

Volume 5-Number 1-2023-10

## **Non-Social Studies major Teachers: Challenges and Coping Mechanisms in teaching Araling Panlipunan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This phenomenological qualitative study examined the challenges and coping mechanism of 10 newly-hired Non-Social Studies major teachers in public junior high schools in Bulacan. Purposive sampling method with criteria was used in selecting the participants and the data undergone narrative analysis. This paper discusses the challenges faced by non-Social Studies major teachers in teaching Araling Panlipunan subjects and the strategies they employ to overcome them. The study reveals that security of tenure, encouraging flexibility, construction of lesson plans, knowledge on the subject matter, assessment design, intervention plan, and teaching methods are crucial factors in ensuring effective teaching of Araling Panlipunan subjects. The study proposes a program called Capacitating the Competence of Non-Social Studies Major Teachers to bridge the expertise gap between Social Studies major teachers and non-Social Studies major teachers and equip the latter with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide quality education to students. The program's design and content were informed by the challenges faced by non-Social Studies major teachers highlighted in Chapter 3 and suggestions provided by participants in Chapter 7 for seminars, programs, and workshops. Ultimately, the study emphasizes the significance of education in shaping the minds of the youth and the noble vocation of teaching.

**KEYWORDS** – Non-Social Studies major teachers, challenges, coping mechanisms, programs

### **INTRODUCTION**

The education system is a critical component of society as it plays a crucial role in shaping the future of individuals and communities by equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in their chosen career paths. This is only possible through the dedication and enthusiasm of qualified educators. According to UNESCO, a qualified teacher possesses the

minimum academic qualifications required to teach a specific subject at the relevant level within their country. Therefore, a teacher's attributes hold immense importance in the realm of education as they are the primary factor that determines a student's success. Reputable educational establishments carefully evaluate these qualities before hiring their staff to ensure that students receive a superior education.

While the majority of academic institutions prioritize hiring teachers who possess competencies and expertise in their field, the challenging situation of new teachers being assigned to out-of-field teaching positions within the first two years of their career is especially problematic during the early career stage, which is typically defined as the first five years after a teacher's graduation from college. Teaching out-of-field is the practice of assigning teachers to classrooms and subjects for which they do not possess the appropriate qualifications or adequate preparation. This can include teaching students in any grade level or any type of school without holding the necessary credentials or situations where a teacher possesses the appropriate credentials in terms of subject knowledge or pedagogical content knowledge but is assigned to teach a subject or grade level outside of their area of expertise.

In the Philippines, the government has responded to the demand for better education by enacting legislation such as Batas Pambansa Blg.232 Section IX of the Education Act of 1982, which guarantees students' entitlement to competent teaching and appropriate quality education. The Department of Education (DepEd) hiring policies, based on DepEd Order No.7, s.2015 - Hiring Guidelines for Teacher I Positions for School Year 2015-2016, is aimed at integrating and institutionalizing the primary goal of the K to 12 Basic Education Program. This program seeks to enhance the country's overall quality of basic education by hiring highly qualified teachers. The DepEd recognizes that the success of any school depends on its teachers, and the ability of teachers plays a crucial role in the education system.

However, various challenges have emerged in today's educational landscape that directly impact teachers, one of which is the difficulty of teaching across different subject areas. Despite the issuance of DepEd Order No. 13, s. 1994, which aims to match teaching preparation with teaching assignments, teaching outside of one's specialization remains an unrecognized but significant issue in Philippine education. This is evident in the projected 29.8% of teachers who teach outside of their specialization in the School Personnel Assessment List and Basic Profile of Secondary Schools for 2016.

The challenges of teaching subjects outside of one's expertise can manifest in a lack of confidence in the classroom, inability to provide satisfactory answers to student queries, and disinterest in the subjects they teach, resulting in shallow instruction and disinterest in students. Despite these challenges, the majority of research participants reported that teachers

do not shy away from out-of-field teaching. They contend that expecting teachers to be well-rounded could alleviate difficulties and lead to more effective teaching that embodies the true essence of being an educator.

Therefore, identifying the problem and the coping strategies that non-social studies major teachers use to adapt to the challenges of teaching social studies is crucial. This gap in the literature needs to be addressed to develop better support systems for non-social studies major teachers and improve the overall quality of education in the Philippines.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized a phenomenological research approach to capture the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of Non-Social Studies teachers while teaching Araling Panlipunan subjects. Phenomenological research is a qualitative research approach that focuses on understanding human experiences and perceptions.

The study involved ten newly-hired Junior High School teachers from the Department of Education Division of Bulacan who have been teaching Araling Panlipunan subjects for zero to five years, but whose baccalaureate degree is not related to any social studies curriculum. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used to select participants who met the criteria.

In-depth face-to-face and virtual interviews were conducted with the participants. School Principals served as gatekeepers and were approached by the researcher prior to the interviews. The interviews were conducted in different municipalities of Bulacan, and the participants were given the choice to choose the mode and place of interview for their convenience. An android mobile phone was used to record audio during face-to-face interviews, while virtual interviews were conducted via MS Teams. Participants signed an informed consent form, and all collected data were stored in a Google Drive accessible only by the researcher.

The collected data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using Microsoft Office application. Narrative analysis was used to understand and analyze the data, which involved the interpretation of stories or accounts of personal experiences. The researcher aimed to uncover the essence of a phenomenon by exploring how individuals experience it, focusing on the rich and detailed descriptions of the teachers' experiences and perspectives.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study found that the teachers' motivations for accepting the Araling Panlipunan teaching assignment were primarily job security and stability in an otherwise unpredictable profession, which they saw as necessary for supporting their families and achieving a comfortable lifestyle. Participants also appreciated the flexibility that the assignment provided in their teaching practices. Despite the challenges of teaching outside their area of expertise, they saw it as an opportunity to demonstrate their adaptability and embraced the assignment willingly.

However, the study also identified various difficulties that non-Social Studies major teachers face in teaching Araling Panlipunan. One of the primary difficulties was constructing lesson plans that could motivate students, conform to new curriculum structures, and use various languages of instruction. Participants emphasized the importance of subject matter knowledge and the need to improve their understanding of the content through research and reading. Additionally, teachers found it challenging to design assessments that measure critical thinking and writing abilities, considering social and economic factors, and assessing higher-order thinking abilities. Finally, educators encountered various obstacles when working with struggling students, but by adopting a collaborative and supportive approach, they could make a significant impact on their students' lives.

To cope with these difficulties, the study identified several themes that describe the attitudes and practices of non-Social Studies major teachers in teaching Araling Panlipunan. The teachers exhibited resilience and commitment to continuous improvement, prioritized self-reflection, ongoing learning, and collaboration with colleagues to enhance their teaching practice, and emphasized the importance of seeking advice and collaborating with subject-matter specialists to improve teaching and student outcomes.

Despite the challenges, non-Social Studies major teachers discovered the significance of the Araling Panlipunan curriculum in expanding their knowledge of history, geography, and culture, and recognized the importance of instilling civic responsibility and cultural awareness in their students. They were motivated by student feedback and came to view teaching as a noble vocation. Moreover, they found self-fulfillment in the chance to encourage critical thinking abilities and cultural understanding, which broadened their students' outlook on national and global issues.

Based on the findings, the study proposed a program entitled *Capacitating the Competence of Non-Social Studies Major Teachers: Filling the Gaps through Intervention Program*. The program aims to bridge the expertise gap between Social Studies major teachers and non-Social Studies major teachers and equip the latter with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide quality education to students. The program's design and content were informed by the

challenges faced by non-Social Studies major teachers highlighted in Chapter 3, as well as suggestions provided by participants in Chapter 7 for seminars, programs, and workshops.

## CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that teaching Araling Panlipunan subjects can be challenging for Non-Social Studies major teachers, but their commitment to providing quality education to students motivates them to take on the challenge. The study recommends the implementation of the Capacitating the Competence of Non-Social Studies Major Teachers program to equip these teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach the subject. Additionally, the study recommends the use of a Vertical Professional Learning Community, a Teaching Aids Bank, and seminars/training programs to enhance the teaching competency of subject teachers. Pursuing a master's degree is also recommended to help teachers acquire specialized knowledge and advance in their field. Finally, the study suggests further research to explore the impacts of pursuing a Master's Degree in Social Studies among non-Social Studies major teachers.

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