

Teaching Out of Field: How Non-Philosophy Majors Navigate the Senior High School Philosophy Classroom in Zamboanga City

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Abstract. This study explored the lived experiences of senior high school teachers assigned to teach Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person under the Philippine K to 12 curriculum. The program's rapid rollout generated an urgent need for qualified philosophy instructors that the education system could not meet, so the subject was often taught by educators whose academic training lay outside philosophy. Utilizing a qualitative research design anchored on the phenomenological method, this study gathered data beginning in January 2017 from 12 senior high school teachers, non-philosophy majors teaching the subject across four school sites in Zamboanga City, Philippines: a state university, a private university, and a state college, each offering the senior high school program, and a public high school, the only purely secondary institution among them. Selected through purposive and convenience sampling, the teachers served as key informants in semi-structured interviews guided by an eight-item interview guide covering their background, challenges, coping mechanisms, and remedies; transcripts were analyzed thematically. Results revealed that participants' difficulties originated primarily from a mismatch between their specialization and the philosophical content taught. Ten of the twelve had taught the subject for five months to one year, and most reported difficulty understanding philosophical concepts, mastering content, identifying appropriate pedagogy, and securing adequate references. To cope, teachers relied on self-directed research, collegial consultation with philosophy specialists, and the Department of Education's curriculum guide and modules, supplemented by activity-based classroom strategies. The experience also exacted a psycho-emotional toll, surfacing as stress, embarrassment, and diminished confidence, consistent with prior out-of-field teaching research. Participants recommended sustained training and seminars, adequate instructional materials, and the hiring of qualified philosophy specialists. The study concludes that out-of-field teaching of philosophy poses a perceived risk to the quality of senior high school instruction and calls for systemic institutional support.

Keywords: out-of-field teaching; phenomenology; philosophy education; senior high school; teacher specialization

Introduction

Questions about the meaning of human existence, “Why am I here? Where do I come from? Who am I?”, are among the most fundamental that men and women confront. Philosophy, as a discipline of the mind, addresses these complexities carefully and critically; it has therefore long been regarded as foundational to education and as a discipline that must be taught with particular care and competence. The Greeks embedded philosophy at the heart of their education. The Sophists trained the young in debate and oratory to argue well and persuasively before their peers (Frost, 1962), and this tradition reached its height in Socrates’ dialectic, Plato’s Republic, and Aristotle’s ethical and political treatises (Omas-as, 2005). Each philosopher taught differently, yet their works shaped how humanity has explored and gained knowledge of itself and its universe.

In the Philippines, philosophy entered formal education through the Spanish colonial period. Early parochial schools provided religious instruction, but the Augustinian, Dominican, and Jesuit friars later integrated philosophy into the curriculum; the University of Santo Tomás, for example, offered philosophy and theology taught by friars who possessed the requisite expertise (Omas-as, 2005). For centuries, however, philosophy remained confined to tertiary and seminary education and was not part of basic education.

With the implementation of the K to 12 reform, Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person became a core subject in the senior high school curriculum (Department of Education [DepEd], 2016). Because philosophy had traditionally been reserved for seminaries and tertiary institutions, the Department of

Education faced an acute shortage of specialized teachers qualified to deliver the subject. As a result, the course was assigned to teachers who are not philosophy majors, an arrangement that the international literature describes as the "out-of-field teaching" phenomenon (Ingersoll, 1998; Neakrase, 2010), a pattern also documented among Philippine teachers through both phenomenological inquiry (Arendain & Limpot, 2022) and studies of qualification-subject mismatch (Guiaselon et al., 2022). If philosophy is a systematic search for truth and a foundation of knowledge of the self and the universe, then it ought to be taught by trained, qualified, and competent instructors. This tension between curricular ambition and teacher supply motivated the present study.

This concern is sharpened by the broader learning crisis confronting Philippine basic education, in which persistent gaps in learner achievement and recurring questions about the quality of instruction have become a pressing national concern (Second Congressional Commission on Education [EDCOM II], 2024). In such a climate, the competence of teachers in newly introduced subjects bears directly on the learning that students are able to attain, and where teachers are assigned to subjects outside their preparation, the risk to instructional quality, and ultimately to learning, is magnified. The Philosophy of the Human Person, a wholly new addition to the senior high school curriculum, is especially exposed to this risk, since few teachers were trained to deliver it.

In Zamboanga City, among the higher education institutions, only Ateneo de Zamboanga University offers a Commission on Higher Education (CHED)-recognized Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy program, and admission was almost exclusively oriented toward candidates for the priesthood; most graduates proceeded either to religious vocation or law (Ateneo de Zamboanga University, 2024). Consequently, philosophy subjects in many local schools are taught by non-specialists, producing a visible mismatch between teachers' expertise and their teaching load. While the international out-of-field literature documents the instructional and psycho-emotional costs of the phenomenon (Du Plessis, 2005; Ingersoll, 2002; Neakrase, 2010), and recent Philippine studies have begun to describe it in other subject areas (Arendain & Limpot, 2022; Guiaselon et al., 2022), philosophy has remained outside its scope; the review below derives this gap in detail. Against this backdrop, the study explored the lived experiences of non-philosophy majors assigned to teach the subject, in order to surface the problems, they encounter, the strategies they use to cope, and the remedies they proposed.

Research Objectives

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences and determine the challenges and coping mechanisms of non-philosophy majors teaching the Philosophy of the Human Person in selected senior high schools. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What common problems do non-philosophy majors encounter in teaching the Philosophy of the Human Person in the selected senior high schools?
2. What coping mechanisms do these teachers employ to manage the challenges they face?
3. What remedies do the participants recommend to resolve the problems associated with non-philosophy majors teaching the subject?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study is limited to four schools in Zamboanga City, coded as School A, School B, School C, and School D, and involves twelve (12) key informants who are teachers not majoring in philosophy, distributed as seven (7) from School A, three (3) from School B, one (1) from School C, and one (1) from School D. It focused on the common problems or challenges and coping mechanisms of non-philosophy majors handling Philosophy of the Human Person, and sought to determine remedies or recommendations from the informants directly involved. Prior to the interviews, informants were oriented on the study's purpose and procedures so that they had sufficient understanding of what participation would involve, and related literature was incorporated throughout to support the key informant interviews and to phenomenologically describe the informants' experiences.

Literature Review

The Specialized Demands of Teaching Philosophy

Teaching philosophy has never been a simple undertaking; it requires mastery of content, sustained reflection, and methodological discipline. In his essay "The Nature of Philosophical Inquiry," Robert O. Johann pointed out Blondel's observation about the difficulty of reconciling the universal scope of philosophical reflection with technical and methodological precision (as cited in Dy, 2005, p. 7). Johann captured this tension as a conflict between the matter and the form of philosophy: *"There is, as it were, a kind of conflict between the matter and form of philosophy. On the one hand, philosophy has traditionally pretended to exercise a kind of universal jurisdiction... On the other hand, philosophical reflection seems unable to make*

headway except at the price of progressive specialization and self-limitation... philosophers seem bent on adapting the universal object of their discipline to a whole range of special methodologies which seem more indicative of individual biases and points of view than of any requirement of subject-matter" (Johann, as cited in Dy, 2005, p. 7). This observation underscores three sources of philosophy's difficulty: the universal scope of its subject matter, its reflective and abstract nature, and the variety of methods its teaching demands. Philosophy therefore requires commitment, expertise, and specialization. Yet, as this study assumes from the outset, teachers in many Philippine schools are tasked to teach the Philosophy of the Human Person beyond the limits of their field, a situation attributable to the scarcity of qualified specialists and best characterized as out-of-field teaching (Neakrase, 2010).

Pedagogical Approaches to Philosophy: Systematic, Historical, and Integrative

A central challenge for any teacher of philosophy is deciding which approach to use. Clarke (2001), a professor of philosophy at Fordham University, observed that many philosophy departments in Jesuit colleges had shifted from a primarily systematic to a primarily historical approach, and argued that this shift did not serve students well. The systematic, scholastic approach (beginning with logic, proceeding through metaphysics and cosmology, and ending in the philosophy of the human person; Dy, 2005) was, in Clarke's view, excessively narrow and rigidly scholastic, insufficiently open to modern and contemporary developments, and often delivered by teachers not professionally trained as philosophers (Clarke, 2001).

Clarke nonetheless warned that an exclusively historical approach can produce a mind that is knowledgeable and critical, yet lacking the conviction or skill to construct an integrative vision of reality (Clarke, 2001). As a resolution, he proposed an integrative approach in which the professor offers students a personal, reflective synthesis of the key philosophical problems.

Specifically, Clarke called on the professor to hold a personal, integrative vision of philosophy and to be willing to stand before students not merely as a lecturer transmitting content, but as a philosopher in his own right, presenting, after careful reflection, what he judges to be the most illuminating solution currently available to the field's central problems (Clarke, 2001).

For Clarke, students learn to philosophize only by apprenticing themselves to teachers who serve as role models and who are themselves genuinely committed to the practice of philosophy (Clarke, 2001). This integrative ideal aligns with the broader aims of Jesuit education, which seeks the holistic formation of each individual as a member of the community and promotes dialogue between faith and culture (International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education, 1986). The approach is simultaneously an ideal and a challenge: it demands of teachers a personal commitment to philosophy as a way of life, not merely a body of content to be transmitted.

Efforts to render philosophy accessible to Filipino learners reflect the same concern. Pavo (2012) designed a modular text-workbook that unpacks philosophical positions in language attuned to Filipino students' sensibilities, integrating reflective questions and group activities while preserving the discipline's rigor, echoing Heidegger's reminder, as noted by Pavo (2012), that the purpose of philosophy is not to simplify understanding but to deepen and complicate it. Existentialist and phenomenological perspectives further caution against reducing the human person to a system or method; Kierkegaard's protest against depersonalization and his insistence on existence as individual, finite, and free (Babor, 2007; Dy, 2005) imply that teaching the Philosophy of the Human Person cannot be confined to any single instructional formula. More recently, a content analysis of the Introduction to Philosophy of the Human Person (IPHP) Curriculum Guide by Irmano, Inocian, Tabunag, Compuesto, and Gualiza (2023) identified sufficiency gaps in several thematic clusters of the curriculum and recommended learner-centered strategies, such as reflective teaching, situated and contextual learning, and cooperative learning, to help teachers deliver the subject's more difficult themes.

Teaching as a Relational and Ethical Responsibility

Beyond content and method, the literature frames teaching philosophy as a relational responsibility. Bell (2002) held that great mentors ask effective questions and listen for the meaning behind their students' answers, citing Socrates as the exemplary teacher, who needed nothing more than the ability to ask the right question and to listen attentively. In the Socratic method, the teacher learns from students even as students learn by being questioned, and education becomes liberating (Dy, 2005). Garcia (1998, as cited in Ibana & Tugado, 1998) extended this view, arguing that philosophy is critical thinking oriented toward creative action and practical wisdom, and that teaching is fundamentally an act of being for others: students, through open and friendly dialogue, become teachers in their own right, showing educators the true meaning of responsibility. Teaching, on this account, requires teachers to listen closely to their students and to give of their time generously.

These relational ideals are institutionalized in the attributes expected of K to 12 teachers, who are envisioned as multiliterate, multispecialist, multiskilled, self-directed, lifelong learners, flexible, creative problem-solvers, critical thinkers, passionate about teaching, and emotionally intelligent (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2012). The K to 12 reform positions teachers as the key to realizing its vision of holistically developed twenty-first-century Filipino graduates (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2012). The expectation that a single teacher be a "multispecialist," however, sits in tension with the realities of out-of-field assignment, in which teachers are asked to deliver content well outside their preparation.

The Out-of-Field Teaching Phenomenon

Out-of-field teaching refers to the practice of assigning teachers to subjects that lie outside their field of training or qualification (Ingersoll, 1998). A body of international research documents its effects on both instruction and teacher well-being, providing the most direct empirical frame for the present study.

Neakrase (2010) investigated differences in content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), and teaching practices between in-field and out-of-field novice secondary physics teachers, using a mixed-methods design that combined interviews, observations, case studies, and concept maps coded for correctness, connectedness, and complexity over a two-year period. In-field teachers demonstrated strong, consistent content knowledge (accurate terminology, well-organized explanations, and logically progressive concept maps), and their PCK matured as they learned to identify students' prior knowledge and difficulties. Out-of-field teachers, by contrast, showed weaker understanding and more misconceptions, focused on process and engagement rather than content, considered students' prior knowledge only superficially, relied on traditional techniques such as lecture and textbook reading, and showed little growth across their first two years. These findings illustrate how out-of-field teaching can compromise instructional quality and, in turn, student learning.

Taylor (1996) corroborated these patterns in the field of social studies, interviewing five out-of-field high school and junior high teachers in Manitoba, Canada. Four of the five lacked adequate knowledge of the structure of the social studies curriculum, and the teachers tended to reduce the discipline's goals to citizenship while overlooking aims such as critical thinking. Taylor attributed part of this shortfall to teachers being given little time to prepare for out-of-field assignments made known only as classes were about to begin.

Du Plessis (2005, 2015) shifted attention to the human cost of the phenomenon. Through interviews with principals and teachers in South African schools, Du Plessis (2005) found that participants commonly experienced stress, physical fatigue, and emotional strain, describing educators as becoming tense and worn down, often overwhelmed by exhaustion. The pressure to maintain an authoritative image before students, parents, and colleagues led some teachers to feign mastery, breeding frustration, particularly with more assertive, higher-grade students. Experienced teachers expressed feeling undervalued, ineffective, and poorly supported as a result of being assigned outside their field (Du Plessis, 2005), and some were prompted to consider leaving the profession altogether. These findings were subsequently published in peer-reviewed form, where the authors concluded that the out-of-field phenomenon and its implications must be recognized if schools are to provide effective and quality teaching, substantial teacher support, and sufficient staff development programmes (Steyn & Du Plessis, 2007). In a later transnational investigation drawing on the perspectives of educational directors, principals, teachers, and parents, Du Plessis (2015) found that out-of-field placement bears directly on content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge, connecting the emotional costs documented above to measurable instructional consequences. Ingersoll (2002) likewise warned that such conditions can disproportionately burden teacher attrition, aggravating the very shortages that produce out-of-field assignments in the first place. Teacher motivation and professional development are thus implicated: sustained, well-designed development is associated with improved instruction (Desimone et al., 2002), while unmet support needs depress motivation (Alam & Farid, 2011).

Read across its four strands, this literature does more than accumulate; it converges on a single uncomfortable proposition. The first strand establishes that philosophy's difficulty is intrinsic rather than incidental: because its object is universal while its method is necessarily specialized (Johann, as cited in Dy, 2005), competence in the discipline cannot be reduced to command of a syllabus. The second strand compounds this by showing that no pedagogical choice neutralizes that difficulty — the systematic approach risks narrowness while the exclusively historical approach yields critical minds without integrative conviction, so Clarke's (2001) remedy is not a method at all but a personal philosophical synthesis the teacher must already possess. The third strand raises the demand higher still, casting teaching as relational and ethical work that presupposes exactly that possession, since one cannot apprentice students to a practice one does not oneself inhabit (Bell, 2002; Garcia, 1998, as cited in Ibana & Tugado, 1998), even as national policy asks the same teacher to be a "multispecialist" (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2012). The fourth strand then describes, empirically, teachers who possess none of it, and it is strikingly consistent about what follows: thinned content knowledge

and retreat to lecture and textbook (Neakrase, 2010), curricular goals collapsed into their most tractable elements (Taylor, 1996), and mastery performed at a psycho-emotional cost that pushes teachers toward exit (Du Plessis, 2005; Ingersoll, 2002).

The gap therefore follows from the juxtaposition of these strands rather than from a mere absence of studies. Taken in sequence, they generate a prediction the existing evidence cannot test: if the out-of-field penalty is a function of the distance between what a subject demands and what a teacher brings, it should be most severe in a discipline whose demands are integrative and dispositional rather than propositional — and philosophy is precisely such a discipline. Yet the out-of-field literature has been built almost entirely on subjects in which competence is comparatively legible, physics and the social studies among them (Neakrase, 2010; Taylor, 1996), and its Philippine extensions have likewise remained with other subject areas (Arendain & Limpot, 2022; Guiaselon et al., 2022). No study asks what happens when the mismatch is not merely one of content but of philosophical formation — a question sharpened in a region where local training in the discipline is scarce and in a subject introduced recently enough that teachers had no prior habituation to fall back on. Nor do the two bodies of literature meet on remedy: the philosophy-teaching strand prescribes personal integration, which no seminar can supply, while the out-of-field strand prescribes institutional support in the form of sustained professional development and adequate preparation time (Desimone et al., 2002; Alam & Farid, 2011). Whether teachers themselves experience the shortfall as one of knowledge, of formation, or of institutional support, and what they consequently ask for, is an empirical question this study takes up.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed qualitative research design within a phenomenological tradition. Qualitative research is empirical inquiry in which data are not expressed as numbers (Punch, 1998) and which adopts an interpretive, naturalistic approach, studying phenomena in their natural settings and in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Phenomenology was selected because the study sought to describe the essential structures of a lived experience (here, the experience of teaching philosophy out of field) as it presents itself to those who undergo it (Creswell, 2014), and data were analyzed using Colaizzi's (1978) stepwise method of extracting significant statements, formulating meanings, and clustering them into themes. Consistent with Creswell's (1994, 2014) characterization of qualitative inquiry, the study aimed to understand how participants make sense of their world rather than to predict or control it, and it drew directly on the knowledge and perspectives of those involved in the program. The researcher, who specialized in and taught Philosophy for over a decade, occupied an insider-outsider position: familiar with the subject matter's conceptual and pedagogical demands, yet not personally a non-philosophy-major teacher experiencing the phenomenon under study. To guard against this prior expertise shaping the interpretation of participants' accounts, the researcher engaged in bracketing (*epoché*) by setting aside personal assumptions about the "correct" pedagogical approach when formulating interview questions and by anchoring the analysis in participants' own words rather than the researcher's disciplinary judgment.

Research Sampling

This study employed purposive and convenience sampling in selecting its key informants. Purposive sampling, which involves the deliberate selection of participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research questions (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015), was used to ensure that only teachers who were not philosophy majors but were at the time teaching Philosophy of the Human Person were included, since they possessed the specific lived experience relevant to the study's objectives. Convenience sampling, which selects participants based on their ready accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016), was likewise applied in choosing the four schools in Zamboanga City, based on their accessibility and the willingness of the teachers to participate. Through this combined approach, twelve (12) teachers across School A, School B, School C, and School D served as the key informants of the study, a sample size consistent with qualitative guidance suggesting that thematic saturation is often achieved within twelve interviews in fairly homogeneous samples (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), a benchmark that informed the target sample size at the design stage; furthermore, qualitative research values the depth and richness of information drawn from each informant over sheer sample size (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Research Locale

This study was conducted in four senior high schools in Zamboanga City, Philippines, coded as School A, School B, School C, and School D to ensure anonymity. School A is a state university whose servicing college supplies specialized teachers in language, the humanities, and the social sciences. School B is a private university operating across three campuses. School C is a state college. Schools A, B, and C are all located within

the city proper of Zamboanga City, while School D is a public high school located in Barangay Sangali, on the city's eastern coast. Schools C and D each designated a single teacher to teach philosophy.

Research Participants

The participants of this study were the very individuals entrusted with teaching a subject outside their field of expertise, making their insights indispensable to understanding the phenomenon under investigation. Twelve teachers who were not philosophy majors served as the key informants, selected through purposive and convenience sampling to identify those directly involved in delivering the subject while minimizing disruption to their work schedules. Of these, seven were from School A, three from School B, one from School C, and one from School D. As individuals directly responsible for delivering Philosophy of the Human Person despite lacking a formal background in philosophy, they possessed the firsthand experience necessary to address the research questions. To uphold data privacy and confidentiality in accordance with ethical research standards, the identities of the participants were protected throughout the study; participants were coded, with informants referred to using the designations KI-1 through KI-12 rather than their actual names.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered using an eight-item Interview Guide for Key Informant Interviews, supplemented by a participant information sheet. The guide was organized around four themes, namely the teacher's background, challenges, coping mechanisms, and recommended remedies, with its items calibrated to the level of the informants. A panel of three experts in qualitative research and philosophy from School A reviewed the instrument's content for validity, and their feedback and recommendations served as the basis for revising the items to ensure appropriateness, clarity, and relevance to the study's objectives.

Data Gathering Procedure

In the preliminary stage, the researcher secured written permission from the relevant school authorities, namely the Dean of the servicing college of School A, the Vice President for Academic Affairs of School B, the OIC-President of School C, and the Principal of School D, to gain access to each research site and its teachers. The approved letters obtained from these authorities served as the researcher's official authorization to conduct the data gathering in their respective schools. In the information-gathering stage, the researcher determined the total number of teachers handling the subject and confirmed which of them were non-philosophy majors, in order to plan the interviews and prepare the necessary materials. In the actual data gathering stage, the researcher informed all participants of the interview schedule and venue in advance. Prior to each interview, informed consent was obtained from the key informants, with emphasis placed on the voluntary nature of their participation and the confidentiality of their responses; any questions or concerns they raised were addressed immediately to ensure their clarity and understanding of the study. Twelve individual key informant interviews were then conducted at the informants' own schools according to their availability, and the interviews were documented through digital recordings and written field notes taken with the assistance of a note-taker. Data gathering began in January 2017, following the receipt of written permission from the four participating schools. Interviews were conducted by the researcher, who at the time specialized in and taught Philosophy at one of the participating schools and therefore shared a professional, collegial relationship with several of the key informants. Interviews were conducted primarily in English, the language in which all participant responses are reported in this manuscript, so no formal translation was required. Each semi-structured interview, guided by the eight-item interview guide, lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes. The audio recordings described above were later transcribed verbatim by the researcher and cross-checked against the field notes to verify accuracy.

Results and Discussion

Profile of the Key Informants

The twelve key informants were non-philosophy majors teaching the Philosophy of the Human Person in the selected senior high schools. Table 1 presents their fields of expertise by school. The majority, six of twelve, were graduates of Social Studies, followed by two from Political Science, two from the Natural Sciences, one from Education major in English, and one from Islamic Studies. Not one of the informants was a philosophy graduate, a fact that is itself the central condition the study examines.

Table 1. Profile of Key Informants by Field of Expertise and School

School	Social Studies	Political Science	English	Natural Sciences	Islamic Studies	Total
A	5	1	1	0	0	7
B	1	1	0	0	1	3
C	0	0	0	1	0	1
D	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	6	2	1	2	1	12

Table 2 reports the informants' teaching experience in the subject. Ten of the twelve (83.33%) had taught the Philosophy of the Human Person for five months to one year, while only two (16.67%) had two years or more of experience. This concentration of inexperience compounds the specialization mismatch and frames the challenges discussed below.

Table 2. Key Informants' Teaching Experience in the Philosophy of the Human Person

Months/Years Teaching Philosophy (Approximate)	No. of Key Informants	Percentage
5 months to 1 year	10	83.33%
2 years and above	2	16.67%
Total	12	100%

Research Question 1: What common problems do non-philosophy majors encounter in teaching the Philosophy of the Human Person in the selected senior high schools?

Theme 1: Common Challenges of Non-Philosophy Majors

Specialization Mismatch as the Root of Difficulty

When asked about their original field of expertise, the informants consistently located the source of their difficulty in the gap between their training and the subject they taught. Representative responses include:

KI-1: *My area of specialization or original field of expertise is Social Studies.*

KI-5: *My degree is actually Physical Science or BSED Physical Science... so, if you will ask me what is my expertise, then it is more on the natural sciences.*

KI-8: *Actually I am a graduate of Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English, and therefore I am teaching English. And I think it is my field of expertise.*

KI-10: *I am a graduate of BS Islamic Studies... and so my original field of expertise is social science.*

KI-11: *Having graduated [with] the degree of BS Chemistry, my field of expertise is Physical Science.*

These statements confirm that all informants teach outside their field, the precondition that Ingersoll (1998) and Neakrase (2010) identify as the defining feature of out-of-field teaching. The mismatch is most acute for those whose preparation lies furthest from the humanities, for example, the chemistry and physical-science graduates, who must translate an abstract, reflective discipline into classroom instruction without prior grounding in it.

Difficulty in Lesson Preparation

Asked whether they encountered problems in preparing lessons, eleven of the twelve informants (91.67%) answered affirmatively; only one (8.33%) denied difficulty (Table 3). The recurrent justification was the same: "philosophy is not my field of expertise" (KI-1, KI-2, KI-3, KI-4).

KI-6: *Of course, especially if you are not a major in Philosophy.*

KI-7: *Yes, Sir, because I do not have the background in teaching Philosophy.*

KI-11: *I would admit that I have difficulty in preparing the lesson plan, since Philosophy is not my field.*

The lone informant who initially denied any difficulty, KI-5, the most experienced participant, claimed that the subject "is the easiest... all you have to do is to gain mastery of the subject." Yet KI-12, who likewise reported "none, so far," immediately conceded that "philosophy is challenging" when asked about its concepts, effectively revoking the earlier denial. This pattern indicates that even apparent confidence coexists with underlying conceptual strain. The preponderance of difficulty in lesson preparation aligns with Du Plessis (2005), who linked out-of-field preparation to stress and the felt need to maintain an authoritative image before students.

Table 3. Responses on Difficulty in Lesson Preparation (Question 4)

Response	No. of Key Informants	Percentage
Yes (experienced difficulty)	11	91.67%
No (no difficulty)	1	8.33%
Total	12	100%

Conceptual Density and Content Mastery

The most articulated challenge concerned understanding philosophical concepts and mastering content. Asked about the common challenges they face in teaching the subject to senior high school students, the informants responded:

KI-1: *Since Philosophy is not my field of expertise, then I find it hard to teach Philosophy. I do not have enough knowledge about the subject matter. I have no mastery of the content. I think we lack references and instructional materials and I have little knowledge about the approach of how you are going to teach Philosophy.*

KI-2: *There are a lot of activities but I do not have enough knowledge on how to connect them to the topics in Philosophy. Even if we have some books, because I am not a major in Philosophy it is hard for me to understand.*

KI-3: *So for me, the common challenge that I encountered is the lack of references.*

KI-4: *Teaching Philosophy subject is really difficult, because I am not a Philosophy graduate. What I am teaching is only the content and the fact.*

KI-5: *The textbooks that they offer to us... [are] very absurd and erroneous, very brief... If you look at the textbook it will not give you any direction at all. I find it difficult to teach philosophy properly, because of the guidelines that are apparently not the works of the experts.*

KI-6: *My approach is for college students. I find it hard to revise the lecture to make it more appealing to the senior high school students. Concepts in Philosophy are difficult, especially in existentialism.*

KI-7: *I have no background in Philosophy. Philosophy is deep and I cannot really understand the article that I read.*

KI-8: *First is the content of the topic itself, since it is not really my field... Second is... the proper approach... Third, we have references, but the best reference is also a problem.*

KI-9: *The common challenge is the concept, so I have to read the books.*

KI-10: *The problem that I encountered is the discussion of truth or the concepts in Philosophy.*

KI-11: *The problem... is the resources. We only have the curriculum guide... No books, no guides, no resources. And I am unfamiliar with Philosophy.*

KI-12: *The questions are difficult... Sometimes the... class size is quite big, so the students find it boring.*

Table 4. Common Challenges Encountered (Question 5)

Common Challenge	No. of Responses	Percentage
Difficult concepts	6	50.00%
Lack of knowledge / no mastery	4	33.33%
Unfamiliar philosophical approach	1	8.33%
Lack of references	1	8.33%
Total	12	100%

Table 4 consolidates these statements. Difficult concepts (six responses) and lack of knowledge or content mastery (four responses) dominate, followed by an unfamiliar philosophical approach and a lack of references. The pattern closely mirrors Neakrase's (2010) finding that out-of-field teachers exhibit weaker content understanding and more frequent misconceptions, and that they tend to foreground process and engagement when their grasp of content is insecure. KI-5's critique of poorly written textbooks further echoes Taylor's (1996) observation that inadequate curricular grounding undermines out-of-field teachers' ability to teach the discipline's deeper goals.

Pedagogical Uncertainty

Uncertainty about appropriate approaches emerged when informants described how they taught the subject. Their accounts reveal limited and often imprecise command of philosophical pedagogy:

KI-1: *I have used the integration of historical and systematic approach... from the definition of Philosophy and the school of thought, then up to the core topic.*

KI-2: *I have used the Historical approach because I started with the meaning of Philosophy.*

KI-3: *I have used the historical approach... because the subject... was Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person.*

KI-4: *I think, I have used the historical approach.*

KI-5: *I am more on the same as what Socrates used... I do give them thought-provoking questions.*

KI-6: *Well, the usual approach that I use is chalk-talk. But sometimes I also use the visual aid... especially in trying to explain deeper concepts in Philosophy.*

KI-7: *"I am more on the activities and lecture in teaching the philosophy of the Human Person."*

KI-8: *Since Philosophy of man is dealing with the concepts of a human being... I would be more on the reflective side... it is more on the experiential approach.*

KI-9: *I have used the Socratic approach... Aside from the question and answer approach I also have used simulation before class discussion begins.*

KI-10: *I have used different approaches... like the student-centered approach... I usually asked question[s] to them in order to analyze and to improve their... critical thinking.*

KI-11: *Before introducing the lesson... I always asked questions about their experience in life... then I relate their experience to the lessons.*

KI-12: *Okay, lecturing, Sir. Sometimes I use the instructional materials like the projector or LCD and the PowerPoint.*

Several informants employed recognizably Socratic or experiential techniques without being able to name them: KI-10 and KI-11, for instance, described question-and-answer methods that are dialectical in nature but did not identify them as such. Overall, none of the informants articulated the contemporary existential and phenomenological approaches that the subject invites, and those who named the historical approach described it inconsistently. This imprecision reflects Clarke's (2001) concern that teachers without philosophical formation default to transmitting historical content rather than modeling the activity of philosophizing, and it parallels Neakrase's (2010) finding that out-of-field teachers gravitate toward traditional techniques.

Research Question 2: What coping mechanisms do these teachers employ to manage the challenges they face?

Theme 2: Coping Mechanisms

Self-Directed Research, Consultation, and Curricular Aids

Asked how they cope, the informants described a repertoire centered on self-study, consultation, and reliance on official curricular materials:

KI-1: *I carefully review the curriculum guide that was recommended by the Department of Education. I looked for references and other instructional materials needed in teaching Philosophy.*

KI-2: *I have used the curriculum guide... different references or books, and have watched some discussion[s] in philosophy on YouTube, which makes the lesson preparation easier.*

KI-3: *Library research, internet research, and consulting the philosophy teacher on how to teach Philosophy.*

KI-4: *Aside from reading the books, browsing the internet, I also have consulted the professors in philosophy about how to teach Philosophy.*

KI-5: *I do follow the tertiary teaching strategy.*

KI-6: *Really read about the concepts and apply one to three strategies to the topics, so that you will know which... could be best applied to your students.*

KI-7: *My coping mechanism is to rely on the references and on the module of the other schools. However, I met a problem... because outsiders are not allowed to use their own module.*

KI-8: *Reading... burning [the] midnight candle in studying the content... [and] asking those experts about teaching the subject and asking for guidance from those who are from the field of philosophy.*

KI-9: *I really need to let them understand the topic. My coping mechanism is to really have more readings, and browse the internet.*

KI-10: *To ask some teachers about how to teach philosophy in order to understand those topics, and I also have done a research.*

KI-11: *To relate my experience to their experience... to integrate values to the lesson... [and] to recall my undergraduate philosophy subjects like the Philosophy of Man and Philosophy of Science.*

KI-12: *To have more research and more reading.*

Table 5. Coping Mechanisms of Non-Philosophy Majors (Question 6)

Coping Mechanism	No. of Responses	Percentage
Research and lesson preparation	6	50.00%
Consultation with specialists	3	25.00%
Curriculum guide / module	3	25.00%
Total	12	100%

Table 5 summarizes these mechanisms. Research and lesson preparation (six responses) is the most common, followed by consultation with philosophy specialists (three) and use of the curriculum guide or modules (three). These strategies are practical and resourceful, and they reflect the self-directed, lifelong-learning attributes expected of K to 12 teachers (SEAMEO INNNOTECH, 2012).

Importantly, these coping mechanisms do not guarantee effective teaching. As Du Plessis (2005) observed, the intensive preparation required of out-of-field teachers is itself a source of strain that can push educators to feign mastery to protect their credibility. While the informants regard self-study and consultation as the most immediate remedy available to them, such strategies, absent specialist preparation, may also entrench a stressful, dissatisfying, and ultimately less effective teaching practice.

Classroom Strategies and Assessment

The informants' coping is enacted through their classroom strategies. When asked what strategies they employ and how they judge their suitability, most described predominantly progressive, activity-based methods (laptops and projectors, role play, reporting, multimedia, group dynamics, simulation, and the "cabbage" question activity), while a smaller number relied predominantly on traditional lecture and discussion. Assessment was generally tied to rubrics, quizzes, and test performance, though several informants could not clearly articulate how they evaluate a strategy's suitability. KI-9, for example, simply affirmed that the Socratic strategy was "appropriate," while KI-10 could not specify an assessment technique. One informant candidly captured the underlying uncertainty:

"There are really right strategies for each subject matter that you are teaching. That is why we really have to find the right strategy, because sometimes we are not oriented about the best strategy that we can apply to this lesson."

Table 6. Strategies Employed by the Informants (Question 7)

Type of Strategy	No. of Responses	Percentage
Progressive (activity-based, multimedia)	10	83.33%
Traditional (lecture-centered)	2	16.67%
Total	12	100%

Table 6 shows that progressive strategies predominate (ten responses) over traditional ones (two). On reassessment, KI-6's account ("the usual approach that I use is chalk-talk. But sometimes I also use the visual aid") was reclassified from Progressive to Traditional, since chalk-talk was stated as the informant's usual, predominant method and visual aid only a secondary supplement; KI-6 joins KI-12 ("lecturing, Sir. Sometimes I use the instructional materials like the projector or LCD and the PowerPoint") as the two informants whose primary approach is lecture-centered. While these are valid techniques (Ebert et al., 2011; Irmanto et al., 2023) and the associated assessment methods (paper-and-pencil tests, graded recitation, and rubrics) are sound classroom-assessment practices (Angelo & Cross, 1993), their effectiveness in philosophy depends on careful, critical alignment with the nature of philosophical inquiry and reflection (Rescher, 2010). A reliance on activity and engagement, when not anchored in content mastery, risks the very substitution of process for substance that Neakrase (2010) documented among out-of-field teachers.

The Psycho-Emotional Toll

Although the interview guide did not directly probe emotion, the psycho-emotional dimension surfaced throughout the informants' narratives, consistent with Du Plessis (2005). KI-7's account is especially revealing: "Teachers are being put to shame if they do not know what they are teaching. I have an experience of this, Sir. I didn't really understand well philosophy." KI-8's image of "burning the midnight candle" and KI-5's insistence that the subject be given to "real academe" rather than "people who were forced to teach philosophy because we lack manpower" both convey strain, embarrassment, and diminished professional confidence. These experiences echo the sense of being undervalued, ineffective, and poorly managed that Du Plessis (2005) documented among out-of-field teachers, as well as the motivational risks identified by Alam and Farid (2011), and they signal that, left unaddressed, the phenomenon may contribute to attrition (Ingersoll, 2002).

Research Question 3: What remedies do the participants recommend to resolve the problems associated with non-philosophy majors teaching the subject?

Theme 3: Recommended Remedies

Asked what administrators should do to address these challenges, the informants converged on three remedies: provide training and seminars, supply adequate instructional materials, and hire qualified philosophy specialists.

KI-1: *The administrators must provide more references, instructional materials, trainings and seminars to teachers to make [them] as effective as possible.*

KI-2: *We need more trainings and seminars and more modules [so] we will know the activities that are appropriate to the different topics in Philosophy.*

KI-3: *Conduct[ing] a seminar or training for those teachers who are teaching Philosophy that is not their field... [and] provide more references, modules, and instructional materials.*

KI-4: *Provide us more textbooks, references, modules, seminars, workshops and trainings.*

KI-5: *Employ real academe in the field... there should be proper scrutiny before the release of textbooks... [and] the students who will take it should be selected.*

KI-6: *Hire a competent professor to deliver the discipline... graduates of theology or philosophy major, because not everybody can teach the concepts... give the best reference... and provide all the facilities to the students.*

KI-7: *Proper training and seminars must be given to the teachers... It is not just teaching anything. Teachers are being put to shame if they do not know what they are teaching.*

KI-8: *Assign teachers who are really experts to this particular field; if... there is [a] shortage... then... give thorough trainings, even just one month preparation for teachers to master it.*

KI-9: *Have the teachers undergo a training about the subject.*

KI-10: *Conduct more seminars [for] the teachers who are totally new to this field.*

KI-11: *Prepare the learning materials, provide us the guide, and have the teachers... undergo certain seminars or trainings... to enhance their skills.*

KI-12: *Provide more references, because all books are not complete... they have to find more references for the students to get more involved in the subject.*

Table 7. Recommendations to Administrators (Question 8)

Recommendation	No. of Responses	Percentage
Provide trainings, seminars, and materials	9	75.00%
Hire qualified philosophy experts	3	25.00%
Total	12	100%

Table 7 shows that the provision of training and seminars was recommended most frequently (nine responses), followed by the hiring of qualified experts (three). The emphasis on training reflects the informants' immediate, pragmatic concern with becoming more effective, and it is well supported by evidence that sustained professional development improves instruction (Desimone et al., 2002). The call to hire specialists addresses the structural root of the problem, the shortage of qualified philosophy teachers, consistent with the literature's insistence that philosophy be taught by those formed in the discipline (Clarke, 2001; Dy, 2005). Underlying both remedies is the participants' shared perception that institutional support is the most viable solution to the challenges of out-of-field teaching. This aligns with Steyn and Du Plessis (2007), whose interview-based study of the phenomenon concluded that its implications must be recognized in order to secure effective and quality teaching, substantial teacher support, and sufficient staff development programmes.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent, which the researcher explained in detail to each informant prior to the interview. As part of this process, informants were informed that the interview would be audio-recorded for accuracy of transcription and analysis, and each gave explicit permission for the recording before it began; informants were likewise advised that they could request the recorder be paused or turned off at any point without penalty. Participants were assured that all data would be treated with strict confidentiality, and identifying information was replaced with codes (KI-1 to KI-12). All informants expressed themselves freely and without coercion. Likewise, schools were coded for anonymity. In the absence of a formal Institutional Ethics Review Board (ERB), since data were gathered in 2017, three years before the researcher's graduate school established its Ethics Review Board in 2020, the researcher nonetheless applied the

safeguards described above, together with additional measures appropriate to a study of this kind. The study posed no more than minimal foreseeable risk to participants, consistent with routine professional reflection on teaching practice. Participants remained free to withdraw at any point without penalty, and all data, including audio recordings, field notes, and transcripts, were handled in a manner consistent with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173): recordings, notes, and transcripts were accessible only to the researcher and the note-taker, who was likewise bound to confidentiality. No monetary or other compensation was provided to participants.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences and examined the challenges and coping mechanisms of twelve non-philosophy majors teaching Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person in four senior high schools in Zamboanga City. Three sets of findings emerged. First, regarding challenges, the informants' difficulties originated in the mismatch between their fields of specialization and the subject they taught. None was a philosophy graduate; six were Social Studies majors, two Political Science, two Natural Sciences, one Education (English), and one Islamic Studies. Inexperience compounded the mismatch: ten of twelve had taught the subject for five months to one year. Eleven of twelve reported difficulty in lesson preparation, and the most frequently cited challenges were difficult philosophical concepts and a lack of content knowledge or mastery, followed by an unfamiliar pedagogical approach and a shortage of references and well-written textbooks. The informants' accounts of their teaching approaches confirmed a limited and imprecise command of philosophical pedagogy, with several using Socratic or experiential techniques without being able to name them and none articulating the subject's contemporary existential and phenomenological approaches. Second, regarding coping mechanisms, the informants relied chiefly on self-directed research and lesson preparation, consultation with philosophy specialists, and the Department of Education curriculum guide and modules, supplemented by progressive, activity-based classroom strategies and conventional assessment methods. While resourceful, these mechanisms do not by themselves guarantee effective teaching and may add to the teachers' strain. The data also revealed a psycho-emotional toll (stress, embarrassment, and diminished confidence) consistent with the international out-of-field literature. Third, regarding remedies, the informants recommended that administrators provide sustained training, seminars, and workshops; supply adequate instructional materials, references, and facilities; and hire qualified, competent philosophy specialists. Across all three research questions, institutional support emerged as the participants' perceived solution to the phenomenon. Taken together, the twelve informants in this study perceived out-of-field assignment as a serious and consequential problem for non-philosophy majors teaching the Philosophy of the Human Person. The data indicated that the teachers' difficulties were closely associated with the gap between their original specialization and the philosophical content they are required to deliver. Because the subject demands intensive preparation and confronts teachers with substantial pedagogical uncertainty, the phenomenon was reported to affect not only instructional quality but also the psycho-emotional well-being of the teachers concerned. These findings are consistent with prior research showing that out-of-field teaching weakens content delivery (Neakrase, 2010; Taylor, 1996) and burdens teachers emotionally and professionally (Du Plessis, 2005; Ingersoll, 2002). Within the bounds of this local, non-probabilistic sample, a responsive stance from administrators appears warranted, through hiring qualified philosophy specialists, conducting thorough and sustained training, and providing the instructional resources teachers and students need, if the senior high school program is to deliver philosophy education of genuine quality.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are organized by the level at which they can be acted upon. At the school level, given that eleven of the twelve informants reported difficulty in lesson preparation and cited difficult philosophical concepts and a lack of content mastery as their foremost challenges, school administrators are encouraged to institute sustained and rigorously designed training programs and seminar-workshops for teachers who are not philosophy majors, structured around the specific conceptual and pedagogical demands of the discipline; a single or brief seminar is unlikely by itself to establish lasting content competence, so training should be treated as an ongoing, multi-session commitment rather than a one-time intervention. Because the informants relied heavily on self-directed research, consultation, and the DepEd curriculum guide to cope, administrators are further encouraged to establish structured mentoring arrangements that pair non-philosophy majors with colleagues possessing expertise in the discipline, and to ensure the provision of adequate and appropriate instructional resources, including validated textbooks, instructional modules, and suitable classroom facilities. Where feasible, administrators may also prioritize hiring qualified and competent philosophy instructors and support current faculty who wish to pursue advanced studies in philosophy. At the policy level, the persistent shortage of qualified philosophy teachers observed across all four participating schools suggests a role for the Department of Education and the

Commission on Higher Education in promoting and expanding philosophy and teacher-education programs at the tertiary level. Because this recommendation is drawn from a local, non-probabilistic sample of twelve informants in Zamboanga City, any broader national policy application should be considered cautiously and validated against a wider evidence base before adoption. For future research, the study recommends broadening the scope of this inquiry through larger and more diverse samples across other regions, and adopting longitudinal and mixed-methods research designs to more comprehensively examine the long-term effects of out-of-field teaching of philosophy on student learning outcomes.

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