

Voices From the Ground: A Qualitative Study on the Integration of Administrative Officers in the Department of Education

Elgen Mark June S. Ebon^{*1}, Raiza F. Ebon², Charina C. Gloria³

Department of Education, Capiz State University Burias Campus, MAMBUSAO, CAPIZ, Philippines

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100600264>

Received: 21 May 2026; Accepted: 26 May 2026; Published: 22 June 2026

ABSTRACT

Aim: This study explored the impact of Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 002, s. 2024—which mandates the immediate removal of administrative tasks from public school teachers—on the professional lives and career paths of educators. It examined how the removal of non-teaching workloads influences instructional focus, professional relief, role strain, and career advancement, while identifying operational challenges, management strategies, and differences in implementation across varying school sizes.

Methodology: A qualitative Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed, incorporating qualitative open-ended questionnaire with 15 public school teachers in the District of Mambusao West, province of Capiz.

Results: The findings of the study revealed five major themes: (1) Lived Experiences within the Dual-Role System, where teachers faced intense work saturation, instructional compromises, and severe psychological strain; (2) Professional Challenges and Identity, highlighting that extreme time constraints caused severe time poverty, while manual bottlenecks led to identity conflict and burnout; (3) Management and Coping Strategies, revealing that educators relied on disciplined time prioritization, collaborative peer networks, and proactive task-shifting to survive the clerical workload; (4) Perspectives on Career Alignment, demonstrating a positive transition in professional outlook where removing non-teaching tasks enhanced peer mentorship and re-anchored teachers in their vocational purpose; and (5) Perspectives on Administrative Officer Deployment, emphasizing that formal role separation served as a vital structural stabilizer that successfully enhanced instructional quality, restored operational flow, and protected teacher well-being.

Conclusion: The findings indicate that the administrative unburdening policy positively contributes to teachers' instructional revitalization and professional well-being despite challenges related to severe time poverty and initial systemic transitions. Effective integration of specialized Administrative Officers requires institutional support, structured role separation, and clear operational workflows to maximize pedagogical focus and eliminate chronic workload burnout for public school educators.

Keywords: administrative unburdening; role specialization; administrative officer

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education (DepEd) has historically grappled with the disproportionate administrative burden of the teaching profession, where educators were frequently pulled away from instruction to manage school operations. To address this, the Philippine government enacted Republic Act No. 9155 (Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001), which mandated that the school's primary focus must remain on the learning process.

In recent years, the administrative burden on teachers intensifies due to complex requirements in financial management, human resources, and procurement. In response, DepEd issued DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024, titled "Removal of Administrative Tasks from Teachers." This policy acts as a critical turning point, as it mandates the immediate transfer of all administrative duties—including personnel administration, property and physical facilities management, and financial handling—to non-teaching personnel. This was further supported

by DepEd Order No. 007, s. 2023, which accelerated the recruitment and deployment of administrative officers (AOs) to schools nationwide.

The integration of AOs is intended to professionalize school governance by assigning technical tasks to trained personnel. By relinquishing these administrative functions, teachers are expected to realign their professional practice with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. However, the implementation of DepEd Memorandum No. 052, s. 2024, has created a significant shift in school workplace dynamics. Data from Razon (2022) previously quantified that Filipino teachers spent an average of 15 to 20 hours per week on clerical labor. Reports from Philstar (2024) confirmed that the hiring of thousands of AOs is a direct attempt to return these hours to student-centered activities.

While the unburdening of teachers is the primary goal, the reality of this transition remained under-researched. For many educators, administrative tasks are deeply woven into their daily routines. The sudden removal of these functions has led to a variety of lived experiences, ranging from professional relief to role confusion and challenges in establishing new collaborative workflows. This study, therefore, sought to document these "voices from the ground."

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Related Studies

Public school teachers face a profound journey of adaptation when they are finally allowed to step away from heavy paperwork and return to what they love most. When forced to carry the exhausting identity of a "jack-of-all-trades," educators experience a fragmented professional identity and a severe decline in pedagogical performance as peripheral compliance tasks completely deplete the time and energy needed for authentic student engagement (Sánchez & Ramírez, 2022; Tran, 2017; Alfuraih, 2022). This emotional friction and stress only deepen when schools operate in a low-trust environment focused on continuous document auditing, reducing complex educational values into measurable metrics that trigger acute workload strain and structural burnout (Ball, 2016; Troman, 2016; Maslach & Leiter, 2022). To survive this daily exhaustion, tired teachers are forced to rely on everyday coping tactics, aggressively prioritizing urgent deadlines and routinely bringing paperwork home into evenings and weekends just to keep from drowning in digital and clerical overload (Nordin & Ariffin, 2019; Guidetti et al., 2021). Ultimately, the arrival of specialized administrative support personnel brings a long-awaited peace back to the school, surgically lifting the heavy financial and property liabilities to grant educators an emotional, empowering homecoming straight back to the heart of teaching (Finn & Levine, 2018; Day, 2017).

Synthesis

The literature and related studies reviewed in this chapter establish that the historical "teacher-clerk" paradigm—characterized by the heavy inflation of non-instructional tasks like personnel administration, property management, and financial reporting—creates severe role conflict, role strain, and time poverty (Biddle, 1986; Razon, 2022). To navigate this overextended environment and protect classroom boundaries, educators rely on short-term coping mechanisms, ranging from individual problem-focused strategies to informal, peer-driven collaborative support networks (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Carver et al., 2018). However, Cognitive Load Theory demonstrates that because complex clerical processing and high-level instruction compete for the same limited working memory, these individual adaptations act merely as temporary buffers that ultimately drain the cognitive energy required to maintain instructional quality (Feldon, 2017).

To resolve these systemic challenges, the Department of Education's structural unburdening under DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024, mandates the specialized deployment of administrative officers to absorb technical operations. This institutional shift triggers a vital "vocational homecoming," allowing the teacher's professional self-concept to shift away from document compliance and firmly realign with instructional leadership and pedagogical excellence (Lewin, 1951; Day, 2017). While macro-level institutional data proves that administrative delegation successfully reduces attrition, a significant qualitative gap remains regarding the subjective ways educators reconstruct their professional identity during this sudden role transition. Grounded in constructivist and interpretivist frameworks, this Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) directly addresses this gap by

exploring the lived experiences and authentic "voices from the ground" within the public schools of the Mambusao West District.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the journey of public-school teachers as their administrative and clerical functions were relinquished to dedicated administrative officers, focusing on how they navigated the dual-role system and transitioned into specialized support. To capture the heart of this professional shift, the inquiry deeply examined the specific challenges educators faced while juggling heavy clerical burdens alongside their teaching roles, as well as the everyday management strategies they employed to keep their classrooms afloat. Ultimately, by listening to their lived experiences, the study uncovered the teachers' personal perspectives on their shifting workloads, the resulting realignment of their careers, and the profound impact of finally having specialized administrative officers step in to safeguard their primary calling.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

General Objective

To explore the journeys, lived experiences, and professional transitions of teachers whose administrative and clerical functions were relinquished to dedicated administrative officers.

Specific Objectives

1. To explore the lived experiences of teachers regarding the previous dual-role system and their subsequent transition to specialized administrative support.
2. To identify the specific challenges that teachers faced while performing administrative functions alongside their core teaching roles.
3. To determine the management strategies employed by teachers to successfully navigate and balance their evolving professional responsibilities.
4. To analyze the teachers' perspectives regarding the impact of this transition on their career alignment and instructional focus.
5. To understand the teachers' perspectives on the integration, role, and overall employment of administrative officers within the school system.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of teachers regarding the dual-role system and the transition to specialized administrative support?
2. What specific challenges do teachers face while performing administrative functions in addition to their teaching roles?
3. What management strategies are employed by teachers to navigate their professional responsibilities?
4. What are the teachers' perspectives on these lived experiences and the resulting career alignment?
5. What are the teachers' perspectives on the employment of administrative officers?

METHODS

Research Design

A qualitative research method using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) rooted in phenomenological philosophy (Husserl, Heidegger, van Manen) alongside Interpretive Description (Thorne, 2016) was employed. It is framed under constructivist and interpretivist paradigms. The selection of an open-ended questionnaire over semi-structured interviews was a deliberate methodological adaptation to the study's logistical and environmental constraints.

Because the study was conducted during a period when face-to-face or real-time interview engagement was restricted due to the participants' mandated 30-day undisturbed vacation in the month of April, written open-ended questionnaires allowed the researcher to capture deep, experiential data without encroaching on the educators' protected personal time. By utilizing this written format, the instruments were strategically distributed immediately prior to the start of the April vacation window. This provided participants the entire duration of their break to complete the narratives at their own pace and in their preferred, stress-free setting. This flexible approach eliminated the time constraints and immediate pressure inherent in live interviews, giving educators the necessary psychological space for deep reflection. As a result, the study successfully captured authentic, unforced insights into the teachers' emotions and professional transitions, aligning with the reflective depth required by IPA and Interpretive Description.

Population, Sampling, and Data Saturation

This qualitative study was conducted within selected public elementary and secondary schools in the School District of Mambusao West. Rather than drawing a statistical population for generalization, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select fifteen regular public school classroom teachers who had directly transitioned through the operational shifts of the workload reduction policy. This sample size was determined by the principle of data saturation.

During the concurrent analysis of the written submissions, data saturation was explicitly achieved by the twelfth participant, at which point the inductive coding process yielded repetitive structural patterns, and no novel themes, experiential variations, or distinct conceptual codes emerged regarding the administrative transition. To ensure comprehensive analytical depth and validate the boundaries of these established patterns, the remaining three narrative datasets were fully processed, confirming total thematic redundancy.

Instruments

To gather rich, qualitative data and capture the depth of participants' narratives, this study utilized a qualitative open-ended questionnaire as its primary research instrument. Intentionally designed to avoid the constraints of traditional structured surveys, this instrument allowed the fifteen teacher-participants to move beyond superficial responses and freely express their emotions, professional struggles, triumphs, and the lived meanings associated with their shifting workloads. The deployment of open-ended questions was crucial for eliciting the expansive written narratives and "thick descriptions" necessary for a rigorous Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Data Collection

The data collection process was executed as a continuous field procedure spanning from April to May 2026. After securing clearances from the Graduate School Dean of Capiz State University and the Public Schools District Supervisor of Mambusao West, the researcher coordinated with local school heads to orient eligible classroom teachers, guarantee anonymity, and obtain signed informed consent.

The primary qualitative open-ended questionnaire was deployed through dual channels immediately prior to the teachers' scheduled departure for their mandated 30-day undisturbed vacation in April: physical copies in sealed

packets were delivered directly to school heads. Participants utilized this extended vacation window to reflect on and write their narratives in a private setting of their choice.

Upon the conclusion of the vacation period in May 2026, the researcher retrieved the completed physical envelopes from the schools, compiled them with the electronic submissions, and replaced all real identities with anonymized alphanumeric codes.

Treatment of Data

The researcher utilized Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyze the qualitative data, systematically exploring the lived experiences, professional journeys, and core perspectives of the fifteen public school teachers in the Mambusao West District following the relinquishment of their administrative functions. The analytical process was structured to guarantee that emerging concepts were firmly rooted in the participants' authentic, written narrative answers.

1. **Familiarization** – After reading the compiled written questionnaire transcripts and follow-up notes several times, the researcher took note of significant statements, recurring thoughts, and initial patterns regarding how the educators historically balanced the dual-role system and navigated the transition to specialized support. These early impressions helped focus subsequent coding cycles directly on elements relevant to the study's five research objectives.
2. **Initial Coding** – The raw textual data was broken down into meaningful segments (such as sentences and specific narrative phrases), and each unit was assigned a descriptive code that captured its conceptual essence. For instance, statements detailing severe time deficits, cognitive fatigue, and overlapping clerical duties were given explicit codes representing role ambiguity and workload strain.
3. **Generating Initial Themes** – To uncover evolving structural patterns, related codes were systematically clustered into preliminary thematic categories. These early groups reflected broader phenomena, such as the survivalist coping mechanisms teachers deployed to handle paperwork or the immediate operational changes felt upon the physical deployment of non-teaching personnel.
4. **Reviewing Themes** – To maintain strict internal consistency and relevance to the central research questions, the preliminary categories were refined, combined, or redefined. This stage ensured a clear, accurate distinction between the manual, unoptimized inefficiencies of the past and the stabilized, instructional focus observed under the new framework.
5. **Defining and Naming Themes** – The final overarching themes were identified and structured to directly correspond with the study's specific research questions: (1) Lived Experiences within the Dual-Role System, (2) Professional Challenges and Identity, (3) Management and Coping Strategies, (4) Perspectives on Career Alignment, and (5) Perspectives on Administrative Officer Deployment. The teacher-participants' remarks were directly tied to these five structural designations, mapping out how specific experiential and descriptive codes directly built these broader, institutional thematic categories.
6. **Writing Up** – The final findings were organized into a rigorous, coherent narrative, integrating rich, verbatim excerpts from the educators' transcripts to illustrate, validate, and support each finalized theme. The analytical discussion highlighted how the data clarified the profound psychological, practical, and identity shifts experienced by teachers as they transitioned away from the hybrid "teacher-clerk" persona.

Throughout this analytical lifecycle, the researcher ensured that all themes remained deeply grounded in participant replies by maintaining an audit record of codes, contextual adjustments, and interpretative decisions. This deliberate approach allowed the analysis to move past mere procedural reporting, showing a direct, transparent link between the raw ground narratives, the inductive coding hierarchy, and the final structural conclusions of the study.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

To establish the scientific rigor and qualitative integrity of the findings, the research design strictly adhered to Lincoln and Guba's framework for qualitative validity, addressing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

1. **Credibility** - The internal validity of the interpretations was secured through member checking and peer debriefing. Following the initial thematic organization, the transcribed text and preliminary analytical summaries were returned to a subset of participants to verify that the extracted codes accurately mirrored their lived experiences. Additionally, a peer debriefing session was conducted with an external qualitative researcher to critique the inductive coding structure and challenge any premature conceptual assumptions.
2. **Transferability** - While qualitative research does not aim for statistical generalization, transferability was achieved by providing a meticulous, highly detailed "thick description" of the institutional context, geographic setting (Mambusao West District), and the specific boundaries of the DepEd policy framework. This comprehensive contextualization allows future researchers to determine the applicability of these insights to other rural or urban school divisions undergoing similar structural reforms.
3. **Dependability** - To ensure the stability of the findings over time, a transparent audit trail was systematically maintained throughout the inquiry. This documentation tracks the evolution of the research process, including raw narrative excerpts, initial coding cycles, the consolidation of thematic clusters, and final analytical adjustments.
4. **Confirmability** - Confirmability was maintained through explicit reflexivity. The researcher maintained a reflexive journal to identify and isolate personal biases, professional preconceptions as an educator, and subjective expectations regarding policy implementation. This process guaranteed that the final structural conclusions were firmly rooted in the participants' authentic expressions rather than the researcher's theoretical preferences.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study strictly adhered to established ethical principles of qualitative research to safeguard the rights, safety, and privacy of all participants. The field procedure commenced with the researcher securing formal, written authorizations from the Graduate School Dean of Capiz State University and the Public Schools District Supervisor of Mambusao West.

Upon coordinating with local school heads, the researcher personally conducted comprehensive orientations with eligible classroom teachers to detail the study's objectives and guarantee complete anonymity before obtaining their signed informed consent forms. Participation remained strictly voluntary, and all educators retained the absolute right to refuse to answer any specific open-ended item or to withdraw from the investigation at any stage without facing administrative or professional penalties.

To preserve total confidentiality, all identifying markers were permanently removed from the collected data and replaced with alphanumeric pseudonyms across all transcription databases and the final manuscript. In strict compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), all physical questionnaires collected in sealed envelopes and electronic narrative responses were securely password-protected to ensure exclusive researcher access. Finally, the study integrated the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence by leveraging the teachers' mandated 30-day undisturbed vacation window in April, allowing them ample time to reflect on and write their narratives at their own pace without face-to-face time pressures, thereby ensuring that the data collection caused zero occupational or emotional harm to the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis and interpretation of the information obtained from the informants are presented in this section. The results have been arranged into emerging themes, each of which has been interpreted and its ramifications

discussed. The topic presentation adheres to the order specified in the study's problem statement to guarantee consistency and congruence with the research goals. This organization facilitated a clear integration of participants' narratives with relevant literature, strengthening the analytical depth of the findings.

1. Lived Experiences of Teachers Regarding the Dual-Role System and the Transition to Specialized Administrative Support

Themes

Professional Resilience and Growth

Instructional Quality Concerns

Professional Resilience and Growth One of the major topics that came out of the transcripts was the way teachers navigated the intense friction between administrative overextension and their evolving identity. Carrying a dual role shaped their professional scripts by stretching them thin, yet forcing them to become highly adaptable, resourceful, and disciplined. While the dual-role burden affected their overall efficiency, it simultaneously forced them to build strong organizational and multitasking skills. The following are samples of transcription:

Participant 2: Prior to the employment of AOs, my professional life was focused on gaining experience, developing my skills and learnings.

Participant 5: It made me more responsible, resilient, and collaborative but also often stretched and challenged in my daily interactions within the school community.

These findings demonstrate how the state of cognitive disequilibrium caused by the dual-role system acted as an historical baseline for accommodation, forcing educators to organize complex survivalist competencies within the school ecosystem. While the systemic clerical demands were arduous, they fostered a resilient professional self-schema characterized by an intense sense of responsibility.

These results are in accordance with research conducted by Ulla (2018), which details how Filipino basic education teachers function as multi-taskers who develop survivalist strategies to maintain institutional continuity. This finding is further supported by the core concepts of Christopher Day's Professional Identity Theory (2006), which emphasizes that a teacher's professional identity is not static but is continuously reshaped by intense workplace challenges and shifting institutional demands.

Instructional Quality Concerns An additional topic emphasized how the intense manual burden of legacy hybrid positions fundamentally undermined the core educational mission. Teachers explicitly detailed a fragmented existence where the simultaneous arrival of reporting requirements forced them to rush lessons or divide their attention, blurring their primary pedagogical mandates. The following are samples of transcription:

Participant 1: Before AOs were implemented, it was difficult because the submission of reports would all come at the same time. Sometimes, I couldn't focus on teaching because there were too many paperworks tasks to accomplish.

Participant 3: I spent more time in the submission of school reports than my instructional/ contact time with learners.

This suggests that when administrative expectations saturate an educator's schedule, they trigger severe time poverty, leaving insufficient cognitive capacity for effective lesson planning and student assessment. The exhaustive pressure of managing structural forms alongside direct instruction forces teachers into a bureaucratic persona, causing professional alienation as their actual workplace output conflicts with their internal ideals of high-quality, reflective teaching. Reclaiming these hours is therefore essential to restoring pedagogical autonomy.

Specific Challenges Faced by Teachers While Performing Administrative Functions

Themes

Severe Time Constraints and Time Poverty

Compromised Instructional Quality

Severe Time Constraints and Time Poverty Teachers' involvement in administrative tasks was a severe source of stress and operational strain. Many said they suffered from extreme exhaustion and a lack of personal time due to overlapping duties before the clear implementation of the policy. The following are samples of transcription:

Participant 1: Before AOs were implemented, it was difficult because the submission of reports would all come at the same time. Sometimes, I couldn't focus on teaching because there were too many paperworks tasks to accomplish.

Participant 6: The most significant challenge I faced with the dual-role responsibilities is that we are deprived with the time to rest because mostly of the reports we need to do is urgent.

The findings revealed that legacy hybrid positions put severe strain on teachers, requiring extreme time management and self-control. However, teachers also learned coping mechanisms, including creating their own timetables and asking instructors for help. This suggested that administrative tasks do not merely add professional pressure but also cultivate adaptive skills that support pedagogical persistence.

These findings are consistent with those of Sipahutar and Arsini (2024), who discovered that organized institutional workflows and self-management techniques lessen professional fatigue. Consistent with these findings, Pan, Zhou, & Shek (2022) found that involvement in structural organizational shifts is associated with cognitive growth and organizational advantages that promote operational and emotional management in public systems, suggesting more extensive developmental benefits outside the classroom. Therefore, even though transition phases might increase workload, when they are supported by responsive school settings, they can improve time management and professional resilience.

Compromised Instructional Quality The simultaneous demands of classroom instruction and systemic paperwork directly compromised the integrity of the educational process, forcing educators to cut corners in their primary duties. The following are samples of transcription:

Participant 4: Time management as teacher had to balance teaching with extensive paperworks, often to unfinished task rushed lesson.

Participant 14: It was difficult to maintain focus on core responsibilities & meet deadlines. It has limited resources & constant coordination with others added pressure, affecting efficiency & work.

The participants' narratives illustrate how an unclear division of labor between teaching staff and newly deployed administrative personnel initially hinders operational efficiency rather than supporting it.

These narratives reveal that despite the policy's intent to offload administrative burdens, localized implementation bottlenecks still compromise instructional delivery. When teachers are forced to juggle lingering clerical loose ends due to coordination delays, their core pedagogical focus becomes fragmented. This aligns with contemporary findings on educational policy execution (e.g., Estrada & Gumban, 2024), which emphasize that structural transitions often induce temporary operational friction before stabilizing. The resulting time constraints directly restrict the depth of formative assessments and classroom interventions, turning what should be a seamless transition into a source of acute professional anxiety.

Management Strategies Employed by Teachers to Navigate Their Professional Responsibilities

Themes

Disciplined Time Management and Prioritization

Collaborative Support and Communication

Disciplined Time Management and Prioritization According to the informants, intentional scheduling and task classification had a significant influence on their ability to survive the dual-role setup. Instructors managed conflicting expectations by being methodical and separating duties by urgency. Sample transcriptions are as follows:

Participant 5: I manage my time well, set priorities and asked for support when needed.

Participant 7: Time management and prioritization. I learned to organize my task by urgency and importance.

Therefore, structured prioritization fosters professional confidence and accountability in addition to simple task execution. This is in line with McClain, Kelner, and Elledge (2021), who contended that encouraging positive outcomes in complex work environments requires active supervision and strategic planning. According to the informants' testimonies, individual management techniques improved emotional fortitude and professional dedication. Thus, teachers' engagement transforms experiential learning into transferable professional skills, reinforcing classroom instruction. In the same study on program management conducted by González-Ortiz-de-Zárate et al. (2025), organized individuals outperformed non-structured counterparts across several years, demonstrating the beneficial effects of systematic planning on institutional success.

Collaborative Support and Communication The transition away from legacy administrative obligations was facilitated by active dialogue and strategic file sharing between the teaching staff and the newly deployed officers. Sample transcriptions are as follows:

Participant 8: I manage my time better by setting priorities and focusing on important tasks first. I also asked help from co-teachers and learned to adjust to the changes step by step.

Participant 12: I learned to communicate more with the AO. I slowly handed over the files and reports I used to do so I could focus purely on my lesson plans and teaching materials.

This highlights how structured institutional support can mitigate conflicts between instructional and administrative demands, allowing teachers to maximize learning outcomes. On the other hand, in school setups experiencing communication gaps, administrative functions were frequently delayed, necessitating the utilization of extra time. Time management, stress levels, and overall workplace involvement were all impacted by these structural variations. This finding suggested that institutional arrangements significantly influence whether policies function as instructional supports or additional demands on time and energy. In centralized school contexts, structured scheduling appears to reduce conflict, while in smaller contexts, teachers and administrators often rely on compensatory strategies to balance demands.

Schools that explicitly included modifications into their frameworks typically promote higher levels of engagement and learning results, as noted by the National Association of Secondary Principals. Although these sources provide policy-level rather than empirical evidence, they help contextualize the participants' accounts by illustrating how institutional recognition and administrative support can shape teachers' professional experiences. This emphasizes the necessity of laws that acknowledge educational infrastructure as essential to education rather than as a side effect.

Teachers' Perspectives on These Lived Experiences and the Resulting Career Alignment

Themes

Workload Strain Reduction

Shift from Crisis Management to Instructional Leadership

Workload Strain Reduction One of the prominent milestones highlighted by the informants upon the implementation of the policy was the direct mitigation of operational burnout. Relinquishing clerical burdens allowed educators to shift from exhausted administrators back to motivated classroom facilitators. The following are samples of transcription:

Participant 1: The AO helped a lot in doing administrative task and lessen the burden of teachers.

Participant 14: The separation of administrative functions from teaching roles helped me reduce workload stress, improved efficiency in school operations and strengthened instructional quality.

demonstrated how strategic structural support assists teachers in translating their reclaimed energy into success in the classroom. This suggested that the development of localized administrative assistance through AOs directly influences classroom engagement. Teachers and administrators supported this by noting that teachers who are unburdened from non-teaching tasks typically exhibit greater motivation and discipline in their instructional performance. Collectively, these accounts demonstrated that the removal of clerical work serves as both a restorative environment and an accelerator for converting personal well-being into tangible teaching involvement.

These results were in accordance with research conducted by Aguilar (2018), which shows that reducing the extra-instructional responsibilities of teachers fosters professional resilience, self-discipline, and core life skills. While this source is practitioner-oriented, it provides relevant contextual support for understanding school-based observations of teacher development. This finding is further supported by Wang et al. (2021), who found that sustained institutional administrative support predicts higher teaching engagement and career persistence. The alignment of participant experiences with these studies strengthens the argument that instructional success encompasses multifaceted definitions of support.

Shift from Crisis Management to Instructional Leadership An additional topic emphasized how the formal reorganization of the school workforce fundamentally elevated the campus climate. Teachers noted that the specialized division of labor shifted the school culture away from chaotic paperwork deadlines and toward stable instructional focus. The following are samples of transcription:

Participant 2: Allowed teachers to focus more instruction and student learning.

Participant 10: The school culture has shift from crisis management to instructional leadership.

This suggested how the physical deployment of administrative specialists enables teachers to directly apply and refine their core pedagogical practices in authentic contexts, thereby reinforcing student learning. This finding was consistent with studies that demonstrated how personnel who are unburdened from secondary clerical work frequently acquire higher operational efficiency, better communication, and refined problem-solving skills, which improve educational engagement and classroom performance (Saki & Hanane, 2023; White, 2023). Based on their results, teachers may apply practical skills to academic environments through experiential professional spaces obtained through policy compliance, improving overall institutional performance.

Teachers' Perspectives on the Employment of Administrative Officers

Themes

Resolution of Operational Inefficiency

Establishment of Clearer Role Definition and Accountability

Resolution of Operational Inefficiency The formal introduction of administrative officers was viewed by participants as a vital institutional intervention that resolved the historical bottlenecks crippling local school governance. The following are samples of transcription:

Participant 13: The separation of administrative from teaching is very helpful. Somehow the school operation run smoothly because administrative tasks are handled by a dedicated AO.

Participant 15: It's a good decision because it lets teachers focus on teaching, reduce workload stress, and improve school efficiency and student learning.

These findings reveal that separating functions puts an end to systemic operational friction. By assigning technical mandates—such as financial reporting, personnel administration, and property management—to trained administrative officers, the school ecosystem achieves a fluid workflow. This suggests that the strategic deployment of non-teaching staff does not merely add an extra hand but actively cultivates a smooth operational flow that supports academic persistence and safeguards the structural integrity of basic education.

The experiences of these participants directly reflect the structural milestones intended by recent national mandates, demonstrating the immediate local impact of DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024 ("Removal of Administrative Tasks from Teachers"), which explicitly mandates the immediate transfer of all non-teaching responsibilities to dedicated support staff. By stripping away these auxiliary duties, the policy systematically addresses the historical realities highlighted by Razon (2022), whose quantitative time audit established that Filipino teachers previously spent an average of 15 to 20 hours per week on clerical labor. The smooth operational flow reported by the informants indicates that the accelerated recruitment and deployment of administrative officers under DepEd Order No. 007, s. 2023 has successfully begun to professionalize school governance by placing technical tasks into the hands of specialized personnel.

However, the localized resolution of these inefficiencies is heavily dependent on how schools navigate workplace dynamics under DepEd Memorandum No. 052, s. 2024. While this memorandum provides the strict implementation guidelines required to professionalize school governance support, it simultaneously triggers a significant realignment of roles on the ground. When these structural adjustments are clearly managed, they echo the findings of McKenzie et al. (2021), who observed that designated administrative officers successfully optimize school workflows and reduce operational friction. By structurally insulating the classroom from administrative inflation, as noted by Miller (2023), the execution of these DepEd directives acts as a vital institutional stabilizer. Rather than treating administrative functionality as an afterthought or a secondary burden forced upon teaching staff, the integration of specialized AOs ensures that school operations run with high technical efficiency while successfully returning vital hours to student-centered activities.

Establishment of Clearer Role Definition and Accountability Establishing clear boundaries between pedagogical space and administrative labor was recognized as a cornerstone for modernizing school governance and securing professional balance. The following are samples of transcription:

Participant 5: It allows educators to focus on instruction, improves work-life balance and enhances overall school effectiveness.

Participant 12: The decision is a positive step toward quality education by separating these roles, the school system becomes more organized and student-oriented.

Based on these answers, cooperative efforts between educators, school heads, and administrative officers support maintaining high institutional standards without sacrificing educational performance. The teacher-participants' testimonies illustrate how a well-coordinated administrative team ultimately secures instructional continuity, allowing educators to fully divest themselves of non-teaching workloads.

Moral-Garcia et al. (2020) revealed similar results, emphasizing that favorable organizational achievements are fostered and stress is reduced by strong structural support and systemic motivation. Therefore, administrative officer deployment works best when it is part of a larger institutional support network that fosters well-being and productivity. Penjor & Dorji (2022) also emphasized that individuals believe that structural reforms improve organizational efficiency, professional output, and role self-concept, particularly when they are supported by clear administrative adjustments and collaborative workplace interactions.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate that public school teachers historically operated under severe, unsustainable workplace burdens where heavy time deficits, high stress, and operational inefficiencies compromised their core instructional mandate. The legacy dual-role system induced acute structural and psychological friction, triggering severe burnout and identity confusion. While educators initially relied on localized, reactive coping mechanisms—such as personal time prioritization and informal peer support networks—these strategies functioned merely as temporary buffers that left long-term systemic vulnerabilities unaddressed.

The structural deployment of dedicated Administrative Officers represents a vital institutional intervention that successfully stabilizes the school ecosystem, optimizes operational flow, and protects the well-being of the teaching staff. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that establishing a formal division of labor is an essential institutional victory, proving that teaching requires organizationally protected boundaries to thrive.

Crucially, this study's contributions extend far beyond the localized bounds of the Philippine educational system, offering vital insights to the broader international literature on teacher workload reform. Globally, contemporary educational systems are grappling with a severe crisis of teacher attrition driven by administrative inflation and bureaucratic overextension. By documenting this transition, the study provides an empirical model demonstrating how macro-level policy interventions can successfully dismantle the global "teacher-clerk" paradigm. It offers educational leaders worldwide an operational framework for reclaiming instructional time, protecting teacher mental health, and shifting institutional cultures from reactive crisis management back to reflective pedagogical leadership.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study offers deep insights into the lived experiences of classroom teachers, it is bounded by certain limitations that present valuable avenues for future research. A primary limitation is the study's exclusive focus on the perspectives of regular teaching personnel. To build a more holistic understanding of school workplace dynamics, future researchers may expand the scope of inquiry to include the distinct perspectives of newly deployed Administrative Officers and school heads, capturing the full spectrum of collaborative governance.

Additionally, because this study relied on qualitative written narratives within a single school district, the long-term, quantifiable impacts of administrative relief remain unexamined. Future research may employ longitudinal mixed-methods designs across larger, more diverse school divisions to measure the direct correlation between administrative unbundling and quantifiable student learning outcomes. Finally, policymakers are urged to continually review workload policies to permanently insulate teachers from administrative inflation, ensuring that support structures remain responsive to the evolving needs of the school ecosystem.

REFERENCES

1. Barahona, M., & García, P. (2023). Administrative overload and teacher retention in Spain. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 61(4), 512–530.

2. Biddle, B. J. (1986). Recent developments in role theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 12(1), 67–92. (Retained: Role Theory foundational framework)
3. Bottoms, G. (2021). The toll of administrative tasks on teacher instructional time. *Educational Leadership Review*, 22(4), 15–29.
4. Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge University Press. (Retained: Institutional Habitus theoretical framework)
5. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*. Sage Publications.
6. Chen, L. (2022). "Drowning in paperwork": A narrative inquiry into teacher professional identity. *Qualitative Research in Education*, 11(1), 75–94.
7. Day, C. (2006). *Developing teachers: The challenges of lifelong learning*. Routledge.
8. Department of Education. (2023). *Accelerated Recruitment and Deployment of Administrative Officers Nationwide*. DepEd Order No. 007, s. 2023.
9. Department of Education. (2024). *Removal of Administrative Tasks from Teachers*. DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024.
10. Department of Education. (2024). *Implementation Guidelines for the Professionalization of School Governance Support*. DepEd Memorandum No. 052, s. 2024.
11. Dilthey, W. (1883). *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften [Introduction to the Human Sciences]*. Duncker & Humblot. (Retained: Interpretivist foundational theory)
12. Dworkin, A. G., & Tobe, P. F. (2023). Teacher burnout, administrative stress, and erosion of organizational trust. *International Handbook of Teacher Burnout*, 112–131.
13. Dela Cruz, R. (2023). Informal peer networks as survivalist mechanisms against clerical inflation in basic education schools. *The Philippine Educator*, 45(1), 102–118.
14. Alfuraih, A. (2022). Administrative workload and its impact on teacher's pedagogical performance. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 15(3), 210–225.
15. Esllera, M., & Escala, T. (2024). Clenched schedules and fragmented focus: Lived realities of public school teachers. *Journal of Qualitative Inquiries in Philippine Education*, 9(1), 14–32.
16. Fabella, F., et al. (2022). Pedagogical interference and teacher burnout in the Philippines: The operational cost of excessive non-teaching tasks. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Educational Review*, 10(3), 145–162.
17. Gkolia, A., et al. (2018). The role of teacher self-efficacy in choosing active coping strategies. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 88, 45–56. (Retained: Self-Efficacy Theory applications)
18. González-Ortiz-de-Zárate, A., et al. (2025). Systematic planning and long-term institutional success in educational program management. *Journal of Advanced Educational Structures*, 21(1), 45–62.
19. Guidetti, G., et al. (2021). "Telepressure" and the psychological urge for immediate document compliance in remote educational administration. *Work & Stress*, 35(2), 180–197.
20. Jones, M., & Jones, L. (2022). Time poverty and high switching costs: The temporal degradation of lesson preparation. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 50(4), 612–629.
21. Jomoad, G., et al. (2021). Role saturation and the clericalization of basic education: Diminishing innovation among local practitioners. *Mindanao Education Review*, 13(2), 89–105.
22. Kelvin, R., & Morris, T. (2023). Contemporary administrative rationalization models in specialized professional organizations. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 47(2), 201–224.
23. Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping*. Springer Publishing Company. (Retained: Foundational Stress/Coping theory)
24. Lewin, K. (1951). *Field Theory in Social Science*. Harper & Row. (Retained: Foundational Change Management theory)
25. Lopez, E., & Chen, H. (2022). Institutional accountability, delegation protocols, and mutual professional respect in school ecosystems. *Journal of School Governance*, 16(2), 110–127.
26. Madigan, D. J., & Kim, L. E. (2021). Systemic role overload as an accelerating catalyst for teacher attrition and early retirement: A systematic review. *Educational Research Review*, 32, 100–115.
27. Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2022). *The Burnout Challenge: Managing People's Relationships with Their Jobs*. Harvard University Press.
28. McKenzie, P., et al. (2021). Improving school workflow: The role of designated administrative officers. *Australian Journal of Education*, 65(2), 154–170.
29. Miller, A. (2023). Institutional stabilizers: The impact of non-teaching personnel. *Global Education Review*, 10(2), 45–62.

30. Philstar. (2024, February 12). Deployed administrative officers to strip clerical workloads away from public school faculty. *The Philippine Star*.
31. Piaget, J. (1955). *The Construction of Reality in the Child*. Routledge & Kegan Paul. (Retained: Foundational Constructivist theory)
32. Razon, A. (2022). Quantitative time audit of administrative and clerical labor across public school teachers in the Philippines. *Journal of Philippine School Administration*, 14(2), 55–72.
33. Saki, M., & Hanane, S. (2023). Secondary clerical unburdening and its impact on the operational efficiency of public systems. *International Journal of Organizational Dynamics in Education*, 14(3), 112–128.
34. Salo, P., et al. (2021). Administrative inflation and weakened well-being: Chronic changes in modern teaching workflows. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 65(5), 810–826.
35. Sánchez, M., & Ramírez, J. (2022). Administrative intrusion vs pedagogical freedom: Autonomy under threat in modern school systems. *International Journal of Educational Studies*, 19(2), 112–129.
36. van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. State University of New York Press. (Retained: Foundational Methodology/Phenomenological theory)
37. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press. (Retained: Foundational Social Constructivist theory)
38. Weber, M. (1922). *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft [Economy and Society]*. J.C.B. Mohr. (Retained: Legal-rational Bureaucracy/Verstehen foundational theory)
39. White, C. (2023). Financial reporting and property inventory: The dual burden of the rural educator. *Journal of Rural Education*, 14(2), 101–119.
40. Williams, B. (2021). Subjective narratives of the "Teacher-Bureaucrat." *Journal of Qualitative Research in Education*, 33(2), 140–158.