



Bridging Knowledge Gaps in Out-of-Field Teaching: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Challenges, Instructional Strategies, and Institutional Support

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigates the complex experiences and challenges faced by teachers assigned to teach subjects beyond their formal qualifications, commonly known as out-of-field teaching. Employing a qualitative research design, the researchers conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 40 public school educators tasked with teaching outside their specialized fields. The rich qualitative data gathered from these interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, facilitating the identification of recurring patterns and insightful themes that illustrate the nuanced realities of out-of-field teaching. The findings highlight several critical challenges, including substantial knowledge gaps, increased workloads, diminished teacher confidence, and significant difficulties in maintaining student engagement. Despite these obstacles, teachers actively employed adaptive instructional strategies, such as collaborative practices with colleagues, differentiated instruction, interactive and student-centered teaching methods, and extensive self-directed learning to address their limitations. Additionally, participants identified targeted professional development, structured mentorship programs, adequate resource allocation, workload adjustments, and policy reforms aligning teacher assignments with their expertise as essential forms of institutional support required to enhance their effectiveness and job satisfaction. By comprehensively exploring these adaptive responses and support mechanisms, this study contributes valuable insights and actionable recommendations for educational policymakers, school leaders, and practitioners worldwide seeking solutions to improve both teacher performance and student learning outcomes.

RESUMO

Este estudo qualitativo investiga as experiências complexas e os desafios enfrentados por professores que lecionam disciplinas fora de suas áreas formais de formação, fenômeno conhecido como ensino fora da especialidade (out-of-field teaching). Utilizando uma abordagem qualitativa, os pesquisadores realizaram entrevistas semiestruturadas aprofundadas com 40 docentes de escolas públicas designados para ensinar disciplinas além das suas qualificações específicas. Os dados qualitativos obtidos foram submetidos à análise temática, permitindo a identificação sistemática de padrões recorrentes e temas relevantes que ilustram as realidades vivenciadas pelos professores nesta situação. Os resultados destacam desafios críticos, incluindo lacunas substanciais no conhecimento específico, aumento na carga de trabalho, redução da autoconfiança docente e dificuldades significativas em manter o engajamento dos alunos. Apesar desses obstáculos, os professores adotaram ativamente estratégias instrucionais adaptativas, tais como práticas colaborativas com colegas, instrução diferenciada, métodos de ensino interativos e centrados no estudante, além de investir significativamente em aprendizagem autônoma para superar suas limitações. Adicionalmente, os participantes identificaram o desenvolvimento profissional direcionado, programas estruturados de mentoria, alocação adequada de recursos, ajustes na carga de trabalho e reformas em políticas que alinhem atribuições docentes às suas especializações como apoios institucionais essenciais para melhorar sua eficácia e satisfação profissional.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Article process:

Submitted: 03/17/2025

Approved: 05/08/2025

Published: 05/10/2025



Keywords:

Out-of-field Teaching,
Teacher Challenges,
Instructional Strategies,
Professional Development,
Mentorship,
Institutional Support,
Qualitative Research,
Thematic Analysis

Keywords:

Ensino fora da
especialidade, Desafios
docentes, Estratégias
instrucionais,
Desenvolvimento
profissional,
Mentoria,
Apoio institucional,
Pesquisa qualitativa,
Análise temática

Introduction

Teaching is a multifaceted profession requiring educators to possess deep subject matter expertise, pedagogical skills, and adaptive capacities to effectively respond to diverse classroom needs. Globally, however, many educational systems face significant staffing shortages and logistical challenges, leading schools to assign educators to teach subjects outside their formal qualifications—an issue commonly known as "out-of-field teaching." This phenomenon, wherein teachers instruct subjects beyond their training, has gained recognition as a critical area for educational research due to its implications for teaching quality, teacher morale, and student learning outcomes (Bajar & Alarcon, 2021).

Out-of-field teaching occurs when educators teach subjects they are not formally qualified for or have not specialized in during their academic training. It has emerged as a prevalent issue worldwide, driven by factors such as teacher shortages, institutional resource constraints, policy gaps, and administrative decisions aimed at addressing immediate staffing shortages. Research from various global contexts, including Australia, Europe, and the United States, consistently demonstrates that out-of-field assignments are linked to decreased teaching effectiveness, increased teacher stress, and lower levels of student engagement (Du & McDonagh, 2021).

The scale of this issue is particularly evident in the Philippines, where recent studies report that approximately 62% of public high school teachers regularly teach subjects outside their specialization (EDCOM 2, 2024). This substantial statistic underscores the urgent need to explore the impact of out-of-field teaching within the Philippine educational context more thoroughly. However, despite the widespread nature of this phenomenon, scholarly investigations within local contexts, especially those exploring teachers' qualitative experiences and adaptive strategies, remain notably sparse. Thus, there is a significant research gap concerning the nuanced exploration of Filipino educators' lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and institutional support needs in out-of-field teaching scenarios.

Much of the existing research on out-of-field teaching has tended to focus predominantly on quantitative aspects, examining macro-level outcomes such as student achievement scores, standardized assessments, and teacher attrition rates (Smythe-Thompson, 2022). While these studies provide valuable data about the broader implications and prevalence of out-of-field teaching, they often overlook the rich, qualitative dimensions inherent in teachers' daily experiences and personal challenges. Qualitative research methods are especially beneficial for capturing these intricate, subjective experiences, offering deeper insights into the personal, instructional, and institutional challenges educators face when assigned to teach beyond their areas of expertise (Lim, 2024).

Qualitative studies that delve into teachers' individual experiences can illuminate the realities of out-of-field teaching, revealing specific barriers such as knowledge gaps,

insufficient instructional resources, increased workload, reduced professional confidence, and elevated stress levels. Previous studies have indicated that teachers lacking content-specific expertise often feel inadequately prepared, which can lead to diminished confidence, increased anxiety, and burnout (Ball, 2023). These issues can negatively influence teachers' classroom performance, instructional quality, and ultimately, student learning outcomes. For instance, educators teaching unfamiliar subjects may face challenges in providing clear explanations, developing meaningful assessments, and maintaining student engagement, all crucial factors contributing to effective teaching and learning (Chew & Cerbin, 2021).

Moreover, studies on instructional strategies employed by teachers facing out-of-field assignments often highlight that educators utilize various adaptive and compensatory methods to manage their instructional duties. Teachers frequently rely on collaborative efforts, including mentorship from colleagues specializing in relevant subject areas, sharing instructional resources, and engaging in informal peer discussions. Collaboration among educators facilitates the exchange of expertise, teaching strategies, and emotional support, thereby reducing feelings of isolation and inadequacy (Abenes & Caballes, 2020).

Self-directed learning is another prominent strategy identified in the literature, with teachers proactively seeking to enhance their subject knowledge and pedagogical skills through independent research, online resources, and professional development opportunities. Despite the benefits of self-directed learning, the additional preparation required for unfamiliar subjects can significantly increase teachers' workload, contributing to burnout and reduced job satisfaction (Abenes & Caballes, 2020). Therefore, understanding the full extent and implications of these adaptive strategies through qualitative inquiry is crucial to providing meaningful support to educators.

Professional development and institutional support have been widely recognized in research as critical elements for addressing the challenges of out-of-field teaching. Effective professional development programs tailored specifically for out-of-field educators have the potential to significantly enhance teacher competence, confidence, and instructional effectiveness. Such targeted training can bridge knowledge gaps, improve pedagogical skills, and equip teachers with practical strategies to manage classroom challenges effectively (Balbin et al., 2014). However, despite their recognized importance, professional development opportunities often remain insufficiently targeted or accessible, leaving many out-of-field teachers inadequately prepared for their teaching assignments (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021).

Mentorship programs, collaborative structures, and resource provision have also been identified as essential institutional supports required by out-of-field teachers. Mentorship, where experienced teachers provide guidance and assistance, has demonstrated significant benefits, including increased teacher confidence, improved instructional quality, and reduced stress levels (Diab & Green, 2024). Similarly, access to quality resources such as detailed lesson plans, subject-specific teaching materials, and digital tools can substantially alleviate

preparation burdens, enabling teachers to focus more effectively on classroom engagement and instruction (Reyes et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the alignment of teaching roles with educators' academic qualifications is frequently cited as a fundamental policy consideration in educational research. Teachers assigned to subjects closely aligned with their expertise experience higher levels of job satisfaction, increased instructional efficacy, and improved student outcomes. Conversely, misalignment contributes to stress, reduced confidence, and overall dissatisfaction, factors linked to teacher attrition and compromised student achievement (Balbin et al., 2024).

Additionally, workload management emerges as a pivotal issue, as the demands of out-of-field teaching often require educators to spend considerable time and effort beyond regular teaching hours to adequately prepare for their classes. This extra workload can lead to exhaustion, stress, and burnout, negatively affecting teachers' well-being and long-term retention in the profession (Cabaluna & Moleta, 2023). Addressing workload concerns through policy adjustments and administrative actions is thus critical for sustaining teacher motivation, effectiveness, and student learning outcomes.

Given these considerations, this study aims to fill a critical gap in the existing research literature by qualitatively exploring the specific challenges, adaptive strategies, and institutional supports perceived as necessary by teachers engaged in out-of-field teaching in Mandaluyong and Pasig City, Philippines. This study utilizes qualitative methodologies, including semi-structured interviews with educators, to provide rich, detailed insights into their experiences, coping mechanisms, and recommendations for enhancing their teaching efficacy and student outcomes.

By addressing this notable gap in existing research, this study seeks to contribute valuable knowledge and actionable insights to educators, administrators, and policymakers. Understanding the practical challenges, adaptive strategies, and institutional supports required by out-of-field teachers can inform the development of targeted interventions and policies designed to support educators, improve educational quality, and ensure that students receive high-quality instruction regardless of staffing constraints or logistical limitations. Ultimately, this research aspires to foster systemic improvements in educational practice, enhancing teacher effectiveness, student achievement, and overall educational equity.

With the aim of this study to evaluate the Teachers' Technology Utilization, Instructional Methods, and Readiness, it seeks to address the following questions:

1. With the aim of this study to examine the challenges faced by teachers teaching outside their areas of specialization and the strategies they use to address these challenges. It aims to explore the types of institutional support, professional development, and policy changes that teachers believe are needed to improve their effectiveness and confidence in teaching out-of-field subjects, it seeks to address the following questions:

2. How do teachers teaching outside their area of specialization perceive and navigate the challenges of knowledge gaps and limited subject expertise?
3. What instructional strategies and adaptive approaches do teachers employ to engage students and ensure effective learning in subjects outside their specialization?

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research design to comprehensively investigate the lived experiences, instructional strategies, professional development needs, and perceived institutional support among teachers teaching subjects outside their areas of specialization. A qualitative approach was purposefully selected due to its inherent strength in uncovering nuanced, in-depth insights into participants' experiences, perceptions, and adaptive strategies within complex educational contexts. Qualitative inquiry is particularly valuable in educational research, as it facilitates capturing rich, narrative-driven data that can inform meaningful educational policy and practice improvements.

Prior to initiating data collection, formal permission was systematically sought from the school principals across various public secondary schools located in Mandaluyong City and Pasig City. Official letters explaining the research objectives, significance, and potential implications were presented, ensuring transparency and ethical clarity. This step not only adhered to the highest ethical standards but also fostered trust, cooperation, and meaningful engagement among the participating schools and their faculty.

Data collection was conducted via semi-structured interviews, strategically chosen for their balance between structure and flexibility. Interviews allowed participants the freedom to articulate their personal experiences, perceptions, and adaptive strategies authentically while maintaining consistency through targeted, pre-designed questions aligned with the research objectives. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes, conducted face-to-face in locations comfortable for participants, ensuring confidentiality and openness. With informed consent, conversations were audio-recorded to facilitate accuracy in data transcription.

The data underwent rigorous thematic analysis, adhering to Braun and Clarke's (2006) established methodological framework. This structured yet flexible analytical approach involved multiple stages, including: (1) comprehensive data familiarization through repeated readings of transcripts; (2) generation of initial codes by systematically identifying meaningful data segments; (3) thematic exploration through grouping related codes into coherent clusters; (4) refinement and rigorous evaluation of themes for coherence, consistency, and relevance; and (5) final definition, naming, and interpretation of themes in alignment with the research questions. The emergent themes were substantiated by illustrative excerpts drawn directly from participants' narratives, reinforcing the study's credibility and depth.

This methodology thus provided a robust, ethically sound, and contextually sensitive exploration of out-of-field teaching challenges and strategies, ultimately aiming to inform policy reforms, professional development frameworks, and institutional support mechanisms designed to enhance teacher effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

Respondents

Participants comprised forty (40) secondary school teachers purposefully selected from public educational institutions in Mandaluyong and Pasig cities. Purposive sampling, a non-random sampling strategy, was employed to ensure the inclusion of participants who possessed direct, relevant experiences teaching subjects beyond their certified areas of specialization. Teachers' specializations varied widely—from Mathematics and Science to English and Filipino—while the assigned out-of-field subjects ranged across Physical Education, Values Education, Social Studies, Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE), and Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH).

It is crucial to acknowledge that although this approach enables the gathering of a wide variety of responses, it may also restrict the applicability of the results to the whole population of DepEd teachers. The study's emphasis on secondary and basic education teachers accentuates its significance to individuals directly engaged in foundational and middle education levels, providing a detailed recognition of their particular requirements and viewpoints on flexible learning.

Data Analysis

The data gathered through semi-structured interviews underwent rigorous thematic analysis to explore teachers' experiences comprehensively while teaching outside their areas of specialization. The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework to ensure methodological rigor and analytical depth. Initially, transcripts were meticulously read multiple times, allowing the researcher to immerse deeply in participants' narratives and ensure familiarity with the breadth and depth of the collected data.

Subsequently, initial coding commenced, systematically identifying significant segments of text that directly addressed the research questions. These initial codes represented critical insights into teachers' personal experiences, challenges, adaptive instructional strategies, professional development needs, and suggested institutional support. Through this meticulous coding, patterns and preliminary insights emerged clearly, highlighting significant commonalities and divergences within participants' responses. The analysis process involved the following steps: (1) familiarization with the data through reading the transcripts, (2) generating initial codes by identifying relevant segments of the data, (3) searching for themes by grouping related codes, (4) reviewing themes for consistency and relevance, and (5) defining and naming the themes. The final themes were linked to the research questions and presented with supporting examples from the participants' responses.

Results & Discussion

This table provided a concise overview of the structured view of how teachers perceive and navigate challenges. Teachers assigned to subjects beyond their expertise often encountered significant knowledge gaps, necessitating extensive self-study to deliver effective lessons. One teacher expressed the feeling "uncertain and unprepared," questioning their ability to provide high-quality learning. Another noted the need to spend extra time learning unfamiliar topics to prepare lessons. This challenge was well-documented in literature. Obias et al. (2025) highlighted that out-of-field teaching could adversely affect teachers' self-esteem and overall well-being, as they felt inadequate due to their lack of content knowledge. Similarly, a study by Hobbs and Porsch (2021) emphasized that non-credential and alternatively certified teachers encountered a range of challenges stemming from teaching subjects outside their specialization.

Table 1.

A structured view of how teachers perceive and navigate challenges

Theme	Description	Supporting Examples from Interviews
Knowledge Gaps	Teachers struggle with unfamiliar topics, requiring extensive self-study and research.	- "I feel uncertain and unprepared... I question my ability to provide high-quality learning." (Teacher 21) - "Some topics are unfamiliar, so I need to spend extra time learning and preparing lessons." (Teacher 28)
Time-Intensive Preparation	Preparing for lessons requires significant effort, often extending beyond regular teaching hours.	- "I spend extra time searching for reading materials, modules, and video lessons." (Teacher 1) - "I study over the weekend to prepare for teaching TLE." (Teacher 37)
Low Confidence	Teachers feel insecure about their ability to meet subject standards and address student queries.	- "I felt nervous and scared at first. The rush of 'what ifs' came to mind." (Teacher 6) - "I felt less confident and questioned my competence in teaching music and arts." (Teacher 17)
Student Engagement Issues	Difficulty engaging students due to limited expertise in creating meaningful and engaging lessons.	- "It's hard to engage students effectively when you lack mastery of the subject." (Teacher 11) - "Since I'm not confident in music theory, students notice, and it impacts their engagement." (Teacher 15)
Collaboration with Peers	Teachers seek guidance from colleagues and mentors to navigate knowledge gaps.	- "I seek advice from the subject coordinator if I'm unsure about the lesson." (Teacher 29) - "I ask for help from fellow teachers who specialize in the subject." (Teacher 8)
Self-Learning and Research	Teachers rely on personal effort to study and gather materials for effective lesson delivery.	- "I use YouTube videos and prepare PowerPoint presentations to teach cookery topics in TLE." (Teacher 22) - "I read and study in advance, searching for resources online to explain lessons better." (Teacher 35)

The necessity to bridge knowledge gaps led to increased preparation time, often extending beyond regular teaching hours. Teachers reported spending extra time searching for materials and studying over weekends to prepare for classes. This finding aligned with research by Hobbs (2012), which indicated that out-of-field teachers experienced increased stress due to the additional time required for lesson preparation, impacting their work-life balance and overall job satisfaction.

A lack of subject expertise led to diminished confidence among teachers. Feelings of nervousness and self-doubt were reported, with concerns about meeting subject standards and effectively addressing student queries. Research by Barras & Gillo (2024) supported this observation, noting that out-of-field teaching assignments negatively impacted teachers' sense of identity and self-esteem, leading to decreased confidence in their teaching abilities.

Teachers expressed difficulties in engaging students due to their limited expertise, which affected their ability to create meaningful and interactive lessons. One teacher mentioned the challenge of engaging students effectively without mastery of the subject. A study by Taneri and Ok (2014) found that students taught by out-of-field teachers experienced decreased engagement and motivation, as these teachers struggled to deliver content confidently and engagingly.

To mitigate these challenges, teachers often sought guidance from colleagues and mentors. Collaborative efforts included seeking advice from subject coordinators and fellow teachers specializing in the subject. Goddard and Goddard (2007) found that teacher collaboration enhanced instructional practices and improved student outcomes. Working with colleagues allowed teachers to share resources and strategies, thereby improving their teaching effectiveness.

Teachers also engaged in self-directed learning, utilizing online resources and dedicating personal time to study unfamiliar subjects. This proactive approach helped them deliver more effective lessons (Teachers 2 and 5). The study by Fyfield (2020) indicated that out-of-field teachers addressed challenges by filling knowledge gaps through self-directed learning and seeking professional development opportunities.

In summary, teachers teaching outside their areas of specialization faced multiple challenges, including knowledge gaps, increased preparation time, and reduced confidence, all of which impacted student engagement. To navigate these challenges, they often relied on peer collaboration and self-learning. These findings were consistent with existing research, highlighting the need for targeted support and professional development for out-of-field teachers.

Table 2.

Instructional strategies and adaptive approaches are used by teachers to address their limitations and support student engagement.

Theme	Description	Supporting Examples from Interviews
Collaboration with Peers	Teachers seek help from colleagues and mentors to gain clarity and enhance lesson delivery.	- "I seek advice from the subject coordinator if I'm unsure about the lesson." (Teacher 1) - "Fellow teachers share resources and guide me through difficult topics." (Teacher 5)
Research and Self-Learning	Teachers utilize online resources, video tutorials, and independent study to prepare effectively.	- "I prepare PPTs, watch YouTube videos, and study in advance for lessons." (Teacher 2) - "I search for materials online and take time to understand the content deeply before teaching." (Teacher 3)
Interactive Teaching Methods	Teachers employ strategies like multimedia, role-playing, and hands-on activities to enhance engagement.	- "I use group discussions, role-playing, and case studies to connect concepts to real-life scenarios." (Teacher 7) - "I integrate videos and storytelling to make moral lessons relatable and engaging." (Teacher 3)
Student-Centered Approaches	Activities that involve students taking active roles in their learning, such as peer teaching and collaboration.	- "I use group discussions and peer teaching, allowing students to explore topics and share insights." (Teacher 1) - "Experiential learning helps students apply concepts in real-life situations." (Teacher 10)
Differentiated Instruction	Teachers tailor lessons to accommodate varying student needs, interests, and abilities.	- "I use differentiated instructions to ensure all students can follow the lesson and engage." (Teacher 7) - "By simplifying and presenting content through relatable examples, students can grasp concepts better." (Teacher 5)
Multimedia and Technology Use	Incorporating digital tools, such as videos, PowerPoint presentations, and online platforms, for effective teaching.	- "I prepare PowerPoint slides and search for video tutorials to make lessons visually engaging." (Teacher 2) - "I integrate multimedia tools, including videos, to help students understand concepts." (Teacher 7)

The research presented in this table provided a concise overview of the instructional strategies and adaptive approaches used by teachers to address their limitations and support student engagement. Teachers teaching outside their specialization often turned to their colleagues for guidance and mentorship to enhance lesson delivery and clarity. This collaboration was essential for navigating unfamiliar subjects, as peer support provided valuable resources and strategies that teachers might have lacked. The use of peer advice

reduced stress and uncertainty associated with teaching out-of-field, fostering a more supportive and resource-rich environment for educators (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021).

Self-directed learning and research were essential strategies for teachers who had to prepare for subjects outside their expertise. Teachers often engaged with a variety of resources, including online platforms, textbooks, and videos, to compensate for knowledge gaps. This proactive approach not only helped teachers become more knowledgeable but also encouraged continuous professional growth. However, it was time-consuming and could contribute to teacher burnout if not supported by institutional mechanisms (Hobbs, 2012).

Teachers employed interactive teaching methods, such as group discussions, role-playing, and case studies, to engage students more effectively when they lacked subject expertise. These methods shifted the focus from traditional teacher-centered approaches to more dynamic, student-centered learning. This strategy helped create a more inclusive and participatory classroom environment, which was particularly beneficial for students who might otherwise have felt disengaged due to the teacher's lack of subject mastery (Abenes et al., 2023).

Student-centered approaches, such as peer teaching and experiential learning, enabled teachers to engage students actively in the learning process. This approach was particularly effective for out-of-field teachers, as it shifted the responsibility for learning from the teacher to the students, allowing the teacher to facilitate rather than deliver the lesson directly. It also helped create an environment where students learned by doing, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers relied on this method to compensate for gaps in content knowledge and ensure that learning was meaningful.

Differentiated instruction allowed teachers to meet the diverse needs of students by adapting content, teaching methods, and assessments. For out-of-field teachers, this strategy helped ensure that all students could follow the lesson, regardless of their prior knowledge or learning style. By customizing instruction, teachers provided students with different entry points to the subject matter, facilitating engagement and understanding (Balbin et al., 2025).

Out-of-field teachers often relied on multimedia tools, such as videos, PowerPoint presentations, and digital platforms, to make lessons more engaging and accessible. The use of technology helped bridge knowledge gaps by providing visual and auditory learning experiences that enhanced student understanding. This approach was particularly useful for topics that might have been challenging to explain without subject expertise (Mayer, 2009).

These themes and their supporting research highlighted the strategies that out-of-field teachers employed to engage students and facilitate effective learning. By using collaborative efforts, self-directed learning, interactive methods, student-centered approaches, differentiated instruction, and multimedia tools, teachers mitigated the challenges posed by teaching outside their area of expertise. Research supported these findings, showing that these strategies not only helped teachers build their confidence but also contributed to improved

student outcomes. However, continuous professional development and institutional support remained essential to sustaining these efforts.

Table 3.

Institutional support, professional development opportunities, and policy changes that teachers believe are necessary to enhance their effectiveness and confidence in teaching out-of-field subjects.

Theme	Description	Supporting Examples from Interviews
Professional Development	Teachers emphasize the importance of ongoing professional development to build subject knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Teachers need more professional development workshops or seminars to improve their teaching in unfamiliar subjects." (Teacher 1) - "There should be workshops focused on specific subject areas where teachers lack expertise." (Teacher 10)
Mentorship and Collaboration	Teachers suggest pairing out-of-field teachers with experienced mentors to provide support and guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Pairing out-of-field teachers with experienced mentors would be very helpful." (Teacher 9) - "Collaboration with experienced colleagues could guide me in areas I'm unfamiliar with." (Teacher 5)
Resource Allocation	Teachers believe access to high-quality resources, including lesson plans, teaching materials, and digital tools, is essential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "It would be helpful if schools provided ready-made lesson plans and resources for out-of-field teachers." (Teacher 7)
Role Alignment	Teachers recommend that teaching assignments be better aligned with their areas of expertise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Providing books, teacher's manuals, and modules would ease the burden of preparing lessons." (Teacher 5) - "If teachers were assigned subjects that match their expertise, the quality of teaching would improve significantly." (Teacher 9) - "Aligning teacher roles with their academic background would help reduce unnecessary stress." (Teacher 4)
Workload Management	Teachers suggest reducing the workload for out-of-field teachers to avoid burnout and ensure adequate preparation time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "If possible, they should reduce our workload so we can focus more on the subjects we're teaching out of our field." (Teacher 6) - "Teachers should have more time to prepare for out-of-field subjects to reduce stress and improve performance." (Teacher 10)
Financial and Emotional Support	Teachers call for improved emotional and financial support, acknowledging the extra effort needed for out-of-field teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "The Department of Education should give higher salary or incentives for teachers who handle out-of-field subjects." (Teacher 10) - "Emotional support from the school administration would help teachers stay motivated." (Teacher 3)

This table provided an overview of institutional support, professional development opportunities, and policy changes that teachers believed were necessary to enhance their effectiveness and confidence in teaching out-of-field subjects. Teachers emphasized the importance of professional development opportunities to help them build subject knowledge and teaching skills in areas outside their specialization. Workshops, seminars, and training sessions focused on specific subjects were seen as essential for helping teachers bridge

knowledge gaps and feel more confident in their roles. Providing continuous opportunities for growth ensured that teachers were not only prepared to teach effectively but also supported in their ongoing professional journey (Guskey, 2002). Studies by Saldivar (2024) also affirmed the critical role of high-quality professional development in improving teacher effectiveness, especially when teachers were assigned out-of-field subjects.

Mentorship and collaboration with experienced teachers were identified as essential strategies for supporting out-of-field teachers. Pairing novice teachers with mentors who specialized in the assigned subject provided a supportive environment, enhancing confidence and instructional quality. Collaborative teaching and sharing resources among colleagues also ensured that teachers could improve their practice and feel more competent in unfamiliar subjects. Collaborative learning in the workplace alleviated the burden of out-of-field teaching by offering emotional and pedagogical support (Porsch & Hobbs, 2024).

Teachers expressed the need for access to high-quality resources, such as pre-made lesson plans, teaching materials, and digital tools, to help them manage the challenges of teaching subjects outside their specialization. Resource allocation played a crucial role in ensuring that teachers were not overwhelmed by the preparation required for out-of-field teaching. By providing adequate resources, schools eased teachers' workloads and improved the overall quality of instruction, which was particularly beneficial when teachers faced gaps in their content knowledge (Njuguna, 2024).

Teachers recommended that their teaching assignments align more closely with their areas of expertise to reduce stress and improve teaching effectiveness. When teachers were assigned subjects within their field of specialization, they were better equipped to meet curriculum standards, engage students, and enhance learning outcomes. Misalignment between teaching assignments and expertise often led to burnout and dissatisfaction, which negatively impacted both teacher morale and student learning (Alberts, 2024).

Teachers expressed the need for a reduction in their workload to allow for adequate preparation time when teaching out-of-field subjects. Managing workload effectively was essential for preventing burnout and ensuring that teachers could devote sufficient time to researching and preparing for their lessons. Reducing unnecessary tasks and providing time for professional learning ensured that teachers could focus on what mattered most—effective instruction and student learning (Iqbal & Ali, 2024).

Teachers highlighted the importance of both financial and emotional support to help them cope with the additional stress of teaching out-of-field subjects. Financial incentives, such as higher salaries or bonuses, acknowledged the extra effort required to teach outside one's area of specialization. Emotional support from school administrations and colleagues helped maintain teacher motivation and job satisfaction, creating a more positive work environment (Dreer, 2024).

The themes discussed above illustrated key areas where teachers believed institutional support and policy changes were necessary to enhance their effectiveness and confidence when teaching out-of-field subjects. Professional development, mentorship, resource allocation, and workload management were critical in supporting teachers in these roles. Research supported these findings, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions and systemic changes to improve teaching outcomes and teacher well-being in the context of out-of-field assignments.

Conclusion

This study has illuminated the multifaceted nature of out-of-field teaching, uncovering critical challenges, effective adaptive strategies, and essential institutional supports needed by educators who find themselves teaching subjects outside their formal qualifications. The findings underscore that teachers confronted with out-of-field assignments often experience pronounced knowledge gaps, increased workloads, diminished confidence, and challenges in student engagement. These obstacles not only impact their teaching efficacy but also significantly influence students' academic outcomes. The insights derived from the qualitative experiences of 40 educators underscore the urgent need for comprehensive support systems to enhance both teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

One of the key revelations of this research is the resilience and adaptability displayed by educators facing out-of-field teaching assignments. Teachers proactively bridge their knowledge gaps through extensive self-directed study and adaptive instructional strategies, including collaboration with colleagues, multimedia integration, and student-centered methodologies. These strategies demonstrate remarkable resourcefulness and resilience among educators, reflecting their commitment to maintaining educational quality despite the limitations imposed by teaching subjects beyond their expertise. The adaptive approaches employed by teachers highlight the crucial role of personal initiative and collegial support, which can significantly mitigate the negative consequences associated with out-of-field teaching.

However, individual efforts alone are insufficient to sustainably address the systemic challenges posed by teaching assignments mismatched with educators' qualifications. Institutional support and strategic policy reforms emerge as indispensable components for meaningful improvement. The study reveals a clear demand among teachers for targeted professional development initiatives, specifically designed to address the unique needs of out-of-field educators.

Recommendations

Teachers emphasized the importance of professional development, including targeted workshops and seminars to enhance their subject knowledge. Mentorship and collaboration with experienced colleagues were identified as crucial strategies for building confidence and

improving instructional quality. Additionally, teachers expressed a strong need for adequate resources, such as ready-made lesson plans and teaching materials, to reduce their preparation burden. They also advocated for better alignment between teaching assignments and their areas of expertise, suggesting that this could lead to more effective teaching and improved student outcomes. Finally, teachers called for reductions in workload and increased financial and emotional support to alleviate stress and promote job satisfaction.

Based on these findings, several recommendations for policy and practice emerged. It was suggested that education systems should provide more specialized professional development opportunities for teachers teaching out-of-field subjects, focusing on content knowledge and teaching strategies specific to those subjects. Mentorship programs should be implemented to pair less experienced teachers with colleagues who specialize in the subject areas they are assigned to teach. Resource allocation should be improved by providing teachers with comprehensive teaching materials and digital tools to support lesson planning.

Furthermore, schools should prioritize better role alignment to ensure that teachers are assigned subjects that align with their expertise, which would not only reduce stress but also enhance teaching quality. Finally, policy changes should focus on offering workload management strategies and providing financial incentives or emotional support to recognize the additional effort required of out-of-field teachers. By implementing these recommendations, educational systems could create a more supportive environment for out-of-field teachers, ultimately improving their effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was the small sample size, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. However, the study's focus on qualitative insights from teachers provides a deep understanding of the lived experiences of those teaching outside their field of expertise. Additionally, the study was conducted in a single school district, which may limit the broader applicability of the results to different educational contexts.

Acknowledgment

The researcher extends gratitude to the 40 teachers who participated in this study, whose insights were invaluable. Sincere thanks are also offered to Dr. Faith Micah Abenes-Balbin for her guidance and constructive feedback, as well as to the researcher's family and colleagues for their support throughout the project.

The researcher also wished to acknowledge the guidance and support of the academic advisor, Dr. Faith Micah Abenes – Balbin, whose expertise and constructive feedback played a crucial role in shaping the direction and quality of this study.

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest

The authors assert that they have no conflicts of interest.

Ethics Statement

The present study utilized an internet-based survey technology to gather data from respondents. Participation was completely optional. Prior to their participation, all respondents provided informed consent. Anonymity was guaranteed to respondents, and no personally identifiable information was gathered. Adherence to ethical principles was given top priority throughout the whole research process, including the preservation and disposal of data. For the document preparation, the writers employed generative AI, namely ChatGPT, to improve the sentence structure and increase the overall lucidity of the text. Although the fundamental concepts and research results were obtained via human contributions, the generative AI played a crucial role in enhancing grammar, coherence, and other essential aspects of writing. The integration of human insights with AI support guaranteed a refined and well-organized delivery of the study's findings and conclusions.

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