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Teaching beyond specialization: Teachers' experiences and adaptation in the District of Kalibo II

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Abstract

Aim: This study explored the experiences of teachers assigned to teach subjects beyond their areas of academic specialization in the District of Kalibo II. Specifically, it examined their emotional and instructional challenges, the effects of out-of-field teaching on professional confidence and instructional delivery, the coping strategies they employed, and the forms of institutional support they considered important.

Methodology: The study employed a qualitative research design using thematic analysis. Ten purposively selected teachers from the District of Kalibo II who were assigned to teach subjects outside their formal areas of specialization participated in a focus group discussion. Data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and recommendations.

Results: Six major themes emerged: emotional struggles and gradual adjustment; content mastery and pedagogical difficulty; the impact on professional confidence and instructional delivery; coping strategies and self-driven learning; the importance of support systems; and recommendations for policy and program improvements. Participants initially experienced fear, anxiety, uncertainty, and reduced confidence. Difficulties in mastering unfamiliar content required additional preparation and self-directed learning. Teachers coped through independent learning, the use of online and printed resources, peer consultation, personalized study materials, and support from school leaders and colleagues.

Conclusion: Out-of-field teaching was experienced as both a professional challenge and a process of adaptation and learning. Teachers' ability to manage unfamiliar teaching assignments was influenced by access to preparation time, instructional resources, collegial collaboration, and administrative support. Institutional interventions that recognize and address the demands of out-of-field teaching may strengthen teacher well-being, professional growth, instructional preparedness, and the quality of teaching and learning.

Keywords: *out-of-field teaching, teacher experiences, teacher adaptation, coping strategies, instructional support*

INTRODUCTION

Effective teaching requires pedagogical competence, appropriate instructional resources, and sufficient knowledge of the subject being taught. Across educational systems, however, teachers may be assigned to subjects outside their formal preparation or academic specialization. Out-of-field teaching refers to the assignment of teachers to subjects outside their formal academic specialization or area of substantial professional preparation (du Plessis, 2015). This practice has been discussed in relation to teacher deployment, subject-matter knowledge, professional identity, instructional confidence, and the organizational distribution of qualified teachers (Hobbs, 2013; Ingersoll, 2002; du Plessis, 2015). These concerns remain relevant to educational systems because teachers assigned to unfamiliar subjects may be required to develop new content knowledge while simultaneously planning lessons, managing classrooms, selecting appropriate instructional strategies, and responding to learners' needs.

The international literature further suggests that teachers' responses to unfamiliar professional demands are influenced by opportunities for professional learning, access to resources, and collaboration with other educators. Professional development can strengthen teacher knowledge and instructional practice, while professional networks

and collegial interaction may provide opportunities for teachers to exchange ideas, access resources, and seek assistance when addressing new instructional responsibilities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Trust & Prestridge, 2021). These concerns are particularly important in the context of out-of-field teaching, where the challenge extends beyond teacher deployment and includes the capacity of teachers to adapt their knowledge, instructional practices, and professional confidence to unfamiliar teaching assignments.

Recent educational studies also demonstrate the importance of appropriately designed instructional resources and structured learning tools in supporting teaching and learning. Research involving targeted literacy and numeracy programs, simulation-based learning environments, statistical learning modules, vocabulary interventions, and the use of learning materials illustrates the continuing importance of instructional resources in facilitating learning and skill development across different educational contexts (Balancio & Accad, 2026; Esteves, 2026; Petallo & Robles, 2026; Salvatera et al., 2026; Villamor, 2026). Although these studies address different learner groups and subject areas, they underscore the importance of accessible instructional tools and resources, which may also assist teachers who need additional support when preparing to teach unfamiliar subject content.

Within the Philippine educational context, teaching assignments may require teachers to assume responsibilities beyond their formal areas of specialization in response to the staffing and instructional needs of particular schools. Such assignments may require substantial additional preparation, independent learning, and professional support. Teachers may be expected to demonstrate adaptability and commitment while managing the demands of unfamiliar content, lesson preparation, classroom delivery, and learner engagement. Understanding how teachers respond to these demands is therefore relevant to teacher development, instructional support, educational leadership, and school-level decision-making.

In the District of Kalibo II, concerns surrounding teaching assignments beyond teachers' academic specialization provide an important local context for examining these experiences. Teachers assigned to unfamiliar subjects may encounter difficulties related to lesson preparation, content familiarity, classroom delivery, professional confidence, and workload. At the same time, they may respond by engaging in self-study, consulting colleagues, using digital and printed resources, and developing personal strategies for managing unfamiliar instructional responsibilities. Although previous studies have examined out-of-field teaching in relation to teacher qualifications, organizational conditions, professional identity, and teacher development, there remains a need to understand how teachers experience these assignments within specific educational and institutional contexts. In particular, there is a need to examine how teachers interpret the emotional and instructional demands of unfamiliar teaching assignments, how these assignments influence their professional confidence and instructional delivery, and how they develop strategies for adaptation and learning.

The present study addresses this gap by focusing on the lived and professional experiences of teachers in the District of Kalibo II who teach beyond their areas of expertise. Unlike studies that primarily emphasize teacher qualifications or the organizational dimensions of teacher deployment, the present study centers on teachers' accounts of adjustment, instructional challenges, professional confidence, coping strategies, and support needs.

The study contributes to educational research by highlighting the human and professional dimensions of out-of-field teaching within a specific educational context. Its findings may provide useful insights for teachers, school leaders, professional development providers, curriculum and instructional planners, and education policymakers in developing more responsive approaches to teacher deployment, instructional preparation, professional learning, and institutional support. By examining how teachers learn and adapt while performing unfamiliar instructional responsibilities, the study also contributes to a broader understanding of professional learning as an ongoing process shaped by experience, reflection, collaboration, and institutional conditions.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Challenges of Out-of-Field Teaching

Teaching outside one's area of specialization may create challenges related to subject-matter knowledge, instructional preparation, workload, and professional confidence. Ingersoll (2002) discussed out-of-field teaching as an organizational issue that may affect the distribution of qualified teachers across schools and subject areas. This perspective highlights the importance of examining not only individual teacher competence but also the institutional conditions that influence teaching assignments.

Hobbs (2013) further examined out-of-field teaching as an experience that may influence teachers' professional identity. When teachers move beyond their established areas of competence, they may experience uncertainty and professional discomfort while simultaneously developing new knowledge and capacities. This suggests that out-of-field teaching may involve both difficulty and adaptation.



Similarly, du Plessis (2015) examined out-of-field teaching in relation to teacher quality, professional practice, and teacher development. The study highlights the importance of understanding how teaching assignments outside one's formal preparation may affect teachers and why appropriate institutional and professional support is necessary. Taken together, these studies indicate that out-of-field teaching extends beyond the issue of teacher assignment. It may affect teachers' content preparation, instructional decision-making, professional identity, confidence, and opportunities for professional learning. These concerns are relevant to the present study, which examines how teachers experience and respond to such demands within a specific educational setting.

Teacher Adaptation, Professional Learning, and Coping

Despite the challenges associated with unfamiliar teaching assignments, teachers may develop strategies that enable them to adapt and continue performing their professional responsibilities. Professional learning, collaboration, independent study, and access to instructional resources may assist teachers in developing the knowledge and confidence needed to address unfamiliar teaching responsibilities.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of effective professional development in strengthening teacher knowledge and instructional practice. Opportunities for learning, collaboration, and sustained professional support may therefore be particularly important for teachers who are required to expand their knowledge beyond their original areas of preparation.

Trust and Prestridge (2021) highlighted the role of professional networks in enabling teachers to connect with other educators, exchange ideas, and access learning resources. Such networks may be particularly valuable for teachers who require additional assistance while preparing to teach unfamiliar subject content. Collegial interaction may provide opportunities for teachers to seek guidance, share instructional materials, and discuss difficulties encountered in their teaching assignments.

Recent educational studies likewise demonstrate the importance of appropriately designed learning resources and instructional tools in supporting teaching and learning. Research involving simulation tools, targeted literacy and numeracy programs, statistical learning modules, vocabulary interventions, and other learning materials demonstrates how structured resources can support instructional processes and learner development (Balancio & Accad, 2026; Esteves, 2026; Petallo & Robles, 2026; Salvatera et al., 2026; Villamor, 2026). Although these studies do not directly examine out-of-field teaching, they collectively emphasize the importance of accessible instructional resources, which may also assist teachers who need to prepare for unfamiliar subject content.

The experiences examined in the present study are consistent with this broader understanding of teacher adaptation. Participants described self-study, consultation with colleagues, the use of online and printed resources, and the preparation of personal learning materials as strategies for managing unfamiliar instructional responsibilities.

School Support, Educational Leadership, and Teacher Development

School leaders play an important role in creating conditions that support teacher learning, adaptation, and professional development. Access to instructional materials, mentoring, collegial assistance, preparation time, and responsive administrative practices may help reduce the difficulties associated with unfamiliar teaching assignments.

Bravo (2026), in examining innovative human resource management practices of school heads and teacher career advancement opportunities, highlights the broader importance of school-level leadership and management practices in shaping teachers' professional experiences. Although teacher career advancement is different from out-of-field teaching, both concerns demonstrate the importance of responsive educational leadership in supporting teachers' professional growth and development.

For teachers assigned outside their areas of specialization, institutional support may be particularly important because they are expected to manage unfamiliar content while maintaining instructional responsibilities. The participants in the present study emphasized the value of support from school heads, department heads, mentors, and colleagues. They described receiving lesson guides, reference materials, digital resources, encouragement, and, in some cases, additional preparation time.

These experiences suggest that the challenges associated with out-of-field teaching cannot be understood solely as individual teacher concerns. They are also connected to the institutional environments in which teachers work and the availability of professional, instructional, and administrative support.

Synthesis and Research Gap

The reviewed literature indicates that out-of-field teaching may involve challenges related to content mastery, instructional preparation, workload, professional confidence, and teacher identity. Teachers may respond to these

demands through independent learning, collaboration, professional development, access to instructional resources, and support from professional networks and school leaders.

The literature also demonstrates that instructional and institutional support can influence teachers' capacity to adapt to new professional demands. However, the reviewed studies largely examine broader organizational conditions, teacher identity, professional development, professional networks, instructional resources, or educational leadership. There remains a need to understand how teachers themselves experience teaching assignments beyond their areas of specialization within specific educational and institutional contexts.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the experiences of teachers in the District of Kalibo II who teach beyond their areas of expertise. It focuses specifically on their emotional and instructional challenges, professional confidence, coping strategies, support systems, and recommendations for improving institutional responses to out-of-field teaching. In doing so, the study contributes a context-specific and experience-based perspective that emphasizes not only the challenges of out-of-field teaching but also the processes through which teachers adapt, learn, and develop strategies for managing unfamiliar instructional responsibilities.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The study is anchored in Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning Theory, which explains learning as a continuous process in which individuals develop knowledge through experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. The theory is appropriate to the present study because teachers assigned to subjects beyond their areas of expertise may encounter unfamiliar instructional situations that require them to learn while simultaneously performing their professional responsibilities.

Within the context of the study, the teachers' assignment to unfamiliar subjects represents a concrete professional experience. The difficulties they encounter in content mastery, lesson preparation, classroom delivery, and professional confidence may lead them to reflect on their experiences and identify the areas in which they require additional knowledge or support. Through self-study, consultation with colleagues, the use of instructional resources, and other coping strategies, teachers may develop new understandings and approaches to managing unfamiliar instructional responsibilities. These approaches may then be applied and refined in subsequent teaching experiences.

The framework therefore provides a lens for understanding the process through which teachers:

1. encounter unfamiliar teaching assignments and related instructional and emotional challenges;
2. reflect on their experiences, difficulties, and professional needs;
3. develop new knowledge, coping strategies, and instructional approaches through self-directed learning, collaboration, and the use of available resources; and
4. apply and refine these strategies in subsequent teaching experiences.

The conceptual process guiding the study is presented below:

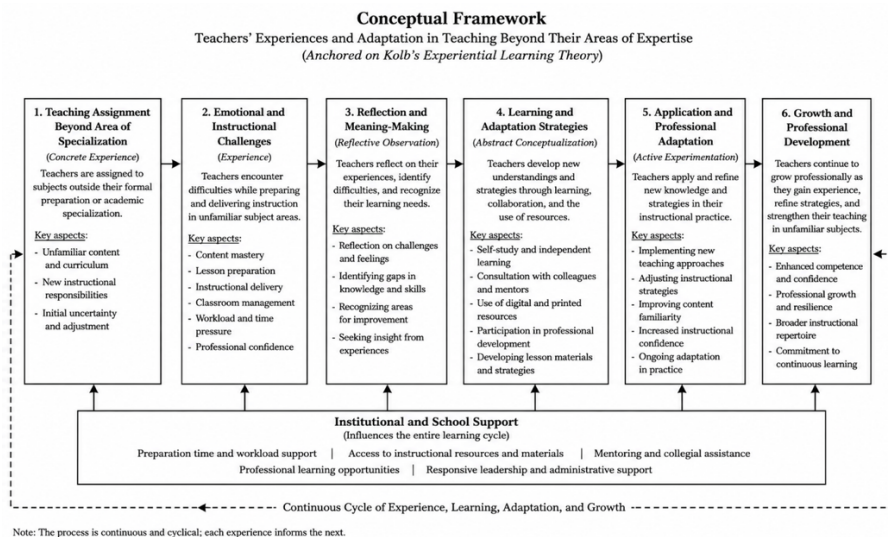


Figure 1

Conceptual Diagram of the Study

Institutional support, including access to preparation time, instructional resources, mentoring, collegial collaboration, and administrative assistance, may influence the teachers' capacity to move through these processes.

The framework guided the design, analysis, and interpretation of the study by providing an educational lens through which teachers' unfamiliar teaching assignments were understood as experiences that may generate reflection, learning, adaptation, and the development of new instructional practices. Rather than viewing out-of-field teaching solely as a problem of teacher deployment, the framework enables the study to examine how teachers actively respond to unfamiliar professional demands and develop strategies through experience and continuous learning.

Statement of the Problem

Out-of-field teaching presents an important educational and professional challenge because teachers may be assigned to teach subjects for which they have limited academic preparation or formal specialization. Such assignments may affect teachers' content knowledge, lesson preparation, instructional delivery, professional confidence, workload, and perceptions of their professional competence. These challenges may also have implications for teaching quality, teacher development, and the support systems provided by schools.

In the District of Kalibo II, some teachers have been assigned to teach subjects beyond their areas of expertise. Although teachers may demonstrate adaptability through independent learning, self-study, collaboration with colleagues, and the use of available instructional resources, there remains limited localized understanding of the specific emotional, instructional, and professional challenges associated with these assignments. There is likewise a need to understand how teachers adapt to unfamiliar teaching responsibilities and what forms of institutional support may help them manage these demands.

The present study therefore sought to explore the experiences of teachers teaching beyond their areas of expertise in the District of Kalibo II, with particular attention to their emotional and instructional challenges, professional confidence, coping strategies, processes of adaptation, and institutional support needs.

Research Objectives

General Objective

To explore the experiences of teachers teaching beyond their areas of expertise in the District of Kalibo II.

Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. To describe the emotional, instructional, and professional challenges experienced by teachers teaching beyond their areas of expertise.
2. To examine how teaching beyond one's area of expertise influences teachers' professional confidence and instructional delivery.
3. To identify the coping strategies and self-directed learning practices employed by teachers in managing unfamiliar teaching assignments.
4. To explore the role of school administrators, colleagues, and other support systems in assisting teachers assigned to subjects beyond their areas of expertise.
5. To identify institutional and policy-related improvements that may support teachers assigned to teach beyond their areas of specialization.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What emotional, instructional, and professional challenges do teachers experience when teaching beyond their areas of expertise?
2. How does out-of-field teaching influence teachers' professional confidence and instructional delivery?
3. What coping strategies and self-directed learning practices do teachers employ in managing unfamiliar teaching assignments?
4. How do school administrators, colleagues, and other support systems assist teachers in managing teaching assignments beyond their areas of expertise?
5. What institutional and policy-related interventions may be proposed based on the experiences and recommendations of the participating teachers?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research design using thematic analysis to explore the experiences of teachers assigned to teach subjects beyond their formal areas of specialization. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study sought to understand how teachers described, interpreted, and responded to the emotional, instructional, and professional challenges associated with out-of-field teaching.

The study examined participants' accounts to identify recurring patterns related to unfamiliar teaching assignments, content preparation, instructional delivery, professional confidence, coping strategies, and institutional support. Rather than measuring the prevalence or statistical relationship of these experiences, the inquiry focused on understanding their meaning within the professional contexts of the participating teachers.

A focus group discussion was used to generate detailed accounts and to allow participants to reflect on shared and individual experiences. The responses were subsequently analyzed thematically to identify patterns and develop themes that addressed the research questions. The interpretation of the findings was further informed by Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, particularly in understanding how unfamiliar teaching experiences contributed to reflection, learning, adaptation, and the development of new instructional practices.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants in the study consisted of 10 teachers from the District of Kalibo II who had experienced teaching subjects beyond their formal areas of academic specialization. The participants served as the primary sources of data because they had direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants who met the established inclusion criterion of having been assigned to teach a subject outside their formal academic specialization or substantial area of training. This sampling technique was appropriate because the study required participants who could provide detailed accounts of the challenges, adjustments, coping strategies, and support needs associated with out-of-field teaching.

The selected teachers participated in the study based on the relevance of their professional experiences to the research objectives. The selection focused on the participants' direct involvement in out-of-field teaching rather than on achieving statistical representativeness. The number of participants was considered appropriate for generating detailed qualitative accounts while allowing the researcher to examine recurring patterns and shared experiences across the focus group discussion.

To protect confidentiality, specific personal information and other details that could directly identify individual participants were not disclosed in the presentation of the findings.

Data Gathering Instrument

Data were gathered through a researcher-developed focus group discussion guide consisting of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed accounts of the participants' experiences of teaching subjects beyond their areas of expertise. The guide was aligned with the Statement of the Problem, research objectives, and research questions.

The discussion questions explored the participants' experiences in handling unfamiliar subjects, the emotional and instructional challenges they encountered, the influence of out-of-field teaching on their professional confidence and instructional delivery, and the coping strategies they employed to address difficulties in content preparation and classroom teaching. The discussion also examined the forms of support received from colleagues, school administrators, and other members of the school community, as well as the participants' recommendations for improving institutional support for teachers assigned outside their areas of specialization.

Before data collection, the discussion guide was reviewed by appropriate individuals with relevant expertise to assess the clarity, relevance, and alignment of the questions with the objectives of the study. Any necessary revisions were made before the conduct of the focus group discussion.

The use of open-ended questions enabled the participants to describe their experiences in their own words and to elaborate on the circumstances that shaped their adjustment to unfamiliar teaching assignments. The flexible nature of the discussion also allowed participants to respond to shared experiences and identify concerns that might not have emerged through more structured questioning.

Data Gathering Procedure

After securing the necessary permission from the appropriate school or educational authorities and obtaining the informed consent of the participants, the researcher conducted a focus group discussion with the selected teachers

from the District of Kalibo II. The discussion was conducted in an appropriate setting that allowed the participants to communicate openly and with reasonable privacy.

The participants were encouraged to discuss their experiences of being assigned to subjects outside their formal areas of specialization. The discussion focused on the difficulties they encountered in preparing and delivering lessons, their emotional responses to unfamiliar teaching responsibilities, the effects of these assignments on their professional confidence and instructional practice, and the strategies they developed to address the challenges they faced.

The participants were also invited to describe the forms of assistance they received from school administrators and colleagues and to share their recommendations regarding how teachers assigned to unfamiliar subject areas could be better supported. Throughout the discussion, the researcher facilitated the exchange of ideas while allowing the participants sufficient opportunity to explain and clarify their experiences.

The responses generated during the focus group discussion were documented and organized for analysis. Audio-recording was conducted with the participants' permission and that the recorded discussion was transcribed for analysis.

To protect the identities of the participants, personal names and other identifying information were excluded from the presentation of the findings. Participant accounts were instead represented through coded identifiers, such as Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and subsequent numerical labels. This approach allowed the findings to retain the participants' perspectives while maintaining the confidentiality of their identities.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through thematic analysis. The documented participant responses were reviewed repeatedly to achieve familiarity with the accounts and to identify meaningful statements related to the participants' experiences of out-of-field teaching.

During the initial stage of analysis, meaningful statements and segments of the participants' accounts were identified and assigned preliminary codes based on recurring ideas, experiences, challenges, and responses. Similar codes were then grouped into broader categories. Through comparison and interpretation of these categories, recurring patterns were identified and developed into themes that addressed the research questions.

Six interrelated themes emerged from the participants' accounts: emotional struggles and gradual adjustment; content mastery and pedagogical difficulty; the impact of out-of-field teaching on professional confidence and instructional delivery; coping strategies and self-driven learning; the importance of support systems; and recommendations for policy and program improvements.

The themes were interpreted in relation to the research questions and the broader educational context of the study. They were not treated as isolated experiences but as interconnected dimensions of the participants' professional lives. Emotional uncertainty influenced professional confidence, difficulties in content mastery increased preparation demands, and these challenges encouraged teachers to develop coping strategies and seek support from colleagues and school administrators.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory further informed the interpretation of the findings. The unfamiliar teaching assignments represented concrete professional experiences that required participants to reflect on their difficulties, identify gaps in their knowledge and instructional preparation, seek information and assistance, and apply newly acquired learning to subsequent teaching situations. The theoretical framework was therefore used to support the interpretation of how professional challenges contributed to reflection, adaptation, and continuing learning.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary. Before the data gathering process, the participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and the general procedures involved. Informed consent was obtained before their participation in the focus group discussion. The participants were also informed that they could decline to answer questions or withdraw from the study without penalty.

The necessary permission to conduct the study was obtained from the appropriate school or educational authorities before data collection. The study was conducted with due consideration for the participants' dignity, privacy, and professional circumstances.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the presentation and interpretation of the findings. Personal names and other information that could directly identify the participants were excluded from the manuscript. Instead, coded identifiers, such as Teacher 1 and Teacher 2, were used when presenting participant accounts and selected statements.

The data were used solely for the purposes of the study and were handled in a manner intended to protect the privacy of the participants. The participants' responses were interpreted within the context of the research objectives, and the findings were presented without attributing unsupported meanings or conclusions to their experiences.

In the focus group discussion, the participants were informed about and consented to the audio-recording before the discussion began.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Emotional Struggles and Gradual Adjustment

The participants described their initial experiences of teaching outside their areas of expertise as emotionally demanding. Their accounts reflected feelings of fear, uncertainty, anxiety, confusion, and apprehension, particularly during the early stages of their assignments. These emotional responses were associated with the participants' awareness that they were expected to teach content for which they did not have the same level of formal preparation or familiarity as teachers working within their areas of specialization.

One participant explained:

"At first, I felt lost and overwhelmed. Over time, I adapted by studying on my own and seeking advice from others."

Another participant described the anxiety of entering the classroom while anticipating questions that might be difficult to answer. This concern reflected not only unfamiliarity with the assigned subject but also the professional responsibility participants associated with providing accurate explanations and meaningful learning experiences despite limited preparation in the content area.

The participants' accounts suggest that out-of-field teaching may initially affect teachers' sense of professional preparedness. Hobbs (2013) discussed out-of-field teaching as an experience that may involve challenges to teacher identity because teachers are required to work beyond their established areas of competence. The experiences reported in the present study reflected a similar pattern. Participants described not only difficulties with unfamiliar content but also uncertainty regarding their capacity to meet the expectations associated with their teaching responsibilities.

The emotional difficulties reported by the participants may also be understood in relation to the process of professional adjustment. Teachers entered unfamiliar teaching situations with varying levels of confidence and preparedness. Their initial experiences exposed them to the practical demands of teaching outside their areas of specialization. As they encountered these demands, participants reflected on the difficulties they experienced and identified ways to address them. This process may be viewed through Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which explains learning as a continuing process involving experience, reflection, conceptual understanding, and application.

Within the context of the present study, the unfamiliar teaching assignment represented the participants' concrete professional experience. Their uncertainty and difficulties prompted reflection on gaps in their knowledge and instructional preparation. Participants subsequently described engaging in self-study, seeking advice, consulting colleagues, and applying what they learned to subsequent lessons. Their adjustment therefore appeared to be connected with continued professional learning and repeated engagement with the demands of the assignment.

The findings also suggest that the emotional difficulties experienced by participants should be understood within the context of their professional responsibilities. Participants were assigned to subjects that required additional preparation and familiarity with unfamiliar content. Their accounts indicate that uncertainty may arise when teachers are expected to assume such responsibilities while still developing the knowledge and preparation required for instruction.

Over time, several participants described a gradual process of adjustment. Repeated exposure to the subject, increased familiarity with the content, and access to advice and learning resources appeared to contribute to a greater sense of preparedness. These accounts suggest that professional adaptation may develop through time, continued experience, reflection, and access to appropriate support. For educational practice, the finding highlights the importance of recognizing the initial emotional demands associated with unfamiliar teaching assignments and considering forms of support that may assist teachers during periods of transition.

Content Mastery and Pedagogical Difficulty

The second major theme concerned the challenge of developing sufficient content knowledge while simultaneously preparing and delivering instruction. Participants explained that unfamiliar teaching assignments often required them to spend substantial additional time studying lessons before entering the classroom. They were therefore

managing two interconnected responsibilities: learning unfamiliar content while preparing to teach that content to students.

One participant stated:

"I struggled with content mastery. I had to spend extra hours reviewing topics that were new to me."

Another participant described difficulties associated with unfamiliar terminology and expressed concern about being unable to provide immediate and accurate responses when students raised questions. These experiences suggest that the challenges associated with out-of-field teaching extended beyond becoming familiar with lesson content. Participants also needed to determine how concepts could be organized, explained, illustrated, and presented to learners.

This distinction is important because classroom instruction requires teachers to make pedagogical decisions in addition to understanding subject content. Teachers may obtain information about unfamiliar topics through independent study, but they must also determine how concepts can be sequenced, connected to prior learning, explained clearly, and adjusted to the needs of learners. The participants' accounts indicate that both content preparation and pedagogical decision-making required additional effort when they were assigned outside their areas of expertise.

The findings are consistent with Ingersoll's (2002) discussion of out-of-field teaching as an issue related to the alignment between teachers' qualifications and the subjects they are assigned to teach. They also correspond with Hobbs' (2013) work, which highlighted challenges that teachers may experience when they move beyond their established areas of expertise. In the present study, participants described this experience through extended preparation, uncertainty regarding difficult concepts, unfamiliar terminology, and concern about providing accurate explanations during instruction.

The participants' experiences may also be interpreted through Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory. Each unfamiliar lesson provided a new professional learning experience. Teachers encountered content that challenged their existing knowledge, reflected on the areas they needed to understand more fully, consulted available resources, and attempted to apply their developing understanding during instruction. Their learning was therefore closely connected to the practical demands of their teaching responsibilities.

However, the findings suggest that experience and individual effort alone may not fully address the difficulties associated with limited subject preparation. Participants described relying on additional study, resources, and assistance from others while adapting to unfamiliar teaching responsibilities. These accounts indicate that access to reliable resources, mentoring, professional guidance, and sufficient preparation time may assist teachers as they develop greater familiarity with unfamiliar subject content.

The findings therefore suggest that content preparation in out-of-field teaching involves not only individual teacher effort but also considerations related to professional development and institutional support. Schools assigning teachers to unfamiliar subjects may consider how teachers can access subject-specific guidance and instructional resources. Such support may help teachers manage the transition between being assigned to a subject and developing greater preparedness to teach it.

Impact on Professional Confidence and Instructional Delivery

The participants reported that teaching unfamiliar subjects influenced their professional confidence and their perceptions of their instructional readiness. When participants felt insufficiently prepared, they became more conscious of their limitations and questioned whether they could meet the expectations associated with effective instruction.

One teacher explained:

"It significantly lowered my confidence to the point where I constantly questioned my capability as a teacher."

Another participant indicated that inadequate preparation could become noticeable during classroom instruction. These accounts suggest that confidence was closely associated with participants' perceptions of their content knowledge and readiness. When they felt uncertain about the subject matter, this uncertainty appeared to influence how comfortably they explained concepts, responded to questions, and managed instructional interactions.

The findings suggest that professional confidence in this context cannot be separated entirely from the conditions under which teachers perform their instructional responsibilities. Teachers may possess established pedagogical abilities within their original fields of specialization while experiencing uncertainty when assigned to unfamiliar subjects. Within the experiences described by the participants, reduced confidence appeared to be related to the specific demands of teaching content for which they had limited formal preparation rather than necessarily reflecting a general lack of teaching competence.

This finding is consistent with Hobbs' (2013) discussion of the ways out-of-field teaching may affect teachers' professional identities. Participants in the present study described questioning their capabilities when placed in

situations that required knowledge beyond their established expertise. Such experiences may create tension between a teacher's sense of professional competence and the uncertainty associated with performing unfamiliar instructional tasks.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory provides an additional perspective for understanding this process. The participants' moments of uncertainty may be viewed as experiences that prompted reflection on areas requiring further learning or preparation. A difficult lesson, an unanswered student question, or a perceived weakness in instructional delivery could encourage teachers to seek additional information or alternative strategies. Participants described applying newly acquired knowledge and approaches in subsequent teaching experiences, which may have contributed to their gradual adjustment.

The participants' accounts also suggest that professional confidence and adaptation were influenced not only by individual efforts but also by access to resources, collegial assistance, and institutional support. Constructive feedback, mentoring, appropriate instructional materials, and opportunities to consult colleagues may provide additional support for teachers who are developing familiarity with unfamiliar subjects.

The finding has implications for educational leadership and teacher development. School leaders may consider that assignments outside teachers' areas of specialization can involve additional preparation demands and may influence teachers' perceptions of instructional readiness. Supportive leadership practices may help create professional environments in which teachers can communicate areas of difficulty, seek assistance, and access relevant resources while adapting to unfamiliar teaching responsibilities.

Coping Strategies and Self-Driven Learning

Despite the challenges associated with unfamiliar teaching assignments, the participants described various efforts to address their learning needs. Their accounts indicated that they actively searched for information, reviewed instructional materials, consulted colleagues, and developed personal strategies to prepare for classroom instruction.

Participants described reading books and online materials, watching instructional videos, listening to podcasts, consulting colleagues, and preparing personalized notes. One participant explained:

"I do extensive self-study using online articles, video lectures, and sample modules."

Another participant referred to a personal notebook as "survival notes," containing information and explanations needed before entering the classroom.

These accounts indicate that self-directed learning formed an important part of the participants' adaptation to out-of-field teaching. Participants recognized areas in which they needed additional preparation and described concrete efforts to develop their content knowledge and instructional readiness. Their coping strategies therefore involved not only emotional adjustment but also practical learning activities.

The findings are consistent with the importance of professional learning and continued teacher development. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasized that teacher learning is strengthened when educators have opportunities to develop knowledge relevant to their instructional responsibilities. Trust and Prestridge (2021) likewise highlighted the value of professional networks in enabling educators to access knowledge, exchange ideas, and connect with other professionals. The present findings similarly showed that participants drew upon different learning resources and interpersonal networks while managing unfamiliar teaching responsibilities.

The participants' self-directed learning may also be interpreted through Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory. An unfamiliar lesson or difficult concept represented a concrete professional experience. Participants reflected on the difficulty and identified what they needed to learn. They then described gathering information through reading, watching instructional materials, consulting colleagues, or developing personal notes. The knowledge and strategies they developed were subsequently applied in classroom instruction, where further experiences could create additional opportunities for reflection and adjustment.

This pattern suggests that experiential learning was embedded in the participants' daily professional practice. Their learning did not occur only through formal professional development activities but also through repeated engagement with actual instructional challenges. Participants' use of online materials, instructional modules, personalized notes, and other resources also reflects the importance of accessible learning tools in supporting educational activities. Recent INJELPS studies have examined simulation tools and electronic trainers, JAMOVI-based instructional modules, vocabulary-focused interventions, literacy and numeracy programs, and learning materials in relation to different aspects of learning and skill development (Balancio & Accad, 2026; Esteves, 2026; Petallo & Robles, 2026; Salvatera et al., 2026; Villamor, 2026). Although these studies primarily focused on learners and different educational contexts, they collectively demonstrate the use of structured and accessible instructional resources to address identified learning needs. In the context of the present study, participants likewise described using available learning resources while developing familiarity with unfamiliar subject content.

At the same time, the participants' reliance on self-directed learning indicates that individual initiative formed an important part of their adaptation. However, the findings do not suggest that individual effort alone was sufficient to address all difficulties. Participants also described consulting colleagues and using available institutional resources. These accounts suggest that self-directed learning may complement, rather than replace, organized professional support.

Thus, the participants' coping strategies reflected both teacher agency and the importance of a supportive professional environment. Their resourcefulness assisted them in responding to unfamiliar teaching responsibilities, while access to mentoring, relevant resources, and professional guidance may further support their continuing adaptation.

Importance of Support Systems

The findings revealed that support from school administrators, department heads, colleagues, and mentors formed an important part of the participants' experiences of out-of-field teaching. Participants described receiving lesson guides, reference materials, digital resources, professional advice, encouragement, and, in some instances, additional time for preparation.

One participant explained:

"The school head gave me a lot of useful materials such as lesson guides, reference books, and digital resources which really helped me understand the subject better."

Another participant described how adjustments in scheduling occasionally provided additional time for preparation. These accounts suggest that the conditions created within the school and the availability of professional assistance influenced how participants managed unfamiliar teaching responsibilities.

The importance of support systems is consistent with the literature on teacher professional development. du Plessis (2015) emphasized the relationship between out-of-field teaching and the need for appropriate professional development. Similarly, Trust and Prestridge (2021) highlighted the importance of professional connections and networks as sources of learning and support. The experiences described by the participants similarly suggest the value of professional environments in which teachers can seek assistance, exchange resources, and learn from colleagues.

Support systems may also be considered in relation to Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory. Although teachers may reflect individually on their experiences, interaction with colleagues can provide additional perspectives that may assist them in interpreting difficulties and identifying possible responses. A teacher encountering a challenging concept, for example, may benefit from discussing the concern with a colleague who has greater subject expertise. Such interaction may extend individual reflection into a collaborative learning experience.

The findings further suggest that educational leadership may influence the conditions under which teachers adapt to unfamiliar assignments. School administrators may support teacher preparedness by providing relevant resources, encouraging mentoring relationships, considering preparation demands, and creating opportunities for teachers to communicate concerns. This perspective is consistent with the broader importance of school-level management practices in shaping teachers' professional experiences. Bravo (2026), in examining innovative human resource management practices of school heads and teacher career advancement opportunities, further situates school leadership within the professional environment in which teachers work. Although the focus of Bravo's study differs from the present investigation, both studies underscore the relevance of responsive school leadership to teachers' professional experiences and development.

A supportive school environment may also help teachers access assistance when they encounter unfamiliar instructional responsibilities. Participants described the value of guidance, resources, and professional interaction while managing their assignments. These accounts suggest that accessible support may enable teachers to communicate difficulties and seek assistance as they develop greater familiarity with unfamiliar subject areas.

Within the context of the present study, teacher adaptation therefore emerged as involving both individual effort and the professional environment in which teachers worked. The findings suggest that out-of-field teaching may be understood not only as an individual teacher's experience but also in relation to teacher deployment, educational leadership, professional development, and institutional support.

Recommendations for Policy and Program Improvements

The participants identified several areas in which schools and educational institutions may strengthen support for teachers assigned outside their areas of specialization. Their recommendations focused on preparation before assignment, sufficient time to study unfamiliar content, manageable teaching responsibilities, access to instructional resources, mentoring, collegial assistance, and opportunities to communicate concerns to school administrators.

One participant stated:

"Schools should conduct a proper orientation before assigning teachers to out-of-field classes."

Another participant emphasized that transitions into unfamiliar teaching assignments should not occur abruptly. These accounts suggest that participants viewed preparedness as a process that may begin before teachers assume full responsibility for an unfamiliar subject.

The recommendation for orientation is significant because participants described uncertainty regarding subject expectations, unfamiliar content, and available resources during the initial stages of their assignments. An orientation process may help teachers become more familiar with the scope and expectations of a new teaching assignment and identify available sources of assistance. Based on the participants' accounts, such preparation may help address some of the uncertainty associated with the transition into unfamiliar teaching responsibilities.

Participants also emphasized the importance of adequate preparation time. The findings showed that teachers often spent additional hours studying unfamiliar lessons and developing instructional materials. These accounts suggest that workload and scheduling arrangements may need to take into consideration the additional preparation demands associated with teaching unfamiliar subject content. Providing reasonable opportunities for preparation may assist teachers in developing greater familiarity with the content and greater confidence in instructional delivery.

Mentoring and peer support also emerged as important considerations. Participants frequently described consulting colleagues when confronting unfamiliar content or instructional difficulties. More organized mentoring arrangements or collaborative professional learning opportunities may provide teachers with more consistent access to subject-specific guidance and professional assistance.

These recommendations are consistent with the literature emphasizing professional learning and support for teachers working outside their primary fields of preparation (du Plessis, 2015). They also correspond with the findings of the present study, in which participants described the value of resources, advice, consultation, and professional assistance. Recent studies published in INJELPS likewise demonstrate the use of deliberately designed educational programs, instructional interventions, learning modules, simulation tools, and learning materials to address identified educational needs (Balancio & Accad, 2026; Esteves, 2026; Petallo & Robles, 2026; Salvatera et al., 2026; Villamor, 2026). Although these studies addressed different educational purposes and populations, their emphasis on structured and context-responsive educational support provides a related perspective for considering how institutions may develop targeted forms of assistance for teachers assigned to unfamiliar subject areas.

From the perspective of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, institutional support may provide opportunities for teachers not only to experience and reflect on professional challenges but also to discuss those experiences, develop new understandings, and apply revised approaches in practice. Within the present study, participants' accounts suggest that access to guidance, resources, and professional interaction formed part of their continuing process of adaptation. Overall, the participants' recommendations indicate that out-of-field teaching may be more effectively supported when it is approached as a shared institutional concern. The participants demonstrated initiative and adaptability, but their accounts also emphasized the importance of preparation, resources, mentoring, collegial assistance, and responsive educational leadership. These findings suggest that schools and educational leaders may play an important role in creating conditions that support teachers as they manage unfamiliar professional responsibilities.

Synthesis of Findings

The findings revealed that, within the experiences of the ten participating teachers, teaching beyond one's area of expertise was a complex professional experience involving interconnected emotional, cognitive, instructional, and institutional dimensions. Out-of-field teaching involved more than becoming familiar with unfamiliar subject content. Participants also described changes in their confidence, perceptions of professional readiness, preparation practices, relationships with colleagues, and reliance on available institutional support.

Participants initially experienced uncertainty, fear, anxiety, and reduced confidence as they encountered unfamiliar teaching responsibilities. These experiences were associated with difficulties in content mastery and concerns regarding instructional delivery. Teachers were expected to explain concepts, respond to learners' questions, and make instructional decisions while simultaneously developing their own understanding of unfamiliar subject matter. The findings therefore suggest that emotional and instructional challenges were interconnected within the participants' experiences.

Despite these difficulties, participants described various forms of adaptation. They engaged in self-directed learning, consulted colleagues, used printed and digital resources, watched instructional materials, and developed personalized preparation strategies. These responses reflected individual initiative and active engagement with the demands of unfamiliar teaching assignments. At the same time, participants also described the value of assistance from colleagues, mentors, school leaders, and available instructional resources.

Viewed through Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, the findings suggest that participants' professional adaptation involved a continuing process of experience, reflection, learning, and application. The unfamiliar teaching assignment constituted a concrete professional experience that exposed participants to new demands and areas requiring further preparation. These experiences prompted reflection on gaps in content knowledge, instructional readiness, and professional confidence. Participants subsequently sought information, consulted others, and developed strategies that they applied in subsequent teaching experiences. New experiences then created further opportunities for reflection and adjustment.

The findings also correspond with previous literature indicating that out-of-field teaching may involve challenges related to teacher preparation, professional identity, and access to appropriate support (du Plessis, 2015; Hobbs, 2013; Ingersoll, 2002). The present study contributes a contextualized account of how these concerns were experienced by the participating teachers in the District of Kalibo II. Their accounts illustrate how out-of-field teaching was reflected in everyday professional activities, including lesson preparation, classroom interaction, independent study, consultation with colleagues, and engagement with available school support systems.

Overall, out-of-field teaching was experienced by the participants as both a professional challenge and a continuing process of adaptation. The evidence from their accounts suggests that greater familiarity and confidence may develop through continued experience, reflection, self-directed learning, consultation, and access to relevant resources. However, the findings also indicate that adaptation was not based exclusively on individual effort. Participants described the importance of institutional conditions, including access to resources, mentoring, preparation time, and professional support.

Taken together, the six themes suggest that, within the context of the present study, out-of-field teaching involved an interaction between teacher agency and institutional support. Participants actively sought ways to learn and adapt, while the availability of professional guidance, resources, and supportive school conditions also formed part of their experiences in managing unfamiliar teaching responsibilities.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concludes that, within the context of the ten participating teachers in the District of Kalibo II, out-of-field teaching was experienced as a complex professional challenge involving interconnected emotional, instructional, and institutional dimensions.

Teachers initially experienced uncertainty, anxiety, and reduced confidence when assigned to subjects beyond their formal areas of expertise. Limited familiarity with subject content increased the time and effort required for lesson preparation and influenced participants' confidence in explaining concepts, responding to learners' questions, and making instructional decisions.

The findings also indicate that teachers actively adapted to unfamiliar teaching responsibilities through self-directed learning, consultation with colleagues, the use of printed and digital resources, and the development of personalized preparation strategies. These experiences suggest that professional adaptation involved both individual initiative and continued engagement with unfamiliar teaching demands.

Support from school administrators, colleagues, mentors, and available instructional resources emerged as an important part of the participants' experiences. The findings suggest that access to preparation time, professional guidance, instructional materials, and collegial support may help teachers manage the demands associated with assignments beyond their areas of specialization.

The study contributes to educational practice by highlighting the importance of viewing out-of-field teaching not solely as an individual teacher's responsibility but also as a concern related to teacher deployment, educational leadership, professional development, and institutional support. Within the context of this study, teachers' adaptation appeared to develop through the interaction of professional experience, reflection, self-directed learning, and support from the school environment.

These conclusions are limited to the experiences and accounts of the ten participating teachers in the District of Kalibo II and should be interpreted within the context of the qualitative design of the study.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. School administrators may provide orientation and transition support to teachers before or during their assignment to subjects outside their areas of formal specialization. Such support may include information about subject expectations, available instructional resources, and sources of professional assistance.
2. Schools may consider providing reasonable preparation time and access to appropriate instructional resources for teachers assigned to unfamiliar subject areas, particularly during the initial stages of their assignments.

3. School leaders may establish or strengthen mentoring and peer-support arrangements that allow teachers to consult colleagues with relevant subject expertise and discuss instructional concerns in a supportive professional environment.
4. Educational leaders may review teaching assignments and preparation demands to consider the additional time and learning requirements associated with teaching unfamiliar subject content.
5. Professional development providers and teacher education institutions may develop targeted learning opportunities that address both subject content and pedagogical strategies for teachers assigned beyond their areas of specialization.
6. Curriculum developers and educational institutions may consider developing accessible orientation materials, subject-specific guides, and other instructional resources that may assist teachers who are required to prepare for unfamiliar teaching responsibilities.
7. Education policymakers and school leaders may consider teachers' experiences and feedback when examining teacher deployment practices, professional support systems, and opportunities for continuing professional development.
8. Future researchers may examine out-of-field teaching across other districts, educational levels, and subject areas. Future studies may also include the perspectives of school administrators, mentors, and students to develop a broader understanding of the experiences and possible educational implications associated with out-of-field teaching.

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