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**CHALLENGES AND COPING MECHANISM OF TEACHERS IN INTEGRATED  
SCHOOLS: BASIS FOR SCHOOL HEADS PROVISION OF  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

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**ABSTRACT**

This qualitative study was conducted to determine the challenges and coping mechanisms of teachers in Integrated Schools as a basis for school heads in providing technical assistance. The research utilized a descriptive qualitative method through in-depth interviews. There were nine (9) participants in the study. The findings revealed that teachers face several challenges, including insufficient content knowledge, increased workload and time constraints, and limited access to instructional resources and training. Despite these difficulties, teachers adopt various coping mechanisms such as self-directed learning and professional initiative, peer collegial support, and effective time management with additional preparation.

Using a qualitative research design, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with teachers in Integrated Schools and were analyzed thematically. Overall, the study highlights the challenges and coping mechanisms of teachers in Integrated Schools, serving as a basis for school heads in providing appropriate technical assistance.

**Keywords:** *Challenges and Coping Mechanism, Teachers, Integrated Schools*

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

In the last few years, the education system has had to deal with more and more problems because of changes to the curriculum, a lack of teachers, and the changing needs of 21st-century learning. One big problem that schools, especially integrated schools, face is having teachers teach subjects that are not their area of expertise. When teachers have to teach subjects for which they haven't had enough academic or professional training, this is called "out-of-field teaching." It has become a common thing in many schools, especially public schools where there are not enough teachers and teachers are not always available (Carreon et al., 2021).

In the Philippines, the K to 12 Curriculum has made this problem even more clear. Teachers in integrated schools, who often teach both junior and senior high school levels, are sometimes asked to teach subjects that are not their main focus because there aren't enough teachers or money (Department of Education [DepEd], 2020). Because of this, these teachers face a lot of problems, such as trouble with mastering the material, delivering lessons, managing the classroom, and grading (Estacio et al., 2021). These problems can make teachers less confident, more stressed, and less effective in the classroom, which can hurt students' learning.

Even though these problems exist, many teachers use different ways to deal with their workloads and keep the quality of their teaching high. Peer collaboration, self-directed learning, online resource utilization, and participation in professional development programs

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have been recognized as effective strategies to mitigate the challenges associated with out-of-field teaching (Salazar et al., 2022). It is important to understand these coping strategies because they show how strong and flexible teachers are when things get tough.

However, while teachers strive to cope independently, the role of school heads remains crucial. As instructional leaders, school heads are responsible for providing technical assistance—a structured form of support aimed at improving teachers’ competence, instructional practices, and overall performance (DepEd, 2021). Effective technical assistance may include mentoring, classroom observation feedback, coaching, and professional development opportunities tailored to teachers’ specific needs.

Consequently, it is imperative to scrutinize the challenges and coping strategies of educators teaching subjects beyond their expertise in integrated educational institutions. By comprehending these experiences, school administrators can formulate more precise and adaptive technical assistance initiatives.

This study aimed to thoroughly examine these facets and to establish a foundation for the creation of technical assistance interventions that will elevate teaching quality, foster teacher well-being, and enhance educational outcomes.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter outlines the research methodology, research design, study participants, data collection procedures, research instruments, and data analysis employed in this study. The objective of this study is to identify the challenges and coping strategies of teachers in

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integrated schools, serving as a foundation for the provision of technical assistance by school heads in the District of Igaras during the academic year 2025-2026.

## Research Method

The research employed a descriptive methodology, utilizing comprehensive interviews to collect qualitative data. McCombes (2023) asserts that descriptive research seeks to precisely and methodically characterize a population, situation, or phenomenon. It can tell people what, where, when, and how, but not why.

The interviewer and the people being interviewed sat together during the interviews to talk about the questions that are related to a certain issue. The interview sought to elicit insights from participants about their experiences, perceptions, and practices concerning a specific issue within a social context, as reflected in their responses to the questions.

## Research Design

The research employed a phenomenological design.

Phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology that emphasizes the exploration and comprehension of individuals' lived experiences regarding a specific phenomenon.

Phenomenology seeks to elucidate the essence and significance of individuals' perceptions, experiences, and interpretations of specific situations in their daily lives.

Creswell and Poth (2020) assert that phenomenological research is a qualitative methodology aimed at describing and interpreting individuals' lived experiences regarding a

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specific phenomenon to comprehend the essence of those experiences. In this method, the researcher gathers information, usually through detailed interviews, observations, or written accounts, and then looks for patterns, themes, and the common core of the experience.

## Participants of the Study

The study, conducted during the school year 2025–2026, included nine teachers from three integrated schools: Igcabugao Integrated School, Igpigus Integrated School, and Cale-Indaluyon Integrated School, all of which are in the District of Igaras.

## Sampling Design

The study employed a purposive sampling design. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method employed in qualitative research, wherein participants are deliberately chosen based on particular characteristics or knowledge pertinent to the study.

Purposive sampling enables the selection of respondents based on their particular experiences and insights regarding the phenomena being examined, such as trust, satisfaction, and loyalty, thereby ensuring the acquisition of high-quality, pertinent data (Campbell et al., 2020).

Purposive sampling is valuable when researchers aim to gain in-depth understanding rather than generalization. This ensures that the participants you interview can provide meaningful insights into the strategies, challenges, and outcomes (Palinkas et al., 2021).

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The researchers do not choose participants at random; instead, they choose people or groups who can give the most relevant, rich, and detailed information about the research topic.

## Research Instrument

The study employed a researcher-developed interview schedule as its research instrument.

There are four questions on the interview schedule that are about the study's purpose.

Voice and video recorders were used to collect data and keep records, but only with the permission of the people involved.

## Validity of the Research Instrument

Before the researcher, the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, and a panel of jurors decided whether the interview schedule was valid, they needed to check each question for clarity, relevance, and whether it fits with the study's goals.

The panel of validators' comments, corrections, and suggestions about the interview schedule were taken into account using the right form of Good and Scates (Appendix A).

## Data Gathering Procedures

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The researcher obtained authorization from the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent, the Office of the District Supervisors, the School Heads, and each participant to carry out the study.

The researcher went to the schools, community, or place that was easiest for the participants to meet for the interview. The researcher interviewed the participants, but first, they had to sign a waiver or permission form to take part in the study.

An in-depth interview was conducted, and a voice and video recorder were provided to comprehensively document the interviewee's statements. After conducting several interviews, the researcher compiled all the data collected.

## Data Analysis

The information collected was examined through a thematic lens. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research technique employed to systematically identify, categorize, and interpret recurring patterns or themes within a dataset.

It is appreciated for its adaptability, as it can be utilized within various theoretical frameworks and qualitative data types. Kiger and Varpio (2020) assert that thematic analysis is a technique for identifying, examining, and presenting patterns (themes) within data, providing a comprehensive, intricate, yet nuanced representation of the data.

Similarly, Nowell et al. (2021) emphasize that thematic analysis not only highlights what participants say but also interprets underlying meanings, making it particularly useful for studies that aim to explore experiences, perceptions, and practices.

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the findings, the following insights were drawn:

Teachers have problems that can make them less sure of themselves when teaching and make it harder for them to answer students' questions correctly. Teachers teaching outside their specialization often rely heavily on textbooks and prescribed modules, limiting their ability to enrich lessons with deeper explanations, contextual examples, or interdisciplinary connections. Teachers must invest additional effort in studying unfamiliar content, preparing instructional materials, and designing assessments aligned with curriculum standards. This often results in stress, fatigue, and reduced work-life balance, particularly in integrated schools where teachers already manage multiple grade levels or subjects.

Teachers address these challenges by demonstrating resilience through various coping mechanisms. A common strategy is self-directed learning, where teachers independently study subject matter through online resources, reference books, and professional learning platforms. This reflects a strong sense of professional responsibility and commitment to student learning. Teachers also rely on peer collaboration, seeking assistance from colleagues who are subject specialists. Informal mentoring, team teaching, and sharing of lesson plans help bridge content gaps and reduce feelings of isolation. In integrated schools, collegial support often becomes a vital survival mechanism.

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## Conclusion

Based on the results and insights of this study, the following recommendations are emphasized:

The following recommendations are made to help school heads, teachers, and policymakers improve instructional support and technical assistance for teachers in integrated schools who are assigned to teach subjects outside of their area of expertise. These recommendations are based on the challenges and coping strategies that these teachers face.

School heads are encouraged to develop a structured and needs-based Technical Assistance (TA) Program that directly responds to the challenges encountered by out-of-field teachers, competency and needs assessments, mentoring and coaching systems, providing classroom-based technical assistance and allocating time for collaborative lesson planning.

Teachers are encouraged to sustain and strengthen positive coping mechanisms, self-directed professional learning, peer mentoring and team teaching and reflective teaching to evaluate classroom strategies.

Schools Division Office may implement division-wide training programs, access to instructional resources, learning materials, and digital platforms, institutionalize capacity-building initiatives aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers.

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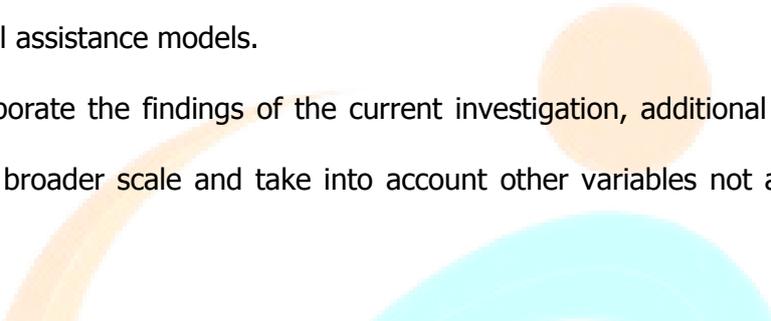


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DepEd may consider reviewing and strengthening teacher deployment and assignment policies, developing standardized technical assistance frameworks and continuous professional development (CPD).

Future researchers may conduct longitudinal studies to examine, explore comparative studies, investigate coping mechanisms, teacher self-efficacy, and instructional quality and validate technical assistance models.

To corroborate the findings of the current investigation, additional studies must be performed on a broader scale and take into account other variables not addressed in this research.



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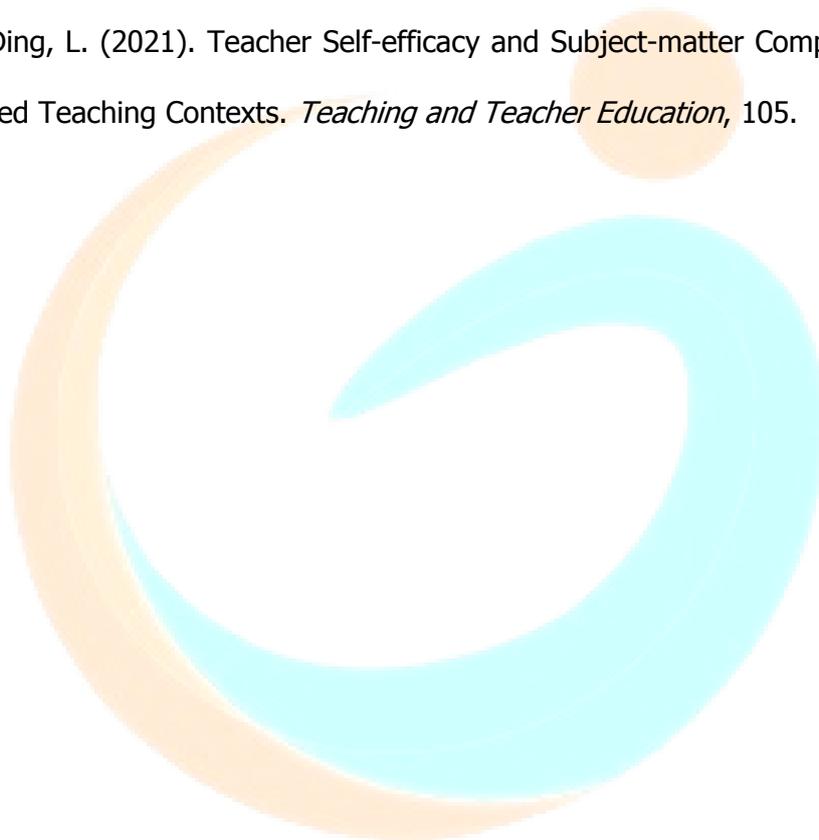


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