



Comparative Analysis of Instructional Practices between Specialized and Out-of-Field Teachers in Teaching Social Studies

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Abstract

This study compares the instructional practices of specialized and out-of-field teachers in teaching Social Studies in four key areas: lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment practices. While several systematic reviews have examined differences between specialized and out-of-field teachers in various subjects, few studies have focused specifically on Social Studies and these four instructional domains. The study is anchored on Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching and the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). An independent samples t-test was used to analyze the data, and the results showed that while both groups demonstrated similar practices in instructional delivery and classroom management, specialized Social Studies teachers performed more effectively in lesson planning and assessment practices. The study concludes that while out-of-field teachers demonstrate competence in delivering Social Studies lessons and managing classrooms, they still need instructional support directed toward improving their lesson planning and assessment practices.

Keywords: Instructional Practices, Lesson Planning, Instructional Delivery, Classroom Management, Assessment Practices, Specialized Teachers, Out-of-field Teachers, Social Studies

Introduction

Instructional practices refer to the strategies, methods, and processes teachers use to present, facilitate, and assess learning in the classroom (Ansell *et al.*, 2020) ^[7]. Previous studies reported that both the specialized and out-of-field teachers benefit from professional development programs that they receive, which improve these practices (Hobbs & Quinn, 2020; Lopez & Roble, 2022) ^[53, 68]. However, various studies also revealed that out-of-field teachers may rely heavily on the materials being prepared beforehand and are less likely to immerse themselves with the students and engage in engaging activities, compared to the specialized one (Du Plessis, 2019; Belmonte *et al.*, 2024; Gomez & Petalla, 2025) ^[38, 16, 47]. Despite several systematic reviews in comparing these classifications of teachers in various subjects, few focus specifically on Social Studies and on the four key instructional domains of: lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment practices. Therefore, this study aims to compare the instructional practices of specialized and out-of-field Social Studies teachers, aiming to identify similarities, differences, and its implications to teaching effectiveness.

Building on this foundation, interdisciplinary subjects like Social Studies which integrate a wide range of disciplines, demand a full grasp of both pedagogy and content. Educators of this field are expected to take on multiple roles through carefully organized instructional methods and at the same time be equipped with the ability to successfully adapt strategies to effectively convey its complexity to diverse learners. However, it has been recognized globally that one of the problems of educational institutions is the shortage of teachers (Ingersoll *et al.*, 2014; Chi, 2024) ^[55, 27]. This complication often leads to subject mismatches, where educators are assigned to teach subjects outside their area of specialization (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2015; Badaru & Ndlovu, 2025) ^[39, 13]. This situation which has become a persistent concern in the field of education contributed to instructional gaps that can lead to lessons lacking depth or focus, gradually affecting students' understanding and grasp of the subject.

With this challenge left unresolved, the goal of giving students a complete and accurate understanding of Social Studies becomes increasingly difficult to achieve.

Expanding the discussion to the global context, some elements of effective instruction are universal and applicable to all educators, others are highly unique to the subject matter being taught. In addition, it is widely recognized that instructional tactics are multi-faceted or an allrounder, and that the context in which they are used determines how effective they are in teaching and learning. An example is the study of Hobbs, L. and Porsch, R. (2021) ^[52] which showed that subject-specific training of teachers is responsible for a much more effective delivery of teaching than any other, which leads to a higher student proficiency among their learners. Additionally, according to the study of Saldivar, J. M. (2024), the targeted professional development and support helps out-of-field teachers gain the knowledge and skills they need to teach effectively, which in particular, this professional development and assistance improve instructors' ability to organize, carry out, and oversee classroom instruction. Supporting this, in the study of Goos, M. and Guerin, A. (2021) also shows that in Ireland, a study about Productive Pedagogies research found out that upskilled, in-field (specialized), and the out-of-field educators displayed alike patterns, which three scored highest on problem solving and conceptual strategies, but they gained the lowest on the section of fostering connectedness and supportive classroom environments.

This global issue is evident in various regions, according to Weldon (2016), nearly one-third of Australian teachers have taught outside their specialization. In relation to this, rural principals report difficulty in finding qualified applicants. Moreover, Korean studies indicate that such assignments negatively affect instructional quality and student learning outcomes, prompting calls for urgent reforms (Kwak, 2019). In the Philippine setting, the challenge is equally pressing. In order to meet staffing needs, schools, especially in rural and underserved areas, reassign teachers to unfamiliar content areas, such as Social Studies (Ingersoll, 2001; 2003; Hobbs & Torner, 2014; Du Plessis, 2015) ^[55, 39]. In such contexts, teachers' professional development programs (PD) must be sustained, subject-based, and responsive to the actual challenges they face in the classroom (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2017; Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018) ^[36], which are crucial to improving teacher competency in lesson planning, instruction, and classroom management. In addition to strengthening teaching practices, OECD (2019) and other international studies have shown that effective professional development impacts educational equity and student achievement.

Similarly, in the Philippines, Chi (2024) ^[27] revealed that 62 percent of secondary school teachers are going through teacher-subject mismatches because of the lack of teachers resulting from limited budget for hiring. This persistent problem does not only present challenges for teachers, but also questions the quality of instructional delivery and student learning outcomes in subject areas. This growing trend of out-of-field teaching presents adjustments in classroom delivery, particularly in how teachers adopt instructional strategies when teaching outside their area of

specialization. According to the study of Francisco and Celon (2020) ^[42], the instructional practices of teachers have a significant impact on students' academic performance, although the extent may vary. In relation, Pacaña *et al.* (2019) ^[75] pointed out that the scenario of out-of-field teaching has prompted teachers to teach without sufficient procedural content knowledge which contributes to the low academic performance of the learners. Expanding on this in the Philippine context, Saragena (2024) found that differences in instructional materials can be explained through varying points, including the diversity of learners they handle and the topic they are teaching. Although growing attention has been given to out-of-field teaching, most studies highlight only general challenges rather than providing an in-depth comparison of instructional practices and the reasons behind the differences, especially in the field of Social Studies. Furthermore, Bordoh *et al.* (2018) ^[20] stated that teaching Social Studies requires a strong professional background due to the complexity of its concepts and interdisciplinary nature. In the same study, the authors further implied that "the concepts in Social Studies as a discipline can effectively be taught by teachers who possess the requisite qualification in Social Studies but not any teacher from a different academic discipline" (p. 27). Similarly, Cohen *et al.* (2018) ^[28] pointed out that teachers' instructional practices are strongly influenced by the subject they are teaching. The study additionally implied that these instructional practices are unique and do not employ the same instructional techniques or activity structures across different subjects. This reinforces the idea that teachers develop and apply subject-specific instructional strategies, which are influenced by their academic preparation and familiarity with the content. The presented findings collectively highlight how subject specialization and classroom context both contribute to the way lessons are designed and delivered, particularly in content-heavy subjects like Social Studies. In addition, Philippine-based research provides further insights, as several studies have explored instructional practices and out-of-field teaching in Social Studies. Pedroso and Magno (2023) examined how teachers facilitate self-directed learning, underscoring the importance of adaptable strategies and learner autonomy—though they did not distinguish between specialized and out-of-field educators. Toring (2017) investigated the experiences of the out-of-field teachers in Zamboanga City, highlighting the different factors such as the limited mastery of content knowledge and the urgent need for professional development. However, the study did not include an extensive comparison across different instructional domains. Similarly, the findings of Pino, Largo, and Brigoli (2025) ^[78] revealed that out-of-field teachers often struggled with pedagogical competence and faced noticeable gaps in assessment practices. In their study, Bihag *et al.* (2005), discussed a wide range of instructional topics, from integrated modalities and technology-enhanced learning to the growing emphasis on whole-person development. While these studies provide valuable insights, most are single-case investigations and still fall short of offering a systematic comparison between specialized and out-of-field Social Studies teachers.

Therefore, it becomes imperative to examine the differences between the instructional practices of specialized and those of out-of-field teachers. Considering that Social Studies is a multifaceted subject requiring both expert subject knowledge and effective pedagogy, it is of the utmost importance to understand the approaches taken by specialized teachers as opposed to those teaching outside their area of expertise. As a result of the persistent global out-of-field teaching problem, educators are often assigned subjects for which they lack expertise due to a shortage of educators, funding constraints, and the unequal distribution of qualified personnel (Ingersoll, 2003; Du Plessis *et al.*, 2015; UNESCO, 2021) [55, 39]. As a means of filling this gap, the present study will compare four major areas of instructional practice, including lesson planning, instruction delivery, classroom management, and assessment practices, among specialized and Out-of-Field Social Studies teachers. As part of the study, relevant

comparative evidence will be provided to assist in developing targeted professional development frameworks, mentorship systems, and curriculum supports that will help address immediate classroom needs as well as advance the Philippines' goal of enhancing Social Studies education.

2. Theoretical-Conceptual Framework

The research is anchored on Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching and the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). It compares the instructional practices of specialized and out-of-field Social Studies teachers in terms of lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment practices through quantitative analysis. A subsequent qualitative phase explores the underlying reasons behind these instructional patterns. Below is the illustration of the theoretical-conceptual framework of the research:



Fig 1: Theoretical-Conceptual Framework

Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching

The comparative analysis in this study is anchored on Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching (FFT), which outlines 22 components and 76 elements grouped into four domains of teaching responsibility: Planning and

Preparation, the School Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities (Harris, 2025) [50]. Teachers can use it as a tool, either on their own or with their students, for various purposes such as analyzing and assessing teaching practice (Danielson *et al.*, 2009) [34]. The framework allows

for the whole instructional practice to be divided and structured so that it can be deeply investigated.

Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST)

Another anchor for the comparative analysis is the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) under DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017. The PPST replaces the National Competency-Based Teacher Standards in response to the adoption of evolving national and global frameworks such as the K to 12 curriculum. It specifies 37 strands across seven domains: (1) Content Knowledge and Pedagogy, (2) Learning Environment, (3) Diversity of Learners, (4) Curriculum and Planning, (5) Assessment and Reporting, (6) Community Linkages and Professional Engagement, and (7) Personal Growth and Professional Development. In this study, the PPST serves as a lens to assess how specialized and out-of-field Social Studies teachers address these domains and strands in their instructional practices.

Integration of Frameworks

Both Danielson's Framework and the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) are used in this study as dual lenses through which instructional practices are understood, measured, and interpreted. The PPST ensures alignment with national educational policy and practices, while Danielson's model provides an internationally recognized structure. Both emphasize that effective instructional practices, such as strategic lesson planning, differentiated content delivery, effective classroom management, and assessment — are essential to high-quality teaching. Together, they guide the evaluation of teaching patterns, allowing the study to identify the differences and similarities of the two categories of teachers — specialized and out-of-field teachers in Araling Panlipunan or Social studies.

Teacher Specialization and Instructional Challenges

There is a notable discrepancy between teachers' areas of expertise and the subjects they are required to teach in the Philippine Basic Education System. Due to systemic teacher shortages, uneven distribution, and scheduling constraints in schools (Hobbs, 2020) ^[52], teachers without expertise in the subjects are often assigned to teach social studies or Araling Panlipunan. As a result of these systemic factors, they must teach the material despite limited exposure or experience in the subject.

According to Adem (2022) and Porch and Whanell (2019), teacher specialization showcases content mastery and is highly associated with better instructional planning, execution, and decision-making, all of which support structured and effective teaching strategies, resulting in higher student proficiency. In contrast, out-of-field teachers often report challenges in content delivery, often relying on textbooks or traditional methods (Du Plessis, 2019; Gomez & Petalla, 2025) ^[38, 47], and limited pedagogical flexibility, which can hinder deep learning (Belmonte *et al.*, 2024) ^[16]. Moreover, out-of-field teachers require not only time and effort during their teaching requirements but also a profound knowledge of learning strategies (Hobbs & Quinn, 2020) ^[53].

Research Design and Purpose

Given these complexities, this study uses a sequential explanatory mixed-method design to identify first the differences and patterns in instructional practices (quantitative phase) and then explore the reasons behind them

(qualitative phase). This approach is a comprehensive analysis of how teacher specialization influences teacher behavior, lesson structuring, and overall instructional quality. Anchored on Danielson's Framework for teaching and the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), the study aims to compare how these two types of teachers approach instructional practices, in terms of lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment. Furthermore, the study seeks to explore the underlying factors that influence these patterns, particularly in relation to whether teachers are teaching within or outside their specialization.

3. Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to compare the instructional practices between specialized and out-of-field teachers in teaching Social Studies. It aims to investigate how their instructional practices differ or overlap in the four key areas of teaching: lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment practice. Through a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, this research will establish patterns in teaching practices credited to teachers' field of specialization and explore the underlying factors that influence these patterns.

To be specific, this study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What are the instructional practices of specialized and out-of-field teachers in teaching Social Studies in terms of:
 - a. Lesson planning
 - b. Instructional delivery
 - c. Classroom management
 - d. Assessment practices?
2. Is there a significant difference between the instructional practices of specialized and out-of-field teachers in the four identified areas?
3. How do specialized and out-of-field teachers explain the reasons behind their instructional approaches and strategies in their lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment in teaching Social Studies?
4. What factors influence the teaching practices of specialized and out-of-field teachers in Social Studies?

4. Method

4.1. Research Design

This study utilized a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design with a comparative approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017) ^[31]. The research was conducted in two distinct phases. As described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) ^[31], this type of research method included a quantitative phase that preceded the qualitative phase, which was carried out to explain and enrich the quantitative findings. It seeks to integrate quantitative results and qualitative explanations to generate complementary evidence addressing the research topic.

4.2. Sampling Design, Research Respondents, and Environment

Thirty (30) junior high school teachers teaching Social Studies assessed their instructional practices in the four key areas of teaching: lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment practices using a

validated questionnaire. Fifteen (15) of them were specialized teachers in the subject, while the other fifteen (15) were out-of-field teachers. Eight (8) teachers from each group also agreed to participate in a semi-structured interview to gather qualitative data and provide deeper insights into the patterns emerging from the quantitative results. The locale of the study consists of public and private secondary schools in the region of Cebu, Philippines. All secondary schools within these areas were considered potential sites for data collection, depending on teacher availability and approved permissions.

4.3. Research Instrument

A validated thirty-five (35) item survey questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for collecting quantitative data, while the researcher served as the main instrument for gathering qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. The survey questionnaire consisted of items evenly distributed across the four instructional practices assessed. For the qualitative phase, a semi-structured interview guide was utilized to further explore teacher perspectives and experiences, supporting and enriching the quantitative findings.

4.4. Data Gathering Procedure

Data gathering began with securing ethical clearance, followed by obtaining formal permission from selected public and private secondary schools in Cebu to administer the research instruments. Once approval was granted, the researcher collaborated with department heads to identify eligible Social Studies teachers.

The researcher personally distributed the consent forms and the face-to-face survey, which included a respondent profile section and items measuring instructional practices. Once the desired number of thirty (30) respondents—fifteen (15) specialized and fifteen (15) out-of-field teachers—was reached, survey collection was completed.

Teachers who agreed to participate in the second phase were purposively selected and invited for face-to-face semi-structured interviews conducted at their schools.

4.5. Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the structured survey questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize both the demographic profiles of respondents and their responses across the four instructional practices.

Independent Samples t-tests were conducted to determine whether significant differences existed between the instructional practices of specialized and out-of-field teachers in each domain. The reliability of the survey instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and a pilot test was conducted to ensure internal consistency.

For the qualitative phase, thematic analysis was employed to examine interview responses, which involved coding the data, identifying emerging themes, and aligning them with the quantitative findings (Jowsey *et al.*, 2021) ^[59]. Both data types were integrated during the final analysis stage, where qualitative results were used to interpret statistical trends and patterns. This data triangulation provided a richer understanding of how and why instructional practices varied between specialized and out-of-field teachers in teaching Social Studies.

4.6. Ethical Consideration

Before the conduct of the study, all ethical considerations were secured to avoid conflicts. The respondents were informed that all data collected would remain confidential and would not be disclosed in any manner that could compromise their identity. They were fully briefed on the process and purpose of the study, which were indicated in the consent forms. The benefits of the study were explained clearly, emphasizing that their participation would contribute to scientific knowledge and potentially lead to improvements in related educational practices.

5. Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the self-rating assessment of junior high school Specialized Social Studies teachers from Cebu, Philippines. The results determine the instructional practices of specialized teachers in teaching Social Studies.

Table 1: Lesson Planning, Instructional Delivery, Classroom Management & Assessment Practices of Specialized Social Studies Teachers ($n=30$)

Lesson Planning	Mean	SD	Description
1. I align my lesson objectives with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs).	4.73	0.458	Very High Practice
2. I adapt lesson content based on learners' interests and backgrounds.	4.47	0.516	Very High Practice
3. I integrate Social Studies lessons with real-life issues at local, national, and global levels.	4.87	0.352	Very High Practice
4. I plan lessons that promote critical and creative thinking.	4.53	0.516	Very High Practice
5. I consider students' prior knowledge when designing activities.	4.53	0.640	Very High Practice
6. I effectively use teaching resources, including ICT tools.	4.53	0.640	Very High Practice
7. I prepare contingency plans in case of technical or classroom challenges.	4.27	0.961	Very High Practice
8. I coordinate with other teachers in aligning lesson goals.	4.33	0.617	Very High Practice
Instructional Delivery	Mean	SD	Description
1. I use varied instructional strategies (e.g., lecture, discussion, simulation).	4.53	0.516	Very High Practice
2. I deliver content in a way that is clear and understandable to students.	4.67	0.488	Very High Practice
3. I make connections between historical/social concepts and present realities.	4.40	0.737	Very High Practice
4. I use higher-order questioning to encourage critical thinking.	4.47	0.640	Very High Practice
5. I provide differentiated instruction based on learner needs.	4.33	0.617	Very High Practice
6. I use culturally relevant examples during discussions.	4.33	0.617	Very High Practice
7. I respond flexibly to students' misconceptions and learning gaps.	4.40	0.632	Very High Practice
8. I use student feedback to adjust my instruction during class.	4.33	0.617	Very High Practice
9. I promote active student participation during lessons.	4.53	0.516	Very High Practice
Classroom Management	Mean	SD	Description

1. I maintain a classroom environment that promotes respect and inclusivity.	4.80	0.414	Very High Practice
2. I manage classroom routines and transitions effectively.	4.47	0.640	Very High Practice
3. I set clear expectations for student behavior.	4.47	0.516	Very High Practice
4. I ensure all learners feel safe and supported.	4.60	0.507	Very High Practice
5. I use positive reinforcement to promote good behavior.	4.33	0.488	Very High Practice
6. I resolve classroom conflicts constructively and fairly.	4.60	0.507	Very High Practice
7. I encourage peer collaboration and group discipline.	4.53	0.516	Very High Practice
8. I adapt seating arrangements to support diverse activities and learners.	3.93	0.961	High Practice
Assessment Practices	Mean	SD	Description
1. I use varied types of assessments (e.g., written, performance-based, oral).	4.80	0.414	Very High Practice
2. I align assessments with lesson objectives and competencies.	4.67	0.488	Very High Practice
3. I give timely and constructive feedback on student performance.	4.27	0.594	Very High Practice
4. I involve students in self- and peer-assessment.	4.20	0.414	High Practice
5. I use rubrics to assess performance tasks in Social Studies.	4.60	0.507	Very High Practice
6. I analyze student results to improve instruction.	4.40	0.507	Very High Practice
7. I report student progress accurately to stakeholders.	4.40	0.507	Very High Practice
8. I modify assessments to accommodate students with diverse needs.	4.40	0.507	Very High Practice
9. I use both formative and summative assessments regularly.	4.67	0.488	Very High Practice
10. I document and reflect on student progress over time.	4.33	0.488	Very High Practice

Range of Values	Description
4.21–5.00	Very High Practice
3.41–4.20	High Practice
2.61–3.40	Moderate Practice
1.81–2.60	Low Practice
1.00–1.80	Very Low Practice

Lesson Planning of Specialized Social Studies Teachers

Results revealed that specialized Social Studies teachers from Cebu, Philippines, strongly agreed that their lesson plans were aligned with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs). Posner and Rudnitsky (2006) ^[80] emphasized that alignment between objectives and standards enhances instructional coherence and ensures that lessons remain targeted toward intended learning outcomes. Teachers likewise reported integrating real-life issues at local, national, and global levels into their lessons. According to Gay (2018) ^[45], grounding instructional content in learners' cultural and social contexts strengthens the relevance of learning and deepens students' understanding of complex concepts.

Teachers also indicated that their instructional plans promoted critical and creative thinking. As noted by Rosenshine (2012) ^[87], learning tasks that require analysis, synthesis, and reflection allow learners to extend their understanding and develop higher-order reasoning skills. Teachers further reported consistent use of instructional resources and technologies, echoing Jonassen's (2014) assertion that well-integrated learning tools enhance engagement and support students in visualizing abstract ideas.

Findings also revealed that teachers considered learners' prior knowledge in designing activities. Wiliam (2018) emphasized that recognizing students' existing understanding enables teachers to scaffold instruction more effectively and anticipate potential misconceptions. The teachers additionally agreed that their lesson plans included clear, explicit instructions that guided learners toward lesson goals—aligned with Archer and Hughes' (2011) ^[8] conclusion that well-sequenced and explicit planning reduces confusion and promotes student confidence. Although contingency planning received the lowest mean score within the domain, it still fell under "very high practice," suggesting

that teachers proactively anticipate challenges to maintain instructional continuity. Darling-Hammond and Adamson (2014) ^[35] highlighted that such forward planning ensures smoother lesson flow and supports quality learning experiences.

In summary, specialized Social Studies teachers demonstrate very high lesson planning practices. Their planning reflects strong alignment with MELCs, integration of real-world contexts, and attention to learners' prior knowledge, while also promoting critical thinking. Continued professional development and collaborative lesson planning initiatives are recommended to sustain and enhance the quality and consistency of instructional design.

Instructional Delivery of Specialized Social Studies Teachers

Results revealed that specialized teachers strongly agreed that they delivered content clearly and understandably. Archer and Hughes (2011) ^[8] emphasized that instructional clarity reduces misconceptions and enables students to follow lesson progression effectively. Teachers also reported using varied instructional strategies, which aligns with Calderón *et al.* (2021) ^[23] who argued that diverse approaches help students connect new information with prior understanding.

Higher-order questioning and active student engagement were also widely practiced. Brookhart (2013) ^[21] stressed that prompting learners to justify, evaluate, and reflect enhances deeper thinking and supports conceptual understanding. Teachers further noted that they addressed students' misconceptions as they emerged, supporting Belbase's (2022) argument that immediate clarification of misunderstandings strengthens conceptual accuracy and promotes meaningful learning.

Differentiated instruction was also consistently applied. Valiandes and Neophytou (2018) ^[99] noted that adapting teaching methods to student needs ensures equitable access

to learning. Additionally, teachers utilized culturally relevant examples, consistent with Gay's (2018) ^[45] claim that culturally responsive instruction enhances engagement and helps students relate new content to personal experiences. In summary, specialized Social Studies teachers demonstrate very high instructional delivery practices. Their instruction is clear, engaging, adaptive, and culturally responsive. Schools may further enrich instructional quality through ongoing support for innovative pedagogical approaches and continuous enhancement of teachers' adaptability to diverse learner needs.

Classroom Management of Specialized Social Studies Teachers

Results showed that specialized Social Studies teachers strongly agreed that they foster classroom environments characterized by respect and inclusivity. Emdin (2021) ^[40] highlighted that emotionally supportive and affirming spaces encourage student participation and contribute to overall well-being. Teachers also reported ensuring that learners felt safe and supported, consistent with Hammond's (2020) assertion that emotional safety is foundational for students to take intellectual risks.

Teachers effectively managed routines and established clear expectations for behavior. This reflects Cook *et al.*'s (2018) ^[29] finding that predictable structures minimize disruptions and establish stable learning environments. Teachers also addressed conflicts constructively, aligning with Kim and Bolger's (2019) ^[64] view that effective conflict resolution strengthens peer relationships and contributes to a positive classroom culture. Furthermore, teachers fostered collaboration among learners, consistent with Mendo-Lázaro *et al.*'s (2022) ^[72] highlighted benefits of cooperative learning such as improved communication and interpersonal skills.

In summary, specialized Social Studies teachers demonstrate very high classroom management practices. Their ability to maintain safe, structured, and inclusive environments promotes both academic engagement and positive socio-emotional development. Continued professional development in adaptive classroom management strategies

will support the maintenance of these strong practices.

Assessment Practices of Specialized Social Studies Teachers

Results revealed that specialized teachers employed varied assessment strategies. Brookhart (2013) ^[21] noted that multiple formats allow learners to demonstrate understanding in diverse ways. Teachers also strongly agreed that assessments were aligned with lesson objectives, which is essential for validity according to Darling-Hammond and Adamson (2014) ^[35].

Teachers used both formative and summative assessments, consistent with Black and Wiliam (1998) ^[19] view that ongoing assessment guides students toward continuous improvement. Rubrics were also widely used, reflecting Panadero and Alqassab's (2019) ^[76] argument that rubrics clarify expectations and enable consistent, fair scoring. Teachers analyzed student results regularly and provided accurate progress reports—practices aligned with Wiliam's (2018) assertion that data-driven decisions enhance instructional effectiveness.

While self- and peer-assessment received the lowest rating within the domain, it still fell under "very high practice," supporting Brookhart's (2013) ^[21] position that reflective assessment fosters self-regulation and metacognitive skills. Teachers also modified assessments to address diverse learner needs, consistent with Tomlinson's (2017) ^[96], which emphasized flexibility in assessment as an equity principle. In summary, specialized Social Studies teachers demonstrate very high assessment practices. Their use of diverse, aligned, and reflective assessment approaches supports equitable and accurate measurement of student learning. Schools are encouraged to sustain these strengths through continuous capacity building in assessment literacy and inclusive assessment design.

Table 2 presents the self-rating assessment of junior high school Out-of-field Social Studies teachers from Cebu, Philippines. The results determine the instructional practices of out-of-field teachers in teaching Social Studie.

Table 2: Lesson Planning, Instructional Delivery, Classroom Management & Assessment Practices of Out-of-field Social Studies Teachers ($n=30$)

Lesson Planning	Mean	SD	Description
1. I align my lesson objectives with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs).	4.20	0.414	High Practice
2. I adapt lesson content based on learners' interests and backgrounds.	4.13	0.352	High Practice
3. I integrate Social Studies lessons with real-life issues at local, national, and global levels.	4.40	0.507	Very High Practice
4. I plan lessons that promote critical and creative thinking.	4.20	0.414	High Practice
5. I consider students' prior knowledge when designing activities.	4.13	0.516	High Practice
6. I effectively use teaching resources, including ICT tools.	4.27	0.594	Very High Practice
7. I prepare contingency plans in case of technical or classroom challenges.	3.87	0.640	High Practice
8. I coordinate with other teachers in aligning lesson goals.	4.20	0.676	High Practice
Instructional Delivery	Mean	SD	Description
1. I use varied instructional strategies (e.g., lecture, discussion, simulation).	4.40	0.507	Very High Practice
2. I deliver content in a way that is clear and understandable to students.	4.40	0.507	Very High Practice
3. I make connections between historical/social concepts and present realities.	4.13	0.352	High Practice
4. I use higher-order questioning to encourage critical thinking.	4.27	0.458	Very High Practice
5. I provide differentiated instruction based on learner needs.	4.20	0.561	High Practice
6. I use culturally relevant examples during discussions.	4.20	0.414	High Practice
7. I respond flexibly to students' misconceptions and learning gaps.	4.20	0.414	High Practice
8. I use student feedback to adjust my instruction during class.	4.00	0.535	High Practice
9. I promote active student participation during lessons.	4.20	0.414	High Practice
Classroom Management	Mean	SD	Description
1. I maintain a classroom environment that promotes respect and inclusivity.	4.40	0.507	Very High Practice
2. I manage classroom routines and transitions effectively.	4.27	0.594	Very High Practice

3. I set clear expectations for student behavior.	4.20	0.561	High Practice
4. I ensure all learners feel safe and supported.	4.33	0.488	Very High Practice
5. I use positive reinforcement to promote good behavior.	4.40	0.507	Very High Practice
6. I resolve classroom conflicts constructively and fairly.	4.13	0.516	High Practice
7. I encourage peer collaboration and group discipline.	4.07	0.594	High Practice
8. I adapt seating arrangements to support diverse activities and learners.	4.27	0.594	Very High Practice
Assessment Practices		Mean	SD
1. I use varied types of assessments (e.g., written, performance-based, oral).	4.13	0.352	High Practice
2. I align assessments with lesson objectives and competencies.	4.20	0.414	High Practice
3. I give timely and constructive feedback on student performance.	4.07	0.258	High Practice
4. I involve students in self- and peer-assessment.	4.07	0.458	High Practice
5. I use rubrics to assess performance tasks in Social Studies.	4.20	0.414	High Practice
6. I analyze student results to improve instruction.	4.07	0.258	High Practice
7. I report student progress accurately to stakeholders.	4.00	0.535	High Practice
8. I modify assessments to accommodate students with diverse needs.	4.27	0.458	Very High Practice
9. I use both formative and summative assessments regularly.	4.20	0.414	High Practice
10. I document and reflect on student progress over time.	4.00	0.535	High Practice

Range of Values	Description
4.21–5.00	Very High Practice
3.41–4.20	High Practice
2.61–3.40	Moderate Practice
1.81–2.60	Low Practice
1.00–1.80	Very Low Practice

Lesson Planning of Out-of-field Social Studies Teachers

The results revealed that the selected Junior High School out-of-field specialized Social Studies teachers from Cebu, Philippines, have a high level of practice in aligning their lesson objectives with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) in their lesson planning. Zalun (2023) ^[104] noted that teachers in the Philippines highly utilized MELCs in their lesson planning to ensure alignment with the prescribed learning competencies. Teachers also have a high level of practice in adapting lesson content based on learners' interests and backgrounds. Out-of-field teachers in the Philippines adopt different teaching strategies, approaches and improvisations to adjust to their classroom realities ensuring that appropriate measures are taken to deliver instructions appropriately (Lopez & Roble, 2022) ^[68]. In planning Social Studies lessons, it was found out that teachers have a very high level of practice in integrating the lesson with real-life issues at local, national and global levels. Similarly, a study conducted by Seludo and Murillo (2023) ^[90] stated that in planning Social Studies lessons, teachers often develop activities with real world application that can help students reflect on the issues and current trends around them. Teachers also have a high level of practice in planning lessons that promote critical and creative thinking. In the Philippines, teachers who are assigned to teach Social Studies have good practices in delivering lessons that are positively correlated with the learners' creativity and critical thinking (Paz, 2021). Results also revealed that teachers have a high level of practice in considering students' prior knowledge when designing activities for the class. Turk *et al.* (2023) noted that teachers often check their learners' prior knowledge and use it as a basis for planning the lesson and anticipating students' responses thereby minimizing time and discussion struggles.

Findings of the study indicated that selected teachers have a very high level of practice in using teaching resources, including ICT Tool effectively. According to the study conducted by Turbanada *et al.* (2025), many secondary public-school teachers in the Philippines have a high degree of technology integration. Moreover, Mayantao and Tantiado (2024) ^[71] stated that teachers in the country regularly use

digital tools such as PowerPoint and videos. The study also confirmed that teachers have a high level of practice in preparing contingency plans in case of technical or classroom challenges. Teachers are skilled to prepare for any class disruption, thereby implementing contingency plans in case of any unforeseen circumstances during class days (Dayagbil *et al.*, 2021) ^[37]. Teachers also have a high level of practice in coordinating with other teachers in aligning lesson goals. Bautista *et al.* (2023) ^[15] noted that teachers in the Philippines often collaborate in functional groups to produce shared lesson plans and thereby aligning instructional goals across different classes and teachers.

The study revealed that out-of-field Social Studies teachers in Cebu, Philippines demonstrate a high level of practice in effective and responsive lesson planning, specifically, integrating objectives with MELCs. This result suggests that teachers are skilled at generating meaningful lessons that do not just foster student engagement but also critical thinking relevant to current societal contexts. The findings also highlight the importance of equipping out-of-field teachers with professional support in instructional planning. It recommended that the educational institution enhance lesson alignment and adaptability through providing and conducting regular workshops and collaborative planning sessions. These practices will contribute to sustaining high quality education through good quality instruction thereby enhancing learners' educational experiences in Social Studies.

Instructional Delivery of Out-of-field Social Studies Teachers

Results revealed that the selected Junior High School out-of-field Social Studies teachers from Cebu, Philippines, have a very high level of practice in using varied instructional strategies (e.g., lecture, discussion, simulation) in instructional delivery. Social Studies teachers in the Philippines demonstrate a variety of effective and collaborative teaching strategies in delivering instructions (Baldado & Daniel, 2023) ^[14]. It was also found out in the study that teachers have a very high level of practice in delivering content in a way that is clear and understandable to students. Salpocial and Palma (2023) ^[88] found that

students perceived their teachers to deliver lessons with high clarity and effective teaching practices. Teachers also have High Practice in making connections between historical or social concepts and present realities. Asanza (2025)^[10] found that Social Studies teachers actively contextualize their lessons by connecting historical and social concepts to present-day situations and local realities.

The study's findings also revealed that out-of-field teachers in Social Studies have a very high level of practice in using higher-order questioning to encourage critical thinking among their students. Purnomo and Mulianingsih (2021) found that social-studies teachers developed higher-order questioning strategies which significantly impacted students' critical thinking skills. Teachers also have a high level of practice in providing differentiated instruction based on learner needs. Teachers consistently consider generating lessons tailored to students' readiness and learning styles thereby indicating high levels of differentiated instructional practices (Garrett, 2023)^[43]. Findings also suggest that teachers have a high level of practice in using culturally relevant examples during discussions. Pedroso *et al.* (2024)^[77] found that Social Studies teachers deliberately employ culturally relevant strategies during class discussions to encourage student participation.

It was also found out that teachers have a high level of practice in responding flexibly to students' misconceptions and learning gaps. Carney (2022)^[25] documented multiple situations where teachers utilized strategies to identify gaps that are used as basis in adjusting lessons to address those gaps. Teachers also have a high level of practice in using student feedback to adjust my instruction during class. Magno and Piosang (2019)^[70] found that Filipino teachers frequently use student feedback to inform and adjust their instruction in real time. Moreover, the results revealed that teachers have a high level of practice in promoting active student participation during lessons. Most teachers have a high level of practice of consistently integrating active class participation and learner-centered approaches during lesson discussions (Ramos & De Guzman, 2020)^[83].

In summary, out-of-field Social Studies teachers have a very high level of practice in utilizing varied instructional strategies, delivering lessons clearly, and adapting to learners' needs. This result implies that efficient instructional delivery is very crucial in achieving effective student understanding and engagement in Social Studies. Such practices highlight the teachers' ability to foster interactive, learner-centered classrooms. It is therefore important for the institution to continue in providing good support systems that strengthen teachers' pedagogical adaptability. Sustaining these practices can lead to more dynamic instructional delivery among Social Studies teachers.

Classroom Management of Out-of-field Social Studies Teachers

Results revealed that the selected Junior High School out-of-field Social Studies teachers from Cebu, Philippines, have a very high level of practice in maintaining respect and promoting inclusivity in the class. Jugan *et al.* (2024)^[60] stated that for teachers, maintaining a classroom environment that encourages respect and inclusivity is vital for the growth and development of learners. Furthermore, teachers have a

very high level of practice in managing classroom routines and transitions effectively. A study by Jayme and Tantiado (2025)^[56] similarly revealed that Filipino teachers have a very high level of practice in instructional time management, routines and behavioral management practices.

In the study, it was also revealed that the selected out-of-field Social Studies teachers have a high level of practice in setting clear expectations for student behavior. Teachers' classroom management practices include having fixed expectations in students' behavior that is aligned with the school standards (Jayme & Tantiado, 2025)^[56]. Teachers also have a very high level of practice in ensuring that all learners feel safe and supported inside the classroom. Alimahan and Ubayubay (2025)^[4] noted that for teachers, ensuring the safety and well-being of the learners is a topmost priority which includes the establishment of rules inside the classroom. Moreover, selected teachers also showed a very high level of practice in using positive reinforcement to promote good behavior. This result affirms the findings of Lapaz and Bello (2020)^[66], who stated that the use of positive reinforcement by teachers is highly practiced in classroom settings, fostering positive relationships between teachers and students.

The study's result showed that the selected teachers have a high level of practice in resolving classroom conflicts constructively and fairly. Amaquin and Sibag (2025)^[6] stated that teachers resolve conflicts that arise in a classroom setting through collaborative learning experiences using mediation and empathy aligned with their classroom management strategies. Furthermore, it was revealed that teachers have a high level of practice in encouraging peer collaboration and group discipline among their students. Collaborative learning is a widely used teaching approach among teachers as it increases students' interpersonal skills and participation, thereby helping teachers in managing classroom behavior and maintaining discipline (Mendo-Lázaro *et al.*, 2022)^[72]. Teachers also have a very high level of practice in adapting seating arrangements to support diverse activities and learners. Gremmen *et al.* (2016)^[48] also noted that teachers' high level of practice in making seating arrangements is influenced by academic, social, and classroom management considerations.

In summary, out-of-field Social Studies teachers have a strong classroom management ranging their responses from high to very high levels. Teachers specifically practice setting good and effective classroom behavior among students. This signifies that classroom management is an important aspect in guiding students with life long lessons that they can use in their everyday lives. This result shows how important it is for teachers to set guidelines in the classroom that not only foster academic achievement but also good behavior inside the classroom. This suggests that building good relationships inside the classroom is rooted in consistent management practices, mutual respect, and the creation of a supportive learning environment where students feel valued and responsible for their actions. It is recommended that schools and educational institutions provide continuous professional development through seminars and workshops on effective classroom management strategies. By continuously improving these skills, educators can create a more inclusive, engaging, and well-managed learning environment that supports both academic growth and character development.

Assessment Practices of Out-of-field Social Studies Teachers

Results revealed that the selected out-of-field junior high school Social Studies teachers from Cebu, Philippines, have a high level of practice in using varied types of assessments as their assessment practices. Laporteza (2019) ^[67] stated that assessment practices of teachers vary as it is deeply aligned with the type of lessons that they will deliver reflecting on the nature of content areas they handle. Teachers also have a high level of practice in aligning their assessments with lesson objectives and competencies. Many teachers deliberately design assessment to match stated outcome and competencies ensuring assessment-objective alignment in basic education (Alonzo, 2023) ^[5]. Moreover, the study showed that teachers have a high level of practice in giving timely and constructive feedback on student performance. A study by Younis *et al.* (2021) ^[102] found a significant relationship between teachers providing timely constructive feedback and between academic performance. Additionally, the study revealed that teachers have a high level of practice in involving students in self and peer assessment. Similarly, Kilic (2022) ^[63] found out that teachers have strong practice in three types of assessment which includes self, peer, and teacher assessment. It was also found out that teachers have a high level of practice in using rubrics to assess performance tasks in Social Studies. A study by Jeong (2015) ^[57] points out that teachers have a high level of deliberate use of rubrics to assess performance-based work and that they often adjust how they assess students focusing more on criteria rather than only errors. Teachers also have a high level of practice in analyzing student results to improve instructions. Teachers participating in data driven personalized instruction were significantly more accurate in their judgments of their students' academic competence thereby helping them to better gauge student competence and tailor instruction accordingly (Gatlin *et al.*, 2021) ^[44]. Additionally, teachers have a high level of practice in reporting student progress accurately to stakeholders. Rances and Sumalinog (2023) ^[82] stated in their study that teachers consistently reflect high

professional communication standards in school by accurately reporting student progress to parents, guardians and other school stakeholders.

The study revealed that teachers have a very high level of practice in modifying assessments to accommodate students with diverse needs. Teachers regularly modify assessments to cater to students with varying abilities and learning needs (Ramos & Juan, 2024) ^[84]. Teachers also have a high level of practice in using both formative and summative assessments regularly. Teachers consistently used both formative and summative assessments to monitor student learning, identify gaps, and evaluate overall achievement (Ahmed, Ali, & Shah, 2023) ^[2]. In addition, the study also revealed that teachers have a high level of practice in documenting and reflecting on student progress over time. According to Smith and Lopez (2023) ^[92], teachers document student progress from time to time to keep track of students' performance and use it to reflect on student work overtime to inform their instructional adjustments.

In summary, out-of-field Social Studies teachers have a high level of practice in utilizing diverse assessment methods and providing constructive feedback to learners. The result showed that teachers practice aligning their assessments with lesson objectives and competencies, use rubrics and varied assessment types, and modify tasks to address students' diverse learning needs. This implies that teachers consistently ensure that evaluation processes are fair, inclusive, and reflective of actual student progress. It is recommended that educational institutions conduct continuous professional development programs. Strengthening these practices will generate high-quality teaching, promote accountability among educators.

Table 3 presents the independent samples t-test to determine whether there were significant differences between the instructional practices of specialized and out-of-field teachers in teaching Social Studies across four key teaching areas: lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment practices.

Table 3: Lesson Planning, Instructional Delivery, Classroom Management & Assessment Practices of Specialized and Out-of-field Social Studies Teachers (n=30)

Independent Samples T-Test					
	Statistic	df	p	Effect Size	Interpretation
Lesson Planning	2.70	28.0	0.012	0.985	Reject the null hypothesis.
Instructional Delivery	1.58	28.0	0.124	0.578	Fail to reject the null hypothesis.
Classroom Management	1.37	28.0	0.180	0.502	Fail to reject the null hypothesis.
Assessment Practices	3.44	28.0	0.002	1.257	Reject the null hypothesis.
Note. $H_0: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$					

I. Lesson Planning

The independent samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference between specialized and out-of-field teachers in lesson planning, $t(28) = 2.70$, $p = .012$, with a large effect size ($d = 0.985$). This suggests that specialized teachers engage in more efficient lesson planning practices than out-of-field teachers. Specifically, specialized teachers are more effective in designing lesson plans aligned with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) and incorporating real-life issues into lessons. According to Rebuscas & Dizon (2018) ^[86], it is challenging for teachers to fully absorb the lesson and prepare for the subject when they are teaching topics that fall outside their area of specialization. Teachers trained and majored in Social Studies tend to possess stronger pedagogical content

knowledge, referring to a comprehensive grasp of the subject and the skill to teach it effectively allowing them to design coherent, standards-aligned lessons that effectively integrate historical and civic concepts emphasized that a teacher's understanding of their subject matter greatly affects the effectiveness of their lesson planning practices (Gomez & Petalla, 2025) ^[47]. According to Wsheeley *et al.* (2023), teaching subjects outside of one's area of expertise can undermine teachers' confidence and have an undesirable impact on students' learning. This situation forces teachers to allocate more time and energy to learning new material, which restricts their capacity to design activities that foster inquiry and critical thinking.

Moreover, Belmonte *et al.* (2024) ^[16] found that out-of-field social science teachers heavily rely on pre-packaged

materials or peer assistance when planning lessons outside their expertise. These findings highlight that specialization in Social Studies provides teachers with deeper pedagogical content knowledge, allowing them to design more purposeful and contextually meaningful lesson plans that promote student understanding.

II. Instructional Delivery

The results showed no significant difference in instructional delivery between specialized and out-of-field teachers, $t(28) = 1.58$, $p = .124$, although a moderate effect size ($d = 0.578$) was observed. This suggests that both groups demonstrate similar practices in utilizing varied instructional strategies, delivering lessons clearly, and adapting to learners' needs.

This may be attributed to the fact that instructional delivery depends more on general pedagogical skills such as scaffolding, questioning, and student engagement than on subject specialization. Research suggests that properly developed institutional interventions and instructional guidelines can help eradicate the gap and disparities between specialized and out-of-field teachers (Paldillo *et al.*, 2020; Castro *et al.*, 2024) ^[26].

Caneda and Biol (2025) ^[24] stated that despite being assigned to teach subjects outside their specialization, out-of-field teachers were still able to deliver clear, engaging, and well-structured instruction through the use of effective and adaptive teaching strategies. Similarly, the findings affirm that out-of-field teachers can implement effective instructional delivery when provided with proper guidance, instructional materials, and institutional support. Despite challenges such as limited content knowledge or lower confidence in teaching unfamiliar subjects, they are still capable of facilitating meaningful learning experiences and promoting student achievement (Bugwak, 2021) ^[22]. The absence of a significant difference in instructional delivery suggests that effective teaching strategies are transferable. Both specialized and out-of-field teachers can deliver engaging and meaningful instruction when provided with appropriate training, resources, and institutional support.

III. Classroom Management

The t-test indicated no significant difference in classroom management between specialized and out-of-field teachers, $t(28) = 1.37$, $p = .180$, with a moderate effect size ($d = 0.502$). Both groups appear to handle classroom routines and student behavior in similar ways, particularly in maintaining respect, promoting inclusivity, and implementing effective classroom practices.

This finding suggests that classroom management is influenced more by teaching experience and teacher's job satisfaction than by subject specialization (Muhammed, 2025; Yabog, 2025) ^[73]. According to Yabog (2025), higher job satisfaction enhances teachers' ability to manage classrooms effectively, as satisfied teachers are more capable of fostering positive learning environments. In line with the findings of Hobbs and Porsch (2021) ^[52], out-of-field teaching can also promote learning opportunities, as repeated experience in teaching unfamiliar subjects increases teachers' perceived competence and confidence. Similarly, Recede *et al.* (2023) ^[85] emphasized that while out-of-field teachers may initially face challenges in classroom control due to low self-efficacy, their confidence and management skills gradually improve with experience. Ünal and Ünal (2012) ^[98] also found that teachers' attitudes toward behavior and

instructional management in the classroom vary significantly depending on their years of teaching experience. The similarity in classroom management practices indicates that both specialized and out-of-field teachers develop effective classroom management through experience, reflective practice, and professional growth rather than through subject specialization.

IV. Assessment Practices

A significant difference was found in assessment practices, $t(28) = 3.44$, $p = .002$, with a large effect size ($d = 1.257$). Specialized teachers demonstrated more effective and diverse assessment strategies than out-of-field teachers.

According to Assante (2023), specialized teachers utilize authentic assessment strategies such as essay writing, oral presentations, interviews, case study analyses, and live performances to evaluate students' learning outcomes in Social Studies. This difference may be attributed to out-of-field teachers limited pedagogical content knowledge, which directly influences how they design and implement assessments.

According to Lopez and Roble (2022) ^[68], effective teaching relies on three essential factors: content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and teaching skills. Out-of-field teachers often believe that their limited content mastery hinders their ability to design effective assessments, which may, in turn, negatively impact student performance (Lagria, 2021) ^[65]. Similarly, Co *et al.* (2021) ^[30] emphasized that out-of-field teachers often struggle with limited subject mastery, making lesson preparation and the creation of student assessments more difficult. This lack of pedagogical depth hinders their ability to develop authentic and skill-based assessments aligned with learning objectives.

This finding underscore that specialized teachers' strong grasp of Social Studies content allows them to design more meaningful, skill-oriented assessments that better measure students' critical thinking and conceptual understanding. Nonetheless, targeted professional development and institutional support can help enhance out-of-field teachers' assessment literacy, narrowing the performance gap (Akayure, 2021) ^[3].

Lesson Planning Approaches, Strategies, and Factors

In this area, a total of 4 themes emerged. Two of the themes are shared in both groups, while the remaining themes are unique among them.

Comparable Themes

Theme 1: Curriculum-Guided Lesson Preparation

Curriculum-guided lesson preparation refers to applying the curriculum according to what is intended (Turan-Özpolat & Bay, 2017) ^[97] in their lesson plan. Both specialized and out-of-field Social Studies teachers create lesson plans according to the curriculum guide, teacher guide, and MELCs. This is reflected in these statements:

"I usually review the curriculum guide and most essential learning competencies provided by the Department of Education." - SP1

"Well, planning for me always starts with the curriculum guide and the Most Essential Learning Competencies from DepEd. I make sure that every lesson is competency-based and that my objectives are aligned with the K-12

standards.” - SP3

“I always start with the MELCs, of course — that’s our backbone.” - SP5

“Well, I usually start by checking the MELCs and the curriculum guide to make sure I’m following what’s required.” - OF1

“Honestly, since Araling Panlipunan isn’t my main field, I always start by checking the MELCs and the teacher’s guide — that’s where I get my direction. I make sure I fully understand the topic first before creating any activity. Sometimes I even watch short videos or read articles just to make sure I’m explaining things correctly.” - OF2

For specialized teachers (SP) 1 and 3, the curriculum serves as their backbone for competency-based lessons. However, for out-of-field teachers (OF) 1 and 2, they give heavier weight to following the curriculum to ensure that their lesson plans are aligned with the curriculum and they can teach Social Studies correctly. Talili *et al.* (2021) ^[93] confirmed that out-of-field teachers do face challenges concerning lesson planning due to their lack of mastery in the subject. Hence, they are careful in crafting lesson plans to achieve accuracy. On the other hand, Adjei (2018) ^[1] supported the fact that undergraduate degrees of teachers usually manifest their content knowledge and strength. Therefore, permitting specialized Social Studies teachers to utilize their expertise adds to their capacity in creating their lesson plans (Gerretson, Bosnick & Schofield, 2008; as cited in Adjei, 2018) ^[1]. Although both groups utilize MELCs, curriculum guides, and teaching guides in formulating lesson plans, their attitude differs because of their divide in terms of their degree of specialty. Hence, this calls for school administrators and Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) to support out-of-field Social Studies teachers in their professional development needs by conducting programs.

Theme 2: Contextualized Lesson Planning

By taking the definition of Contextualized Teaching and Learning (CTL), “Contextualized” can be thought of as the application of lessons to contexts that students are interested in (Kalchik & Oertle, 2010) ^[61]. Both specialized and out-of-field Social Studies teachers exhibited qualities of incorporating instructional strategies that both actively engage students and apply lessons to real-world situations. This is shown in the following statements:

“I’m the type who connects lessons to everyday experiences — like if the topic is about geography, I’ll relate it to places they’ve actually been to or even the weather that week.” - SP4

“I try to connect the competencies to what’s actually happening in our country or community. For example, if the topic is about governance, I might bring up current local issues or even news headlines.” - SP5

“I think my TLE background influences how I design lessons — I always look for the practical side of things. I like connecting theories to real situations so students can see the relevance in their daily lives.” - OF1

“Since I came from a different field, I plan with a focus on clarity and creativity. I think of how I would understand the topic if I were a student. My background helps me see things from a fresh perspective — maybe I don’t explain like a historian, but I make sure students see the lesson’s relevance. I guess that’s one of my strengths — I make the lessons practical and easy to grasp, even if they’re not my specialization.” - OF2

It is noteworthy that both specialized and out-of-field teachers tend to bring their background from other subjects of specialization in connecting lessons to the real world. Out-of-field Social Studies teachers can actually do so, as backed up by Hobbs and Torner (2019, as cited in Tran, 2020), who stated that new knowledge from out-of-field can actually help in improving their teaching in their specialized fields. In this regard, they view Social Studies as a stepping stone to enhance their teaching expertise, which drives them to integrate what they have learned in their subjects of expertise into the Social Studies subject and, in turn, reflect and renew themselves from the results. Meanwhile, it is already given that they can easily connect with real-life situations because they can use academic content and skills in Social Studies to real-world problems (Ball & McDiarmid, 1990; as cited in Attia, 2017) ^[12]. This illustrates a difference between specialized and out-of-field Social Studies teachers in terms of their approaches to contextualizing lessons. That is, they leverage their distinct backgrounds in executing contextualized teaching and learning. This implies that teachers must be trained to become adaptable and integrative in their teaching approaches, methods, and strategies to overcome limitations in lesson planning posed by the lack of teaching experience and expertise.

Unique Themes

Theme 3: Content Mastery and Depth (Specialized Only)

Content mastery is the ability of teachers to comprehend the subject matter so that they can apprehend main ideas and teach them effectively to students (Ngugi & Thinguri, 2014) ^[74]. Specialized teachers in Social Studies exhibited this trait as shown in the following:

“Since I’m really an AP major, I think that gives me a certain “freedom” when planning lessons. I’m not scared to go beyond the textbook or dig deeper into the topics. Having a master’s degree also changed how I plan — I’m more intentional now. I think about critical thinking, empathy, and citizenship, not just memorization.” - SP4

“Being a specialized AP teacher really helps, because I already have a solid grasp of the content and the flow of topics across grade levels. But I also try not to become too rigid...My background gives me confidence to go beyond the usual methods and experiment with activities that fit my learners’ needs.” - SP5

The specialized teachers above stated that because of their mastery of the Social Studies subject, they have gained the courage to plan lessons that explore beyond what is contained in the textbooks and experiment with uncommon methods and activities to respond to learners’ needs. Berliner (2001) ^[17], referring to Glaser’s propositions about expert teachers, confirmed that expert teachers are more adaptable and

ambitious, and can modify their perspectives quickly in solving problems compared to novice teachers. Moreover, Tran (2023) confirmed that knowledge of a subject's content, together with teaching experience, enables teachers to understand their students in-depth. This demonstrates the power of subject mastery in bestowing bravery and confidence among specialized teachers to plan innovative methods and strategies for the sake of achieving the desired objectives while taking into consideration diverse student profiles. This suggests that teachers, especially the out-of-field Social Studies teachers, must be given support systems through initiatives such as seminars or increased access to reliable learning resources that aim to deepen their knowledge and reach mastery in Social Studies content.

Theme 4: Collaborative Professional Growth (Out-of-Field Only)

Zeng and Day (2019) defined collaborative and professional development as a sustainable exchange of learning between teachers. Out-of-field Social Studies teachers practiced this to help in their lesson planning, as revealed in the following:

"The biggest challenge is really content. There are topics that I didn't study deeply in college, like politics or ancient civilizations, so I have to study those on my own. Another challenge is time — balancing preparation with other teaching loads can be tough. But I've learned to adapt. I ask help from my co-teachers who are AP majors..." - OF2

"I read the lessons ahead of time and I ask proper coaching from my co-teachers." - OF3

The statements from out-of-field teachers have disclosed that they turn to proper coaching from their co-teachers, especially from specialized Social Studies teachers, in order to enlighten them about the subject content and manage their time allotment on lesson preparation. Badaru and Ndlovu (2025) ^[13] supported this by saying that out-of-field teachers have navigated the challenges of teaching their subject outside of their expertise through collaboration and mentoring. This indicates that out-of-field teachers are prepared and committed to adapting to the demands of out-of-field teaching by establishing partnerships with specialized teachers and learn from them. Thus, school administrators and educational institutions must lead in organizing and formalizing networks to connect out-of-field Social Studies teachers to the specialized counterparts for orderly and meaningful improvements towards Social Studies lesson planning.

Instructional Delivery Approaches, Strategies, and Factors

In this area, 3 comparable themes have been identified, namely: (1) Student-Centered Instructional Delivery, (2) Inclusive Teaching Practices, and (3) Professional Confidence.

Comparable Themes

Theme 1: Student-Centered Instructional Delivery

Student-centered instruction refers to an approach that allows students to influence the content, activities, materials, and speed of learning (Jony, 2016) ^[58]. It is composed of many activities that can be characterized as interactive (Jony, 2016) ^[58], inquiry-based (Gholam, 2019) ^[46], and contextualized

(Kalchik & Oertle, 2010) ^[61]. Both specialized and out-of-field Social Studies teachers practice these, as follows:

"I use a combination of interactive discussions, group activities, debates, and inquiry-based learning. I also incorporate multimedia presentations and local cases/scenarios to make lessons more interesting and relatable." - SP1

"I'm a big fan of storytelling and simulation... For instance, instead of just lecturing about colonialism, I let students role-play different perspectives — a Filipino farmer, a soldier, a merchant — so they can 'feel' the impact of events...And sometimes, I invite students to do 'community interviews' to connect lessons to local realities." - SP5

"I often use storytelling, short videos, and class discussion. Students like it when I relate lessons to what's happening today — for example, using current events or local issues. I also use group work, mapping activities, and even games to keep them engaged. Sometimes I do role-plays, especially when the topic is about government or leadership." - OF1

"I use a lot of storytelling, especially for historical lessons. I'm not a 'lecture-heavy' teacher; I like creating short interactive discussions or games. For example, I sometimes do 'timeline races' where groups arrange events in order — it's fun but also educational. I also like using visuals and short videos. For Grade 10, when topics get more complex, I use real news clips to make discussions feel more current..." - OF2

Based on these statements, both groups incorporate local news and events in their topics and use a variety of student-centered activities such as multi-media presentations, storytelling, group activities, and role-plays. However, specialized teachers can conduct more complex activities, such as projects and debates, compared to out-of-field teachers. Ngugi and Thinguri (2014) ^[74] confirmed that teachers need the capability in content mastery and delivery to utilize a variety of strategies to manipulate the learning environment for facilitating learning. However, in the quantitative analysis, there is no significant difference between these groups in terms of instructional delivery; therefore, the complexity gap might be a case of considering learners' preference for ease, convenience, and comfort (Cuthrell & Lyon, 2007) ^[32] and the fact that most teaching styles among teachers lean on visual-auditory instruction rather than body-kinesthetic, as found in the study of Wilson (2018). This means that it does not matter if both specialized and out-of-field Social Studies teachers are capable of conducting complex activities, as long as they consistently observe instructional clarity, higher-order thinking, and student engagement in a wide variety of instructional activities. Therefore, it is important for teachers not to focus on quantity but on the quality of instructional strategies they employ to deliver effective learning to students.

Theme 2: Differentiated Instructional Practices

Differentiated instruction refers to teachers' actions to respond to the diverse backgrounds and capabilities of students (Tomlinson, 2017) ^[96]. Specialized as well as out-of-

field Social Studies teachers apply this, as evidenced by these statements:

“Differentiation is a must. I consider students’ learning styles, readiness levels, and interests. For example, visual learners get infographics or maps, while those who prefer discussions participate in debates or group reflections. DepEd emphasizes inclusive education, so I make sure to adjust my strategies for learners with different needs — by simplifying instructions, providing scaffolds, or using varied modes of assessment.” - SP3

“For the ones who struggle, I use simpler examples or give visual aids. For the fast learners, I challenge them with extension questions or let them lead group work. Sometimes, I even mix languages — I explain concepts in English first, then switch to Filipino if I see blank faces.” - OF2

Both groups of Social Studies teachers, in accordance with the legal frameworks of the Philippine education system, adjust to learners by simplifying lesson delivery for struggling learners and conducting advanced lesson delivery for advanced learners. Inclusive education has been enshrined in the 1987 Constitution, RA 10533, DepEd Order No. 72 s. 2009, and other legal bases that protect minority groups, such as RA 9442 and RA 8371, thereby directing teachers to use differentiated instruction in the classrooms. This is supported by Thakur (2014) ^[95], who said that differentiated instruction serves as the foundation for inclusive education, and was confirmed in the study of Qorib (2024) ^[81], which revealed that differentiated instruction is beneficial in learning and fostering diversity. This discloses the impact of the government’s involvement and support in successfully implementing inclusive education, which leads to the ingrained practice of differentiated education in the Philippines, may it be by specialized or out-of-field Social Studies. Hence, DepEd must diligently enforce inclusive education principles by training teachers in their professional development process to learn and apply differentiated teaching practices.

Theme 3: Professional Confidence

Professional confidence refers to the maturing belief that their profession is essential and that they are capable of meeting its expectations by tapping into positive experiences (Holland *et al.*, 2012) ^[54]. Both specialized and out-of-field Social Studies teachers exhibit this trait in their instructional delivery, as observed in the following:

“This is not to boast, but my field of specialization has given me the confidence to teach the subject effectively and with enthusiasm. Teaching Economics to my Grade 9 students is especially fulfilling, as it is one of my favorite disciplines within the field of Social Studies.” - SP2

“At first, I wasn’t that confident. I felt like, ‘What if I say something wrong?’ But over time, I gained confidence by preparing well. My field actually helps me — since I’m from an English background, I’m used to explaining concepts clearly and creatively. I use that skill to make AP lessons easier to follow. My style now is conversational — I like asking, ‘What do you think?’ or ‘Have you experienced this in your barangay?’ - OF2

It can be seen that while specialized teachers have already established confidence due to their alignment with Social Studies in their educational years, their counterparts have to build it to gain confidence. However, they have done it by not shying away from their background, regardless of their irrelevance to Social Studies. Based on the definition of Holland *et al.* (2012) ^[54] on professional confidence, the out-of-field teachers have used their experiences from their different areas of expertise as positive experiences to navigate teaching Social Studies initially. It is likely the manifestation of autonomy orientation under the Causality Orientations Theory, wherein people’s behavior is driven by their goals and needs (Koestner & Levine, 2023). As a consequence, instead of being unconfident because of the objective reality of their unfamiliarity with Social Studies, they subjectively interpret it as an extension of their professional development (Zaid *et al.*, 2021) ^[103] from their different expertise and thus willingly decided to relate and apply their background to Social Studies to grow confidence in the unfamiliar subject itself. However, specialized teachers absolutely used their background as well to possess confidence; therefore, their similar way of achieving confidence by relying on their educational experiences is the reason why there is no significant difference between them in terms of instructional delivery. This implies that professional confidence of out-of-field teachers must be nurtured so that their competence will be at par with specialized teachers.

Classroom Management Approaches, Strategies, and Factors

In this area, a total of 4 themes emerged. Three of the themes are shared in both groups, and the remaining one is associated with the out-of-field Social Studies teachers.

Comparable Themes

Theme 1: Positive, Empathy-Centered, and Trust-Based Classroom Culture

Positive Classroom culture fosters supportive classroom environments, caring student-teacher relationships, and an inclusive ethos, which creates an environment that enhances students’ well-being (Fletcher, 2015) ^[41]. This includes Empathy-centered discipline, where understanding, cooperation, and concern for others are actively fostered, which directs constructive connections between students and teachers (Md Hashim, Syed, & Chan, 2019). As well as Trust-based discipline, where students and teachers cultivate mutual trust through individualization (Prasse, 2021), relationship-focused, teamwork, and communication, which fosters a nurturing environment (Arslan & Polat, 2016) ^[9]. Both specialized and out-of-field Social Studies teachers exhibited qualities of applying classroom management that amplify a positive atmosphere to manage classroom settings. This is shown in the following statements:

“I believe in building relationships first. Once students know that you respect them, classroom management becomes much easier. I set clear routines — but I also make the classroom feel like a safe space where opinions are welcome. For time, I use simple cues — I write our flow on the board, so students can see where we are in the lesson. And if things get noisy, I usually pause and say, ‘Alright, what’s making everyone so excited?’ It breaks the tension and brings them back without scolding.” - SP4

“My years of experience helped me understand that students respond best when they feel trusted. Because I’ve handled all grade levels, I’ve learned to adjust my tone — lighter with Grade 7s, more analytical with Grade 10s. My academic background in social sciences also helps me see behavior as part of social interaction, not just misbehavior. So I approach discipline through dialogue — asking students to reflect on their actions instead of just giving punishment.” SP5

“I make sure to set clear rules at the beginning of the school year. I also try to keep my classes organized — I prepare everything before the lesson starts. I use timers for group activities so we stay on schedule. And I’ve learned that building a good relationship with the students helps a lot — when they respect you, managing them becomes easier.” - OF1

“I learned early on that classroom management is really about building relationships. If students like you and respect you, they’ll listen. I make sure to start each class with a friendly tone — a quick check-in or a short energizer. For time, I always prepare a structured plan, but I stay flexible. Sometimes discussions get really interesting, so I adjust on the spot. For behavior, I handle it calmly. I prefer talking to students privately instead of scolding them in front of the class.” - OF2

Both the Specialized and Out-of-field teachers utilize positive reinforcements to create a lighter and more supportive classroom environment. In particular, SP4, SP5, and OF2 give emphasis on their use of empathy-centered classroom management through relationship-building. While OF1 points out the trust-based approach as one of the keys to building genuine relationships and respect among students and teachers, which are essential to effective behavior management. Cimatu (2025) affirms this in his study by revealing that the specialized social studies teachers use several interactive methods, inclusivity, and even effective discussion management, which are the drivers in developing an empathetic and empowering classroom culture for the students. Additionally, both types of teachers actively foster a positive classroom culture by putting first within their classes the relationship-building, empathy, and trust, which enhances student engagement and makes managing the classroom easier. The strategies they utilize, including structured routines, management for respectful behavior, and inclusivity, show how, regardless of the field of specialization they have, teachers can still obtain a supportive and nurturing environment. These findings imply that teacher preparation and professional development programs should give strong emphasis on empathy-centered and trust-based classroom management strategies for all teachers that are teaching social studies. The School Administrators and Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) can continue to support both teachers through providing them with the training opportunities that help in strengthening the relationship-focused and other practices, guaranteeing a constantly positive classroom climate when they go back to the reality of teaching.

Theme 2: Flexible Classroom Management

Flexibility refers to the capacity to adjust one’s behavior and emotions in response to changing circumstances, maintaining

one’s open mindset, adaptability, and resilience to navigate challenges effectively (Valentozzer, 2025). Both specialized and out-of-field teachers demonstrate flexibility by adjusting their behavior and mindset to balance structured, stable, and at the same time adaptive time and classroom management. This is shown in the following statements:

“Establishing structure and consistency is important. I set clear expectations and routines from the start of the school year. For time management, I follow the lesson design framework — the 4As (Activity, Analysis, Abstraction, Application) — which helps me allocate time efficiently across each phase of learning. I maintain discipline through positive reinforcement and by fostering mutual respect. When students feel heard and involved, classroom management becomes much smoother.” - SP3

“Structure and consistency are important, but so is empathy. ... For time management, I follow a clear flow — from motivation, to discussion, to synthesis — but I keep it flexible in case meaningful discussions come up. ... Classroom management for me isn’t about control — it’s about creating an environment where students respect learning.” - SP5

“I make sure to set clear rules at the beginning of the school year. I also try to keep my classes organized — I prepare everything before the lesson starts. I use timers for group activities so we stay on schedule. And I’ve learned that building a good relationship with the students helps a lot — when they respect you, managing them becomes easier.” - OF1

“I learned early on that classroom management is really about building relationships. If students like you and respect you, they’ll listen. I make sure to start each class with a friendly tone — a quick check-in or a short energizer. For time, I always prepare a structured plan, but I stay flexible. Sometimes discussions get really interesting, so I adjust on the spot. For behavior, I handle it calmly. I prefer talking to students privately instead of scolding them in front of the class.” - OF2

It is evident that both specialized and out-of-field teachers emphasize the importance of a balance between structure and flexibility in classroom management. This establishes clear rules, routines, and time management strategies while attending to the real-time needs of the students, fostering engagement in the classroom. OF1 and OF2, who are the out-of-field teachers, bring their prior experiences from prior subjects they taught, to balance structured planning with adaptive responsiveness. Kavanagh (2000) ^[62] agrees, as it states that specialized teachers are structured as it sets clear rules and consistent, establishing stable routines and organized classroom management. According to L. Rosales (2023), social studies educators are adaptive based on what works best for the students, through *sophist Ingenuity*, which implies the skills of such teachers in sorting activities that the students will be engaged in. And the diversified molders, which teachers show flexibility and balance as they utilize the OCSRA Technique. Additionally, Pino *et al.* (2025) ^[78] further stated that out-of-field Social Studies instructors show flexibility and development in the face of challenges,

including classroom management itself. This reveals that amidst institutional constraints, both of these teachers use an adaptable and responsive approach, in order for them to be able to strike a balance between structure and flexibility in their classroom management. They establish clear rules while remaining responsive to students' immediate needs inside the classroom. From here, it can be implied that, in order for teachers to enhance how to handle real-time dynamics, they should emphasize both structured planning and adaptive strategies. This is through providing mentorship, targeted resources, and peer collaboration for out-of-field teachers, in order to further support their ability to blend consistency with flexibility, improving student engagement and learning outcomes.

Theme 3: Student-centered Approach

Student-centered Approach is an approach in the field of education that puts its focus on each of the learner's needs and views students as the center of the learning process, giving them a voice in what they are learning (Lynch, 2025) ^[69]. Both Specialized and out-of-field teachers exhibit qualities of incorporating student-centered strategy or approach that engages students contextually, to empower them in managing their class. This is shown in the following statements:

"I make the learning environment active and participatory. Students engage more when lessons are relatable. So, I often use problem-based learning and situational analysis — for example, connecting lessons on governance to current local issues. I also encourage collaborative tasks, multimedia presentations, and student-led discussions. Engagement, for me, means making them feel that Social Studies is about their lives, not just history or politics." – SP3

"I always tell my students, 'You're not just learning about people in history — you are part of history.'" That usually catches their attention. I use debates, simulation games, and sometimes even community immersion. One time, my students interviewed barangay officials about local governance — and they came back so excited to share what they learned. I think the key is to make students feel ownership of what they're learning. When they see their role in the story, engagement comes naturally." – SP4

"I let them share their own opinions or experiences. For example, when we talk about culture or community, I ask them to describe traditions in their barangay. I also use interactive games, debates, and multimedia. Students really like it when lessons are connected to things they actually experience." – OF1

"I keep it light and relatable. I use real-world examples and pop culture references — like connecting lessons about colonialism to movies or shows they know. I also let them express themselves through creative outputs like posters, mini-dramas, or news vlogs. I've noticed that when students have ownership of what they're doing, they become more engaged. I also celebrate small wins — like giving simple praise or posting their best works on the board." – OF2

SP3, SP4, OF1, and OF2 show a strong commitment to utilizing a student-centered approach in their classroom management. They actively involve their learners in shaping their own learning and behavior through strategies like SP3's problem-based learning, SP4 and OF1's debates, and OF2's interactive contextualized activities. Through connecting lessons to real-life experiences, they make learning more relatable and engaging, which then helps foster collaboration and empowerment. Dan *et al.* (2013) ^[33] agree to this, as they stated that specialized social studies teachers make sure that the learning environment is engaging the students meaningfully, which prompts them to contribute in the process. Tang (2023) ^[94] added that a student-centered approach can be operationalized through interactive strategies, including debates, which align and are consistent with the out-of-field classroom management practices. These responses show how both teachers rely on problem-based tasks and other interactive activities in order to involve and strengthen collaboration, improve the classroom climate, and support effective behavior management among students in the classroom. This implies that schools should support both teachers in employing student-centered, interactive strategies to enhance classroom management and learning outcomes. By doing so, students are empowered to actively participate, apply lessons to real-life contexts, and enhance classroom climate.

Unique Theme

Theme 4: Inclusive and Context-Sensitive Practices (Out-of-field Teacher only)

Inclusivity refers to the idea that all people, no matter the differences one may possess, must be included and assimilated in the different aspects of life equal benefits for everyone and addressing possible deficiencies for the same reason of equality (Ricee, 2022). Out-of-field teachers in Social Studies exhibited this trait as shown in the following:

"Since I'm used to handling TLE classes, which are usually active and hands-on, I already know how to handle noisy or energetic groups. That experience helps me keep AP discussions lively but still controlled. I'm used to moving around the room and checking on each group's progress, so time and behavior management feel natural to me." – OF1

"I dealt with students in different backgrounds; therefore, I don't assume that a single type of approach fits all. I consider the cultural background of my students and their economic status." – OF3

The out-of-field teachers, OF1 and OF3, particularly stated that since they had already dealt with and handled classes aside from Social Studies, therefore widened the fact that they also dealt with more students in different backgrounds. This became their ground in dealing with students with inclusivity, making sure they handle different students well, and their management can cater to these diverse students, particularly in giving assessments and tasks. Through this, they foster an atmosphere of respect and acceptance. A study by Du Plessis (2019) ^[38] about out-of-field teachers agrees with this, as it stated that teachers are expected to acknowledge each of their students' various learning needs and must accommodate learning diversity to demonstrate

inclusive teaching. This further added that effective diversity management in the classroom starts with teachers' awareness and sensitivity to recognize and appreciate student differences. These responses show how out-of-field teachers are able to manage diversity in the classroom by adapting their strategies to students' various backgrounds. Their awareness and sensitivity to these differences show how they contribute more to an equitable and inclusive learning environment even despite their content-knowledge limitations. This implies that these teachers must be provided with sustained training and support that strengthen their capacity for inclusive management, enabling them to deliver fair, responsive assessments to diverse students.

Assessment Practices Approaches, Strategies, and Factors

In this area, 3 comparable themes have been identified, namely: (1) Comprehensive and Authentic Assessment Approaches, (2) Feedback-Driven Instruction and Reflective Improvement, and (3) Purposeful and Standards-Guided Assessment Design

Comparable Themes

Theme 1: Comprehensive and Authentic Assessment Approaches

Comprehensive and authentic assessment approaches refer to the use of multiple assessment types—traditional tests, written outputs, and performance-based tasks—to obtain a fuller, more accurate picture of student learning. Authentic assessment, as defined by Wiggins (1990) ^[100], requires students to apply knowledge in “real-world” or meaningful contexts, emphasizing judgment, performance, and application rather than rote recall. Similarly, Gulikers, Bastiaens, and Kirschner (2004) ^[49] highlight that authenticity is achieved when assessments mirror tasks, conditions, and standards found in actual practice. In both specialized and out-of-field Social Studies classrooms, teachers combine quizzes, written work, projects, simulations, podcasts, and community-based tasks, demonstrating an integrated approach that captures students' higher-order thinking and real-life competencies. This is observed from their statements such as:

“I use a mix of formative and summative assessments such as quizzes, written outputs, performance tasks, and project-based assessments.” – SP1

“I use a combination of traditional assessments... and authentic assessments, like performance tasks or project-based activities.” – SP2

“I use a mix — written quizzes, reflection papers, group presentations, and performance tasks. Sometimes I ask them to make posters or write short essays about community issues. I like assessments that show understanding, not just memorization.” – OF1

“I mix traditional and creative ones... I really enjoy assigning performance tasks. For example, I once asked my students to create a short podcast about a local issue... I also use reflection journals.” – OF2

The experiences of both specialized and out-of-field teachers demonstrate a shared commitment to promoting meaningful

learning through diverse assessment modalities. While specialized teachers incorporate authentic tasks because these align with their deep disciplinary grounding, out-of-field teachers rely on mixed approaches to ensure students can demonstrate understanding in multiple ways despite their own content limitations. This finding supports Wiggins' (1990) ^[100] claim that authentic assessment strengthens students' ability to apply knowledge to lived contexts, while also affirming the argument of Darling-Hammond and Adamson (2014) ^[35] that diverse assessment formats improve equity and access by giving students multiple pathways to express learning. The consistency across both groups implies that Social Studies teachers—regardless of specialization—recognize the subject's inherently contextual and experiential nature. Consequently, schools and administrators should continue to train teachers in designing performance-based and multimodal assessments, ensuring that classrooms maintain authenticity and align with 21st-century learning goals.

Theme 2: Feedback-Driven Instruction and Reflective Improvement

Feedback-driven instruction and reflective improvement refer to the instructional process where teachers use ongoing, specific feedback from formative assessments to adjust teaching strategies, support learners, and enhance lesson delivery. Black and Wiliam's (1998) ^[19] seminal work on formative assessment explains that feedback is most effective when it is used to modify teaching and learning activities in real time. Similarly, Hattie and Timperley (2007) ^[51] emphasize that high-quality feedback—specific, corrective, and actionable—has a significant impact on student achievement. Both specialized and out-of-field teachers in this study actively provide immediate and constructive feedback and engage in reflective practice to refine their instruction and respond to student needs, as shown in the following:

“I use assessment results to adjust my teaching methods—revisiting lessons or providing remediation when necessary.” – SP1

“Feedback is continuous and formative... If I see a pattern of misunderstanding, I revisit the topic using different strategies.” – SP3

“I usually give feedback verbally right after activities or quizzes, then write short comments on their papers... If I notice many students didn't understand something, I adjust my lesson next time or reteach the topic.” – OF1

“I try to make feedback personal and positive... Their feedback helps me too — if many didn't get something, it's a sign I need to reteach it differently.” – OF2

The statements above reflect a strong alignment with research describing feedback as a central driver of learning. Both groups of teachers demonstrate a dynamic process in which error patterns inform reteaching, and feedback not only guides students but also shapes teachers' next instructional moves. This mirrors the findings of Shute (2008) ^[91], who argued that good feedback reduces uncertainty and supports mastery, particularly when it is timely and specific. Furthermore, reflective practices described by the teachers

affirm Schön's (1983) notion of the "reflective practitioner," wherein teachers refine their craft through deliberate introspection. Specialized teachers often interpret feedback through their strong grasp of content, while out-of-field teachers rely on feedback to ensure accuracy and confidence in their delivery. These patterns suggest the need for schools to strengthen professional learning communities where teachers can collaboratively reflect on assessment data, exchange strategies, and support one another in feedback-based instructional improvement.

Theme 3: Purposeful and Standards-Guided Assessment Design

Purposeful, standards-guided, and fair assessment design refers to creating assessments that are deliberately aligned with curriculum standards (such as the MELCs), incorporate clear rubrics, and ensure objectivity, fairness, and validity in evaluating student performance. Wiggins (1996) ^[101] emphasizes that assessments must be grounded in standards, transparent in criteria, and coherent in design to support both learning and fairness. Likewise, Popham (2014) ^[79] asserts that well-constructed assessments must reflect intended learning outcomes and use clear scoring guides to minimize subjectivity. Both specialized and out-of-field teachers adopt standards-referenced assessment practices, relying on rubrics, alignment with competencies, and focus on comprehension and application rather than surface-level recall, as expressed in the following:

"Having a strong foundation in Social Studies helps me design assessments that measure not only recall but also critical thinking and value-laden outcomes." – SP1

"Assessment becomes more manageable because I am well-guided by the learning competencies." – SP2

"Since I'm not a Social Studies major, I make sure to use clear rubrics and guidelines when grading... I focus more on how well students understand and apply what we discussed." – OF1

"I focus more on understanding than technical details... I rely on rubrics so grading stays fair and transparent. I also consult co-teachers to ensure alignment with standards." – OF2

The experiences of both groups reveal that clear criteria and standards alignment serve as foundational anchors in designing assessments that are fair and pedagogically sound. Out-of-field teachers rely on rubrics and co-teacher consultation as scaffolds to ensure accuracy—supporting the findings of Ingersoll *et al.* (2014) ^[55] that non-specialists often depend on structured tools to maintain quality. Meanwhile, specialized teachers leverage their disciplinary mastery to create deeper, more analytical assessments aligned with higher-order competencies, echoing Brookhart's (2013) ^[21] argument that content expertise strengthens assessment validity. Interestingly, both groups converge on the belief that fairness emerges from transparency, alignment, and consistency. This suggests that professional development in standards-referenced and rubric-based assessment can benefit all teachers, particularly in promoting equity and ensuring that grading reflects genuine understanding rather than rote recall.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Assessing the instructional practices of specialized and out-of-field teachers is essential in strengthening the quality of Social Studies education. The study found that while both groups demonstrated similar practices in instructional delivery and classroom management, specialized Social Studies teachers performed more effectively in lesson planning and assessment practices. It is recommended that school administrators, TEIs, and DepEd initiate and facilitate programs directed toward improving the lesson planning and assessment practices of out-of-field Social Studies teachers, including but not limited to continuous professional development training, mentorship opportunities supervised by Social Studies experts, and strong collaborative avenues with specialized Social Studies teachers.

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