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## Pragmatic Sentiments and Coping Strategies of Out-Of-Field English Teachers in Public Senior High Schools

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### ABSTRACT

A phenomenological study was conducted to examine the challenges of out-of-field teachers in English, including their coping mechanisms and their suggested solutions to manage their sentiments in public senior high schools during the school year 2019-2020. The researcher used a one-on-one interview guide in collecting data, which were analyzed using the Ajjawi and Higgs framework of data analysis. The lack of content mastery that results in poor students' performance is the top sentiment for out-of-field teachers, and it was hard for them to teach English as it is out of their specialization. It was found out that the out-of-field teachers employed several coping strategies and suggested solutions to DepEd to manage their sentiments, such as; acquiring competence through training, self-learning and motivating, asking for assistance from co-teachers, and to improve schools' manpower. Hence, the researcher recommends the conduct of a comparative study on the performance of students and teachers, and regular mentoring of school heads and master teachers to aid out-of-field teachers. This calls for program mechanics that deal with alleviating the challenges that novice out-of-field teachers experience through program reforms, training and skills enhancement, professional development, and peer mentoring programs.

### INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a critical component in molding young minds towards learning and development. Hotaman (2010) opined the need to value teachers' efforts to educate students for them to become the solution to society's perennial challenges and need for change. He added that "this profession should be given prominence within the context of the nation's social, cultural, economic, and technological dimensions" and be viewed as a distinct and professional occupation in society (p.10). Unfortunately, there is an uprising global concern regarding classroom teachers' qualifications, especially in handling critical disciplines such as reading, numeracy, and science-related domains (Johnson, Jacovina, Russell, & Soto, 2016). Darling-Hammond (2006) supported this notion, stating that the traditional programs for teacher-education are weak and cannot answer the need in the acquisition of 21st-century skills, hence questioning teachers' preparation, schools'

reputation, and teachers' strength to manage professional challenges. Citing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), Dee and Cohodes (2008) explicitly "acknowledged this view by requiring that every elementary and secondary public-school teacher be highly qualified by the end of the upcoming school year" (p. 7). Since the quality of teaching is at the heart of student learning outcomes, it is important to look into the preparations, readiness, perceptions, and challenges faced by teachers, especially those who are assigned to teach disciplines not aligned to their specialization, termed as out-of-field teachers.

Reid (2011) defined out-of-field teaching as teachers who teach not only subjects outside their area of expertise but also specific grade levels without the proper credentials aligned to them. Du Plessis, Carroll, and Gillies (2015) highlighted the misconceptions made among out-of-field teachers in terms of their confidence and competence to teach subjects not aligned with their specialization,

which are quite detrimental to their career choices. Jerald (2002) argued that the presence of out-of-field teaching on core academic subjects is “unacceptable”, as it jeopardizes educational outcomes, inclination, and reasoning skills. Ingersoll (2003) establishes a link between out-of-field teaching and institutional effectiveness among a vast number of schools in the United States. and the concerns that it causes stress, attrition, and turnover among teachers. Saleh and Aziz (2012) compared the teaching performances of high-performance schools, excellence cluster schools, sports schools, and ordinary daily schools, and found that they are much bound to conventional teaching. Moreover, Fitchett’s investigation of 21st-century teacher-practitioners found that the least qualified teachers were more likely to work with the most “at-risk” school populations. while collaborating less with peers in the workplace. These contentions show the importance of assessing the teaching key result areas irrespective of whether they are in or out-of-field instructors, to wit, the department of education is divided into teaching and learning process, learners’ outcome, community involvement, professional growth, and development, and classroom management. The argument that out-of-field teaching practices possess a significant impact on the quality level of learning serves as the main guiding principle of the present study, which calls for an in-depth exploration of the experiences of out-of-field teachers handling English courses or subjects in the Philippines.

The K-12 Program is an instrument of the global elite to promote the universal system of education to go well with their capitalist and exploitative agenda (Abulencia, 2015). The opening of the K12 Program in the Philippines, which covers kindergarten and 12 years of basic education, remains a big challenge for members of the public and private education sectors. The said program faced serious challenges such as deployment and training of teachers (Sergio, 2012), mismatch of course offerings to the needs of the industries, and learners' acquired competencies (Almerino et al., 2020). It all boils down to teachers’ capacity to build knowledge, competence, and confidence among learners of today. In a nutshell, several studies focused on teachers' profiles as correlates of their teaching performance, such as Sundayana

(2015) who found an adequate readiness of English teachers to implement English instruction and fair competence to develop lesson plans, Nbina (2012) who found a significant relationship between teachers’ competence and learners’ academic performance in a senior secondary school, and Putri, et al. (2019) significant association between teachers’ level of professional development and English teachers’ competence in Pidie regency. Considering that the previous studies are quantitative, the researcher was prodded to conduct a qualitative study focusing on pragmatic sentiments, which is defined as utterances towards specific events and the intentional acts of speakers at specific times and places (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2021). Moreover, the sentiments of out-of-field English teachers in senior high school are not well studied.

Indeed, the lack of competent teachers to handle English courses posit a massive problem with regards to learners’ acquisition of appropriate and exact knowledge and understanding. The researcher, being a secondary senior high school teacher, observed some problems that hamper the teaching of English subjects, including insufficiency of instructional materials, congested classrooms, and a flock of professionals coming from different industries attracted by the high salary offered by the Department of Education without realizing the very purpose of teaching. In fact, Bala (2017) noted that some teachers do not know how to transfer learning while others have a low commitment to work. Hence, this study was conducted to find out the pragmatic sentiments and strategies employed by out-of-field English teachers from the schools' division of Eastern Samar during the school year 2019-2020. It endeavored to provide a thick description of the participants’ experiences so that possible support could be provided to them.

## **METHODS**

This study utilized the qualitative approach (Yin, 2014) specifically phenomenology. Creswell (2007) emphasized that qualitative research is undertaken when the purpose of the researcher is to present and further understand the experiences of participants about a certain event or phenomena, using a researcher-made interview guide.

The researcher included regularly employed out-of-field senior high school teachers determined

via the database of the monitoring and evaluation of Senior High Schools and met the following criteria: 1) out-of-field English teacher, 2) has one to five years teaching experience in the SHS, 3) currently assigned to teach English subject outside his/her specialization, and 4) is willing to participate in this study as the respondents of the study. A total of four (4) male participants and two (2) female participants from Grade 11. All of the participants are currently teaching English subjects. After the last participant, no other themes emerged from the pre-data analysis made, hence data saturation was reached.

The primary source of data was taken from the transcripts of the out-of-field English teacher participants. The data was analyzed using the stages developed by Ajjawi and Higgs (2007). Finally, this study followed the appropriate research ethics guidelines. The researcher sought the primary source of data was taken from the transcripts of the out-of-field English teacher participants. The data was analyzed using the stages developed by Ajjawi and Higgs (2007). Finally, this study followed the appropriate research ethics guidelines. The researcher sought consent via Consent Form from the respondents, to use their given data. The participants were assured that these data will be kept confidential and cannot be used in any legal actions against them. To safeguard their anonymity, pseudonyms were used when names are mentioned in the evidence.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Challenges Encountered by Out-Of-Field Senior High School Teachers in English**

The respondents were asked about what challenges regarding; the teaching-learning process, students' outcomes, community involvement, classroom management, and professional growth and development. Discussions are provided in a thematic manner below.

#### *Lack of content mastery and school learning facilities*

The researcher collected responses regarding the problems and challenges they have to meet in preparing their instructional materials and the scarcity of learning facilities in schools. The lack of content mastery and school learning facilities were the unveiled themes.

Most of the participants shared similar thoughts on the challenge they encountered, specifically the lack of content mastery on the assigned subjects. Teacher Sharon said that "some lessons need to be translated to her local dialect so that she can understand it technically", Teacher Barry mentioned that "he was having a hard time understanding the lesson that resulted to poor attainment of learning objectives", while Teacher Iris and Teacher Wanda both shared that since English is not aligned to their specialization, they cannot give 100% of what is expected from them. A similar finding was published by Barrot (2018) who suggested that teachers may not be able to fully practice principled teaching in their respective classrooms. The result is aligned with Kiyomet (2010) suggestion on the need to evaluate teachers' competencies in conjunction with changes and reform studies, and Kress (2000) who pointed out the need to sustain or even improve the level of professional development to address the needs of the learners in the 21st-century era. Likewise, Abulon (2010) mentioned teachers' content mastery and expertise in ensuring the acquisition of quality learning. Teachers with enough knowledge must ensure that essential learning will be transferred to their students, that they are not only advancing students, but they are also, in the end, adding value to the people to a larger group of people.

Notably, Teacher Lanie mentioned that "it is the school facilities that lack support to the overall learning of the students". This minor theme is inlined with the findings of Akomolafe and Adesua (2016) that the "availability and effective utilization of school physical facilities play a significant role in enhancing students' academic performance" p.41. The finding implies the need to improve schools' structure.

#### *Poor academic performance and learning styles*

The researchers collected respondents' encountered problems in assessing students' output and the mechanics employed to ensure the attainment of a passing Mean Percentage Score (MPS) and other performance indicators. Poor academic performance and learning styles were the unveiled theme.

All of the participants shared the same ideas about their problem on student outcomes. According to Teacher Sharon, "some students lack retention and had a hard time understanding some

of the lessons I am teaching”. Similarly, Teacher Garry said that “poor performance is a great challenge since some students can’t pronounce the word properly and cannot spell words properly.” Both Teacher Iris and Teacher Wanda noted that students often show “poor learning style and attitude” that pushed them to “cheat”. The findings support Blazar and Kraft’s (2017) negative impact of poor learning styles on the academic performance of the students. The findings highlighted the importance of ensuring time and relationship efficiency in instruction. Teachers must build a good connection between the learners and the instruction.

#### *Lack of cooperation of parents and the community*

The researcher collected respondents’ initiatives undertaken that benefit the community and foster a good rapport with the school stakeholders like the parents, government officials, and other non-government organizations. The lack of cooperation between parents and the community was the sole theme that emerged in the present study. Some participants observed some parents who are not cooperative in the realization of school-related activities. According to Teacher Garry, “local officials are not cooperative and tend to be passive when we invite them about major school activities”, while Teacher Wanda observed that “they only show support to some tangible PTA projects”. Identified reasons include a hectic work schedule and being busy with their business. Schools, parents, and the community should work together to promote the health, well-being, learning, and health-related needs of students (Troupe, 2017). The findings imply the need to strengthen school-community linkages through team building and family day activities for parents to better understand their role as co-partner in the attainment of quality learning.

#### *Time and financial constraints*

The researcher inquired on the steps the respondents undertaken for professional development, perception in writing action research, exemplary performance, and impact of graduate schooling. Time and financial constraints were found to be the reasons affecting the professional development of teachers. Most of the participants stated that they need to manage their time between work and equipping themselves with enough knowledge even at their own cost. Teacher Sharon

said that she “need to buy additional books and attend to webinars/training with her own money”, while Teacher Aris lamented the “difficulty of doing multi-tasking and conflict with time for work considering that teachers have a lot of papers to do and things to do and pay a certain fee just to attend seminars at the convenience of our time”. While one participant expressed that he has not yet encountered a problem regarding professional growth and development. When asked about their graduate studies, most of them chose a discipline that is aligned to their BSED graduate specialization. The finding is related to Bubb and Early (2013) result on the importance of time management in ensuring productiveness among teachers. Teacher attendees need to have really good time management skills to finish their daily to-do lists and to fully optimize the use of professional development opportunities.

#### *Poor planning skills and large class size*

The researcher asked for the classroom setting/s that they find difficult to manage, as well as classroom problems such as misbehavior, absenteeism, and non-compliance. Poor planning skills and large class size are found to be emerging themes on this concept.

All of the participants shared the same experience regarding classroom management. Teacher Garry highlighted that “there different types of learners, teachers need come up strategies to cater the multiple learners”. According to Teacher Iris, “I am unsure if some of the activities I give to my students will reveal their learning progress and show their full knowledge and potential”. Other participants shared that they experience difficulty in choosing the best-fitted activity for their students. Their observations are consistent with the study of Flower, McKenna, and Haring (2017) to focus on determining and implementing differentiated strategies to improve learners’ interaction in the classroom. This finding implies the need to determine appropriate strategies that focused on the development of learners’ positive attitudes and cultural background.

Another common problem among senior high schools is the large class size. Teacher Barry even declared that he is handling more than 60 students in one class. Hence, the participant finds it difficult to manage and ensure learning in this case. This finding is consistent with the challenges

encountered by Biyela (2019) on the problems caused by overcrowding. The finding implies the need among teachers to think of the most appropriate strategies to cope with the situation and attain quality learning.

### **Coping Mechanisms of Out-Of-Field Senior High School Teachers in English**

Due to the various problems faced by out-of-field senior high school teachers in teaching English, they have employed several coping strategies to overcome these challenges. Among these are: (1) acquiring competence through training, (2) asking assistance from co-teachers, and self-learning/motivating. Indeed, being a teacher is a difficult task, learning how to cope with stress is an invaluable skill that all teacher education programs should be integrating as a fundamental professional competence.

#### *Acquiring competence through training*

The participants shared that through attending training and webinars, they were able to cope up with the challenges they encounter. Teacher Garry uttered, "I attend webinars/training at my own cost/expense to further improve my competency". Preparing themselves through webinars/training gives them a clear idea of the subject they need to teach. This supports the findings of Essien, Akpan, and Obot (2016) on the significant relationship between training participation and students' learning outcome.

#### *Self-motivating/learning*

Two respondents chose to motivate themselves to withstand the challenges that they are confronted with. According to Teacher Iris "I do this by being passionate and thinking of alternatives to equip myself with enough knowledge. Getting involved in different training will enhance my skills that will benefit my learners. I do advance preparation and reading to get as many ideas", while Teacher Wanda "Helping parents and students meet long-term goals by being a quality teacher as much as I can even if I have a hard time mastering complicated lessons. I understand that the school is banking much trust to me that's why I double my time in doing advance reading and research topics on the internet". Schiefele and Schaffner (2015) showed that teachers' didactic interest and self-efficacy predicted teacher reports of instructional practices. Du Plessis (2013) pinpointed teachers' self-efficacy, and teachers' behavior as the main

variables affecting out-of-field teaching performance, while Naparan and Alinsug (2021) believed that teachers' ability to integrate technology in instruction, use of differentiated instruction, and teachers' flexibility are found to be an essential factor in teaching multi-grade classes.

#### *Asking assistance from co-teachers*

Teacher Aris mentioned that whenever he found himself in a difficult situation, he sought the help of his colleague on topics that he doesn't understand. Similarly, Horn, Garner, Chen, and Frank (2020) found that teachers' co-participation predicts growth in teachers' expertise, pointing to the added value of teachers' participation in high-depth teacher collaboration. The finding implies the need for teachers to feel that they belong to the organization, and is essential in the growth and development of every program implemented by the Department of Education.

### **Suggested Solution of Out-Of-Field Senior High School Teachers in English to the DepEd System to Manage their Challenges**

The respondents have outlined the following suggested solutions to the DepEd system to minimize their challenges: conduct of content and pedagogy-centered training, and improve schools' manpower.

#### *Conduct content and pedagogy-centered training*

All of the participants shared the same idea that there should be proposals made on the regular conduct of training and seminars. According to Teacher Sharon, "for me, it is important to have more training for teachers to improve pedagogy and competence". This is also similar to the response of Teacher Iris which is "the conduct training and seminars relevant to the needs of the teachers and students, which are not limited purely theoretical and audio lessons". Others said that there should be revisions on different aspects of training to better address the issue of out of field teaching, about their suggested solutions to DepEd on how to manage the challenges they encounter. Improving employees' skills and their productivity is essential for organizational growth (Hannah, 2021). Training and development are one of the least priorities of an institution (Chopra, 2015). Training allows someone "to acquire new skills, learn enough knowledge that is related to their assigned subjects, sharpen existing ones, perform better, increase productivity and be better leaders" p.10. As Vega

(2015) pointed out, deeper knowledge of the content and how to teach it are very important factors rather than training teachers solely on new behaviors and techniques. The enhancement of training will give a positive impact on teachers, this will ensure that they will gain sufficient knowledge to help them embrace English even it is out of their specialization. The need for out-of-field teachers to undergo training especially on content and pedagogy would definitely improve their understanding of the concepts that are needed to be dispensed to their learners.

#### *Improve schools' manpower*

Teacher Barry shared that "it is also important that DepEd must improve manpower dissemination and the Division offices must strictly consider the need of the school with regards to the lacking teachers in a specific specialization" This is aligned with Garcia and Weiss (2019) notion on the negative impact of lack of manpower to the working conditions and organizational outcomes. In contrast, Jerald and Ingersoll's (2002) found OOF teaching is not driven by a shortage of teaching staff. The finding shows that majority of teachers are made to believe that they can do everything, thus less support is given to novice out-of-field teachers. This calls for program mechanics that deal in alleviating the challenges that novice out-of-field teachers experience through program reforms, training and skills enhancement, and professional development, and peer mentoring programs that would create a holistic growth among teachers which in turn would be manifested by their students.

Overall, the findings from the present study call on collaboration among the school administrators, coordinators, coworkers, and school stakeholders to aid out-of-field teachers in performing jobs more effectively. Likewise, training on mental awareness and the relevance in attaining quality organizational outcomes, together with giving of recognition that values one's efforts to an organization are all critical to the school's overall effectiveness. Lastly, communication with school administrators and coordinators must be open and honest for issues and problems to be addressed and possible solutions to be developed.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Out-of-field teaching according to the reviewed study is a rampant practice worldwide,

that can affect students' outcomes and the likes. Hence, a study was conducted to describe the sentiments and coping strategies encountered by out-of-field teachers in English in the public senior high schools in the schools' division of Eastern Samar during the school year 2019-2020. Based on the findings derived, the pragmatic sentiments identified by the out-of-field senior high school teachers in English on the five key result areas of the Department of Education include; lack of content mastery and school learning facilities for teaching and learning process; poor academic performance for students' outcomes; lack of cooperation of parents and the community for community involvement; time and financial constraints for professional growth and development; and poor planning skills and large class size for classroom management. The coping strategies employed by out-of-field senior high school teachers in English include; acquiring competence through training, self-learning/motivating, and asking assistance from co-teachers. Finally, the out-of-field senior high school teachers in English suggest to DEPED the conduct of training focusing on the improvement of their content mastery and pedagogical skills. Likewise, they suggest the increase of teaching manpower among senior high schools in the schools' division of Eastern Samar.

Hence, the following recommendations are offered. To conduct a comparative study on the performance of students and out-of-field teachers, establish a peer-mentoring program to aid out-of-field teachers, that Master teachers must constantly monitor teachers' lesson plans and provide adequate assistance and monitoring, and that a wider scope of the study should be made. However, this qualitative undertaking only captured the problems faced by out-of-field senior high school teachers in English. Thus, it is suggested to conduct studies in the lower levels such as in the junior high and elementary schools to further validate the findings of this study. Moreover, quantitative analysis can be accentuated to validate the derived themes using standard analytical tools.

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