NON-SPECIALIZED TEACHING AMONG TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL-LIVELIHOOD TEACHERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this research was to describe the experiences gained by Technical-Vocational-Livelihood teachers who are teaching subjects outside their specialization from Veruela District, Division of Agusan del Sur. Employing phenomenological approach among 10 participants, in-depth interview was conducted which answered the four fundamental questions. Essential themes were generated out from their responses to the research questions. The results uncovered the participants' lived experiences, and from it five themes emerged: difficulty in teaching, limited learnings can be imparted to students, learning other subjects while teaching, opportunity to learn another field, and acquire additional skills. The participants also shared the challenges they encountered in dealing parental involvement, from which emerged six themes: adjustment in subject to teach, lack of knowledge about the subject, to find references, not well-prepared in abrupt questions of students, compromising free-time to study, and no mastery in the subject taught. Further, for the coping mechanisms they revealed seven essential themes: find references using internet, spending time to study, prepare the lessons in advance, give collaborative activities, seeking help from knowledgeable colleagues, colleagues, and technical assistance through trainings and seminars. Lastly, for the insights they cited eight themes which emerged: it is challenging, simplify the strategy while teaching, be resourceful, teacher must only teach with their specialized subject, have an appropriate human resource inventory, and hoping for reformation in hiring system.

Keywords: Technical-Vocational Livelihood Teachers, Non-Specialized Teaching, Experiences, Challenges, Coping Mechanisms, Insights, Phenomenological approach, Veruela, Agusan del Sur.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Problem and its Background

The phenomenon of non-specialized teaching among technical-vocational-livelihood instructors presents a complex challenge, necessitating a comprehensive investigation into its implications on subject mastery, instructional efficacy, and student achievement in order to devise tailored approaches for augmenting the quality of technical-vocational-livelihood education.

In Thailand, one prominent issue of out-of-field teaching is the mismatch between educators' qualifications and the subjects they teach (Smith et al., 2019). This highlights concern about educators lacking specialized training, leading to potential gaps in subject knowledge. This mismatch raises questions about the competency of teachers to effectively convey accurate and comprehensive information to students. Garcia & Kim (2020) contribute to the discussion by exploring the impact of out-of-field teaching on student learning outcomes. Their findings underscore the negative correlation between out-of-field teaching and academic achievement. Students taught by educators lacking formal qualifications in the subject may experience challenges in grasping complex concepts, potentially hindering their overall academic performance.

Out-of-field instruction has also been recorded in both public and private schools in Batangas, Philippines. This is a result of the growing enrollment, which forces the majority of schools to hire so many teachers that even non-majors are forced to teach courses outside of their areas of expertise. Furthermore, the Department of Education enabled non-teacher education graduates to teach in Senior High School with the adoption of the K–12 curriculum (DepEd Order No. 3, series 2016). In here, teaching nowadays is bombarded with several challenges. Thus, out-of-field teachers and non-teacher education graduates will experience more challenges since they have not been exposed to the teaching contexts in their undergraduate degree.

These scenarios were also observed in Veruela District, Division of Agusan del Sur. As to the Senior High School, many Technical-Vocational-Livelihood teachers are teaching subjects outside from their specialization because they were only given few teachers which necessitates them to teach the subject. The mismatch of teaching load is also observed where the school head or department head assigned a new teaching load for both new and tenured teachers but no background whatsoever on the subject to be taught (Acosta, 2020). This may address the lack of teachers in some subject areas but the effect can be replaced to limited students' learning, achievement, and participation.

A comparable study that examined the breadth and depth of the experiences of Technical-Vocational-Livelihood teachers who are instructing courses outside of their area of expertise, however, has not been found in the local context, according to the researcher. This study investigated their real-world experiences, difficulties they encountered, and methods for instructing students in disciplines unrelated to their specialty. The purpose of this study was to aid in the creation of plans and policies related to management, oversight, and training.

1.2 Purpose of the study

This qualitative phenomenological study set out to investigate the experiences, difficulties, coping strategies, and insights that TVL instructors in Veruela District, Division of Agusan del Sur, employ when teaching subjects other than their areas of expertise. Five open-ended questions were used to begin the inquiry with the 10 participants and explore their experiences managing topics in areas other than their specialties.

1.3 Research Question

The research focused on the experiences of TVL teachers who are teaching subjects that are demerits from their specialization how teachers tackled the challenges, and the techniques they were using to aid the problems. Moreover, it would be led by:

- 1. What are the experiences of the TVL teachers in handling subjects which are outside of their specialization?
- 2. What are the challenges the participants experienced in handling subjects which are outside of their specialization?
- 3. How do TVL teachers cope with the challenges of teaching subjects outside their specialization?
- 4. What are the insights the participants gained from their experiences in handling subjects that are outside of their specialization?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section seeks to put the notion under study into a framework, vis-a-vis the themes and literature, so that the reader can get a sense of the issues TVL teachers teaching normative subjects are grappling with. The findings of similar research to this were presented to assist us in interpreting and visualizing the emphasis made in this qualitative study. All these were searched from different records that consist of books, journals, websites, and manuals.

2.1 Out-of-Field Teaching. Research by Smith et al. Pirila, Matsinhe & Klapp (2019) further point out the widespread nature of out-of-field teaching and the challenges confronting educators with no formal qualification in the subject area they are teaching. The research explores this in more detail in relation to student learning outcomes, revealing possibly gaps in both content knowledge and pedagogy.

In addition, Garcia and Kim (2020) lend understanding to the direct effects of out-of-field teaching on student achievement. The researchers in the study reviewed how the mismatch of teacher qualifications compared to subject expertise leads to lower academic performance. This research demonstrates the importance of trained teachers to academic achievement.

2.2 Experiences on Teaching Non-Specialized Subjects. In particular, data from the National US Schools and Staffing Surveys showed that high rates of out-of-field teaching were a primary cause of underqualified teaching within American public schools (Layton, Kim, & Causarano, 1999). McConney and Price (2010) reported that the unambiguous results of a survey found out-of-field teaching to be common in both Australia and the US.

This research study based on the Schools and Staffing Survey published by the US National Center for Education Statistics has a focus of out-of-field teaching across schools, by comparing teacher credential and other key factors contributing to from-school-to-school variation in out-of-field teaching. Most of them - thought to be generally competent - wound up as teachers in there, and many of them, particularly in the poorest schools, were pushed into teaching subjects they didn't know all that well. The study found that while there may have been a need for specific teachers, the out-of-field kind of instruction was due to particular administrative and organizational matters (Laitsch, 2003).

2.3 Challenges Posed by Out-Of-Field Teaching. Regardless of their area of expertise, teachers need to have certain attributes that will enable them to teach the courses effectively. Greater success is possible when one is resourceful. A resourceful teacher, in a similar vein, always seeks a means to advance their career (Baldoni, 2010).

A few studies conducted in Australia, North America, and Asia have revealed that having a resourceful mindset is beneficial for stress management and overall health compared to having a non-resourceful attitude. Researchers at Trent University in Canada came to the conclusion that being resourceful increases one's likelihood of using self-control to deal with life's challenges, leading to better adaptations and improved performance. According to Briggs (2015), being resourceful also entails accepting challenges and disagreements, questioning one's own and other people's beliefs, and appreciating the importance of discomfort.

2.4 Coping Mechanisms Posed by Out-Of-Field Teachers. Santos and Cruz (2019) argue that out-of-field teachers use what they know about adjacent subjects to create lesson plans and conduct classroom discussions more effectively. How they used creative resiliency to tackle the challenges of teaching non-specialist courses.

The study also underscores the importance of professional development for out-of-field instructors to refine their content knowledge and instructional practice. Dela Cruz et al. further emphasized that targeted training programs and workshops tailored for out-of-field instructors can offer them resources to work on their existing bodies of knowledge, and improve learning and teaching practices. (2020). This confirms that with proper training and professional learning support, out-of-field teachers can negotiate successfully with the challenges of teaching outside their field of expertise.

2.5 Insights on Out-Of-Field Teaching Experiences. The term "dirty little secret" in education refers to out-of-field instruction. The number of teachers who are teaching outside of their field is large. One explanation for the large proportion of incompetent instructors in many school systems appears to be budget cuts. Inadequate school administration and additional obstacles within the educational system are also to blame for the problems with inappropriate teacher placement. One of the biggest obstacles to high-quality education is the problem of negligent teacher assignment, which is not new. Every school, whether private or public, religious or secular, or located in a rural or metropolitan area, is affected to some extent by this issue. It is a common occurrence for teachers to be given lessons in which they lack the necessary expertise (Gutowski & Rado, 2014).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research approach to investigate the experiences of TVL teachers managing issues outside of their area of expertise. In essence, it helped participants better grasp a particular event they were experiencing as they described it (Creswell, 2014).

According to phenomenology, in order to comprehend human experiences, one must use interviews to immerse oneself in the ideas and insights of others fully. It makes it easier to conclude how to understand the participants' experiences because these were their real lives, and they had all dealt with the problem of parental participation in schools (Creswell & Creswell, 2009).

3.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in the secondary schools of Veruela District, Agusan del Sur Division. These included Veruela National High School, Sampaguita National High School, La Fortuna National High School, and Sinobong National High School.

3.3 Research Participants

There were 10 participants in this study, enough to saturate information gathered from the studied group. In determining the research participants of this qualitative-phenomenological study, Creswell (2013) suggests eight to fifteen participants. Therefore, in this study, there were 10 participants for the In-Depth Interview (IDI).

Furthermore, the inclusion criteria for the selection of participants were the following: (a) the participants must be a public-school teacher in the School Year 2022-2023, (b) with a position from Teacher I-Teacher III, and

Master Teacher I-IV (c) from various secondary schools in Veruela District, (d) must have at least one-year Teaching experience, (f) has an experience in handling subjects outside from their specialization.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The procedure of gathering data required a number of tasks for the qualitative researcher. Before leaving after the research study, the researcher followed strict procedures for gathering data and participated in a number of events.

First, the researcher ensured that the study adhered to proper research protocols and thus submitted the research, underwent review, and was checked by the thesis adviser and the panel.

Second, the researcher asked the permission and consent of the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division Office of Agusan del Sur, the Public Schools District Supervisor, and School Principals to conduct the study. The researcher prepared the materials and tools needed for the data gathering, such as the interview guide, audio recorder, and field notes.

Third, participants identified with the use of the purposive sampling method. Some of the participants will be recruited and contacted with the help of gatekeepers. The gatekeepers, therefore, asked to read and sign a confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement form. The researcher ensured that the selected participants met the criteria and had experience in handling subjects outside of their specialization. The research objectives and the entire methodology were explained to the selected participants. Also, the participants were sent informed consent forms through emails and were asked to provide their e-signatures if they agreed to the condition stipulated that their participation was voluntary and without coercion, in which they were willing to impart their knowledge as needed in the study.

Fifth, the recorded interviews were stored in a flash drive, secured with a password, to be ready for transcription. The drive was stored in a secure and locked storage place that would be accessible to only the authorized person of the study, who would be the researcher. It was also uploaded to Google Drive, which would not be viewable to the public, for additional security and backup. All were transcribed verbatim to ensure a greater degree of accuracy during the data analysis. After the study was conducted, all the data were only stored and kept for three years, after which all would be destroyed and disposed of to prevent unauthorized people from using and accessing the files.

3.5 Data Analysis

In a qualitative study, analysis is regarded as the most complex phase and the one that receives the least thoughtful discussion in the literature (Aberdeen, 2013). Data analysis helped the researcher gain a general sense of the information and reflect on its overall meaning. In this study, data analysis included transcription, coding, thematic analysis, and formulation of major themes and core ideas.

The process of organizing data derived from the obtained raw data is known as data coding. To allow themes to emerge, it organizes the data by narrowing down the amount of raw data to the most pertinent to the study objectives and dividing it into manageable chunks (Vaismoradi et al., 2016).

In the context of this study, the researcher determined the codes by highlighting the relevant and reoccurring themes with coloured pens, using the same colour for similar ideas. Next, each theme was clustered together based on its colours and labelled using words and short phrases. Also, the researcher identified the colours that frequently occur or repeatedly emerge, as they were more likely to be considered a theme.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the participants' responses. The process of examining and summarizing patterns or themes in data is known as thematic analysis (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The participant's responses were transcribed and categorized into themes, which were used to serve as a basis for the discussions and recommendations.

The thematic analysis in this study was carried out after the initial codes were identified. Subsequently, all of the participant replies were categorized and analyzed in order of specificity. Complete themes were created by extracting and grouping responses with related central ideas. A subject need to have five or more central concepts in order to be considered legitimate. In order to maintain participant anonymity in this study, the researcher also gave each participant a code name.

Transcription involves a translation meanwhile also referring to the conversion of sounds from audio recordings to text (Padilla-Díaz, 2015). The interviews and discussion were transcribed, and data were organized to bring meaning to the text.

3.6 Trustworthiness and Credibility

According to Shenton (2004), who referenced Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility is crucial for determining the value of a research study. Establishing credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability are all necessary to be considered trustworthy.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

The 1979 Belmont Report's guiding principles served as the foundation for the steps taken to ensure ethical considerations in this investigation. Respect for people, beneficence, and fairness were recognized as basic ethical considerations that the researcher followed (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979).

According to the Belmont Report, respect for persons entails upholding each person's right to autonomy as well as treating them with decency and consideration. In the case of this study, the investigator ensured that a virtual orientation was held prior to the study's execution. Emails requesting informed consent were also issued to the individuals. They received all the information required regarding the goal of the investigation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The established themes and their emergence served as a foundation for expanding the analysis of the study's findings. Each theme was connected to relevant studies and literature, and a thorough debate was conducted to see how each aligned with the theme.

4.1 What are the experiences of the TVL teachers in handling subjects which are outside of their specialization?

- **4.1.1 Experiences in Handling Subjects Outside of Specialization.** Types of themes in this theme are problems while teaching; limited learning can be given to students. The preceding were the experiences of the respondents as Technical-Vocational-Livelihood teachers in the teaching of non-specialized subjects. Inferential to this result is that when teachers do not feel well-prepared or confident in the subject matter, it has negative implications for the depth and quality of the learning experiences they provide their students. This constraint raises levels of anxiety regarding both the academic output and the successful completion of curricular aims.
- **4.1.1.a Difficulty in Teaching.** This theme constituted difficulty in teaching and limited learnings can be imparted to students. The primary experience of Technical-Vocational-Livelihood teachers who are teaching subjects outside their specialization. It conveyed the overwhelming and challenging nature of the role. Participants revealed a nuanced and intricate landscape of challenges faced by educators in this specialized field. Informant 5 pointed out:

(For me, first is the difficulty in teaching, since there was a lack of materials. You really need time to download and study what you need, especially if it is not within your specialization).

This was supported by informant 10, who also shared the difficulties and contended;

(It is difficult because you have to read the lesson in advance, sir, and familiarize yourself with the topic, especially in skilled subjects. The subject I am currently handling, sir, is Automotive Servicing, while my major is Agri-business, so they are quite distant from each other. That is why I had a significant adjustment to make with this subject. I even asked experts in automotive for advice. I have planned to undergo specialized training in this subject next summer, sir. I am handling this subject because, as it turns out, I am the only one available for it. Our Senior High School coordinator requested me to handle it.)

4.1.1.b Limited Learnings Can Be Imparted to Students. This theme unveils a poignant narrative of educational constraints faced by educators in this specialized domain. The exploration illuminated the intricate dynamics that restrict the breadth and depth of knowledge transfer, emphasizing the challenges these teachers encounter in providing comprehensive learning experiences. Informant 6 narrated the difficulties of Technical-Vocational-Livelihood teachers who are teaching subjects outside their specialization;

(For me, sir, there is a limitation in what can be learned or imparted to the students. Regarding the subjects, sir, they indeed serve as a challenge, and we really need to study each lesson thoroughly because they are not within our specialization.)

For her part, informant 5 shared;

(Our teaching to students seems somewhat uncertain, and it seems that the transfer of learning I can provide is insufficient, especially if it is not your major. But in my case, that is why I really have to double my effort.)

4.1.2 Advantages of Teacher Handling Subjects Outside of Specialization

This section presents the results to the specific research question 1.2 'What are the advantages of being a teacher handling subjects which are outside of your specialization?' under the 1st major research question 'What are the experiences of the TVL teachers in handling subjects which are outside of their specialization?' The theme generated which served as results was, learning other subjects while teaching.

4.1.2.a Learning Other Subjects While Teaching. The results revealed unfolds a compelling narrative of educators who find themselves immersed in the continuous process of acquiring knowledge beyond their specialized domains. This exploration delved into the educators' lived experiences, revealing a dynamic interplay between the demands of teaching technical-vocational-livelihood subjects and the necessity to grasp and convey broader academic content. Informant 1 stated;

(The advantage is that you get to learn about things outside your subject. I am a Technical Livelihood Education (TLE) teacher in cookery. Currently, I am handling Media Information Literacy. So, for me, it is not just the students who gain ideas; I also get to learn about Media Information Literacy in the process.)

Informant 2 also added;

(Perhaps the advantage for me is that I can indeed gain something from it. There are things I can learn from other subjects that I can also apply to my specialization. Because the 21st Century is all about history, I can apply it to my specialization.)

Likewise, informant 5 substantiated by saying;

(The only advantage perhaps is that you can learn across other specializations, but for me, it is a bit challenging because we really need to double our time to master the competencies. It can be stressful for teachers, at least in my case, sir).

4.1.3 Most Benefiting Part as A Teacher Handling Subjects Outside of Specialization.

This section presents the results to the specific research question 1.3 'What do you think is the most benefiting part as a teacher handling subjects which are outside from your specialization?' under the first major research question 'What are the experiences of the TVL teachers in handling subjects which are outside of their specialization?" The themes which served as results, were opportunity to learn another field and acquire additional skills.

4.1.3.a Opportunity to Learn Another Field. It uncovers a transformative narrative of educators embracing the chance to broaden their expertise beyond their specialized domains. This illuminated the educators' lived experiences, showcasing a willingness to step outside their comfort zones and engage with diverse subject matter. Informant 2 expressed;

(I consider it the most beneficial aspect, a plus factor... there is an additional learning opportunity for me in that particular field that I did not study during my baccalaureate studies, and now I am handling that subject. It benefits me a lot, especially in the subjects I focus on, most of which are part of my minor courses. Currently, I am handling subjects like Philosophy and Oral Communications. Every time I encounter them, there is a deeper explanation, and that is the most beneficial part for me as a teacher.)

This was supported by Informant 5 who uttered;

(Basically, we can learn things outside our specialization if we teach, and it can boost our confidence. However, we need to allocate more time to study in advance, instead of relaxing, you still need to study.)

Informant 1 also shared;

(It can be beneficial because it is not just about building my expertise as a cookery teacher. With Media Information Literacy, I have also gained new knowledge about our subject.)

4.1.3.b Acquire Additional Skills. This theme unveils a compelling narrative of educators actively seeking and cultivating supplementary skills beyond their primary teaching focus. This exploration delved into the lived experiences of these teachers, illustrating a proactive engagement with the acquisition of diverse competencies that enhance their instructional capabilities. Informant 6 expressed;

(The most beneficial part is acquiring additional skills and knowledge for the teacher, and it also allows us to learn how to cope with pressure.)

This was supported by Informant 7 who uttered;

(Perhaps the benefits are the things that I have learned while teaching those subjects, providing additional knowledge for me.)

Informant 8 who claimed:

I have learned other things aside from my specialization. Additionally, I have been able to contribute to the school because there is indeed a shortage of teachers who should handle those subjects.)

4.2. What challenges have the participants experienced in dealing with management in schools?

4.2.1 Challenges Encountered in Handling Subjects Outside of Specialization.

The themes derived from the responses of the research informants to the specific research question 2.1 What are the challenges you have encountered in handling subjects which are outside of your specialization?' are presented in this section. The themes were: adjustment in subject to teach and lack of knowledge about the subject.

4.2.1.a Adjustment in Subject to Teach. Participants revealed that this unveils a nuanced portrayal of educators navigating the necessity to adapt and teach subjects beyond their specialized domains. This delved into the lived experiences of these teachers, highlighting the challenges and adaptive strategies employed in adjusting to varied subjects within the technical-vocational-livelihood context. Informant 1 had this to say;

(At the same time, I am adjusting to my subjects because it is my first-time handling Media and Information Literacy. But it is still okay; even though I belong to the new generation and can relate a bit, I am still adjusting the subject.)

This was also affirmed by informant 2 who stated;

(I have come to realize that it is an additional learning experience for me. It is nice to handle a different subject. However, when you teach another subject, it takes time—a considerable amount of time—to fully grasp and master it. For example, especially when you are relatively new to teaching that subject, it is not automatic that you will master it right away. It may take a few years before you become comfortable and proficient in teaching it. It's not something you can acquire immediately.)

4.2.1.b Lack of Knowledge About the Subject. As the result showed, the theme unveils a candid narrative of educators grappling with the challenges posed by teaching subjects outside their expertise. This delved into the lived experiences of these teachers, shedding light on the difficulties and uncertainties arising from insufficient familiarity with certain subjects within the technical-vocational-livelihood framework. Informant 6 cited;

(The challenge is that I find it difficult to elaborate or provide additional information about the lesson, and what I can offer is what they will have to accept. It is challenging because it is the first time, I am handling that subject. Perhaps, with time, I will be able to make adjustments and improve.)

There were times when overlapping of tasks occurred, meanwhile, informant 8 revealed:

(Indeed, I cannot provide additional information to the students because I do not have prior knowledge about what I teach. I have to study to gain more information, and that is the reality, sir. You have to be resourceful if you want to teach it properly.)

Informant 9 also revealed:

(There are indeed many challenges along the way, sir. Sometimes, I cannot answer my students' questions about the equipment because, even I, do not have the knowledge. This aligns with the saying that you cannot give what you do not have.)

4.2.2 Most Difficult Part in Handling Subjects Outside of specialization.

This section presents the results to the specific question 2.2 'What do you think is the most difficult part in handling subjects which are outside of your specialization?' After subjecting the responses to content analysis, the following themes were drawn, to find references and not well-prepared in abrupt questions of students.

4.2.2.a To Find References. This unfolded a narrative of educators actively seeking and utilizing diverse sources to enhance their understanding of unfamiliar subjects. This exploration delved into the lived experiences of these teachers, portraying a proactive engagement with the process of researching and discovering relevant references to support their teaching endeavors.

Informant 1 noted;

(Finding references is probably the most challenging part.)

Specifically pointed out by informant 8 that making crucial decisions for the was difficult. She stressed;

(It is really challenging to find references, sir, especially when you have to do it yourself. Your free time that could be spent computing grades ends up being consumed by internet searches for references.)

Informant 10 added;

(The most challenging aspect of handling the automotive subject is the lack of references and the absence of mock-up devices or realia that align with the given curriculum guide.)

4.2.2.b Not Well-Prepared in Abrupt Questions of Students. This suggests a candid perspective on educators facing the spontaneous inquiries of students in unfamiliar subject areas. This qualitative exploration delves into the lived experiences of these teachers, exposing the challenges and uncertainties that arise when confronted with unexpected questions outside their specialized expertise. Through the phenomenological inquiry, the study captures the educators' reflections on the dynamic nature of classroom interactions, highlighting the need for adaptability and quick thinking in addressing students' spontaneous queries. Informant 4 stressed:

(Yes, that is indeed a challenge, and it can be quite difficult. It can be frustrating, especially since teachers are expected to come to the classroom prepared as a general rule. However, what I observe is that there are questions that students ask abruptly. Sometimes, we are not prepared to answer in that particular way, and that adds another layer of difficulty.)

Likewise, informant 5 highlighted:

(Yes, indeed, when a student asks about the meaning of a context word and you cannot provide the exact meaning, it can be challenging. You might think, "Maybe I explained it incorrectly," and sometimes the questions are phrased differently, making it difficult to answer. But as a teacher, it is important to stand your ground so that you won't be undermined or degraded.)

4.2.3 Disadvantages of being a Teacher in Handling Subjects Outside of specialization

This section presents the results to the specific question 2.3 'What are the disadvantages of being a teacher in handling subjects which are outside of your specialization?' After subjecting the responses to content analysis, these themes were drawn: compromising free-time to study and no mastery in the subject taught.

4.2.3.a Compromising Free-time to Study. This unfolds a narrative of educators making sacrifices in their personal time to deepen their understanding of diverse subjects. Informant 3 noted;

(The disadvantage is what we commonly believe: you cannot teach what you do not have, especially when dealing with new topics. So, the technicalities need thorough study, and that is disadvantageous for us as teachers not specialized in that field. It becomes pressuring, and you have to say yes. Your time element is crucial; you need to prioritize and compromise your free time just to fit in teaching that particular subject.)

On the same vein, informant 10 also revealed:

(We need to invest more time in reading and mastering skills related to what I am focusing on.)

4.2.3.b No Mastery in the Subject Taught. This implies a candid exploration of educators grappling with a lack of expertise in certain subjects within their teaching repertoire. Informant 4 noted;

(The significant disadvantage is not mastering what you are teaching to the students.)

On the same vein, informant 6 also revealed:

(For me, sir, the disadvantage of teaching outside your specialization is... first, you might just be puzzled or do it casually. So, it is really an advantage if you have mastered the topic because even if it is impromptu or with abrupt questions, you can deliver it confidently. In my case, being related to computer courses and having to teach advanced math, I really need to study in advance, unlike in my specialization where I can get by with minimal preparation, sir.)

4.3 How do TVL teachers cope with the challenges in handling with subjects which are outside from their specialization?

This section presents the results on the viewpoints of the research participants of their coping mechanisms with the challenges as teachers handling with subjects which are outside from their specialization. This was the gist of the third major research question, 'What are your preparations in handling with subjects which are outside of your specialization?' Five specific research questions were utilized to gather data and information.

4.3.1 Preparations Made in Handling the subjects outside of specialization

In this section, the themes created were from the responses to specific research question 3.1, 'What are your preparations in handling with subjects which are outside of your specialization?' The following were the themes: find references using internet and spending time to study.

4.3.1.a Find References Using Internet. This theme unveils a proactive approach adopted by educators to augment their knowledge base in unfamiliar subjects. This exploration delved into the lived experiences of these teachers, highlighting their reliance on the internet as a valuable tool for accessing diverse and relevant references. Informant 1 narrated;

(First, I search for references on Google, and in addition to that, I also use YouTube.)

Informant 3 mentioned about planning. She unveiled;

(Basically, I am the one who prepares the class program and teaching loads for senior high school. I am aware of what I will be handling ahead of time. As part of my preparation, I seek references from the internet, starting with searching for modules.)

Informant 7 also added;

(Given the limited subject matter knowledge and my pedagogical content knowledge, which are crucial in preparation and actual teaching, I spend most of my free time on the internet to prepare my learning materials and daily lesson plans. Sometimes, sir, I have no time left for myself because I focus on preparation, feeling embarrassed that my students might be more knowledgeable than me.)

4.3.1.b Spending Time to Study. This theme underscores the dedication of educators who invest additional time in self-directed learning to enhance their instructional abilities. Informant 3 narrated;

(That is part of my preparations, and after that, I will spend extra time reading. During my free time, when I do not have classes, I will read and study extensively. After reading, it is necessary to highlight what you may misunderstand and take notes. This is appropriate for your learners' level of understanding).

Informant 8 unveiled;

(Certainly, I need to prepare a lot, sir, like generating new activities, being more creative, and gaining confidence in the methods I use to teach. I also have to dedicate a significant amount of time and effort to studying the subject's content and carefully planning activities that are suitable for the students' abilities to ensure effective learning.)

4.3.2 Strategies used in Handling with subjects outside of Specialization

Presented in this section are the themes drawn from the responses to the specific question 3.2, 'What strategies did you use in handling with subjects which are outside of your specialization?' The following themes were created: prepare the lessons in advance and give collaborative activities.

4.3.2.a Prepare the Lessons in Advance. This theme unveils a conscientious approach adopted by educators in anticipating and addressing the challenges of teaching diverse subjects. This qualitative exploration delves into the lived experiences of these teachers, highlighting the significance of meticulous lesson preparation to navigate unfamiliar content areas.

Informant 1 mentioned about strategy employed. She cited;

(Perhaps one of the strategies is consistently preparing lessons for the next day ahead of time, and in addition, I also engage in advance study of my lessons.)

Further, Informant 4 explained;

(Downloading materials from the internet ahead of time, preparing lesson plans in advance, and sometimes purchasing readymade learning modules/activities online are strategies I employ. Then, I take the time to read and review when available.)

4.3.2.b Give Collaborative Activities. This illuminates the educators' innovative strategies to foster a collaborative learning environment. This qualitative exploration delves into the lived experiences of these teachers, highlighting their deliberate efforts to engage students in activities that promote teamwork and shared knowledge. Through the phenomenological inquiry, the study captures the educators' commitment to facilitating interactive and cooperative learning experiences within the technical-vocational-livelihood context. Informant 2 had this to say;

(I have them read the story, and I assign them questions to answer, but it is essential to have a teacher assist them. I still provide assistance because if they work individually, they might struggle to understand the story. Most of the activities involve groupings since they might find it challenging if left to work individually.).

Moreover, informant 3 pointed out;

(Commonly, the strategy we use is a collaborative one, utilizing groupings. I group them, and to maximize their discovery within the lesson, we engage in an analysis with guided questions. I then ask them questions, and they present their basic understanding of the text. After that, we answer process questions to delve deeper into the lesson. So, that is my strategy where we learn together, and I can also add to their basic ideas about the subject matter.)

4.3.3 Possible Solutions Employed on the Challenges Encountered in Handling with Subjects Outside of specialization

Presented in this section are the themes drawn from the responses to the specific question 3.3, 'What are the solutions you have employed on the challenges you encountered in handling with subjects which are outside of your specialization?' the theme generated was seeking help from knowledgeable colleagues.

4.3.3.a Seeking Help from Knowledgeable Colleagues. This theme reveals a collaborative approach adopted by educators when facing challenges in unfamiliar subjects. This exploration delved into the lived experiences of these teachers, illustrating their willingness to seek guidance and support from colleagues with expertise in specific areas. Informant 3 cited;

(My colleagues are knowledgeable about the topic that I might not fully understand. So, I ask them questions and listen to their explanations to gain additional understanding. These are the solutions I employ.)

Further, informant 8 explained;

(Honestly, sir, I reach out to friends and colleagues who specialize in the subject to teach me things that I have not learned, and they are willing to share their knowledge.)

On the other hand, informant 9 explained;

(Sometimes, I also approach those teachers who are more knowledgeable in that subject so I can learn from them.)

4.3.4 People who Helped in coping with the Challenges in Handling with subjects Outside of Specialization

Presented in this section are the themes drawn from the responses to the specific question 3.4, 'Who helped you in coping with challenges in handling with subjects which are outside of your specialization?' The theme generated was colleagues.

4.3.4.aColleagues. This emerges as a pivotal support system in the study on non-specialized teaching among technical-vocational-livelihood teachers, showcasing the collaborative efforts among educators. Informant 1 mentioned;

(Perhaps, I ask for advice and references from my colleagues, the ones who are also teachers here. I request guidance and seek references that they have, and sometimes I also search on Google).

Further, informant 7 explained;

(Sometimes, my co-teachers and friends willingly share their knowledge with me when I ask. Additionally, our school head provides recommendations and technical assistance during my instructional supervision.)

Nevertheless, informant 8 also shared;

(If there are terms, I am not familiar with, I ask my friends who teach the same subject in other schools. My colleagues also encourage me to do my best, which is why I feel challenged.)

Informant 10 also said;

(My wife, who is also my co-teacher, and my friends inside the school are my mentors.)

4.3.5 Assistance have seek to help with subjects outside from specialization

Presented in this section were the themes drawn from the responses to the specific question 3.5, 'What assistance did you seek to help you with subjects which are outside from your specialization?' the following themes were generated: technical assistance through trainings and seminars.

4.3.5.a Technical Assistance Through Trainings and Seminars. This unfolds as a crucial aspect in the study on non-specialized teaching among technical-vocational-livelihood teachers, highlighting the significance of structured learning opportunities. Through qualitative exploration of their lived experiences, educators express the invaluable support gained through specialized trainings and seminars, offering technical assistance in handling subjects outside their specialization.

Informant 6 narrated;

(The most important things that I seek are technical assistance (TA), as well as participation in trainings and seminars.)

Moreover, sharing of expertise from colleagues was mentioned by informant 3 who uttered;

(Of course, training and seminars are indeed the top priority, sir, especially for subjects outside my specialization. I really need more seminars.)

Further, informant 3 explained;

(Assistance is something I need, especially when our Immediate Supervisor conducts observations. That is the only time we can acquire technical assistance from them. Of course, we also have scheduled times when our supervisor provides guidance. It is just a matter of making the most out of the available time.)

4.4 What are the insights the participants gained from their experiences in are outside of their specialization?

This section presents the results on the viewpoints of the research participants of their insights with the challenges of being TVL teachers who are handling subjects which are outside of their specialization. This was the gist of the fourth major research question, 'What are the insights the participants gained from their experiences in handling subjects which are outside of their specialization?' Five specific research questions were utilized to gather data and information.

4.4.1 Experiences to Share to Other TVL Teachers Handling subjects outside of specialization

In this section, the themes created were from the responses to specific research question 4.1, 'What can you share to other TVL teachers who are handling subjects which are outside of their specialization?' The generated themes were: it is challenging and simplify the strategy while teaching.

4.4.1.a It Is Challenging. This theme emerges as a candid reflection from experienced technical-vocational-livelihood teachers when offering insights to colleagues handling subjects outside their specialization. Informant 1 stated;

(Perhaps, based on my experiences, it is okay to take on other challenges in a subject. Aside from learning, you can also impart your knowledge about it. In my case, with Media Information Literacy, being part of the new generation at 24 years old, I can relate more to subjects outside my specialization, and that can be challenging but also rewarding.)

Meanwhile, informant 6 said;

(One thing I can share with my fellow TVL teacher is to accept the challenges. It is interesting and provides additional learning, and it can be enjoyable. Though there may be an adjusting period, it can be a challenging and fulfilling experience.).

Further, informant 9 added;

(What I can share is that it's very challenging to teach subjects outside your specialization, especially when handling workshop activities. It is a real challenge for me because I need to put in double the effort all the time. Sometimes, I even go the extra mile just to make sure I have something to teach. It requires a significant adjustment from my end during those times.)

4.4.1.b Simplify the Strategy While Teaching. This surfaces as a valuable piece of advice from seasoned technical-vocational-livelihood teachers for colleagues dealing with subjects beyond their specialization. Informant 2 stated:

(What I would like to share with them is that before we start teaching, we must master our lesson because if we do not, the students will suffer. It is crucial to thoroughly understand the material so that as teachers, we do not appear hesitant or unsure during discussions. If a teacher does not comprehend the subject, students will not learn from us. They will struggle to understand, and it will have a significant impact. It is our responsibility to ensure our students learn and can bounce back during assessments. Their results are influenced by how well we convey the information. If we do not express it clearly, if we do not elaborate on the topic, they will not learn, they will not understand. It is fine if the students are bright or fast learners because giving them an activity will suffice. But what about the slow learners? We need to guide them patiently.)

Meanwhile, informant 3 said:

(In my teaching strategies, we remain flexible in the classroom, given the fact that we follow a certain process in teaching. For as long as, typically in the classroom, we engage in question and answer sessions. That is my practice—group activities and question and answer. Sometimes, when dealing with abstractions, I need to conduct lectures, a teacher-centered approach. We remain flexible, as long as I see the impact during assessments. If the students can achieve 80%, I am content with the test I provided. That serves as my basis for evaluating the success of what I taught. For now, I find it quite different. There is a distinct difference between the TVL group of learners and the Acad group of learners. I need to make more adjustments with the TVL group as they are not academically inclined. But then, what I do is to simplify things to align with their context.)

4.4.2 Advice to other TVL Teachers Handling Subjects outside of specialization

The theme created in this section was from the responses to the specific research question 4.2, 'What advice will you give to other TVL teachers who are handling subjects which are outside of their specialization?' The theme was to be resourceful.

4.4.2.a Be Resourceful. The result emerges as a crucial piece of wisdom from the study on non-specialized teaching among technical-vocational-livelihood teachers. Through qualitative exploration of their lived experiences, educators stress the importance of resourcefulness in navigating challenges associated with teaching subjects outside their specialization.

Informant 6 narrated her view about taking challenges lightly, she said;

(For me, do not limit yourself to the words written in the book; be resourceful. Research to gain more information, and always attend seminars.).

Moreover, informant 9 added;

(Based on my experience, it is challenging for me to teach non-major subjects. That is why I really rely on the internet for assistance because we cannot solely depend on our own understanding. Honestly, sir, it feels like I am a student, constantly facing factsheets and watching YouTube videos, especially when it comes to conducting games.)

4.4.3 Recommendations to Department of Education Authorities regarding the concerns in Handling Subjects outside of specialization

The results in this section were taken from the responses to the specific research question 4.3, 'What recommendation will you give to the Department of Education authorities regarding the concerns in handling subjects which are outside of their specialization?' This was the theme drawn from the responses: teacher must only teach with their specialized subject.

4.4.3.a Teacher Must Only Teach with Their Specialized Subject. Recommendations for the Department of Education (DepEd) authorities regarding surfaces as a perspective within the study on non-specialized teaching among technical-vocational-livelihood teachers. Informant 1 mentioned;

(In my recommendation, it is better if you stay in line with your expertise. If you are a TVL teacher, you should solely focus on being a TVL teacher. Do not set it aside; you can concentrate more because, in four years, that is what you will study, that is what you will master. You become more experienced, and you can teach more effectively by imparting what you have mastered. It is better to be specialized rather than teaching abruptly without in-depth knowledge, where you might question if what you're teaching is correct. So, it is better to stay in line with your specialization. If you are a Math teacher, focus solely on Math. If you are a TVL teacher, concentrate solely on TVL.)

Similarly, informant 2 said;

(So, in my recommendation, teachers in the TVL track should handle only TVL subjects. Yes, it might not align with your course. For example, if it is all about history or social sciences, it can be done if you love that subject because passion plays a role. But yes, it should align for a more comprehensive learning experience for the students, as they might have knowledge that we do not possess.)

Also, informant 6 added:

(For me, in the Department of Education, if possible, teachers should teach within their specialization to eliminate problems. I highly recommend that for every specialization, there should be a corresponding teacher who will teach it. It is advantageous, sir, if you are aligned with what you are teaching because you can provide valuable inputs to the students.)

Finally, informant 8 supported:

(It is indeed enjoyable to teach your major, sir, because even if it is abrupt, you can still teach well with no difficulty. That is why I recommend that it should be in line with your major. The qualification for hiring should be changed, not based on connections but on merit.).

4.4.4 Suggestions to Improve the Concerns in Teaching Subjects Outside of specialization

The themes in this section were from the responses to specific question 4.4, 'What suggestions can you give to help improve the concerns in teaching subjects outside of their specialization of TVL teachers?' The theme was: have an appropriate human resource inventory.

4.4.4.a Have an Appropriate Human Resource Inventory. This emerges as a noteworthy consideration within the study on non-specialized teaching among technical-vocational-livelihood teachers. Through exploration of their lived experiences, educators highlight the importance of maintaining an adequate pool of human resources to effectively address the challenges associated with teaching subjects outside their specialization. This was echoed by Informant 3:

(I will go back to the appropriate HR inventory and our hiring system. We need to investigate if the reason is not based on merit, but rather, if someone has an RQA (Registry of Qualified Applicants) status, they are automatically placed there, even if it's not necessary. That is not a good practice in our department.)

To reinforce, Informant 8 said:

(For me, sir, it is a flaw in the HR system. That is why my suggestion is for them to revise their standards for RQA and not just hire without considering the department's actual needs. Sometimes favoritism takes precedence in the hiring process, and that's the result we get.)

4.4.5 Hopes and Aspirations as a TVL teacher in Handling Subjects Outside of Specialization

The theme in this section was from the responses to specific question 4.5, 'What are your hopes and aspirations as a TVL teacher in handling subjects which are outside of your specialization?' This was the last specific research question for the 4th main research question. The theme was hoping for reformation in hiring system.

4.4.5.a Hoping for Reformation in Hiring System. This theme emerges as a perspective within the study on non-specialized teaching among technical-vocational-livelihood teachers. Informant 3 stated;

(I am hoping for a reform in our hiring system within the Department of Education. As we are studying educational management, we are future policy-makers and educational leaders. Hopefully, we will address these concerns to ensure that those hired will truly be beneficial in the field. Of course, for those of us affected, we feel the impact of the system. The only thing that gives me hope is that we accept it graciously. After all, teaching carries a high level of responsibility that we are entrusted with. No matter what happens, it's still better to have someone teaching, even if they are not specialized, than not having anyone at all. I am hopeful that we will understand our responsibility, even as we wait for improvements in the system.)

Importantly, Informant 4 uttered:

(For me, there should be a change or reform in the system of hiring newly appointed teachers. I hope that the favoritism system will be eliminated and that the laws will be strictly enforced, without any tampering to allow for loopholes.)

Further, Informant 7 supported this by saying;

(My hopes? I hope that the issue of mismatched teacher assignments gets addressed, and I am also hoping for positive changes with the new administration.)

5. CONCLUSIONS

The themes gathered from this study supported the multi-componential reality of non-professional teaching among TVL educators as presented in the literature. The trials and tribulations of dealing with non-specialist subjects highlights the importance of a whole school approach in tackling the issues which teachers face. It is clear that targeted support, continuous professional development and pedagogy is needed now, more than ever. This means a call to educational institutions, policy makers, and stakeholders to invest in systems and policies in improving the quality of instruction in technical-vocational-livelihood education.

Moreover, the reported benefits of teachers teaching some form of out of field be it musical, are indicative of staff personal and professional growth and subsequently a narrative we should acknowledge and support. The inherent advantages of new learning that comes to educators working in subject areas other than their own will be equally directly to continuous learning. It is hoped that educational institutions can make use of these insights in formulating strategies to promote lifelong professional development which can enrich the culture of both the teachers and the students in the technical-vocational-livelihood context.

Also, the most rewarding part of the experience of being a teacher of ancillaries is the growth, personal and professional, that comes from teaching disciplines one is not specialized in; something that needs to be acknowledged and lauded. It will entail the creation of enabling policy, professional learning and professional growth opportunities that leverage the virtues of subject teachers running courses in areas other than their specialization. Thus, institutions may also be able to help improve the standards of the technical-vocational-livelihood field.

Further, there are issues which cropping up in general teaching such as subject re-alignment and limited familiarity which require hands-on approaches to improve teacher readiness. Creating programs that target professional development, programmatic mentoring, and building resources proactively help overcome these areas of challenge. Under this strategy, it is intended to ensure teacher proficiency and promote the higher standards of technical-vocational-livelihood education.

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