



Received: 15-11-2023
Accepted: 25-12-2023

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

Navigating Uncharted Territories: Difficulties and Opportunities of the Out-of-Field Physical Education Student Interns

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Abstract

This study examined the experiences of the out-of-field of physical education (BPED) interns. This research aims to explore PE interns' challenges when teaching subjects outside of their field and how they responded to these challenges. The study employed a phenomenological approach, and the data was collected from six PE student interns from Cebu normal university. The results revealed that teaching out-of-field subjects presents significant challenges for PE interns, they persevered and remained innovative in their teaching approaches. The study

highlights two themes: (a) difficulties in teaching pedagogies and (b) opportunities perceived. The findings also suggested that the challenges of teaching out-of-field subjects allowed interns to improve their teaching skills, incorporated new strategies, and expanded their knowledge of different subjects. In conclusion, this study showed that while teaching out-of-field subjects may be difficult, it provided a valuable training ground for physical education interns to progress and improved their teaching abilities.

Keywords: Out-of-Field, Physical Education, Physical Education Interns, Lived Experiences

Introduction

Out-of-field teaching refers to teachers teaching outside their field of qualifications in an institution. The problem persists in some parts of the world due to the high standards of licensing (Ingersoll, 2014) and the shortage of teachers in the district or city (Sanchez & Rue, 2019) ^[8]. In the realm of education, the quality of learned experiences was significantly shaped by the presence and accessibility of a diverse array of resources that facilitate the implementation of effective teaching methods. (Hattie, 2009, as cited by du Plessis, 2013 ^[4]) it could be asserted that educators continue to have been the primary and most impactful asset within educational resources. This phenomenological study described how these difficulties influence the student interns teaching courses not part of their degree programs at the university.

The availability of resources to support effective pedagogies impacts the teachers (Pacana *et al.* 2019) ^[7]. Many teachers must instruct in areas beyond their specialized knowledge, potentially compromising the quality of education. This situation arises from a need for more specialized course instructors and a growing school student population.

The Philippines had adopted the k to 12 curriculum and implemented many new curricula in the past few years. In 2016, the department of education implemented the k to 12 curriculum in primary education; its goal was to address learner needs and may have been adapted to fit specific learner groups. In lieu of these changes, Cebu Normal University responded to these changes by revising its degree programs in education. The revisions include the bachelor of secondary education major in MAPEH, in which the degree program was split into its focused areas for physical education and culture and arts. The challenge was that the curriculum did not match the degree program of the teaching interns at the Cebu Normal University. Teaching internship provides critical experience to education students as it trains them to learn the skills they need in teaching and professional development. The 4th year intern teaching students at the university came with a great responsibility. The intern learned from their experience in order for them to improve their teaching skills interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. The skills and knowledge they had learned from the student teaching intern program at the university would contribute to their future career growth, effectively priming them for their initial job and aiding them in making informed career choices.

An insufficient number of qualified teachers could lead to overcrowded classrooms, limited access to quality education, and decreased student learning outcomes. When faced with a shortage of teachers, education policymakers often resort to hiring

individuals who may not have the proper qualifications or training for the specific subjects or grade levels they were tasked to teach (Cinkir, S.; Kurum, G., 2015) [2].

Having out-of-field student interns temporarily alleviates the shortage, ensuring that classrooms had an adult presence and that students continued to receive some form of education. Looking at the current situation of the physical education student interns in the university, they may face challenges and difficulties in teaching in their area or subjects that were intended for something other than their degree program. By studying the lived experience of physical education student interns in the university, we researchers could identify their challenges and suggest ways, strategies, or techniques that the interns may utilize to remediate these difficulties.

Philosophical Stance

This research could contribute hugely to the body of knowledge and helped develop the educational system in this nation. The study could be a key to unlocking the lived experiences of out-of-field teaching of student interns. Observing the situation led the researchers to examine issues that the Cebu Normal University students had experienced during their internship. The researchers' authentic observations yielded gaps that were not given enough attention and intervention. Thus, ontological, methodological, and axiological assumptions anchored this study.

Ontology Assumption

Reality was context-bound, so participants continuously recreate it based on their understanding (Slevitch, 2011). Reality was to believe that something made sense. Reality was single, tangible, and fragmentable. This study is intended to describe the physical education student interns' out-of-field teaching experiences during their training ground, precisely, the teaching of music and arts, and the challenges encountered when teaching that was not their field. In this study, the teachers could express their perceptions, ideas, and opinions regarding specific phenomena through this study. The researcher agreed that realities may be discerned directly from experiences and that many realities could be seen from various angles or viewpoints. It opened up a channel for individuals to express themselves and contribute by allowing them the opportunity to do so.

Methodological Assumption

The study presented was the result of the researcher's values. Through a descriptive phenomenological approach, the researchers could identify and describe the physical education student interns in their subjective experience and insights about out-of-field teaching. The underlying structures of experiences or processes visible in the raw data could build a framework. Before making generalizations, the researcher worked with the particular data and then went into great length about the study's context. The researchers ensured they interpret the participants' answers and data without prejudice or biases.

Axiology Assumption

The main objective of this research endeavor was to elucidate the real-life experience encountered by fourth-year college Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) student interns as they undertook their teaching internship,

encompassing physical education and other academic courses. These lived experiences unveiled a deeper dimension of significance within their realms, thus furnishing them with an array of opportunities for growth and development. The researchers delved into the prominent values that distinctly influenced the narrative of these individuals, aligning the researcher's interpretation with that of the participants. The broader relevance of these findings extends beyond the academic realm, encompassing stakeholders within educational institutions, policymakers, and members of the wider community. The introduction of this manuscript thoughtfully expounds upon the study's rationale, elucidating its potential to make a meaningful impact on a diverse range of individuals and institutions.

Domain of Inquiry

The study described the individual experiences of Cebu Normal University Physical Education college interns in teaching non-PE subjects.

Methodology

Design

The researchers utilized a descriptive phenomenological qualitative research design. This study is intended to identify the challenges, difficulties, and struggles of the physical education student interns. According to Edmund Husserl, descriptive phenomenology aims to discover, explore, and disclose the meaning or essence of the phenomena of interest (Priest, 2004, p. 6; as cited by Augusto Jr. 2014). The descriptive phenomenological research design was the best way to study the lived experiences of these physical education interns, and by doing so, the researchers could recommend strategies and techniques that the student interns could utilize.

Key Informants and Sampling Design

The Physical Education student interns participated in the studies at Cebu Normal University. Six bonafide student interns of Cebu Normal University had been selected to participate in the studies. The participants had been chosen through the use of snowball sampling. Snowball sampling was one of the most popular methods of sampling in qualitative research, central to which were the characteristics of networking and referral. Researchers usually started with a small number of initial contacts (seeds), who fit the researched criteria and were invited to become participants within the research. (Parker & Scott, 2019). They had been selected through the following criteria:

1. Student interns taking up Bachelor of Physical Education.
2. Student interns who are handling or teaching Music and Arts.
3. Students with ages ranging from 20 - 25 years old.
4. Bonafide 4th year student of Cebu Normal University.

Locale

This study was conducted at Cebu Normal University-Main Campus, located at Osmeña Boulevard, Cebu City. Cebu Normal University is a pioneering university offering a Bachelor of Physical Education as a degree major. The university is across from Abellana National High School and beside the Banko Central ng Pilipinas. The respondents were interviewed during their pre-service school days'

vacant time. The initial school year 2023-2024 semester had been dedicated to conducting this investigation.

Instrumentation

The primary research instruments of the study were the researchers themselves. This study used a qualitative methodology to understand better the experiences of ILS out-of-field Physical Education student instructors. The researcher's primary function was to conduct interviews using a directive interview and a question guide. Participants would be interviewed with semi-structured questions, and their responses would be recorded.

Data Gathering Procedure

The first step in the Descriptive Phenomenological Qualitative Research study's data collection was to ensure that there would be no personal views or biases of the researchers. The permit to conduct a study in the Cebu Normal University- Integrated Laboratory School was forwarded to the ILS supervisor and mentors of the student interns. The study involved the participation of six student interns of Physical Education at Cebu Normal University who would be teaching music and arts, which was not part of their specialization. The researchers established these criteria to ensure the relevance and specificity of the data collected. Before data collection, the researchers interviewed all informants with the same leading question, "Can you please share your experience and insights in teaching Music and Arts?" The data collected from the interviews from the informants were confidential. This data gathering allows the researchers to come up with their conclusions by analyzing and interpreting the results.

Data Analysis

The researchers used Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenology data analysis approach to report on the interns' lived experiences while participating in out-of-field education. The researcher extracted, organized, and analyzed a set of data narratives using Colaizzi's methodology. The themes produced by the study served as the researchers' framework for comprehending the phenomenon under investigation.

The process of utilizing Colaizzi's technique was that first, the researchers read and re-read all of the transcribed interviews to understand the data. Then, they extracted significant statements. These were phrases or sentences that directly pertained to the phenomenon. During the process, the researchers broadly categorized pertinent quotes and generated sub-themes based on multiple statements that conveyed similar meanings. This process was to give meaning to statements given. Then, the researchers would repeat the first three steps to all interviews to create final themes based on the formulated meanings. The researchers created this comprehensive or exhaustive description to describe the informants' experiences. To ensure the results aligned with their experiences, the informants validated the presented, examined, and interpreted data. Additionally, experts confirmed the study's findings.

Rigor of the Study

According to Durning SJ *et al.* (2015), to be as neutral and objective as possible in interpreting data and presenting results, these four strategies determined Credibility,

transferability, dependability, and confirmability used to provide sufficient contextual information.

Credibility: According to Shenton AK (2004), Credibility guaranteed truthful and open reporting of how biases and other potential confounders were detected and dealt with during the study's various stages. Such reporting and interviews, which were first specified in the study's conceptual framework, might be used to do this. The researchers included training that was looking for prior experiences to the background theory access to the study population in every informant. Once the interview begins, it might be simpler to receive the answer because the researchers may know the informants better. The researcher could then be convinced that they genuinely provided thoughtful responses in the interview. However, the researchers used a method to ensure the informants responded truthfully.

Dependability: According to Shenton AK (2004), The research methodology must be described in detail so that future researchers could duplicate the study and guarantee dependability. The researchers in this study described the out-of-field teaching of physical education students interns, specifically at Cebu Normal University. All data were gathered and checked based on the responses of each informant. The researchers ensured that the data covered were accurate and concise after the interview was written out.

Confirmability: According to Marshall MN (1996), By employing and adhering to standards of rigor such as member checking, triangulation, and peer review, as well as by eliminating or, at the very least, explaining any researcher's effect on the outcome, the results were more likely to be confirmed. All the details were guaranteed to ensure that the data was based on the informants and that no bias was present while analyzing the data. This was done to ensure that all the information gathered from the informants was adequately analyzed and verified.

Transferability: By outlining sample criteria, including the study's geographic location, the quantity and make-up of its participants, and the duration of its data collecting and analysis. The study was focused explicitly on the out-of-field teaching of Physical Education Student Interns at Cebu Normal University. The researchers served as the instruments and subjects throughout the study. All the recordings, interviews, questions, and data analysis ensured that the findings were secure and concrete. The researcher also allowed other researchers to determine whether the study was transferable to their research.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher began the study after receiving approval from the university's Research Ethics Committee (REC). For the data collection process, the researchers followed the ethical guidelines. The researchers provided the participants with an informed consent form. The study's participation was entirely optional or voluntary. The researchers informed the participants beforehand that they taped and recorded the interview, transcribed it, and only utilized the recordings for data analysis. The researchers were the only ones with access to the recordings—the researcher's disc stored the recordings in a private disc. Pseudonyms would be employed during the whole length of the investigation to keep the informants' identities secret.

Results and Discussion

In the process of data analysis there are ten significant statements present and discussing the actual experiences of Cebu Normal University interns studying physical education that are teaching Out-of-Field subjects during their internship. Upon the clustering, the two main themes that emerged from the study were Difficulties in Teaching Pedagogies and Opportunities Perceived, along with the sub themes of Difficulties towards the Content, Difficulties towards Classroom Management, and Learn New Things.

Theme 1: Difficulties in Teaching Pedagogies

The first theme indicated that the informants encountered difficulties teaching subjects beyond their expertise, primarily in Physical Education. This highlighted how their restricted knowledge in the subjects they taught, particularly in Music and Arts, made it challenging for the informants to deliver effective lessons to their students.

Difficulties towards the Content

Preparing accurate content and lessons for their classes posed a significant challenge for the physical education interns. As PE majors who had primarily focused on studying physical education and health, tackling non-PE-related subjects and familiarizing themselves with the lessons from the beginning presented an additional obstacle for them, apart from the challenges of preparation and classroom management. One key informant said:

“So one of the hardest experience jud namo in teaching out-of-field is kana jung we don't know unsa jud ang content sa labi na sa music and arts... Unsure mi always, unsure mi always unsa amo ikuan sa amoang mga students and we don't know jud unsa na activities na mabagay jud sa students...” (So one of the hardest experiences we have encountered in teaching out-of-field is that we don't know what the content should be, especially in Music and Arts... We're always unsure of what we should teach the students and we don't know what activities are accurate for them.)

Another informant said:

“Ay oo, kanang sa challenges nu is kanang music and arts nu wala jod mi naka kuan ana naka kaning wala sa among subjects sa atong pagka BPED.” (Yeah, the challenges in Music and Arts is that we didn't delve deep into it when we were studying in BPED.)

Teaching outside their field, particularly for PE interns, poses a challenge as it diverges significantly from their expertise, demanding more extensive studying and effort compared to their peers. One informant said:

“When it comes to Values which is I taught grade 2 niya it's all about the creation of God, so not inline gyud sakong teaching style og sa akong mga expertise...” (When it comes to Values which I taught in grade 2 and it's all about the creation of God, so it's really not aligned with my teaching style and my expertise...)

Another informant shared:

“That's why when we encountered that we are the ones who will handle Music and Arts, especially in the ILS [Integrated Laboratory School] especially handling Elementary students, it was quite shocking at first considering that we don't have any technical capabilities and knowledge about it.”

The subjects P.E, Music and Arts, and Values have different principles and ideologies which had been emphasized by the informants. They differed from the content itself as well as the actualization of the topic. This coincided with the study of Co *et al.* (2021) ^[3] where they concluded that teachers teaching out of their specialization faced crucial issues and challenges. These challenges were mainly due to limited subject matter knowledge (SMK) and influenced the teacher's pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which was crucial in the preparation and actual teaching. Ensuring effective learning required teachers to dedicate ample time and effort to studying the subject's content, as well as carefully planning activities that aligned with the students' abilities.

Difficulties towards Classroom Management

The interns' challenges with the teaching pedagogy extended beyond subject matter; they also encompassed issues related to classroom management and student engagement. To address these complexities, they explored various strategies aimed at fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment while staying aligned with the educational goals of music and arts. As one informant noted:

“But one thing that I discovered is try to really [uhm] try to have a really good rapport with the students in a way you still have the sense of authority. You as an educator, you must have [uhm] a very creative and [catchy] way to get the attention of students especially if you know the lesson.”

The informant emphasized the importance of building positive relationships with students as a strategy for effective classroom management, particularly in the context of teaching Music and Arts. This approach aligns with the findings of Zhang Z. (2022), who demonstrated the positive impact of teacher-learner rapport on learner engagement. It is also consistent with the research conducted by Slunt *et al.* (2004), which highlighted the benefits of instructional methods that prioritize learning over instructor-centered teaching, ultimately enhancing students' comprehension of the subject matter.

Fostering a strong rapport with students can be advantageous for both sides, particularly for interns instructing outside their field. Gaining students' interest can happen naturally, but it's also essential to maintain appropriate boundaries and authority. One informant remarked:

“...kanang dapat imohang strategy kay more on ummm kana bitawng authoritative jud kayka sa front, like everyone must listen kanang ingon ana jud na aura kay there are teachers [who] also have different

strategies, different as mine. Nya akoo man gud strategy is more on kanang strict ko kay to balance bitaw sa environment sa classroom..." (Your strategy must be authoritative especially in front [of the class], like everyone must listen, that kind of aura. Because there are teachers [who] also have different strategies that are different from mine. My strategy is somewhat strict to balance the environment in the classroom...)

Another informant said:

"Even though you are feminine, you must force yourself to be authoritative, so that you can catch the attention of your students and allow them to listen to you as a teacher."

Imposing authority towards children is a challenge. Such an approach could scare them off and could be a barrier in connecting with the students. However, proper implementation of authority, consistent enforcement of rules, and providing justification to such rules can make the teaching process easier. This concurs with the study by Erica Fenner- McAdoo (2021) which teaches styles fosters a structured learning environment, where teachers maintain control while also encouraging student participation and independent thinking. To ensure that students have a great and interesting educational experience, it is crucial to promote a balance between authority and warmth and support.

Theme 2: Opportunities Perceived

The second theme thoroughly examines the perceived opportunities and potential advantages of educators teaching subjects beyond their primary areas of expertise. By delving into educators' experiences and viewpoints, this theme aims to illuminate how teaching out-of-field can nurture creativity, adaptability, and a more comprehensive grasp of various educational concepts.

Learn New Things

Despite the hardships of teaching out of their field, the student interns found a silver lining with their internship. They didn't see the experience as a barricade from succeeding but as an opportunity to flourish and empower themselves. One informant said:

"But on the other hand, though, it is quite fulfilling because it is a self-learning process, and it didn't hinder us knowing that we don't have any like the foundational aspects, [the] theoretical aspect, we don't have that [ah] but right now on the field itself it is really fulfilling, considering that you will be immersing to a new subject and it helps us elevate our ways on how to teach our students because it really depends on us on how we will deliver the lesson because we don't want to present ourselves as the teachers of this specific subjects like if we will handle Music and Arts [uhm] we want also to be presentable in front, we should be knowledgeable"

Another informant stated:

"However, for me, it is fulfilling in my part, kay I really thought nga dili kaayo ko creative in terms of

kanang mga visual aids." (However, for me. It is fulfilling in my part because I really thought that I am not creative in terms of preparing visual aids.)

One of the opportunities that student interns had the chance to explore was tapping into their inner creativity. This experience enabled them to surpass their limits and gain a deeper understanding of themselves while teaching outside their field.

Besides utilizing their creativity, they also get to apply it in their classes, such as Music and Arts. The information they have gathered while teaching these subjects has made them more competent in their field. They consider this experience beneficial as it allows them to learn and discover things that are outside of their expertise. One informant shared:

"...Especially kay gamit kaayo ni siya during the board exam jud, kani imong nakat-on during the internship, gamit kaayo ni siya kay during the board exam man gud dili man gud siya b- dili man gud siya BPED alone ra imohang itake, diba? So, you will take [um] an exam about the MAPEH itself." (This is very useful for us, especially for the board exams. Everything we have learned from the internship will be useful for the board exams since we will not be taking BPED alone, right? We will take the exam as the MAPEH itself.)

The opportunities perceived from teaching out of the field emphasized the role of professional development, mentorship, and support systems in empowering educators to leverage these opportunities effectively, ultimately contributing to the enrichment of teaching practices and the holistic development of students in a dynamic educational landscape. The PE student interns teaching out-of-field must practice preparedness by searching reliable sources and learning from the MAPEH book by Hormenu *et al.* (2014). It, therefore, enhanced pre-service teacher preparation and provided an opportunity for beginning teachers to the real-life teaching situation and to become socialized into the profession as they put together subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge into lesson delivery.

Exhaustive Description

This study sought to investigate the experiences of student interns majoring in physical education when teaching subjects outside their expertise, such as music and arts. The research uncovered two primary themes: Difficulties in Teaching Pedagogies and Opportunities Perceived, accompanied by the sub-themes Difficulties towards the Content, Difficulties towards Classroom Management, and Learn New Things.

Notably, a key issue was the Difficulties in Teaching Pedagogies. The difficulties in teaching subjects outside their expertise, primarily in Physical Education, emphasized their limited knowledge in areas like Music and Arts, which hindered their ability to provide effective instruction to students. They faced both difficulties with the content and classroom management. The physical education interns, primarily focused on their PE and health studies, encountered a significant challenge in preparing accurate content and lessons for non-PE subjects. This was further compounded by the need to acquaint themselves with these unfamiliar subjects from scratch. The interns struggled with

teaching methods beyond just the subject matter; they also faced challenges related to classroom management and keeping students engaged. To overcome these issues, they experimented with different strategies to create a supportive and engaging learning environment that aligned with the educational goals of music and arts.

The second theme is Opportunities Perceived, and this theme includes "learn new things." The second theme thoroughly examines the perceived opportunities and potential advantages of educators teaching subjects beyond their primary areas of expertise. By delving into educators' experiences and viewpoints, this theme aims to illuminate how teaching out-of-field can nurture creativity, adaptability, and a more comprehensive grasp of various educational concepts. Despite the hardships of teaching out of their field, the student interns found a silver lining with their internship. The researchers have found that out-of-field teaching is not a hindrance to imparting knowledge and learning through the experience we get; instead, it can be an opportunity for self-development. One of the opportunities that student interns had the chance to explore was tapping into their inner creativity. This experience enabled them to surpass their limits and gain a deeper understanding of themselves while teaching outside their field.

Finally, the interns are faced with a challenge of teaching subjects that are not related to their field of study such as Music and Art. This is because their course is Bachelor of Physical Education. However, this challenge has made them more innovative and open-minded. It has helped them become more creative in developing their teaching materials as they have shifted their focus from their own interests to the needs of their students. Out-of-field teaching has made them more flexible and adaptable, which has broadened their knowledge and skills.

Conclusion

To sum up, the interns faced challenges, and yet they managed to take the initiative and innovate in terms of teaching various subjects, activities, room management, and imposing values. The results showed the hardships of the Physical Education student interns upon teaching out-of-field subjects. Nonetheless, it also proved that these challenges were not a hindrance to the preparation of becoming a teacher. It somehow opened the eyes of both the researchers and the physical education intern that this phenomenon was inevitable in the real world, and having to experience such a phenomenon was an opportunity for them to venture out of their capabilities and push the Physical Education interns to their limit.

Recommendation

The study navigated the experiences of the Physical Education student interns as they taught out-of-field subjects. It was evident that these interns encountered challenges and difficulties as they underwent this phenomenon. However, they found a silver lining, for they believed it was an eye-opener and a chance for them to grow and venture out new taunting pedagogies. The researchers recommended letting the Physical Education student interns teach based on their studies to showcase a quality education about PE. Nonetheless, suppose there was the need to let the Physical Education student interns teach out-of-field subjects because it was the memorandum of the school. In that case, the school must provide an enhancement program

or a new curriculum for the Physical Education students to prepare themselves for their internship. This program would serve as their training grounds for teaching specific out-of-field subjects to mitigate experiencing more challenges as they went through in the teaching field as a student intern of Physical Education. Furthermore, this program or curriculum could also benefit the Physical Education students, for they could be equipped with more knowledge about the out-of-field subjects, specifically Music and Arts, that they could utilize in the Licensure Examination.

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