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Teacher Self-Efficacy as a Mediator Between Subject Qualification Alignment and Perceived Teaching Effectiveness Among Senior High School Teachers

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Abstract. Teacher deployment challenges remain a concern where staffing constraints require teachers to handle subjects beyond their specialization. This study examined subject qualification alignment and the mediating role of teacher self-efficacy in relation to perceived teaching effectiveness among senior high school teachers. Grounded in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997), the study employed a quantitative, non-experimental correlational design using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Data were collected from 200 senior high school teachers in selected public schools within the Zamboanga City Schools Division, Philippines. Subject qualification alignment was measured using a three-level index—fully aligned, partially aligned, and not aligned—while teacher self-efficacy and perceived teaching effectiveness were measured using Likert-scale instruments. Results showed that subject qualification alignment had no significant direct effect on perceived teaching effectiveness ($\beta = 0.079$, $p = 0.191$), but significantly predicted teacher self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.285$, $p < 0.001$). Teacher self-efficacy strongly predicted perceived teaching effectiveness ($\beta = 0.867$, $p < 0.001$), and the indirect effect was significant ($\beta = 0.248$, $p < 0.001$), confirming full mediation. The findings indicate that teacher self-efficacy is the key mechanism linking subject qualification alignment and perceived teaching effectiveness. The study highlights the importance of mentoring, professional development, and supportive deployment policies in strengthening teacher self-efficacy, particularly among teachers handling partially aligned or non-aligned subjects.

Keywords: Teacher Self-Efficacy; Subject Qualification Alignment; Teaching Effectiveness; SEM; Mediation

Introduction

Teacher effectiveness remains a central concern because of its relationship with student learning and school performance (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Hattie, 2009). International evidence, including the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), shows that teacher deployment is influenced by staffing requirements, curriculum demands, and the availability of qualified teachers. In the Philippines, these challenges became particularly relevant with the implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program and the expansion of the Senior High School (SHS) curriculum, which increased the demand for teachers with subject-specific qualifications. Despite DepEd qualification and hiring requirements, staffing constraints and the diversity of SHS strands may result in teachers being assigned to subjects that are partially or not aligned with their academic preparation. Thus, this study conceptualizes subject qualification alignment as a continuum ranging from fully aligned to partially aligned and not aligned assignments.

Although subject qualification alignment is generally expected to influence teaching effectiveness, findings remain inconsistent, suggesting that structural conditions alone may not explain variations in teacher performance. Recent research highlights teacher self-efficacy as an important psychological factor influencing instructional behavior, persistence, and adaptability (Klassen & Tze, 2014; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Grounded in Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1997), self-efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs in their capability to successfully perform instructional tasks. It may serve as a psychological buffer against instructional stress and ambiguity. Teachers whose assignments are aligned with their preparation may draw on relevant knowledge and mastery experiences that strengthen their efficacy beliefs, while partial or non-alignment may create cognitive demands associated with unfamiliar content, curriculum requirements, and instructional preparation. Strong self-efficacy may nevertheless enable teachers to perceive such challenges as manageable and respond through greater effort, adaptation, and persistence.

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Despite growing research on teacher qualifications and self-efficacy, limited empirical evidence explains how subject qualification alignment influences teaching effectiveness through teacher self-efficacy, particularly among Philippine SHS teachers. This study therefore examines teacher self-efficacy as a mediating mechanism between subject qualification alignment and perceived teaching effectiveness. By integrating structural assignment conditions with psychological processes, the study seeks to determine whether alignment affects teaching effectiveness directly or primarily through teachers' beliefs in their instructional capabilities.

Research Questions

This study aims to examine the mediating role of teacher self-efficacy in the relationship between subject qualification alignment and perceived teaching effectiveness among senior high school teachers.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a significant relationship between senior high school teachers' subject qualification alignment and their perceived teaching effectiveness?
2. Is there a significant relationship between subject qualification alignment and teacher self-efficacy?
3. Is there a significant relationship between teacher self-efficacy and perceived teaching effectiveness?
4. Does teacher self-efficacy significantly mediate the relationship between subject qualification alignment and perceived teaching effectiveness?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study examined the relationship between subject qualification alignment, teacher self-efficacy, and perceived teaching effectiveness among senior high school teachers in selected public schools in the Zamboanga City Schools Division during the school year 2025–2026. It focused on three levels of subject qualification alignment—fully aligned, partially aligned, and not aligned—and examined the mediating role of teacher self-efficacy. The study was limited to 200 senior high school teachers and employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyze the proposed relationships.

Literature Review

Teacher effectiveness is strongly associated with student achievement, while alignment between teachers' academic preparation and assigned subjects remains a persistent challenge. In this study, subject qualification alignment refers to the degree of congruence between teachers' academic specialization and teaching assignments. Such alignment provides relevant subject-matter knowledge that supports instructional planning, content delivery, and assessment (Shulman, 1987).

In the Philippine context, teacher-subject mismatch remains evident. Mejia et al. (2025) reported that among 245 teachers, 42.86% were mismatched, 25.31% matched, and 31.84% handled both aligned and non-aligned subjects. Mismatched teachers reported greater preparation demands, decreased confidence, and difficulties addressing student misconceptions. Similarly, Evardo (2024) found that senior high school teachers assigned to research subjects outside their specialization experienced anxiety, frustration, and instructional difficulties. These findings indicate that subject misalignment is not merely an administrative concern but may also affect teachers' psychological readiness and instructional experiences.

Teacher self-efficacy provides an important psychological perspective for understanding these effects. Grounded in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997), self-efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs in their ability to successfully perform instructional tasks. Teachers with strong self-efficacy tend to demonstrate greater persistence, adaptability, and effective instructional behavior (Klassen & Tze, 2014; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Alignment may strengthen self-efficacy by providing relevant knowledge and mastery experiences, whereas persistent partial or non-alignment may create cognitive challenges associated with unfamiliar content, additional preparation, and instructional uncertainty. However, mentoring, social persuasion, professional collaboration, and successful experiences may help teachers develop confidence despite assignment difficulties. Thus, self-efficacy may serve as a psychological resource that enables teachers to manage the demands of less-aligned assignments.

Recent studies support the role of self-efficacy as an important mechanism in teacher-related outcomes. Rubio-Valdivia et al. (2024) demonstrated its mediating role in teacher development, while Zhou and Hou (2025) found that self-efficacy contributes to teacher engagement through direct and indirect pathways. Duan et al. (2024) further identified institutional support, professional experience, and classroom environment as important correlates of teacher self-efficacy. Philippine evidence from Evardo (2024) and Mejia et al. (2025) likewise suggests that out-of-field assignments may create psychological and instructional challenges, including anxiety, increased preparation demands, and reduced confidence.

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Taken together, the literature suggests a plausible pathway in which subject qualification alignment influences relevant knowledge and mastery experiences, which may shape teacher self-efficacy and subsequently influence teaching effectiveness**.** However, limited research has directly examined this pathway among Philippine senior high school teachers. The present study addresses this gap by testing teacher self-efficacy as a mediator between subject qualification alignment and perceived teaching effectiveness, integrating structural assignment conditions with psychological processes to provide a more comprehensive explanation of teacher performance.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, non-experimental correlational research design using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine the direct and indirect relationships among subject qualification alignment (SQA), teacher self-efficacy (TSE), and perceived teaching effectiveness (PTE). PLS-SEM was employed because the study examined a theoretically specified mediation model involving both direct and indirect relationships and sought to assess the predictive relationships among the study constructs.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in selected public senior high schools within the Zamboanga City Schools Division. These schools offer diverse Senior High School tracks and specialized subjects, making the setting appropriate for examining variations in the alignment between teachers' academic qualifications and their assigned teaching subjects.

Research Participants

This study included 200 senior high school teachers from selected public senior high schools in the Zamboanga City Schools Division. The participants represented varying levels of subject qualification alignment, comprising 22 (11.0%) fully aligned, 95 (47.5%) partially aligned, and 83 (41.5%) not aligned teachers**.** All 200 questionnaires were valid and included in the analysis.

Research Instrument

The study used a structured questionnaire consisting of three parts: Subject Qualification Alignment (SQA), Teacher Self-Efficacy (TS), and Perceived Teaching Effectiveness (PTE)**.** SQA was measured using a three-level classification: fully aligned, partially aligned, and not aligned**,** coded as an alignment index. Teacher Self-Efficacy and Perceived Teaching Effectiveness were measured using 10-item Likert-scale instruments adapted from established measures. The instruments demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.956 for Teacher Self-Efficacy and 0.963 for Perceived Teaching Effectiveness**.** In the PLS-SEM measurement model, both constructs also demonstrated satisfactory convergent validity and composite reliability, with AVE values of 0.725 and 0.755 and composite reliability values of 0.963 and 0.969, respectively.

Data Gathering Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was secured from the appropriate school authorities and the Zamboanga City Schools Division. After obtaining ethical clearance and informed consent, the questionnaires were administered to the selected senior high school teachers. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and right to withdraw. Completed questionnaires were collected, coded, and securely stored for statistical analysis using SPSS and WarpPLS.

Results and Discussions

Table 1 presents the structural model results showing the direct and indirect effects of subject qualification alignment (SQA), teacher self-efficacy (TSE), and perceived teaching effectiveness (PTE) among senior high school teachers.

Hypotheses	β	p-value	SE	f^2
1. H1. SQA → PTE	0.079	0.191	0.090	0.011
2. H2. SQA → TSE	0.285	< 0.001	0.085	0.081
3. H3. TSE → PTE	0.867	< 0.001	0.074	0.735
4. H4. SQA → TSE → PTE	0.248	< 0.001	0.061	0.035

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Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between senior high school teachers' subject qualification alignment and their perceived teaching effectiveness?

Subject Qualification Alignment and Perceived Teaching Effectiveness

The results show that subject qualification alignment does not significantly predict perceived teaching effectiveness ($\beta = 0.079$, $p = 0.191$). Although the relationship is positive, the p-value exceeds the 0.05 significance level, indicating that the direct effect is not statistically significant. The very small effect size ($f^2 = 0.011$) further indicates that subject qualification alignment has minimal practical influence on perceived teaching effectiveness when considered directly. This suggests that being assigned to subjects aligned with one's academic qualification does not, by itself, guarantee higher perceived teaching effectiveness.

This finding may be explained by teachers' ability to adapt to varying assignment conditions through professional experience, continuous learning, collaboration, and instructional strategies. Thus, structural assignment conditions may not directly determine how teachers perceive their effectiveness.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant relationship between subject qualification alignment and teacher self-efficacy?

Subject Qualification Alignment and Teacher Self-Efficacy

Subject qualification alignment significantly predicts teacher self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.285$, $p < 0.001$), with a small effect size ($f^2 = 0.081$). The positive coefficient indicates that greater alignment is associated with stronger teacher self-efficacy. This finding supports Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997), particularly the importance of mastery experiences in developing efficacy beliefs. Teachers whose academic preparation is relevant to their assigned subjects may have greater familiarity with content and instructional demands, which can strengthen their confidence in performing teaching tasks.

Conversely, partial or non-alignment may require teachers to devote additional effort to learning unfamiliar content and preparing instructional materials. Such experiences may create instructional uncertainty; however, professional support and successful experiences can help teachers develop and maintain efficacy despite assignment challenges.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between teacher self-efficacy and perceived teaching effectiveness?

Teacher Self-Efficacy and Perceived Teaching Effectiveness

Teacher self-efficacy has a strong and statistically significant positive effect on perceived teaching effectiveness ($\beta = 0.867$, $p < 0.001$). The effect size is also substantial ($f^2 = 0.735$), indicating that teacher self-efficacy has considerable practical importance in explaining perceived teaching effectiveness. The relatively small standard error (SE = 0.074) indicates a reasonably precise estimate.

This finding supports previous research showing that teachers' efficacy beliefs are associated with persistence, adaptability, classroom management, and instructional quality (Klassen & Tze, 2014; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Teachers who believe strongly in their instructional capabilities may be more willing to persist when facing difficulties, adjust their teaching strategies, and seek solutions to instructional challenges.

Research Question 4: Does teacher self-efficacy significantly mediate the relationship between subject qualification alignment and perceived teaching effectiveness?

Mediating Role of Teacher Self-Efficacy

The mediation analysis reveals a significant indirect effect of subject qualification alignment on perceived teaching effectiveness through teacher self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.248$, $p < 0.001$). The indirect effect has a small effect size ($f^2 = 0.035$), but it is statistically significant. Because the direct relationship between SQA and PTE is not significant ($\beta = 0.079$, $p = 0.191$), while the indirect pathway through TSE is significant, the results support full mediation.

This finding indicates that subject qualification alignment may influence perceived teaching effectiveness primarily by shaping teachers' self-efficacy rather than through a direct effect. In other words, alignment may contribute to teachers' confidence in managing instructional tasks, and this confidence is subsequently associated with their perceived teaching effectiveness. The finding reinforces Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997), which recognizes that environmental conditions can influence behavior through individuals' cognitive beliefs.

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Overall, the results suggest that teacher self-efficacy is the critical psychological mechanism linking subject qualification alignment and perceived teaching effectiveness**.** The findings therefore move beyond viewing out-of-field teaching solely as a structural staffing problem and highlight the importance of strengthening teachers' cognitive resources. For senior high school teachers in Zamboanga City, mentoring, professional development, peer support, and appropriate deployment practices may help strengthen self-efficacy and sustain teaching effectiveness despite differences in subject qualification alignment. However, because the study was limited to public senior high school teachers in Zamboanga City, the findings should be generalized cautiously to other educational levels, regions, or educational systems.

Ethical Considerations

This study observed ethical standards in educational research. Permission to conduct the study was secured from the appropriate DepEd authorities and school administrators, and informed consent was obtained from all participants after explaining the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw without penalty. Participation was voluntary, with no administrative coercion or influence. Respondents' identities were protected through coding, and all responses were kept confidential, securely stored, and reported only in aggregated form. The study complied with applicable institutional research ethics protocols and the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173).

Conclusion

The study concludes that subject qualification alignment does not have a significant direct effect on perceived teaching effectiveness**,** but it significantly influences teacher self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy, in turn, has a strong positive effect on perceived teaching effectiveness and fully mediates the relationship between subject qualification alignment and perceived teaching effectiveness. These findings suggest that teaching effectiveness is not determined solely by whether teachers are assigned to subjects aligned with their qualifications. Rather, teacher self-efficacy serves as a critical psychological mechanism that enables teachers to manage assignment challenges and sustain effective instructional practices**.** The study therefore contributes to the literature by shifting the understanding of out-of-field teaching from being viewed purely as a structural deficit toward recognizing self-efficacy and cognitive self-regulation as important buffers that can help sustain educational quality despite assignment constraints**.**

Recommendations

School administrators are encouraged to establish peer-coaching and mentoring programs in which partially aligned and non-aligned teachers are paired with experienced subject specialists to strengthen their self-efficacy and instructional competence. DepEd may also consider providing a transitional mentoring period before or during subject reassignment, supported by relevant training and instructional resources. Teachers are encouraged to engage in continuous professional learning and collaboration to build confidence in handling unfamiliar subjects. Future researchers may examine other factors, such as teaching experience, professional development, and institutional support, and replicate the study in other regions and educational levels to determine whether the findings are consistent across different contexts..

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