and manage an increased workload created a heavy emotional toll. The constant need to learn the subject matter while fulfilling teaching responsibilities contributed to stress, anxiety, and self-doubt, with some teachers experiencing imposter syndrome. (Agyapong et al., 2022; Rus et al., 2023) This pressure, coupled with the fear of negative career implications, heightened feelings of inadequacy and led to burnout and exhaustion, further exacerbating the emotional burden of the role.

"I felt insecure at first... because I didn't have a background in Social Studies. The pressure to get everything right made me doubt my abilities since I needed more time to study... to research, and to prepare for the subject." Participant 1

"It has challenged me to grow and develop new skills and knowledge. It has brought me added stress and workload." Participant 2

"Yes, [it is tough] because if you are not so familiar with the lesson you need more time to study, to read and to research because AP is more on facts. Unlike teaching my field of specialization, I know the content. [What] I am saying here is I put so much effort in preparations and all in AP subject." Participant 3

"The experience feels overwhelming, it might slow career progression or lead to hesitation in taking on future challenges." Participant 4

"It is an extra challenge..." Participant 6

These reflections underscore the emotional toll of teaching outside one's area of specialization. The need to consistently study and prepare lessons, particularly for fact-heavy subjects like Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies), intensified their workload and led to feelings of professional inadequacy. For some, the added stress resulted in hesitancy to take on future professional challenges, fearing further strain or potential career stagnation.

Theme 2: Strengths and Positive experiences

This theme underscores the rewarding aspects of teaching outside one's specialization, highlighting how flexibility, passion, and a growth mindset can transform challenges into opportunities for professional and personal enrichment.

2.1 Embracing Growth and Adaptability

Rather than perceiving out-of-field teaching as a setback, many teachers embrace the experience as a privilege and an opportunity to grow. Some of the participants pointed out that being an out-of-field teacher fosters adaptability, problem-solving skills, and continuous learning, which enhance educators' versatility. This is supported by the study of Augusto (2019) as cited in Abrantes and Bargamento (2024), which stated that out-of-field teachers possess the creativity and adaptability to handle various tasks while adjusting to the assigned field's degree of difficulty. Similarly, a study by Pacaña et al. (2019) posits that flexibility minimizes the problem in the condition of out-of-field teaching. Hence, it could be interpreted that flexibility embodies a competent and responsible teacher.

"On the positive side, teaching out-of-field can enhance adaptability, problem-solving skills, and versatility as an educator." Participant 2

"Teaching outside my specialization helped me see things from a different perspective... and I was able to integrate new approaches that enriched my overall teaching practice." Participant 6

The challenge of teaching out-of-field forced these teachers to step out of their comfort zones, leading to the development of new skills that would be applicable in other areas of education. Participant 6, for instance, added that even though teaching outside their specialization posed an extra challenge, it also provided valuable insights into the integration of different disciplines, enriching their teaching practice overall.

"Even though [it was a challenge], teaching outside my specialization opened my eyes to how I could integrate multiple disciplines into my teaching." Participant 6

These insights suggest that while out-of-field teaching poses significant challenges, it also offers valuable opportunities for professional growth and innovation. The need to adapt to unfamiliar subject matter encouraged teachers to adopt interdisciplinary approaches, enriching their teaching practices and broadening their educational perspectives.

2.2 Cultivating Passion and National Identity

After practicing their profession for a number of years, some educators perceive that teaching as an out-of-field is a meaningful challenge that broadens one's skills and opens new career possibilities. The study of Arendain and Limpot (2022) explains that this opportunity will widen teacher's knowledge towards other subject matter as well as their pedagogical knowledge. This allows educators to learn a subject aside from their area of expertise and develop a strong passion for teaching AP. Driven by a desire to instill pride in Filipino identity among students, fostering a sense of national identity and cultural appreciation through lessons in history. Du Plessis(2020), agreed that teachers in out-of-field subjects are also interested in their teaching. They see the opportunity to gain new knowledge and believe that teaching a subject not mastered can help their future as a teacher. Additionally, Hobbs (2013), mentioned that a teacher's love of profession makes the way to learn and thrive in teaching.

"It can open doors to new opportunities and career paths." Participant 2

"It is also a nice privilege for me to love history." Participant 3

"Accept the challenge. we become more expert in our field if we can also understand other disciplines of learning". Participant 6

Out-of-field teaching, while initially daunting, can serve as a transformative experience. By embracing the challenge, educators expand their expertise, gain new perspectives, and foster a multidisciplinary approach to teaching. For many, the experience is not just about overcoming difficulties but also about discovering new passions and opportunities within the teaching profession.

Theme 3: Impact of Professional Development and Specialized Training

The third theme that emerged from the data focuses on the role of professional development and specialized training in enhancing the effectiveness and confidence of out-of-field Social Studies teachers. Participants noted that while access to professional development varied, those who received adequate training and support felt more confident and capable in delivering lessons. This theme explores how professional development opportunities—both formal and informal—helped teachers navigate the challenges of teaching Social Studies despite not having a background in the subject.

3.1 Access to Professional Development and Support

A recurring theme from the responses was the mixed availability of professional development opportunities. Teachers who received access to seminars, workshops, or mentoring expressed that these resources were crucial in helping them adjust to teaching a subject outside their field of expertise. Participant 1, for example, highlighted the value of attending specialized seminars, like the MATATAG Seminar, stating:

"These sessions provided guidance and specific teaching strategies that helped me feel more comfortable with the content." Participant 1

Several studies emphasize the crucial role that professional development plays in enhancing teachers' confidence and competence. According to research by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), the importance of providing professional learning alongside model curricula and classroom materials should not be underestimated. Teachers with access to high-quality professional development tend to demonstrate improved instructional practices and student achievement.

Professional development offered by the school—such as mentorship from colleagues and access to teaching resources—helped build teachers' confidence in their ability to teach Social Studies, even though they were not initially confident in their subject knowledge.

"The support from colleagues and the teaching resources provided by the school made me feel more confident in delivering Social Studies lessons... even though I wasn't confident initially." Participant 2

This highlights the significant role of mentorship and resource-sharing among colleagues. Research by Germuth (2018) underscores the positive impact of teacher collaboration, showing that teachers who collaborate with colleagues are more effective, achieve higher student outcomes, and are more willing to adopt new teaching practices. Studies by Kraft and Papay (2014) further support this, emphasizing that collaborative practices within schools are linked to improved student outcomes. Additionally, Ronfeldt et al. (2015) found that teachers in schools where collaboration is the norm experience greater improvements in their teaching effectiveness.

However, not all teachers had equal access to such support. Some mentioned that while they received some teaching materials from their division, these resources were often limited and outdated.

"The materials we get are often outdated, and this makes lesson preparation more time-consuming and stressful..." Participant 3

The importance of accessible, sustained professional development is evident in studies that highlight teachers' struggles when they have limited access to professional development resources (Garet et al., 2001). The lack of sufficient learning materials made lesson preparation more time-consuming and increased the stress of teaching outside their specialization. This gap in professional support left some teachers feeling ill-prepared and isolated, as they had to rely on personal initiative and informal collaboration with colleagues to develop lesson plans and teaching strategies.

3.2 Importance of Peer Collaboration and Mentorship

Peer collaboration and mentorship have been shown to significantly contribute to professional growth, especially for teachers navigating out-of-field teaching assignments. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) found that mentoring programs help reduce turnover and improve teacher efficacy. Some participants emphasized how mentorship from more experienced colleagues was particularly helpful, especially when they needed guidance on pedagogy and classroom management.

"My mentor was really helpful in guiding me on how to approach classroom management and teaching strategies that worked best for Social Studies." Participant 2

"Collaborating with A.P. major teachers helped me bridge the knowledge gaps I had and gave me strategies to improve my own teaching." Participant 6

"At our school, teachers from different areas help each other out. It's not just about teaching your own subject; it's about supporting each other to make sure we all succeed." Participant 5

Collaboration allowed teachers to share strategies and resources, which were especially important when subject-specific materials were scarce. Moreover, Participant 5 also highlighted the collaborative approach at their school, where teachers from different disciplines worked together to ensure the success of their out-of-field teaching assignments.

"You know, honestly... without the way we collaborate here, I don't think I'd have made it." Participant 4

This peer support system not only helped with content delivery but also fostered a sense of community among colleagues, allowing them to share best practices and support each other's professional growth.

3.3 Challenges with Limited or Inadequate Training

While some teachers benefited from structured professional development, others faced significant challenges due to limited access to specialized training. For example, Participant 4 described feeling uncomfortable and unprepared, particularly when teaching topics like the history of Asia, which they found difficult to engage with personally.

"Teaching history, especially Asian history, is hard for me because I don't have a strong background in it. I had to spend extra time researching to be ready for my lessons." Participant 4

Without adequate support or resources, this teacher was forced to spend extra time reading and researching on their own to prepare for lessons. Similarly, Participant 3 expressed frustration with the lack of specialized training, which made it challenging to master the content and design engaging lessons.

"There's no specific training for Social Studies teachers. The seminars and workshops we have don't really help with understanding the subject in-depth, and this makes it hard to engage students with the material. It has brought me... added stress and workload." Participant 3

Limited access to specialized training is a common challenge for many teachers, particularly those teaching out of field. Research by Garet et al. (2001) points out that the quality of professional development directly impacts teacher efficacy. The absence of targeted workshops or in-depth seminars on Social Studies left these teachers feeling unconfident and overwhelmed, especially as they lacked the expertise to fully address the subject's complexity. This lack of professional development not only made lesson planning more time-consuming but also affected the teacher's ability to effectively engage students with the material.

Conclusion

Out-of-field Social Studies teachers in the Philippines face significant deficits in pedagogical-content knowledge, which compromise their ability to effectively manage their classrooms and deliver quality instruction. This limitation often results in difficulties engaging students and implementing strategies tailored to the interdisciplinary nature of Social Studies. Although some teachers perceive that their students achieve the intended learning outcomes, this claim remains questionable given their lack of confidence and comfort in teaching the subject. The inconsistency between teachers' perceptions and their self-reported challenges raises critical concerns about the actual quality of learning students receive under out-of-field instruction. This study highlights an important avenue for future research: the need for quantitative investigations into whether students of out-of-field Social Studies teachers are genuinely achieving the required competencies. Measuring student performance and competency development in this context can provide empirical evidence to support or refute the claims of instructional effectiveness. Such studies will not only validate the findings of this research but also inform policies and interventions aimed at ensuring high-quality education, particularly in Social Studies, under the K to 12 and the phase implementation of *MATATAG* curriculum. By addressing these gaps, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of out-of-field teaching on educational outcomes in the Philippines.

Recommendations

The findings of this study highlight critical areas for enhancing the effectiveness and well-being of out-of-field Social Studies teachers. In addressing the gaps identified, schools should implement comprehensive professional development programs tailored to the needs of Social Studies teachers, focusing on enhancing PCK, classroom management, and engagement strategies. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasize that high-quality professional learning improves instructional practices and student outcomes. However, even if the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) has issued guidelines for the conduct of In-Service Training for Teachers (INSET) as stipulated in DepEd, these efforts have not adequately addressed the needs of out-of-field teachers. INSET, designed to address areas of need through school-based or cluster-based professional development interventions, has proven insufficient for these educators. Participants noted that despite handling Araling Panlipunan/Social Studies subjects, they are grouped with teachers from their undergraduate degree programs and majors, rendering INSET less effective for addressing their specific challenges in out-of-field teaching.

Structured mentorship programs and peer collaboration should also be strengthened, as these have been shown to enhance teacher efficacy and bridge knowledge gaps (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Moreover, providing updated and contextualized teaching resources, such as multimedia tools, can alleviate the stress of lesson preparation and foster

student engagement. Olokooba (2021) underscores the role of quality instructional materials in creating authentic learning experiences, and Arif et al. (2023) highlight the effectiveness of animated videos in enhancing Social Studies instruction. Furthermore, since resolving this issue quickly is unlikely, it is crucial to develop specific training programs for teachers assigned to teach subjects outside their specialization. This will ensure that they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the demands of the subject.

Additionally, schools should cultivate emotional support systems and reduce teacher workloads to address the emotional and psychological strain reported by participants. Mental health initiatives and work-life balance are essential in mitigating burnout (Rus et al., 2023). Encouraging teachers to view out-of-field teaching as an opportunity for professional growth can also foster adaptability and resilience. Du Plessis (2020) suggests that out-of-field teaching can contribute positively to professional development when supported by institutional initiatives. By combining targeted professional development, collaboration, resource availability, and emotional support, schools can empower out-of-field teachers to succeed and enhance their teaching practices, ultimately benefiting their students.

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