



EXPERIENCES OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN TEACHING SUBJECTS OTHER THAN THEIR AREA OF SPECIALIZATION: BASIS FOR ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of senior high school teachers who were assigned to teach subjects outside their area of specialization and examined the implications of these experiences for designing an enhancement program. The research described the teachers' profiles, their professional experiences, the challenges they encountered, and the coping strategies they employed in handling non-specialized subjects. The results revealed that teachers experienced adjustment difficulties and a sense of professional displacement. The major challenges identified included limited preparation time, increased workload, communication and language barriers, professional stress, concerns about credibility, technical difficulties in subject delivery, and emotional strain caused by sustained pressure. These challenges affected teachers' confidence and instructional effectiveness. To address these difficulties, teachers adopted several coping strategies, including self-directed learning to improve subject knowledge, the use of digital and online learning resources, collaboration with colleagues, and the application of student-centered teaching approaches.

Keywords: *Experiences, Senior High School Teachers, Area of Specialization, Enhancement Program*

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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education emphasizes K–12 educational reform in the Philippines has brought significant changes to the country's basic education system. With the implementation of Senior High School (SHS), there has been an increased demand for teachers to handle a wider range of subjects. However, due to staffing limitations and curriculum requirements, some teachers were assigned to teach subjects outside their area of specialization. This situation can impact both the effectiveness of instruction and the professional growth of teachers. (Caparroso, 2025)

Teaching outside one's area of specialization can present various challenges, including lack of confidence, limited content knowledge, increased preparation time, and difficulty in addressing students' queries. On the other hand, some teachers may discover new skills, develop versatility, and appreciate interdisciplinary learning. Understanding these experiences was vital for improving teacher deployment policies, training programs, and support mechanisms in schools.

This study explored the lived experiences of Senior High School teachers who teach subjects outside their field of specialization. It aims to provide insights into the challenges they encounter, the coping strategies they employ, and the implications of these experiences on teaching quality and student learning. In the Senior High School K to 12 curriculum, course subjects are categorized into core, specialized, and applied subjects. Teachers, most of whom were newly hired, were selected based on their area of specialization and were required to

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undergo almost a month-long series of trainings covering common topics and general academic subjects aligned with their major field.

However, upon deployment to their assigned schools or stations, some teachers were tasked to teach subjects that were not aligned with their area of specialization. Along with other concerns related to the implementation of the new curriculum, they had to confront this additional challenge. Grounded on Bandura’s Social Cognitive Learning Theory, this study examined the lived experiences of teachers teaching subjects beyond their specialization. Collaizzi’s descriptive phenomenological approach was utilized to explore and interpret the teachers’ practices, challenges, coping mechanisms, and the meaning they attribute to their experiences.

Teaching subjects not aligned with one’s area of expertise can greatly affect both teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes. Teachers who were trained in one discipline may find it difficult to adjust to the content, pedagogical strategies, and assessment methods required by another subject. This situation also affects students, who may not receive instruction that was as comprehensive or engaging as that delivered by a content-specialist teacher.

Several studies had shown that teacher specialization plays a crucial role in ensuring quality education. According to Corpuz and Salandanan (2020), subject-matter competence directly influences instructional delivery and learner performance. When teachers handled subjects outside their specialization, they often rely on self-study, collaboration with colleagues, and online resources to cope with instructional demands. While these adaptive

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strategies demonstrate teacher resilience, they also highlight the need for continuous professional development and administrative support.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research method, research design, participants, research instrument, data-gathering procedures, and data analysis employed in the study. It specifically describes how the study explored the experiences, challenges, and coping strategies of Senior High School teachers assigned to teach subjects outside their area of specialization at Pototan National Comprehensive High School, District of Pototan, during the school year 2025–2026.

Research Method

The study employed the descriptive method under qualitative research through the use of in-depth interviews. This method was appropriate because it focused on describing the phenomenon as it naturally occurred without manipulating any variables. It aimed to provide a clear and accurate account of existing conditions, practices, and experiences within the educational setting.

In-depth interviews were conducted to gather the participants' views and insights regarding the issue under study. During the interview, the researcher and the participant were seated at a comfortable distance to allow a relaxed and thoughtful exchange. This approach enabled the researcher to obtain the essential perspectives of the participants and to better understand the issue within its social context through their responses.

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Research Design

The study adopted a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology is regarded as a philosophical approach in qualitative research that seeks to understand how individuals perceive and make sense of their lived experiences. It emphasizes the participants' subjective interpretations of the world, which may differ from commonly accepted views. This design is commonly carried out through interviews to capture the impressions and meanings participants attach to their experiences, and it is widely used in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and social work.

Moreover, phenomenology centers on the examination of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. Its primary purpose is to explore and describe phenomena as they are consciously lived and understood by individuals, without relying on causal explanations or being shaped by unexamined assumptions (Biemel & Spiegelberg, 2024).

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were ten (10) selected senior high school teachers during the school year 2025-2026. Participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (a) currently employed as teachers in a recognized educational institution; (b) actively teaching at least one subject other than their formal area of academic specialization; (c) holding a minimum of a bachelor's degree in education or a related discipline; (d) having at least one year of overall teaching experience; and (e) possessing at least one year of experience teaching a subject outside their specialization.

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These criteria ensured that participants had direct and sustained engagement with the research topic, thereby enabling in-depth exploration of their lived experiences, perceived challenges, and coping strategies. Demographic and professional profile information including age, educational qualifications, specialization, length of teaching experience, specialized training, and duration of teaching the other subject-was collected to contextualize the findings.

Sampling Design

The study employed purposive sampling. According to Nikolopoulou (2023), purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are intentionally selected based on specific characteristics relevant to the study.

Also known as judgmental sampling, this method depends on the researcher’s judgment in choosing individuals, cases, or events that can provide the most relevant information needed to achieve the objectives of the study.

Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made interview schedule as the primary research instrument. The interview schedule consisted of two parts. Part I gathered the participants’ profile, including age, educational qualification, specialization, length of teaching experience, specialized trainings related to the subject being taught, and length of experience in teaching the assigned subject. In addition, voice and video recorders were used for data gathering and documentation, subject to the participants’ consent.

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Validity of the Research Instrument

Before establishing the validity of the researcher-made interview schedule, it was submitted to the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, and a panel of experts in research, testing and assessment, and English for review and validation. Each question was examined for possible revision and improvement.

Validity refers to the extent to which the findings, interpretations, and conclusions of a study accurately and meaningfully represent the concept being investigated. It ensures that the research instrument measures what it is intended to measure and that the results reflect the reality of the phenomenon under study. In establishing content validity, the items and format of the instrument must be aligned with the study's objectives and variables.

This process commonly involves expert evaluation to determine whether the items are clear, relevant, and representative of the concepts being examined (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The comments, corrections, and suggestions of the validators were taken into account in revising the interview schedule, using the appropriate form of Good and Scates (1972), as cited by Soqueña (2021).

Data Gathering Procedures

Permits from the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, the School Division Superintendent, Public School District Supervisor, the School Head and the individual participants were obtained to allow the researcher to conduct the study. The researcher

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had personally visited the school, community, or other locations convenient for the participants to conduct the interviews.

The participants were approached during their vacant time to seek their cooperation in responding to the interview questions. The researcher assured them that their responses were remained strictly confidential.

The participants were informed prior to the interview. Before the interview, participants were encouraged to sign a waiver or consent as a permission for their involvement in the study. Follow-up questions were raised in order to obtain rich information.

Using in-depth interview, voice and video recorders were provided to completely capture the interviewee's words. The researcher consolidated all collected data after series of interviews.

Data Analyses

The data gathered through the interview schedule were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method used to identify, interpret, and present recurring patterns or themes in narrative data.

This approach enabled the researcher to gain meaningful insights into the participants' responses regarding the AI applications commonly used in language learning, how these were utilized, and their perceived advantages and disadvantages.

As explained by Braun and Clarke (2023), thematic analysis offers a flexible yet systematic framework for examining qualitative data and understanding both explicit and underlying meanings in participants' narratives.

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The analysis followed the six phases of thematic analysis: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. This process helped ensure a clear, organized, and credible interpretation of the interview data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study examined the experiences of senior high school teachers who were assigned to teach subjects outside their area of specialization at Pototan National Comprehensive High School during the school year 2024–2025, serving as a basis for policy recommendations.

A qualitative method was employed through in-depth interviews, using a narrative research design and thematic analysis. The participants consisted of ten (10) senior high school teachers from Pototan, Iloilo, whose experiences, challenges, and coping strategies formed the basis of the study.

A researcher-made interview questionnaire was used as the main instrument and was validated by experts. The interviews were scheduled during the supervisors' vacant time. Formal letters were personally delivered and sent through email to the school heads, who approved the request and designated the participants for the interview.

The researcher personally conducted the in-depth interviews at Pototan National Comprehensive High School. Voice recording, note-taking, and photo documentation were utilized during data collection with the participants' consent.

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After the series of interviews, the researcher organized all gathered data. The narratives were then transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted using thematic analysis.

The following were the findings of the study:

Based on the results of the in-depth interviews, the experiences of teachers assigned to subjects outside their area of specialization were characterized by adjustment and professional displacement, professional growth and identity reconstruction, teaching technical and applied subjects, and emotional and pedagogical tension in daily practice.

The findings also revealed that these teachers encountered several challenges, including time constraints and intensified workload, language translation and communication difficulties, issues related to credibility and confidence, professional stress, technical-related concerns, and emotional strain brought about by sustained pressure.

In response to these challenges, the participants employed various coping strategies such as self-directed learning and preparation, the use of digital and online resources, collegial collaboration and co-teaching, and the application of student-centered and collaborative learning approaches.

Overall, the findings suggest that although teachers' individual adaptability helped sustain instruction, systemic mismatches between teachers' specialization and teaching assignments adversely affected instructional quality and teacher well-being.

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Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following insights were drawn:

The findings suggest that teaching subjects outside one's area of specialization brings significant professional, instructional, and emotional implications for senior high school teachers.

The experience requires substantial adjustment, as teachers move beyond their established field of expertise and confront feelings of professional displacement. At the same time, these circumstances promote professional growth and identity reconstruction, as teachers gradually develop into more flexible and adaptable educators.

The challenge becomes even more complex when teachers are assigned technical and applied subjects, which demand different forms of content mastery, instructional strategies, and assessment practices.

Overall, the experience is marked by persistent emotional and pedagogical tension, as teachers strive to maintain instructional quality despite limited familiarity with the subject matter.

The findings further indicate that the challenges encountered by out-of-field teachers are multiple and interconnected. Increased workload and limited time for preparation place heavy demands on teachers, while language translation and communication difficulties make lesson delivery more demanding.

Concerns related to credibility, confidence, and professional stress also affect their classroom performance and sense of self-efficacy.

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In addition, technical-related difficulties and sustained emotional pressure intensify the burden of teaching outside one's specialization.

These results imply that out-of-field teaching is not merely a matter of reassignment, but a condition that can affect teachers' well-being, effectiveness, and professional satisfaction.

Despite these challenges, the findings reveal that teachers employ adaptive and proactive coping strategies to sustain their performance. Through self-directed learning, the use of digital and online resources, collegial collaboration, co-teaching, and student-centered approaches, teachers attempt to manage the demands of unfamiliar teaching assignments. These strategies demonstrate resilience, resourcefulness, and commitment to their profession. However, the findings also lead to the conclusion that while individual adaptability helps sustain instruction, systemic mismatches between teacher specialization and subject assignment continue to compromise both the quality of instruction and the well-being of teachers.



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