Pinagtagpo Pero 'Di Tinadhana: A Phenomenological Inquiry of Mismatched Teachers in Senior High School

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Abstract — The Philippine Senior High School (SHS) program emphasizes specialized learning tracks requiring qualified teachers with subject-matter expertise. However, the persistent global issue of specialization mismatch or "out-of-field" teaching, where teachers handle subjects outside their specialization due to shortages, potentially compromises program quality. This phenomenological study investigated the lived experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of mismatched teachers in Senior High School of Palapag I District, DepEd Northern Samar Division. Ten SHS teachers teaching subjects outside their specialization with minimum three years experience participated in in-depth interviews. Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's Phenomenological Thematic Analysis Model. Findings revealed nine emergent themes in lived experiences: adaptation and preparation, continuous personal and professional growth, collaboration and student-centered learning, rewards and satisfaction, various emotions in teaching, flexibility and exploration, ambiguity and confusion, validation, and support and mentorship. Five challenges emerged: preparation and time management, knowledge and resource limitations, student engagement and confidence issues, increased workloads and stress, and instructional effectiveness concerns. Eight coping mechanisms were identified: seeking guidance and mentorship, personal and professional development, utilizing resources and technology, planning and preparation, adopting effective teaching strategies, maintaining positive mindset and reflection, open communication and collaboration, and engaging with broader educational communities. A competency alignment program was proposed to address these challenges and enhance mismatched teachers' effectiveness.

Keywords — Out-Of-Field Teaching, Mismatched Teachers, Lived Experiences, Challenges Encountered, Coping Mechanisms, Senior High School, Phenomenological Inquiry, Teacher Specialization

I. Introduction

The implementation of the Senior High School (SHS) program in the Philippines has intensified the demand for specialized teachers equipped to deliver quality education across diverse learning tracks. However, a significant challenge confronting the educational system is the widespread prevalence of teacher specialization mismatch, where educators are assigned to teach subjects outside their area of expertise. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as "out-of-field" teaching, has emerged as a critical concern affecting educational quality and student outcomes.

Globally, out-of-field teaching represents a persistent challenge across educational systems. In Australia, approximately 16 percent of science teachers and 24 percent of mathematics teachers lack the necessary qualifications for their assigned positions (Darby, 2014). Similarly, South Africa reports that 39 percent of science teachers are unqualified for their specific roles (Silva, 2020). The United Kingdom faces comparable challenges, with 26.6 percent of mathematics teachers, 28.7 percent of geography teachers, and 31.4 percent of physics teachers teaching subjects for which they lack appropriate training (Loveys, 2011).

The 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) revealed that in over 40 participating countries, more than 10 percent of lower secondary school science and mathematics teachers teach outside their specialization. This concern is particularly acute in countries like Georgia and Saudi Arabia, where fewer than 60 percent of science and mathematics teachers received training in their teaching subjects as part of their formal education. The 2019 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) further emphasized this issue, showing that in at least 16 participating countries, over 10 percent of grade 8 students were taught mathematics by teachers without a major in mathematics or mathematics education.

In the Philippines, the situation is particularly alarming. A 2024 Rappler report revealed that 62 percent of teachers in the public school system teach subjects they did not specialize in during their undergraduate studies. This statistic, based on Department of Education data from 700,000 teachers, underscores the magnitude of the challenge facing the Philippine education system. Locally, in Palapag I District, DepEd Northern Samar Division, 67 percent of Senior High School teachers are teaching subjects outside their college specialization, highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms.

The consequences of out-of-field teaching extend beyond individual teacher challenges to significantly impact student learning outcomes. Research indicates that students taught by mismatched teachers often demonstrate lower academic achievement, particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields (Guzman et al., 2020). Additionally, decreased student engagement, compromised learning environments, and reduced college enrollment rates in critical fields represent substantial concerns requiring immediate attention.

Despite the widespread nature of this phenomenon, limited research has explored the lived experiences of mismatched teachers, particularly in the Philippine context. While studies have examined the broader implications of out-of-field teaching, few have delved deeply into the personal experiences, emotional responses, and adaptive strategies employed by teachers navigating these challenging assignments. This research gap limits understanding of how educators cope with specialization mismatch and what support systems might enhance their effectiveness.

This phenomenological inquiry addresses these gaps by exploring the lived experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of mismatched Senior High School teachers in Palapag I

District. Through in-depth investigation of these educators' perspectives, this study aims to provide insights that can inform policy development, professional development programs, and support systems designed to enhance the quality of education delivered by mismatched teachers. The research findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on out-of-field teaching while offering practical implications for educational administrators, policymakers, and teacher support specialists.

Literature Review

The phenomenon of out-of-field teaching has garnered significant attention from educational researchers worldwide, revealing consistent patterns of challenges and impacts across diverse educational contexts. Goos defines out-of-field teaching as assignments where teachers handle subjects that do not align with their training or education (Earp, 2024). This definition encompasses both content knowledge gaps and pedagogical content knowledge deficiencies that can significantly impact instructional effectiveness.

Challenges in Out-of-Field Teaching

Research consistently demonstrates that mismatched teachers encounter multifaceted challenges that extend beyond simple content knowledge gaps. Datingaling (2019) found that teachers spend significantly more time developing effective pedagogy due to inadequate training and the necessity of studying unfamiliar concepts before instruction. This increased preparation time contributes to heightened stress levels and workload concerns, particularly affecting teachers' work-life balance and professional satisfaction.

Mkandawire et al. (2016) identified significant contradictions and tensions faced by newly qualified teachers assigned to teach outside their expertise. These challenges include differing expectations between administrators and supervisors, difficulties applying theoretical knowledge in practice, and dissatisfaction with curriculum requirements. The study emphasized the importance of effective teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional development in addressing these challenges.

Bastian and Janda (n.d.) revealed that additional course preparations are negatively associated with teacher effectiveness. Their analysis showed that teaching new courses for the first time significantly impacts teacher performance, as educators must simultaneously plan, learn, and teach new content. This finding underscores the substantial cognitive and emotional demands placed on mismatched teachers.

Fulgado (2017) examined teachers' experiences and concerns when teaching subjects outside their specialization, revealing difficulties accessing relevant modules, e-materials, and training opportunities. These resource limitations make it challenging for educators to deliver curriculum effectively and provide meaningful feedback to students. The study concluded that

specialist teachers generally achieve better student outcomes than non-specialist teachers, emphasizing the importance of appropriate teacher-subject alignment.

Psychological and Emotional Impacts

The psychological impact of out-of-field teaching represents a critical dimension often overlooked in policy discussions. Leonin's (2024) study identified "lack of confidence" as the primary theme emerging from teachers' experiences teaching outside their specialization. This confidence deficit significantly impacts teacher effectiveness and can create cascading effects on student learning and classroom dynamics.

Mangubos (2019) found that mismatched teachers reported strong feelings of ineffectiveness in their teaching strategies, lack of confidence in sharing knowledge and expertise, and perceptions of reduced effectiveness compared to specialist teachers. These psychological challenges can contribute to decreased job satisfaction and potentially influence teacher retention decisions.

The emotional toll of out-of-field teaching extends beyond individual confidence issues to encompass broader concerns about professional identity and competence. Teachers often experience stress, anxiety, and uncertainty when navigating unfamiliar content areas, particularly when students demonstrate greater subject knowledge than their instructors. This dynamic can create uncomfortable power imbalances in classroom environments and compromise the establishment of effective teacher-student relationships.

Impact on Student Outcomes

Research consistently demonstrates that teacher specialization mismatch negatively affects student achievement across multiple dimensions. Guiaselon et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between teachers' professional qualifications and student performance on the National Achievement Test, finding that higher teacher qualifications correlate with better student outcomes. However, the study also revealed that training alone for unqualified teachers does not improve student performance, suggesting that foundational subject knowledge remains crucial for effective instruction.

Mensah (2024) emphasized the significant impact of teacher qualifications on mathematics achievement, concluding that teacher qualification represents a major factor affecting student performance. The study recommended employing only qualified teachers with appropriate educational backgrounds to teach mathematics at the Senior High School level, highlighting the importance of proper teacher-subject alignment.

Malahay's (2021) study of science education revealed that most teachers lacked necessary educational qualifications to teach all science disciplines in the K12 curriculum. The research found that General Science teachers with outstanding ratings performed better than non-science

teachers, suggesting that subject-specific preparation significantly influences teaching effectiveness. The study discouraged assigning non-science teachers to handle science subjects due to their lack of necessary educational preparation.

Coping Mechanisms and Adaptations

Despite significant challenges, research has identified various coping mechanisms employed by mismatched teachers to navigate their assignments successfully. These adaptive strategies range from seeking collegial support to embracing technology-enhanced learning approaches. Professional development emerges as a critical coping mechanism, with teachers actively pursuing workshops, seminars, and training programs to enhance their subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasized that targeted professional development increases teachers' abilities and confidence, enabling them to adapt to diverse teaching circumstances. This finding suggests that appropriate support systems can significantly mitigate the challenges associated with out-of-field teaching.

Collaboration with colleagues represents another essential coping strategy. Trust et al. (2016) highlighted that engagement in professional learning networks and access to digital technologies foster continuous learning while providing teachers with practical strategies and resources. This collaborative approach helps build confidence and competence among mismatched teachers. Technology utilization has emerged as a valuable resource for addressing knowledge gaps and enhancing instructional effectiveness. Teachers increasingly rely on online resources, tutorials, and digital platforms to supplement their content knowledge and develop engaging learning experiences for students. Kimmons et al. (2018) noted that digital platforms provide teachers with accessible, diverse, and flexible resources to enhance instructional effectiveness.

Support Systems and Interventions

Effective support systems play crucial roles in helping mismatched teachers succeed in their assignments. Haryanto (2021) recommended comprehensive curriculum programs, senior mentoring, and training programs to equip teachers with necessary knowledge and skills for teaching mismatched subjects. The study emphasized the importance of addressing teacher recruitment issues through systematic preparation programs. Panela (2025c) explored the research landscape of basic education teachers, highlighting the importance of evaluating skills and competencies to inform professional development initiatives. This research underscores the need for systematic assessment of teacher capabilities to design targeted support programs.

Mentorship programs emerge as particularly effective interventions for supporting mismatched teachers. Experienced educators can provide guidance, share resources, and offer emotional support to colleagues navigating unfamiliar subject areas. These relationships create opportunities for collaborative problem-solving and professional growth.

II. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing phenomenological thematic analysis to explore the lived experiences of mismatched Senior High School teachers. Phenomenology, anchored in the philosophical works of Husserl and Heidegger, focuses on understanding the essence of lived experiences by exploring phenomena as experienced by individuals, free from preconceived theories or frameworks (van Manen, 2016). This approach proved particularly suitable for investigating the deeply personal and subjective experiences of teachers assigned to subjects outside their specialization. The phenomenological thematic analysis approach integrates philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology with systematic thematic analysis processes. This combination enables researchers to approach data both descriptively and interpretively, with phenomenology providing the philosophical lens to prioritize participants' subjective experiences while thematic analysis offers a practical framework for systematic data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Participants and Setting

The study was conducted in Palapag I District, DepEd Northern Samar Division, selected for its high concentration of mismatched teachers, making it an ideal context for exploring their experiences. Ten Senior High School teachers participated in the study, selected based on specific criteria ensuring relevance and depth of findings. Each participant possessed minimum three years of teaching experience, providing necessary insights into teaching profession complexities, and was currently teaching subjects outside their area of specialization. This sample size aligns with typical qualitative research designs, allowing for in-depth exploration of individual experiences while maintaining a manageable scope for phenomenological analysis. The carefully defined participant group provided clear understanding of the study's context and characteristics of those involved.

Data Collection

Data collection employed researcher-crafted interview questionnaires designed to explore participants' lived experiences, challenges encountered, and coping mechanisms as mismatched SHS teachers. In-depth, one-on-one interviews were conducted with all ten participants, allowing for comprehensive exploration of their perspectives, feelings, and interpretations of the mismatched teaching phenomenon. Interview responses in Waray and Filipino languages were transcribed and translated into English to facilitate analysis. The interview process prioritized creating safe spaces for participants to share their experiences openly and honestly, ensuring rich, detailed data collection that captured the essence of their lived experiences.

Data Analysis

Analysis followed Colaizzi's (1978) Phenomenological Thematic Analysis Model, a systematic seven-step approach specifically designed for phenomenological inquiry. This model

emphasizes uncovering and describing the essence of participants' lived experiences while maintaining their authenticity (Morrow et al., 2015). The seven-step process included: (1) obtaining a general sense of each transcript through multiple readings; (2) identifying significant statements connected to the research topic; (3) formulating meanings from these significant statements while setting aside personal biases; (4) clustering themes with similar underlying concepts; (5) integrating theme clusters into exhaustive descriptions; (6) establishing fundamental structures of the phenomenon; and (7) validating findings with study participants. This rigorous approach ensured that analysis remained grounded in participants' actual experiences while providing systematic procedures for identifying patterns and themes across the data. The validation step, where researchers returned to participants to verify findings, enhanced credibility and trustworthiness of the results.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical standards, beginning with approval from the NwSSU Ethics Committee and relevant educational authorities. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection, ensuring transparency about research purposes, data usage, and participant rights. Confidentiality was maintained through compliance with RA 10173 (Data Privacy Act of 2012), with participants assigned codes (P1, P2, etc.) to protect their identities. Data security measures included encryption and access controls to prevent unauthorized use or disclosure. The researchers implemented reflexivity practices to acknowledge potential biases and ensure participant experiences remained central to the analysis.

Communication with authorities followed proper channels, with formal approvals obtained from the Graduate School Dean, Schools Division Superintendent, District Supervisor, and relevant school principals. These procedures ensured ethical conduct throughout the research process while maintaining professional standards and institutional compliance.

III. Results and Discussion

The phenomenological thematic analysis revealed comprehensive insights into the lived experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of mismatched Senior High School teachers. The findings provide a nuanced understanding of how educators navigate the complex terrain of teaching subjects outside their specialization, offering valuable perspectives for educational policy and practice.

Lived Experiences of Mismatched Teachers

Nine emergent themes characterized the lived experiences of mismatched SHS teachers, revealing the multifaceted nature of their professional journey.

Experience of Adaptation and Preparation. Participants described extensive adaptation processes required when teaching outside their specialization. Teachers emphasized the necessity of thorough preparation and utilization of varied teaching techniques to ensure effective instruction. One participant noted, "Based on my teaching experience, it's a challenge for me to teach the subject area that are outside my specialization. In order for me to impart and share my knowledge to my students, I read and read a lot of books or any materials that is helpful for my subject before I stand in front of my students." This finding aligns with research by Abella et al. (2021), who emphasized that teaching outside one's specialization requires extensive preparation and adaptation of teaching strategies. The constant need for adaptation fosters a culture of lifelong learning among teachers as they strive to remain ahead of their students academically.

Experience of Continuous Personal and Professional Growth. Participants consistently reported that teaching mismatched subjects fostered significant personal and professional development. The experience encouraged them to develop adaptability, creativity, and resilience while expanding their pedagogical approaches and subject matter expertise. One educator reflected, "Being a mismatched teacher has profoundly impacted my personal and professional growth. Embracing the challenge of teaching outside my specialization has fostered adaptability, creativity, and resilience." This growth mindset aligns with Dweck's (2015) research on growth-oriented perspectives, suggesting that teachers with such mindsets are better equipped to navigate challenges and transform them into opportunities for improvement. The collaborative aspects of seeking support from colleagues also contributed to professional community building and enhanced teaching effectiveness.

Experience of Collaboration and Student-Centered Learning. Teaching outside specialization promoted collaborative learning approaches and student-centered methodologies. Participants reported focusing more on facilitating student discussions and encouraging peer-to-peer learning rather than traditional lecture-based instruction. This shift created opportunities for reciprocal learning where both teachers and students learned from each other. The emphasis on collaborative learning aligns with Roselli's (2016) findings that student-centered approaches foster understanding and create more engaging learning environments. The reciprocal nature of learning in these contexts demonstrates the adaptive capacity of educators when faced with knowledge limitations.

Experience of Rewards and Satisfaction. Despite challenges, participants found significant satisfaction in their mismatched teaching assignments. Student success, appreciation, and positive feedback provided validation and motivation for continued efforts. One teacher shared, "The most rewarding moment that I experienced is when I saw the results of quizzes, performance tasks or assessments of my students that they got a high score in my subject. Aside from that when my students told me the word 'Thank you, Ma'am', I felt appreciated." These findings reflect Ryan and Deci's (2017) research on intrinsic motivation, where positive student

outcomes serve as powerful motivators for educators. The sense of accomplishment derived from student success validates teachers' efforts and enhances their professional satisfaction.

Experience of Various Emotions in Teaching. Participants experienced a wide range of emotions throughout their mismatched teaching journey. Initial nervousness and anxiety often gave way to enjoyment and fulfillment as teachers adapted to their assignments. However, feelings of betrayal, disappointment, and inadequacy also emerged, particularly when teachers felt unprepared for their assignments. These emotional experiences align with Skaalvik and Skaalvik's (2015) research indicating that perceived teacher competence significantly predicts self-efficacy. The evolution from initial anxiety to eventual enjoyment demonstrates teachers' resilience and adaptability when provided with appropriate support and time for adjustment.

Experience of Flexibility and Exploration in Teaching. Mismatched assignments encouraged teachers to develop flexibility and explore innovative teaching approaches. Participants reported discovering new interests and strengths while transitioning from traditional lecturing to more facilitative roles. This transformation empowered students to participate actively in learning through student-centered discussions and collaborative activities. The shift toward facilitative teaching aligns with contemporary educational movements emphasizing active engagement and collaborative learning environments (Hattie, 2017). Teachers' willingness to embrace new approaches despite initial discomfort demonstrates their commitment to student learning and professional growth.

Experience of Ambiguity and Confusion. Participants acknowledged experiencing confusion and ambiguity, particularly regarding administrative tasks and role definition. This uncertainty sometimes led to self-doubt and questions about teaching effectiveness. Administrative confusion arose when teachers were asked to submit documents related to their areas of specialization despite teaching different subjects. These experiences reflect broader concerns about teacher professional identity and competence highlighted in research on teacher mismatch (Darling-Hammond, 2014). The struggle to define professional roles when teaching outside expertise areas emphasizes the need for clear institutional support and guidance.

Experience of Validation and Support. Positive student feedback and learning outcomes provided crucial validation for mismatched teachers. Witnessing students understand and apply concepts reinforced teaching efforts and provided sense of accomplishment. Additionally, support from colleagues and mentors emerged as essential elements enabling teachers to navigate their challenging assignments successfully. The importance of validation aligns with research emphasizing student feedback's impact on teacher motivation and professional growth (Hattie & Clarke, 2019). Collaborative support systems help build confidence and provide practical assistance for addressing content knowledge gaps.

Challenges Encountered by Mismatched Teachers

Five primary categories of challenges emerged from the analysis, revealing the complex obstacles faced by mismatched teachers in their daily practice.

Challenges of Preparation and Time Management. Participants reported that teaching multiple subjects outside their expertise required extensive preparation time, creating stress and workload management difficulties. The need to research unfamiliar content, design appropriate activities, and ensure curriculum alignment demanded significantly more time than teaching within their specialization. This finding aligns with Daniels et al. (2019), who identified time-consuming lesson planning as a major stressor for teachers managing new curriculum areas. The cognitive burden of selecting appropriate content and activities while ensuring student comprehension represents a substantial challenge requiring institutional support and resources.

Challenges of Knowledge and Resource Limitations. Limited pedagogical knowledge, insufficient resources, and lack of training significantly impacted teaching strategies and effectiveness. Participants struggled with accessing appropriate materials, finding MELC-based information, and locating suitable activities for their lessons. The absence of specialized equipment and up-to-date materials further complicated instruction delivery. These resource limitations align with Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who emphasized that insufficient resources and inadequate professional development opportunities hinder teachers' ability to achieve instructional goals effectively. The over-reliance on internet resources without structured guidance can lead to inconsistencies in content quality and curriculum alignment.

Challenges of Student Engagement and Confidence. Difficulty explaining complex concepts led to reduced student respect and confidence in teacher abilities. Some participants reported feeling intimidated by academically strong students who might possess more subject knowledge than their instructors. Limited student interactions due to subject limitations further complicated classroom dynamics. These challenges reflect Hattie and Clarke's (2019) research emphasizing that clear instruction is essential for maintaining student engagement and respect. When teachers struggle to convey subject information effectively, it can erode student confidence and negatively impact learning outcomes.

Challenges of Increased Workloads and Stress. Teaching subjects outside specialization substantially increased workloads and stress levels among participants. The mental and emotional exhaustion resulting from constant adaptation to new subjects, terminology, and methodologies created significant professional strain. Resource limitations further intensified productivity concerns and confidence issues. The stress associated with mismatched teaching aligns with research by Klassen et al. (2021) on teacher adaptation challenges. The additional effort required for mastering unfamiliar content while maintaining instructional effectiveness creates substantial psychological and emotional demands on educators.

Challenges of Instructional Effectiveness. Participants struggled with creating suitable activities, explaining complex concepts, and managing diverse student needs effectively. Knowledge gaps and classroom management challenges contributed to self-doubt and concerns about teaching effectiveness. Communication barriers when explaining complex concepts further complicated instruction delivery. These instructional challenges reflect the importance of pedagogical content knowledge identified by Shulman (1986). When teachers lack subject-specific expertise, they struggle to create engaging activities, address student questions effectively, and maintain instructional quality.

Coping Mechanisms of Mismatched Teachers

Eight distinct coping mechanisms emerged from the analysis, demonstrating the resilience and adaptability of mismatched teachers in navigating their challenging assignments.

Seeking Guidance and Mentorship. Participants consistently emphasized the importance of seeking support from experienced colleagues and subject matter experts. Formal mentorship programs and informal collegial relationships provided essential guidance for lesson planning, content delivery, and pedagogical strategies. One participant noted, "I reached out to my colleagues and mentors who are experts in the subjects that are not my major. I candidly ask for what is the best activity to have, what strategy to employ in my teaching." This reliance on mentorship demonstrates the value of professional learning communities and collaborative practices in fostering teacher growth and development (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Access to experienced colleagues and mentors significantly mitigates challenges associated with teaching outside specialization.

Personal and Professional Development and Learning. Continuous learning through workshops, seminars, training programs, and self-directed study emerged as crucial coping strategies. Participants actively pursued professional development opportunities to enhance their subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. Online courses, collaborative networks, and educational forums facilitated resource sharing and best practice discussions. This commitment to continuous learning aligns with research by Avalos (2016), emphasizing that ongoing professional development increases teachers' confidence and capacity to adapt to novel subjects. The proactive approach to learning demonstrates teachers' dedication to professional growth despite challenging circumstances.

Utilizing Resources and Technology. Participants leveraged various technological resources to bridge knowledge gaps and enhance instructional effectiveness. YouTube tutorials, online platforms, educational apps, and digital resources provided accessible support for content mastery and pedagogical innovation. Integration of technology facilitated more engaging and interactive learning experiences for students. The strategic use of technology aligns with Koehler et al. (2014) research on Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), which equips

teachers to design and deliver effective lessons. Technology integration helps bridge expertise gaps while fostering active learning environments.

Planning and Preparation. Systematic planning and thorough preparation emerged as essential coping mechanisms for managing mismatched assignments. Participants dedicated specific time for lesson planning, resource gathering, and content mastery to ensure confident delivery. Organizing teaching materials and creating engaging activities helped maintain instructional quality. Thorough preparation strategies align with effective teaching practices identified in educational research. The investment in comprehensive planning demonstrates teachers' commitment to instructional excellence despite subject knowledge limitations.

Adopting Effective Teaching Strategies. Participants employed diverse pedagogical approaches to address their subject knowledge limitations while maintaining student engagement. Student-centered methodologies, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative activities shifted focus from content delivery to learning facilitation. Technology integration and flexible assessments accommodated diverse learning styles and needs. The adoption of student-centered approaches aligns with research by Zimmerman and Schunk (2017) emphasizing that self-directed learning fosters independence and improves academic performance. These strategies enable teachers to create collaborative and empowering learning environments despite content knowledge gaps.

Maintaining Positive Mindset and Reflection. Viewing challenges as growth opportunities and practicing self-kindness helped participants navigate difficulties effectively. Regular reflection, feedback utilization, and celebration of small successes maintained motivation and acknowledged progress. Self-assessment and peer discussions facilitated continuous improvement and adaptation. This positive mindset aligns with Fredrickson's (2016) broaden-and-build theory, highlighting that positive perspectives foster resilience, creativity, and problem-solving capabilities. Reflective practices support Schön's (2017) theory that systematic reflection leads to professional growth and improved decision-making.

Open Communication and Collaboration. Maintaining transparent communication with students, parents, and colleagues helped address concerns promptly and build supportive relationships. Facilitating constructive feedback and fostering mutual respect created collaborative environments promoting shared growth and learning. Open dialogue reduced feelings of isolation while building supportive networks. The emphasis on communication aligns with Hattie and Zierer's (2018) research indicating that open communication fosters collaborative environments and enhances teaching efficacy. Collaborative learning among educators promotes shared accountability and innovation in teaching practices.

Engaging with Broader Educational Communities. Participation in online forums, educational communities, and professional learning networks provided access to broader expertise and best practices. Collaborative workshops and peer mentoring offered specialized support and resource sharing opportunities. These connections enabled teachers to leverage collective wisdom

and stay informed about emerging trends and methodologies. This engagement with professional communities aligns with Trust et al. (2016) research on professional learning networks, which provide opportunities for collaboration, resource sharing, and instructional improvement. For mismatched teachers, such engagement is particularly valuable for bridging subject matter expertise gaps.

Integration with Current Research.

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of research on teacher adaptation and resilience. Panela (2025a, 2025b) explored the impact of COVID-19 on college students' mental health, revealing insights about adaptation strategies during challenging circumstances that parallel the experiences of mismatched teachers developing new competencies under pressure. Similarly, the research capacity building experiences documented by Panela (2025d) provide valuable context for understanding how educators develop new skills and overcome professional challenges.The comprehensive nature of this study's findings aligns with Panela's (2025c) mapping of research landscapes in basic education, emphasizing the importance of systematic evaluation of teacher skills and competencies. The identified coping mechanisms and support needs directly inform professional development initiatives and capacity building programs for mismatched teachers.

Implications for Educational Practice

The findings have significant implications for educational policy and practice. The identification of specific challenges and coping mechanisms provides a foundation for developing targeted support programs for mismatched teachers. The emphasis on mentorship, professional development, and collaborative learning suggests that institutional support systems play crucial roles in teacher success. The positive aspects of mismatched teaching, including professional growth and pedagogical innovation, indicate that with appropriate support, these assignments can contribute to teacher development and educational excellence. However, the challenges identified emphasize the need for systematic interventions to address resource limitations, workload concerns, and confidence issues.

IV. Conclusion

This phenomenological inquiry revealed the complex, multifaceted experiences of mismatched Senior High School teachers, demonstrating both significant challenges and remarkable resilience. The nine themes characterizing lived experiences showed that while mismatched teaching creates substantial difficulties, it also fosters professional growth, pedagogical innovation, and collaborative learning approaches. The five categories of challenges—preparation and time management, knowledge and resource limitations, student engagement issues, increased workloads and stress, and instructional effectiveness concerns—highlight the substantial demands placed on teachers assigned outside their specialization. These findings underscore the need for systematic institutional support and targeted interventions.

The eight identified coping mechanisms demonstrate teachers' remarkable adaptability and resourcefulness in navigating challenging assignments. From seeking mentorship and pursuing professional development to embracing technology and maintaining positive mindsets, these educators developed comprehensive strategies for success despite significant obstacles. The study's findings have important implications for educational policy and practice. The proposed competency alignment program addresses identified challenges while building on successful coping mechanisms. Recommendations include implementing comprehensive professional development programs, establishing mentorship systems, providing resource-sharing platforms, and creating supportive institutional policies that recognize and address the unique needs of mismatched teachers.

Future research should explore the long-term impacts of mismatched teaching on both educator careers and student outcomes. Additionally, investigation of successful institutional support models could provide valuable guidance for educational leaders seeking to optimize the effectiveness of mismatched teaching assignments while supporting teacher well-being and professional growth.

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