



TEACHER TEACHING NOT THEIR SPECIALIZATION: A SECONDARY TEACHERS' VOICE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF LAMBAYONG

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ABSTRACT

This study unveils the teacher's voice teaching not their specialization among secondary schools in Lambayong municipality for the school year 2023-2024 among ten teachers. It employed a phenomenological study using thematic analysis in processing the responses of the participants. On how do teachers end up teaching not their field of specialization the following themes were generated, teacher shortage and underload and staffing needs. Lack of confidence is the only theme generated by their feelings about teaching outside their field of specialization. The student-centered approach was the theme generated on how teachers prepare their lessons in teaching subjects outside their field of specialization. Less confidence is the only theme generated in terms of how teacher are confident in their teaching not in their field of specialization. Interestingly, teachers teaching not their field of specialization need Learning Resources.

Keywords: *Teachers' Voice, Specialization, Secondary Schools, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Quality education has become critical in many countries that are expanding enrolments rapidly to achieve Education for All, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) (2017).

Quality education is the heart of sustainable development and a powerful catalyst for developing more just, humane, and equitable societies Department of Education (Philippines) (2016).

Recently, Education systems have been under strain, but the assumption that there is a compromise between access and quality is flawed. In countries with constrained resources, the successful effort to increase access to primary education has often led to declining quality of education UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) (2016).

The most significant factor in improving student achievement is employing qualified teachers in all schools. Teachers should give the most appropriate tools, including content knowledge and skills and teaching methodology, to do their work professionally. Teacher competency plays a tremendous role in student performance. Moreover, effective teachers possess broad knowledge in the content areas that they teach and often have majored in those specialized areas.

However, teacher quality is a widely discussed issue in education. One of the problems that caught my attention is teaching outside their specialization, mismatched subject assignments in grade school, high school, and tertiary level. The phenomenon of teaching subjects outside the discipline, where teachers lack educational background or training, has been neglected. It is a crucial issue because highly qualified teachers may, in actuality, become highly unqualified if they are assigned to teach subjects for which they have little training or education. Unqualified teachers may negatively impact student's achievement and be detrimental to the educational process.

This prompted the researchers to study the lived experiences of secondary school teachers who are teaching subjects outside their specialization. This study explores the lived experiences, challenges they faced, and strategies they used in teaching subjects outside their field. This study contributes to the formulation of plans/policies needed for management, supervision, and instruction.

Research Questions

The study focuses on the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of teachers teaching not their specialization in the municipality of Lambayong among Secondary Schools. Specifically, the study was carried out with the following objectives;

1. How do teachers end up teaching not their field of specialization?
2. What are the feelings of teachers in teaching not their field of specialization?
3. How do teachers prepare their lessons in teaching subjects not their field of specialization?
4. How confident are the teachers in teaching not their field of specialization?
5. What kind of assistance do these teachers need?

METHODOLOGY

This investigation employed a phenomenological research design as it can study people's experiences, how people construct meaning in their lives, and commonalities that transverse individuals experiencing a specific phenomenon (Edmonds & Kennedy,

2017). Notably, this study utilized Transcendental phenomenology, which aimed to seek understanding in human experience, which is performed by laying aside prepossessed ideas to view the phenomena to be investigated through a new lens, allowing it to immerge, giving its distinct meaning and form.

The focus participants of this study are ten (10) junior and senior high school teachers teaching not their field of specialization who were selected through purposive sampling. This phenomenological study selected participants that fit the suggestion of Creswell (2014) as an ample number of participants to generate meaningful themes and valuable interpretations.

RESULTS

On how do teachers end up teaching not their field of specialization the following themes were generated, teacher shortage and underload and staffing needs.

Lack of confidence is the only theme generated by their feelings about teaching outside their field of specialization.

The student-centered approach was the theme generated on how teachers prepare their lessons in teaching subjects outside their field of specialization.

Less confidence is the only theme generated in terms of how teacher are confident in their teaching not in their field of specialization.

Interestingly, teachers teaching not their field of specialization need Learning Resources

DISCUSSION

On how do teachers end up teaching not their field of specialization the following themes were generated, **teacher shortage and underload and staffing needs.**

Conversely, due to the inadequacy of the teaching force, educators are forced to teach beyond their specialization. This phenomenon is known as “out-of-field teaching” which is a global problem in the field of education that causes significant effects on the part of both the teaching process and students’ learning.

The first theme was teachers’ shortage and underload. As the participants shared their feelings and thoughts;

“I specialize in Filipino, and now teaching Araling Panlipunan and Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao because of staffing needs in our school.”

Participant 1, Teacher II, Female

“My area of specialization is English but due to the shortages in other subject areas is evident, I have to teach another subject in Senior High School such as practical Research.” **Participant 3, Teacher II, Male**

“English is my field of specialization, yes, so to cover the other

teaching loads I handle another subject in TVL.” Participant 4, Teacher III, Female

“My specialization is Filipino, and Yes, I must teach another subject like Creative Nonfiction as a language teacher because of the teaching demand in the scheduling or loads.” Participant 6, Teacher III, Male

The result of the study conforms with the shortage of qualified teachers led to an increase in teachers’ teaching outside their subject areas, undermining a common practice without appropriate response and mitigation Kim, E.G. (2011).

The second theme was, **staffing needs**. Teachers are assigned by school leaders to teach subjects that are unrelated to their prior knowledge just to fill the gaps and achieve the school requirements. Then, the teacher's participants share their views as;

“I graduated BSED-Major in Mathematics. In my first year in teaching both public and private schools. I was asked due to staffing needs and justifying that Mathematics is somehow related to science.” Participant 5, Teacher II, Female;

“BSED-Biological Science, yes, I was asked to teach English subject due to staffing needs.” Participant 9, Teacher II, Female;

“I am majoring in Mathematics, as a public-school teacher I am experiencing yearly teaching another subject due to staffing needs.” Participant 10, Teacher III, Female

The Department of Education issued DepEd Order 3, S. 2016 also known as “Hiring Guidelines for Senior High School (SHS) Teaching Positions Effective School Year (SY) 2016-2017”, which aims to clearly define the application, selection, and appointment process of SHS teachers as well as to establish professional standards and evaluation criteria which will ensure that highly competent individuals with the appropriate qualifications and specializations are hired to teach in (SHSs).

In addition, teaching out-of-field occurs mainly because we do not have teachers in the system that match the subjects taught in schools. The first response to this must be to increase the supply of the teachers we need and ensure they are distributed fairly. However, this will take time (Prince and O’Connor 2018), so the teachers in the system need support and substantial learning opportunities.

On their feelings about teaching outside your field of specialization

Providing quality education is always the goal of every educational institution all around the world and teachers play an important role in carrying this goal. With no strict and unified guidelines in assigning teachers’ teaching load, out-of-field teaching arises which in turn became a global problem.

Hence, the following themes were generated based on the participant's responses, **Lack of confidence**.

As the participants share their views and opinions;

“One of the specific challenges I faced teaching subjects outside my field of specialization was a lack of confidence when teaching because I knew that I was not an expert with my subject loads.” **Participant 2, Teacher II, Male;**

“There are specific challenges I have faced including the need for extensive research, potential gaps in understanding, and the necessity to convey complex concepts in a simplified manner. Since I may not be confident to teach in some subject matter.” **Participant 3, Teacher II, Male;**

“Mastery of teaching specific topics. You have to do research and ask masters of science subjects for guidance are pedagogical strategies. So that you are confident enough to teach the subject matter on that day. But still, I may feel a lack of self-confidence.” **Participant 5, Teacher II, Female;**

“At first, there was hesitancy due to a lack of self-confidence in some competencies, but as a teacher and mentor who is willing to share and committed to teaching and molding young minds and hearts, I wholeheartedly accepted the challenge. As a language teacher, I admit that I am not good at numbers. But I know that Science is an exact Math. So, I’ve got to study and be prepared for every topic.” **Participant 7, Teacher I, Female**

They also share how these challenges affect the effective teaching and learning process compared to those you encounter when teaching within your specialization;

“These challenges affect the effective teaching and learning process by requiring more time for preparation, increasing effort, bridging knowledge gaps, and a heightened focus on facilitating comprehension compared to teaching within my specialization.” **Participant 3, Teacher II, Male;**

“The effect is not the same as teaching my major subject and I always need to prepare before entering the class knowing the fact that Senior High School Students are more concrete with their idea and that questions are more rigid and need a careful response.” **Participant 4, Teacher III, Female;**

“Yes, very challenging, as I have said I’ve got to exert time and effort to study science specifically the periodic table of elements, mixtures, electronic configuration, etc. All of these make me effective as a teacher.” **Participant 7, Teacher I, Female, and**

“Since this is not my expertise, sometimes my confidence in teaching the subject is depleting. I am worried that I can produce the competency or knowledge that it demands.” **Participant 8, Teacher I, Male**

The result of the study conforms with the study of Kola and Sunday (2015) observed that teachers who are assigned to teach outside of their subject specialism lack confidence which is manifested in different ways such as when preparing lesson plans, choosing, or devising activities and analogies to aid students’ learning, answering

students" questions, setting up laboratory experiments, generating students" interest and passion for the subject area. Moreover, he further discussed that teaching out of the teacher's expertise offers many other considerable challenges that the teachers must deal with.

It was concluded by Shaplin (2014) that out-of-field teaching is a serious problem that can affect teachers" effectiveness. He also added that educators who lack the quality and experiences that are needed in the subjects pose challenges for them. Out-of-field cases are greatly increasing in number accompanied by its negative results on the learning process of the learners.

On how do you prepare your lessons in teaching subjects outside your field of specialization?

Public school teachers play an important role in our society, especially for the students. Quality education requires quality teachers. The quality of education directly related to the quality of instruction in the classrooms and the availability of competent teachers is vital in constructing the educational system Adeyemi (2016).

The following theme generated was a **Student-centered approach**

Problem-based learning is a student-centered educational method that aims to develop problem-solving skills through self-directed learning as a lifetime habit and teamwork skills.

The participants of the study share their views and stories;

"Particularly Student-centered approach I usually involve my students in the teaching and learning process with either individual or group activities." **Participant 1, Teacher II, Female;**

"I am always setting expectations and of course limitations with reasonable demands and encouraging students to do their part but sometimes students need extra push at the same time extra points to do so for us both to accomplish what is in their subject matter. Giving rewards or even simple appreciation for them means a lot as a Senior High School Student preparing either to work or continue a college degree to my concern it is always my successful strategy." **Participant 4, Teacher III, Female**

"Getting ready a lesson plan to engage and interest in a subject outside of my major involves careful consideration and creativity. For example, in my lecture, I could plan a role-playing exercise in which students practice conversational abilities in pairs or smaller groups. With these, participation is visible." **Participant 6, Teacher III, Male, and**

"With perseverance and effort, I cannot share what I do not have I need an extra focus on teaching subjects outside my specialization through student-centered classroom activities." **Participant 10, Teacher III, Female**

The result of the study was anchored on the following. Student-centered learning

has become a pioneer in the development of the learning approach. In this approach, students' activities are important indicators of the learning process and quality of the learning product (Zohrabi, et al., 2012). In teaching and learning English, this approach links with flexible learning, experiential learning, and self-directed learning (Acat & Dönmez, 2009).

Therefore, a student-centered classroom is a place where teachers consider the needs of the students, as a group and as individuals, and encourage them to participate in the learning process all the time. The teachers' roles are more that of facilitators than instructors. The students are active participants in the learning process, and teachers help to guide the students, manage their activities, and direct their learning.

On how are teacher confident in their teaching not in their field of specialization

Teachers should give the most appropriate tools, including content knowledge and skills and teaching methodology, to do their work professionally, Carlson (2016). Teacher competency plays a tremendous role in student performance, Kumar (2015). Moreover, effective teachers possess broad knowledge in the content areas that they teach and often have majored in those specialized areas, Villaverde (2017).

In regards to how teacher are confident in their teaching not in their field of specialization the following theme was generated, **Less confidence**.

The focus of teacher learning varies from teacher to teacher depending on the out-of-field and in-field subjects of a teacher; the stability of the teaching load; their teaching experience; the type of support teachers receive; leadership attitudes and decision-making practices; and the dispositions of the teacher as a learner.

With this thought, the teacher participants shared their views and opinions;

"Less confident in my specialized area because I am hardly familiar with the subject matter." **Participant 1, Teacher II, Female**

"At this point of my years in service at DepEd, I can feel that I need to explore more within my subject areas especially non-major areas that are tasked to me because I learned that it is not enough and I feel pressured because aside from academics I still have subject loads in EPAS which is also belong to TVL-Track. In some instances, I'm not that confident to teach, especially on some competencies." **Participant 2, Teacher II, Male;**

"I can say that in my field of specialization, I am confident that I can provide the necessary competencies it requires, in other words, if it is not my specialization, I will just teach to the best I can but there are times that I feel less confident especially those competencies that I need to study more." **Participant 8, Teacher I, Male;**

"Understanding the lesson is simple because everyone can teach, but the scope and depth of the non-major subject I'm dealing with are inadequate to my knowledge and I feel like in not confident to teach

unfamiliar competencies.” Participant 10, Teacher III, Female

The result of the study is parallel to the teaching outside areas of expertise brought complex challenges, and teachers express concern and apprehension when dealing with this situation. Teachers’ lack of confidence when teaching topics outside their scope of knowledge is manifested in different ways, such as when preparing lesson plans, choosing or devising activities and analogies to aid students’ questions, setting up laboratory experiments, choosing classroom activities, linking and applying various concepts and principles to everyday life situations, generating students’ interest and passion for the subject Childs (2007).

They also share How they are comfortable with uncertainty or unexpected questions related to the subject matter.

“Being not specialized in the subject area I am always honest if there’s a question that is something I am not sure of the answer I immediately revise the questions in a way that they could also share their idea to at least lessen the confusion with the topic.” Participant 4, Teacher III, Female;

“Although I am not sure about the answer especially when unexpected questions related to the subject matter, I try to somehow rephrase their questions and relate them to something I am familiar with, or sometimes I throw back the questions to them. Participant 5, Teacher II, Female;

“As a teacher, I am capable of answering unexpected questions but sometimes, I am in doubt and I cannot totally explain the idea because of hesitancy that I might not answer it correctly.” Participant 1, Teacher II, Female.

About the views of the participants. Effectiveness in teaching is in a dynamic match between the teacher and the job.

According to Hobbs (2013), positive, negative, and challenging experiences in education outside the area of expertise are experienced by novice and veteran teachers. It has been overlooked, and least understood. It became a widespread and continuing practice, but those who experienced the difficulties suffered the consequences of being misaligned, lack of confidence, and guilt.

On the kind of assistance do teachers need, since they are teaching outside their field of specialization

Teacher participants shared their own experiences on the kind of assistance they need since they are teaching outside of their field of specialization. It was then teachers who needed **Learning Resources**.

Teachers’ experience in the field develops various levels of expertise to acquire the art, science, and technique of teaching. There is a positive relationship between

teacher quality as “enthusiasm, creativity, flexibility and adaptability and school success of its students. The teacher who has the desire to share the love of the subject with the students can make the material being taught stimulating and enjoyable, improvise and adapt to new demands and new challenges, and learn and improve teaching methods, Panisoara (2014).

The teacher participants share their needs as;

“Resources or materials that will assist me are facilities and other learning printouts.” **Participant 2, Teacher II, Male**

“Yes, through collaborations and extending research we can seek vast resources even beyond our fields of specialization. Learning resources is the key.” **Participant 3, Teacher II, Male**

“Yes, learning resources such as modules or books and especially a compilation of video presentations for easy understanding and proper demonstration of the related lesson.” **Participant 4, Teacher III, Female;**

“Yes, learning materials and other learning resources like worksheets for interactive activities or as a guide for both teachers and learners as well as educational videos and biopics which could help in the learning process.” **Participant 6, Teacher III, Male, and**

“Textbooks with frequently include activities, explanations, and organized content that might be helpful in the classroom.” **Participant 10, Teacher III, Female**

With the testament of the teacher's participants, they are the frontline in the field. Government, policymakers, and administrators are called attention to this matter to be enjoined to provide adequate support, training, and funds to prepare teachers to become equipped and practical Nixon (2017). Thus, the phenomenon of teaching outside specialization should be recognized to provide practical, competent teaching and quality education.

The result of the study is similar to the study of Annalene (2021). Their experiences manifested difficulties, challenges, and negligence and became common practice. An issue on quality education has been taken for granted hence, to be remediated. Participants' views, opinions, hopes, and desires were also solicited to discuss its implications. The teaching and learning process in teaching out-of-field is at stake and detrimental to the education system. When teachers are misaligned, it is suggested that they should be put into proper assignments, preferably to their unique, specialized subjects, and will be provided support.

In addition, Teachers should give the most appropriate tools, including content knowledge and skills and teaching methodology, to do their work professionally, Kumar (2015). Teacher competency plays a tremendous role in student performance, Carlson (2016). Moreover, effective teachers possess broad knowledge in the content areas that they teach and often have majored in those specialized areas, Villaverde (2017).

In like manner the school heads and the school as a whole observed those

problems, the teacher participants also shared their experiences on how the school administrator addressed those issues as;

“Sending me to a seminar-workshop that would develop my knowledge of certain specializations and trainers that would introduce me to several teaching techniques.” **Participant 4, Teacher III, Female**

“To increase teachers' knowledge and make the subject matter easier to understand nonmajor subjects, the administration can offer both internal and external sources of support. Work together with coworkers or experts in the field to provide resources, advice, and ideas.” **Participant 9, Teacher II, Female**

“To meet the expectations, one must properly train and I think I must have that training in a different field because my subject load yearly is just random depending on the scheduling to cover up teaching loads.” **Participant 2, Teacher II, Male**

As supported by the study of Shueler, et.al (2015) it is found that although out-of-field is prevalent it is accompanied by some considerable lapses. Implicated out-of-field teaching as a threat and called for the quick involvement of the government. The government should take action to solve the problem to strengthen the quality of education.

On the other hand, Cruz et. al (2017) discovered that out-of-field teaching is a problem that can have a significant effect on the efficiency of teaching. However, the learning process varies with the intellectual level of the holistic learners.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are drawn based on the findings of the study.

The following themes were generated, teacher shortage, underload and staffing needs, Lack of confidence in what they feel, Student-centered approach on the strategies they employ, less confidence in how they confident to teach, and teachers need learning resources for them to have a meaningful teaching and learning process

Recommendations

From the salient findings of this study and the conclusion reached, the following recommendations are presented;

1. The Department of Education through the Human Resource Department may intensify the teacher induction program through an effective monitoring and evaluating program to provide meaningful feedback and to address the gaps in its implementation. Further, increasing the supply of teachers to meet demand, and ensure the right sort of teachers in the schools must be addressed in the field of teaching not their field of expertise.

2. School administrators may provide effective professional development programs and in-service training that are focused on enhancing teachers' quality, teaching approaches and techniques, and formal mentoring to cater to the needs of the teachers who teach outside of their specialization. Further, teaching qualification must be the primary consideration in assigning and delegating teaching loads.
3. Teachers may also sustain engaging activities through focus group discussions and professional learning communities where they can learn from and provide support for each other.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The author declares that informed consent was obtained, that the respondents were free to withdraw from the study at any time, the anonymity of the respondents was maintained, the respondents' well-being was safeguarded, no conflict of interest exists in the conduct of the study, plagiarism was strictly avoided, there was no bias in the interpretation of the findings and that the results were used purely for research.

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