

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF OUT-OF-FIELD TEACHERS TEACHING HISTORY COURSES IN THE TERTIARY LEVEL

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DOI No. – 08.2020-25662434

Abstract

The teaching of Readings in the Philippine History and the Life and Works of Jose Rizal in the higher education is meant for learners to develop a comprehensive analysis on the Philippine history based on selected primary sources in hopes of promoting the spirit of nationalism imbued in the country's struggles for independence. However, this vision is challenged by out-of-field history instructors. This study aims to explore the individual lived experiences of the 15 out-of-field history teachers who has been through instructor-course mismatch teaching history courses and looks into the problems and implications generated by this out-of-field teaching of history. Materials and Methods: Informants were chosen using a mixed-methods composing of snowball or chain-referral sampling method and were interviewed for data gathering assisted by a semi-structured interview questionnaire. Through descriptive analysis, data are clustered into concepts, idea, and themes. Data provides that out-of-field teaching of history courses triggers incompetence and lack of self-confidence among teachers and instructors; elicits lack of depth and interest in providing quality education; provokes confusion in learning transfer; and students under out-of-field history teachers also get relatively lower scores. Coping mechanisms of out-of-field teachers ranging from a harmonious working environment, peer tutoring, and mentoring, and class observance. Out-of-field history teaching leads to problems concerning teachers' performance and the learning transfer and requires proper attention and effective solutions to achieve quality instruction and the goal of history education.

Keywords: Out-of-Field, History, Tertiary Education, Lived Experiences

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of general education history courses such as the Readings in Philippine History and the Life and Works of Jose Rizal in the tertiary levels is meant for learners to develop a comprehensive analysis on the Philippine society, the country's political, economic, social and cultural systems viewed from selected primary sources in different historical periods, analysis and interpretations, share and critically assess the country's historical development, and by extension, live the spirit of patriotism and nationalism imbued in the country's struggles for independence, and exemplified by the country's heroes.

Such vision, however, is difficult to achieve by many learners due to many factors, one of which is the out-of-field history instructors. Out-of-field teaching is the teaching of any field outside of the teacher's expertise or area of specialization. This problem occurs among many universities and colleges across the country, especially those that are small and remote where students are taught by history teachers who are otherwise experts in other subjects aside from history.

The problem of out-of-field teaching has been generally researched by previous studies. Silva, (2010) and Loveys, (2011) both supported each other's study concluding that the issue occurs due to several conditions that leads to out-of-field-teaching. Their study concluded that teachers

and instructors voluntarily accept to teach subjects despite being untrained or unqualified. This issue is even worsened due to the failure of school and university administrations to recognize this problem and the consequences that are generated by it (Robinsons, 1985).

In fact, a study conducted by Ingersoll (2002) concluded that out-of-field-teaching may also be a result of forcing teachers and instructors to teach for courses and subjects that they do not specialize in neither their training or education. The government's failure to recognize this problem leads to failure of teachers, leading to series of consequences to learners' understanding (Porsch and Wendt, 2015). The study conducted by Dee and Cohodes, (2008) associated the university administrators as the source of the problem of out-of-field-teaching. The study also points to the shortage of teachers in some fields such as Technology, Livelihood Education, Values Education, and Social Studies may also be primary factors for this problem.

This problem of Out-of-Field-Teaching in History needs to be studied and explored because of the scant studies and literatures that addresses to the instructor-course mismatch in history teaching in the classroom. This instructor-course mismatch may also be the reason for the learners' bare interest in the study and learning of history courses in the tertiary level as teachers' conceptions and outlook of their subject matter directly influence the learners' approach to learning and their quality of understanding (Lember & Gow 2003).

This study is based on the premise that teachers should be trained and qualified to ensure adequate historical education and instruction since these courses require dynamic and in-depth knowledge of facts, mastery of events in history, and its deep-rooted causes and wide-ranging implications. Hence, this study examines the out-of-field-teachers or teachers who teach across their specialization in the teaching of Readings in Philippine History and the Life and Works of Jose Rizal in the universities and colleges in Ozamiz and Tangub City including the problem they encounter on teaching across their specialization, and their coping mechanism to deal with this problem. This study will also investigate the factors that lead to the issue of out-of-field-teaching in the general education history courses and will further look into other problems and implications that are generated by the out-of-field-teaching of history. This study is especially relevant and is supplemental to the vision of the Commission on Higher Education's goal of mandating the teaching of Philippine History and the Life and Works of Rizal course to the college curriculum.

This study uses a qualitative method to understand and analyze the individual life experiences of the out-of-field history teachers whose been through instructor-course mismatch. Respondents ranging from out-of-field history teachers, students who had out-of-field teachers in their history classes, and university and school administrators, will be interviewed using a phenomenological interview method. This is based on Rossman and Rallis' (2003) recommendation that an objective phenomenological research interview method should be used to understand the lived experiences of certain group of people.

This is also why the researchers adopt the phenomenological methodology because it befits this research's objective and promotes the significance of this research respondents' lived experiences. Further, the phenomenological approach also allows the researchers to understand, analyze, and comprehend the significance and meaning behind the respondents' view of their ideas, convictions, and qualities, in trying to understand out-of-field-teaching in history courses.

This will be done through a one-on-one interview with the respondents using a recorder, field notes, and an interview guide.

The respondents are chosen using a mixed of the convenience sampling method and the snowball or chain-referral sampling method. These methods were chosen in consideration of the respondents' availability, accessibility, and approximation to the locale of the study. The profile of the respondents will be kept confidential to ensure their safety and privacy. Their participation, upon invitation, shall be voluntary. After the interview, the participants' responses shall undergo a transcription process and will proceed into clustering into concepts, meanings, and themes. All other non-pertinent response shall be eliminated. From clustering, the response shall then be drafted into a whole narrative of shared life experiences of out-of-field history teachers.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Defining "Out-of-field" teaching

Given that the meaning of "out-of-field" teaching is not extensively elaborated within the academe, it is therefore vital to define and give background with the usage of available related materials or literatures prior to investigation of the factors and consequences of the said problem. Sambe (2013) on her article entitled "Out-of-Field Teaching-Consequences of Teachers Teaching Out of Their Field of Study" defined "out-of-field" teaching as teaching a subject with which teachers are unskilled or inexperienced. Ingersoll (1999) on the other hand, defined "out-of-field" teaching as "teachers assigned to teach subjects, for which they had little education, or which did not match their field or specialty or training". Subsequently, a study conducted in Western Australia by McConney and Price (2009) defined "out-of-field" teaching as "teaching in the subject or field for which a teacher has neither a major nor a minor tertiary teaching qualification".

They highlighted the importance of qualified teachers as well who are teaching in certain subject in attaining the subject's goals. This was also supported by Plessis (2017) who stated that in out-of-field teaching teachers are placed in teaching positions in which they have to teach subjects or year-levels outside their field of qualification or expertise, appears in public schools as well as independent schools.

Brodbelt (1990) referred to out-of-field teaching as the "education's dirty little secret" but proved to be not a secret at all due to the fact that this kind of phenomenon already existed for several decades. Therefore, this kind of practice was thought to become one of the severe obstacles in terms of professionalism (NCTEPS, 1965). Sambe (2015) detailed that as this problem remains unaddressed in many colleges and universities, continues to hinder the teachers in providing quality education.

"Out-of-field" Teaching: Underlying Causes

One of the most common reasons why out-of-field teaching continues to prevail in most learning institutions according to du Plessis (2017) is due to the managerial decisions by the school management team, or because of governmental recruitment and placement procedures wherein unsuitable assignment of teachers point towards "crisis management" as a solution for teacher shortages, and school management carrying out inadequate needs. This was supported by Bush and Glover (2016) who emphasized that the way leaders manage people and employ processes for high-quality learning and teaching can influence the effective use of all educators. Dimmock

(1999) claims that school-leaders shape goals, motivations and actions, and initiate change to reach existing as well as new goals for quality education.

Other factors that lead to the prevailing problem of Out-of-field-teaching is the shortage, if not lack, funds. As Sambe (2015) stated, many schools lack enough budget in order for them to hire all teachers that they need for all the courses they have, and this is predominantly factual in low-income schools. This may explain why poor areas tend to contain the largest number of teachers who are improperly assigned (Barlow, 2002). Aside from poor schools or universities, Hobbs (2012) discussed that small-sized schools which predominantly have large number of out-of-field teaching are in rural areas.

Implications of Out-of-field teaching

Reality within school communities is socially formed; recognizing teachers' personally constructed knowledge is fundamental to understanding how they fulfil their roles Badali & Housego (2000). As teachers-educators face the challenge of out-of-field teaching, Bosse and Törner (2015) argued that teachers resort into employing different responses. These responses however, as argued by Sharplin (2014), may lead to negative outcomes such as resulting to teacher stress, poor self-efficacy and disillusionment leading to teacher attrition. As Du Plessis put it, expecting teachers to be effective in teaching outside their expertise is similar to expecting principals to be successful without any specific preparation for their new role. Both may be necessary as short-term "fixes" but, if they become institutionalized, they are likely to be damaging for the professionals concerned and for the schools and students they are intended to serve.

The reality of the influence that the out-of-field phenomenon has on quality education and student outcomes accentuates the need to manage the phenomenon effectively in order to minimize its influence. Darling-Hammond, Harley et al. (1999) demonstrate that teacher quality is the factor that matters most in students' learning. Teachers need to have knowledge, skills, and confidence to carry out specific roles both in their classrooms and their assigned subject areas. It is a requirement that teachers understand the subject matter themselves before they can comprehend student difficulties with content or select appropriate pedagogical approaches to support student learning Nixon et al. (2017) The dispositions that out-of-field teachers project in their classroom have a major effect on quality teaching and learning. Therefore, practices in the classroom are very much influenced by out-of-field teachers' content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge. Harley et al. (1999) note that students react positively towards a teacher whom they perceive as having expertise in a specific subject area.

As a phenomenon, teaching out-of-field is complex and needs to be treated as such in practice and through multilayered investigation. For teaching out-of-field to be recognised as a phenomenon, it needs to be noticed, defined, and articulated. Kerber, Brook, and Educational Policy (2001) noted six key points of impact in educational development programs: (i) perceptions and fulfilment, (ii) beliefs about teaching and learning, (iii) performance and achievement, (iv) students' perceptions of their teachers, (v) students' development, achievement and learning and (vi) school culture and context. Meanwhile, professional learning and development programs should always meet the teacher where they are at, with their prior understanding, beliefs, visions or the goals they had when they decided to become a teacher. Such opportunities should support

teachers to grow in their careers and ensure their well-being within the teaching and learning environment. As when teacher develop a conducive learning environment and righteous conceptions and outlook of their subject matter, it also results into a positive and productive learners' approach to learning and their quality of understanding (Lember & Gow 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When it comes to problems encountered by out-of-field history teachers, the Commission on Higher Education has continuously expressed its concern over this problem of teaching across specialization in the Philippines. The neophyte teachers, or even those who have been in the field for years, face this common scenario. Non-history graduate teachers who teach History courses undergo various problems in teaching the subject. The teaching of History courses requires in-depth knowledge of events and experiences of the past, critical analysis of historical developments, and memorization that poses a very challenging situation for non-history graduate teachers.

Informants collectively had the same sentiment in saying that teaching and handling courses that they do not have educational background or prior training creates challenges in their motivation, confidence, and delivery performance. In the delivery of the lessons, non-history teacher's face a hard time explaining the subject because of its complex scope, and the require prior knowledge which they do not possess leading to several generated concerns.

First of which, out-of-field teaching induces professional incompetence and sheer lack of self-confidence. The research participants opined that their performances in teaching was negatively affected since they could only vaguely discuss historical events without having learned its underlying motivations and its implications. During lessons, these teachers were under much pressure when students questioned about the critical implications of historical developments, and they could not satisfy them with sufficient answers because of their lack of in-depth knowledge and their own dependence on the information found in textbook. The respondents also emphasized that they were not sure whether students learnt adequately from them. They believed that students could have procured more information if they were taught by legitimate history teachers. Three research participants disclosed that:

(1) 'Personally, this has highly influenced my delivery of instruction to my students. I can barely deliver confidently the topics in the books even if I already has studied prior to the class. There were even times when I thought at that time that I was not an effective teacher,' (2) 'A problem occurs when a student asks me a question: I need to scan the book for the answer. And before giving answers, I always try to think twice to not embarrass myself with wrong answers.' (3) 'One of the hardest part of teaching history courses is taking questions from the students that I am completely unaware of, and could not provide answer directly. There are also questions that are too technical such as names, dates, and places that are too technical and thus needs specific answers.'

This claim supports the significance of Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge or PCK (Shulman, 1980; Hill et al., 2005) which argues that teachers should be equipped with the required knowledge to guarantee quality lesson delivery. PCK also utilizes proficient methodologies in providing explanations in delivering lessons to assure students of quality education. To put bluntly, without the required education which gives prior knowledge, training and experiences, out-of-field history teachers cannot demonstrate PCK. This underlying pressure

pushes them to think that they are ineffective and hence the lack self-confidence.

Second, out-of-field teaching elicits lack of knowledge depth and interest. Besides the pressing problem of the need for in depth knowledge, out-of-field history teachers also experience the difficulty in teaching lessons that they do not have the interest. Because of this lack of interest, out-of-field history teachers find it hard to relate the topics and find it challenging to imbibe knowledge and facilitate learning transfer to students. One research participant unwaveringly shared:

'I find it difficult to relate to technicalities in history such as names, dates, places, and events that happened before, even more in teaching these technicalities to my students.'

This response provides that the prior interest is a crucial necessity that influence the delivery and teaching performance of teachers and instructors. Hidi (1990) and Harackiewicz and Hulleman (2010) similarly argued that attention and interest is a fundamental factor that motivates and inspires learning which may consequently improve performance. Interest provides motivations to both teachers and students that shall keep them motivated while learning.

Third, out-of-field teaching provokes confusion in learning transfer. Another factor that presents from the responses of the informants is the difficulty in the delivery of instruction and the students' participation in learning. Graduates of other fields such as in PE and in in English find it difficult to teach History. For the graduate of PE, transforming bodily-kinesthetic intelligence into critical comprehension analysis is crucial, which he's barely able and it may result in confusion among teachers and students. A research participant declared:

'I believe in the quotation that goes, 'You cannot give what you do not have.' When we teachers have a hard time in comprehending and digesting important historical words, we also will have a hard time in discussing these historical terms and in the lesson transfer to our students. Also, if we find ourselves confused at some points in uncovering the meanings of complex historical terms, it is also hard to explain this further to our students.'

With these challenges, majority of the respondents, particularly those that are in University Administration, hesitantly argued that while they acknowledge the problem of out-of-field teaching, the adjustments of coping with this issue must emanate from the teachers. Respondents also suggested that they hardly become productive in dealing several tasks and activities altogether. They believe, however, that if tasks given to them are lessened, it could positively affect them in providing quality education to their students, which is the essence of being a teacher. This argument goes well with the Filipino trait of being effective problem solver in challenging situations. This construct agrees with what Ponsaran (2017) discussed in saying that Filipinos are adept to changes demanded by complex situations.

On the school's intervention on out-of-field teaching, ninety percent of research participants proudly accepted that their school administrators acknowledged the importance of a sound teaching environment for teachers. Respondents also highlighted that they create and provide assistance and programs whenever an issue regarding out-of-field teaching occurs.

One of these programs include teaching workshops, giving content seminars and lectures, and teaching trainings that fit the courses that they teachers. Another program they constantly hold is the course area weekly meeting where teachers meet to discuss pressing concern in their respective classes, do peer tutoring, and conduct classroom teaching observations.

Fifth, on sending for training and seminars in response to out-of-field teaching, the data reveals that less than 50% of the total respondents were sent to different seminars on teaching of history courses to encourage further growth. Lachance and Confrey (2003) mention that the skills developments of both students and professionals such as teachers demands constant support and tutelage to their respective supervisors, teachers, and even peers.

This means that providing intervention programs such as teachers' training, content seminars, and lecturers provides professional growth and personal development for the teachers. Among the respondents, six of them shared their grievance regarding their school's passive action regarding the concerns they raised. A research participant mentioned:

'The administration asked me if I had encountered a big problem with the teaching of the lesson. Afterward, they explained to me that out-of-field teaching could happen because there are only a few teachers who take history as their area of specialization in college.'

This narrative proves that some schools in the research are do not conceive that teaching across specialization is a severe problem. This leads to teachers teaching across their specialization being lagged in the conduct of their courses. Some respondents also shared that they were kept in teaching courses that are out of their field. These situations accordingly negatively impact their self-esteem leading to several concerns among history teachers.

Sixth, regarding the discussion of out-of-field teaching coping mechanisms, Lahad (1993) argues that individuals are hardwired into creating solutions to the problems that they are facing, in order to make their situations more accommodating. In handling the challenges of out-of-field teaching, this means that teachers had to come up with their coping mechanisms in order to overcome the issues that they are facing in their daily classes.

Most of the respondents of this research said that a harmonious environment in their workplace, and a positive relationship with their co-teachers is one of the best stress-reliever they have after their classes. A significant number of respondents also noted that conducting in-class peer observations and evaluations also improve their delivery and discussion. Another coping mechanism they have is their mentoring program. Young out-of-field teaching often go to experienced teachers and history experts whenever they find themselves challenged in understanding the lesson they are studying.

Seventh, the harmonious working environment is not new since Mayall (2006) argued that supervisors and coordinators should provide whatever assistance they can provide to their teachers. This theory strengthened and even validated the coping mechanism by the respondents. Hoffman (2002) argues that a harmonious working environment among teachers, coordinators, and supervisors, provide assistance in minimizing challenges brought about by the complexity of out-of-field teaching. Indeed, a harmonious working environment is a crucial part of the teachers' daily stress-relief system. Couple of respondents mentioned:

'I asked help from my co-history teacher. I go to them for assistance regarding what specific effective teaching methods and strategies should be used in the discussion of specific topic. They are also happy to provide help, motivations, and teaching hacks they learned in their years of teaching as well.'

Eight, on the discussion about the out-of-field teachers' dependency on the utilization of online

learning repository is another effective coping mechanisms by the instructors. Based on the respondents, search engines such as google plays a crucial role in the out-of-field teachers' daily survival in their teaching. With their use of search engine, teachers can learn about answers to the students' question immediately.

With technology as well, teachers can download videos, watch tutorials on YouTube, and search for articles or news clips which can strengthen their knowledge on the different lessons. Technology undoubtedly lifts the burden of these teachers. A respondent shared: *'in the preparatory stage of the lesson, I utilize online and technology in the delivery of instruction. With the help of internet, it sort of provide confidence by imparting information and answers to my students.'*

Out-of-field teachers do not at all depend on the internet in providing them answers. Respondents also shared that constant reading of several history books and continued learning of the context are also much more helpful in their teaching. These respondents also highlighted that a personal initiative to learn more is also a crucial solution to the challenge of out-of-field teaching.

This means, that other out-of-field teachers see the opportunity of teaching across their field of specialization as a room for personal development, an avenue to get out of their personal comfort zones and learn more. These teachers believe that solutions to out-of-field teaching lies in the individuals' adaptability of the teachers, including their ability to be flexible in their situations, as well as their passion for teaching. Flexibility, respondents believe, is one of the best coping mechanisms they employ. Respondents mentioned that flexibility means for them being able to adapt to the different situations in their classes, develops and adapts their teaching strategies to cater the different needs of the situation and the students.

Consequently, teachers who subscribe to this argument believes they can better deliver quality education even when they are teaching across their specialization. This arguments follows Meadows (2006) who argued that teachers who show personal initiative, and flexibility, independence, sail better in a complex and stressful situations in their classes.

Respondents generally believe that out-of-field teaching in history is the result of the lack of history graduates and professionals in the country. These situations make out-of-field teachers to demand more assistance, interventions, and programs that shall aid them in their teaching. The data of the study also shows that out-of-field teachers face countable daily challenges in their teachings which also develops their adaptability, and flexibility, and improving their Filipino trait of resiliency.

CONCLUSION

The data collected from qualitative interviews revealed significant findings about the factors and consequences of out-of-field teaching of history courses in tertiary level. By critically analyzing their perceptions and personal experiences, researchers were able to grasp several factors along with its consequences regarding this phenomenon. Results proved that out-of-field teaching of history courses indeed is a problem and requires immediate response to the authorities for this problem gives the teachers numerous challenges and concerns. In the case of the schools in Ozamiz and Tangub City, this situation is evident however often not considered as a severe problem. Although school administrators are doing efforts to provide assistance to teachers teaching across their specialization, these accordingly, are not sufficient in order to manage the issue.

The idea of being flexible is also being emphasized by some administrators as educator should be flexible even when dealing with this problem. Furthermore, teachers often experience challenges that involves emotional and physical stability, thus greatly affects the teaching process which hinders in providing quality education. Out-of-field history teachers are well-aware that teaching history requires in-depth knowledge about the field, thus this idea constantly put pressure on them. This often leads to problem concerning the performance of the teachers and with the learning transfer. Thus, given the factors and consequences mentioned above, out-of-field teaching of history courses requires proper attention and effective solutions, for quality of the instructional process will be at stake when imparted by out-of-field teachers.

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