

The Invisible Burden: How Clerical Work Silently Hampers Effective Teaching and Learning

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2024.1110062>

Received: 10 June 2024; Accepted: 18 October 2024; Published: 20 November 2024

ABSTRACT

This article explores the often-overlooked yet vital role of clerical work in shaping the education system. It delves into the intricate relationship between clerical tasks and education, examining their merits and demerits within the framework of social and developmental concerns for teachers and students. The shifting landscape of education has expanded the role of teachers to encompass administrative responsibilities, such as data analysis, record-keeping, scheduling, and communication. However, the increasing burden of clerical work has been found to hinder the teaching process and negatively impact student learning, resulting in less time for lesson planning, individualized attention, and cultivating a positive learning environment. This article also highlights the social and developmental implications of excessive clerical work, including the barrier it creates to building strong student-teacher relationships and hindering students' holistic development. While clerical tasks are essential for a functioning school system, prioritizing them over core teaching responsibilities can have detrimental effects on the overall educational ecosystem. The article emphasizes the need for a balanced approach that values both administrative efficiency and quality teaching to ensure the fostering of well-educated and socially responsible citizens. Additionally, it explores the specific clerical tasks undertaken by teachers, such as record-keeping, lesson planning, administrative tasks, assessment and grading, as well as the role of special needs teachers in individualized support and collaboration. The article concludes by acknowledging the challenges of finding a balance between efficient administration and quality teaching within the Zimbabwean education system, emphasizing the crucial role of teachers in nurturing young minds and promoting social and emotional development among future generations.

Keywords: Clerical work, education delivery, burden

INTRODUCTION THE INVISIBLE BURDEN: HOW CLERICAL WORK SILENTLY HAMPERS EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Clerical work, the often-overlooked foundation of any well-oiled machine, plays a vital role in the education system. Beyond the captivating lessons and inspiring lectures lies a complex web of administrative tasks – record-keeping, scheduling, communication – that silently ensure the smooth operation of schools. While seemingly mundane, these clerical duties hold immense social and developmental significance. This article delves into the intricate dance between clerical work and education, exploring its merits and demerits within a framework of social and developmental concerns for both teachers and students.

Traditionally, the role of a teacher was centered on imparting knowledge and shaping young minds. However, the contemporary educational landscape presents a more multifaceted picture. Teachers today are no longer solely educators; they are also data analysts, record-keepers, schedulers, and communication hubs (OECD, 2023). This shift towards an "administrative" role, while arguably necessary for organizational efficiency, carries a hidden cost. Bakeret, et al, (2017) highlights a growing concern: the increasing burden

of clerical work significantly hampers the teaching process and negatively impacts student learning. Time spent on administrative tasks translates to less time spent on lesson planning, individualized attention, and fostering a positive learning environment.

This situation directly affects students' social and developmental needs. Studies by the National Center for Education Statistics (2020) demonstrate that positive student-teacher relationships are crucial for academic achievement, socio-emotional development, and overall well-being. However, excessive clerical work creates a barrier to these connections. Teachers burdened by administrative tasks have less time for individual interactions, classroom management strategies, and building rapport with their students. This, in turn, can lead to a more transactional learning experience, neglecting the holistic development of students as social and emotional beings.

A deeper understanding emerges from an analysis of the social and developmental implications of clerical work on teachers and students. It becomes clear that a well-maintained balance is necessary. While clerical tasks are essential for a functioning school system, prioritizing them over core teaching responsibilities can have detrimental effects on the entire educational ecosystem.

Problem Statement

The quality of education in Zimbabwean public education is seriously threatened by the enormous secretarial workload. Jones et al. (2020) states that educators take time away from their primary teaching responsibilities by dedicating more than 25% of their work hours to administrative duties. If this issue is not resolved, educators may find themselves with less time for one-on-one conversations, classroom management, and rapport-building, which could result in transactional learning experiences that disregard students' holistic development. As a result, there may be a decline in the academic performance, socioemotional development, and general wellbeing of students. However, Zimbabwean public institutions can promote excellent student-lecturer relationships which are essential for effective learning and personal development by finding a balance between administrative responsibilities and teaching activities. By resolving this problem, educators would have more time to devote to course planning, providing individualized attention, and fostering supportive learning environments, all of which would improve the educational experience for participants.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine the impact of this invisible burden in Zimbabwean education system, with a specific focus on the social and developmental consequences for both educators and students.

The objectives are:

1. To investigate the extent to which clerical work affects educators' ability to effectively carry out their primary teaching responsibilities.
2. To explore the social and developmental implications of excessive clerical work on student-lecturer relationships and overall student well-being.
3. To identify potential strategies and best practices for striking a balance between administrative duties and core teaching activities in Zimbabwean education system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Clerical Work for Teachers:

a. Record Keeping:

Woelert et al (2021) argues that administrative tasks and demands can infringe on the time and energy that staff can devote to education's core activities of teaching and research. The staff oversees efficient

attendance management, which is another key component of administrative efficiency. In as much as it plays a critical role in maintaining discipline and maximizing student participation, it uses up time that staff can dedicate to teaching. A considerable amount of time is dedicated to the accurate and timely attendance records which help track student engagement, identify potential issues like absenteeism, and allow for targeted support to ensure students are present and engaged in the learning process.

Furthermore, timely grading and organized paperwork facilitate smooth communication and collaboration between teachers, students, and parents. However, Bozeman and Youte (2020) argue that in as much as clear and consistent grading practices provide valuable feedback to students, enabling them to track their progress and identify areas for improvement, it creates burdens for educators which in turn negatively impacts the core activities of education.

The staff also ensures that organized paperwork which contains critical information about student progress is readily available to both parents and teachers, fostering stronger collaboration and a shared understanding of student needs. This shows the manifold ways administrative duties impact the core activities of education such as teaching and research. It's crucial to acknowledge that the burden of administrative work on teachers can become a double-edged sword. While it contributes to efficiency, excessive clerical work can have detrimental effects. This is the topic we'll explore in the next section, examining the potential downsides of teacher administration and its impact on the quality of education in Zimbabwe.

b. Lesson Planning:

Lesson planning is another important clerical task undertaken by teachers in Zimbabwean schools. Teachers need to prepare detailed lesson plans for each subject they teach, outlining the topics to be covered, learning objectives, teaching strategies, and assessment methods (Curriculum Development Unit, Zimbabwe). The Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) in Zimbabwe provides guidelines and templates to assist teachers.

While comprehensive lesson plans are vital for effective instruction, the time required to create them can be significant. Research by UNESCO (2021) indicates that excessive clerical work, including detailed lesson planning, can significantly reduce the time teachers have for crucial social-emotional learning (SEL) activities. These activities, which foster skills like collaboration, communication, and problem-solving, are essential for students' social and emotional development. Limited time for SEL can hinder students' ability to build positive relationships, manage emotions effectively, and make responsible decisions – all crucial skills for thriving in their communities.

The impact of excessive clerical work on teacher-student interactions extends beyond the classroom walls. Teachers burdened by administrative tasks often have less time for individual student support and parent engagement, (Bozeman et al 2020). This lack of interaction can hinder the development of strong student-teacher relationships, a key factor in promoting student well-being and academic achievement (OECD, 2023). Furthermore, limited communication with parents weakens the home-school connection, hindering collaborative efforts to support students' social and emotional growth.

Ultimately, a well-educated and socially responsible citizenry is fundamental for a thriving community. When teachers are bogged down by clerical work, it has a ripple effect on students' social and emotional development, potentially hindering their ability to become positive and contributing members of their communities.

c. Administrative Tasks:

Beyond the realm of lesson planning and classroom instruction lies a complex world of administrative tasks shouldered by teachers in Zimbabwean schools. This facet, often referred to as "administrative efficiency," encompasses a diverse array of duties:

- **Form Completion:** Teachers diligently fill out various forms, meticulously capturing student data, attendance records, and academic progress. This meticulous record-keeping is essential for reporting

purposes and ensures transparency within the education system (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Zimbabwe).

- **Report Generation:** Teachers regularly prepare reports on student progress, curriculum coverage, and school activities. These reports provide valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers in monitoring student learning and school performance (Zimbabwe Teachers' Union, 2024).
- **Event Organization:** Teachers play a vital role in organizing school events, from sports days and cultural celebrations to fundraising activities and parent-teacher meetings. These events foster a sense of community spirit and provide opportunities for student engagement beyond academics (National Association of Secondary School Heads (NASH), Zimbabwe, 2024).
- **Communication Hub:** Teachers act as communication hubs, interacting with parents through written reports, emails, and meetings. Effective communication fosters collaboration between home and school, ultimately benefiting student learning (UNESCO, 2023).

The National Association of Primary Heads (NAPH) in Zimbabwe underscores the importance of teacher proficiency in administrative tasks. Their position highlights how these tasks contribute to effective school management and ensure timely communication with parents (National Association of Primary Heads, Zimbabwe). Strong organizational skills and meticulous attention to detail are indeed crucial for navigating these diverse administrative responsibilities.

However, it's important to acknowledge the potential drawbacks of an overburdened administrative workload. Excessive administrative tasks can significantly reduce the time teachers have for core instructional activities and personalized student support (World Bank, 2022). This, in turn, can hinder student learning and well-being. It can further be argued that spending a disproportionate time on completing administrative tasks imposes a significant low engagement with the teaching of students, (Woelert 2023). Finding a balance between efficient administration and quality teaching remains a critical challenge within the Zimbabwean education system. Striking this balance is essential to ensure that teachers can fulfil their core responsibility: nurturing the minds and fostering the social and emotional development of future generations.

d. Assessment and Grading

Teachers meticulously grade assessments, ensuring accuracy and fairness in accordance with the Education Amendment Act of 2020 (Education Act Amendment, 2020). This legislation outlines clear assessment procedures to guarantee transparency and consistency in grading practices across the country. More importantly, teachers go beyond the grade itself, providing constructive feedback that helps students understand their strengths and weaknesses, ultimately guiding them towards improvement. This can look like an efficient and legitimate administrative process from a managerial point of view, but it may do so less if considering the core priorities and values of those education such as research, and learning. According to Krucken, (2014) this implies that education' efforts to comprehensively organize and direct these activities on an organizational level and anticipate their outcomes are likely to remain ineffective or, potentially, counterproductive due to an array of administrative duties. Krucken (2014) goes further to argue that the growth in administrative bureaucracies and the proliferation in administrative burdens at education are examples of such counterproductive steering effects

e. Special Needs Teachers: Assessment and Individualized Support

The educational landscape also encompasses a dedicated group of educators – special needs teachers. They cater to students with disabilities or learning difficulties, working tirelessly to ensure their inclusion and academic success. While these teachers share core instructional responsibilities, their role extends beyond the standard curriculum. Generally, administrative burden can shape and constrain education' core activities

in several ways, Woelert (2023). This carries an opportunity cost for education as organizations. According to Woelert (2023), this means that the time and energy required to, for example, learn about and comply with administrative rules and the associated procedures will take away from the time and energy that can be invested into other activities, notably including those directly associated with education' teaching and research missions. Teachers will spend a disproportionate amount of time completing tasks to cater for students with learning difficulties thereby compromising engagement with the teaching of students.

f. IEPs: Tailored Learning and Documentation

Special needs teachers play a crucial role in developing and maintaining Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for each of their students. These comprehensive documents outline specific goals, tailored accommodations, and progress tracking mechanisms. The development of an IEP involves meticulous documentation and ongoing communication with parents and support staff, ensuring all parties are aligned in their approach to supporting the student's individual needs (National Association of Special Needs Educators in Zimbabwe, 2024).

g. Collaboration and Record-Keeping: A Cornerstone for Success

Effective support for students with special needs often necessitates collaboration with a wider team of professionals. Speech therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, and other specialists may be involved in a student's care plan. This collaborative approach demands meticulous record-keeping and clear communication to ensure all parties are informed and working effectively together (UNESCO, 2023).

h. Behavior Management and Documentation

Special needs teachers also play a vital role in developing and implementing behavior management plans for their students. These plans require careful monitoring of behavior patterns and the implementation of evidence-based strategies to promote positive learning environments. Such plans necessitate meticulous documentation to track progress and adapt strategies as needed.

The assessment process in Zimbabwean schools goes beyond assigning grades. Teachers diligently ensure accurate and fair evaluations, while special needs teachers take this a step further by providing individualized support and fostering collaboration with a wider team of professionals. Ultimately, all educators strive to create an inclusive learning environment where every student thrives.

Department Heads: Leaders with a Focus

Department heads play a pivotal role in overseeing curriculum delivery within a specific subject area or department. They serve as instructional leaders, ensuring consistency and effectiveness in how their subject is taught across different grade levels (National Institute of Educational Leadership, 2023). This leadership role encompasses various administrative tasks:

- **Coordinating Assessments:** Department heads work with teachers within their subject area to ensure aligned assessments that accurately measure student learning objectives. This may involve collaborating on developing common tests, rubrics, and grading practices.
- **Data Analysis and Decision-Making:** Beyond coordinating assessments, department heads analyze student performance data to identify trends and areas needing improvement. This data-driven approach allows them to make informed decisions about curriculum adjustments, resource allocation, and professional development strategies for teachers within their department.
- **Liaising with Senior Leadership:** Department heads serve as a bridge between teachers and senior leadership. They provide valuable insights into departmental issues and student learning progress, collaborating with the principal and other administrators to make strategic decisions for the school as a whole.

However, Maassen and Stensaker (2019) argue that an increase in central steering and management control reduces organizational flexibility and intensifies administrative burdens within education. The amount of documentation and reporting that is involved act as a considerable source of administrative burden. Yates et al (2016) therefore argues that these burdens persist even if performance reviews are completed primarily for ‘ceremonial’ reasons and have little actual ramifications on the ground.

Administrative Roles: Supporting the System

Some teachers take on broader administrative roles within the school, such as assistant principals or deans of discipline. These positions require a shift from subject-specific leadership to a more holistic approach to school management. They become responsible for the following:

- **Managing Staff Schedules:** Assistant principals often oversee the creation and management of staff schedules, ensuring adequate coverage for all classes and activities. This involves balancing teacher preferences, workload distribution, and unforeseen circumstances like staff absences.
- **Discipline Procedures:** Deans of discipline are responsible for upholding a positive and productive learning environment. They may develop and enforce school-wide discipline policies, handle student behavior issues, and collaborate with teachers and parents to address student misconduct.
- **Parent Communication:** Both assistant principals and deans of discipline may be involved in communicating with parents, addressing inquiries or complaints, and fostering positive relationships between the school and the wider community

THE DUALITY OF TEACHER ADMINISTRATION: BENEFITS AND BURDENS

Teachers, undoubtedly, play a vital role in any education system. Their dedication to imparting knowledge and nurturing young minds is paramount to student success. However, the increasing administrative workload they face poses a significant challenge. While positions like department heads and deans contribute to the smooth running of a school, the associated clerical tasks can infringe on a teacher's core responsibility: effective classroom instruction. Woelert (2023) therefore argues that, “the time and energy required to, for example, learn about and comply with administrative rules and the associated procedures will take away from the time and energy that can be invested into other activities, notably including those directly associated with education’ teaching and research missions.” Educators with administrative roles compromise engagement with the teaching of students. For those who hold leadership positions within a school, an additional layer of administrative duties is woven into the fabric of their professional lives.

The Price of Neglect: A Call for Balance

The essential tasks performed by teachers in leadership and administrative roles have their negative aspects that require careful attention. Neglecting to address these issues can lead to a multitude of problems, as outlined below:

- **Reduced Time for Lesson Planning and Instruction:** Excessive administrative duties can significantly reduce the time teachers have for meticulous lesson planning and engaging classroom instruction (OECD, 2023). This, in turn, can negatively impact student learning outcomes.
- **Teacher Stress and Burnout:** The constant juggling act between classroom responsibilities and administrative tasks can lead to teacher stress and burnout. This can have a detrimental effect on teacher well-being and ultimately lead to decreased job satisfaction and increased teacher turnover.
- **Erosion of Teacher-Student Relationships:** Less time available for individual student interaction and support can weaken teacher-student relationships, a crucial factor in student motivation and academic achievement (OECD, 2023).

Finding a healthy balance between effective administration and quality teaching is an ongoing challenge within the education system. An acknowledgement of the complexities of teacher leadership and

administrative roles and addressing the potential pitfalls associated with an overburdened workload allows us to work towards creating a sustainable and supportive environment where teachers can thrive and students can flourish.

METHODOLOGY

This study took an interpretive philosophical approach, acknowledging that the effects of clerical work on instruction and learning were a matter of opinion influenced by personal experiences and environmental circumstances (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a result, it was decided that a qualitative research approach would be most suitable since it would provide a thorough examination of the instructors' actual experiences and the interpretations, they made of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To obtain a thorough grasp of the problem within a limited setting, a case study research design was specifically used, concentrating on education system in Zimbabwe (Yin, 2018).

Using the abundance of previously published works and internet resources relevant to the study question, desktop research was carried out as the main technique of gathering data (Snyder, 2019). The interpretive philosophy and qualitative nature of the study supported this approach since they made it possible to analyse a variety of viewpoints and insights from different sources, which added to a rich and complex understanding of the phenomenon (Flick, 2020). A comprehensive study of academic journals, publications, policy documents, internet forums, and other pertinent resources pertaining to clerical labour, effective teaching, and student learning outcomes in higher education settings were conducted as part of the research.

Sources that particularly addressed the effect of clerical labour on teaching and learning in education or higher education institutions with a focus on the Zimbabwean context were required to meet inclusion criteria for the desktop research. In order to guarantee the accuracy and timeliness of the information, sources released between 2020 and 2024 were given precedence. Sources that were published before 2020, had no clear connection to the research issue, or lacked academic rigour or reputation were among the exclusion criteria (Saunders et al., 2019).

Thematic analysis, a well-known technique for finding, examining, and summarising patterns or themes within qualitative data, was used to examine the data gathered through desktop research (Braun & Clarke, 2022). A deep and complex comprehension of the phenomenon was made possible by this method, which was in line with the interpretive philosophy (Nowell et al., 2017). According to Terry et al. (2017), the thematic analysis process included becoming acquainted with the data, creating preliminary codes, looking for themes, evaluating and honing in on topics, and identifying and labelling the final themes. The study was conducted with a strict focus on ethical considerations. Despite the lack of direct participant involvement in desktop research, ethical standards like respecting intellectual property rights, avoiding plagiarism, and managing data responsibly were maintained (Saunders et al., 2019). Furthermore, the study procedure ensured the protection of individual privacy and organisational confidentiality by handling any sensitive or confidential material with the utmost care and discretion (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Teacher's Burden: Time Lost and Morale Drained

Teachers wrestling with excessive clerical work, from attendance records to standardized test preparation, have less time to invest in lesson planning, a crucial factor in student learning (Riley et al., 2019). Darling-Hammond, et al. (2019) emphasizes the importance of dedicated time for lesson preparation and collaboration among teachers. Without this dedicated time, well-crafted and engaging lessons fall by the wayside, potentially hindering student progress.

The unrelenting pressure to meet administrative deadlines, coupled with demanding teaching responsibilities, can lead to a decline in teacher morale and job satisfaction (Smith et al., 2020). This negativity can permeate

the classroom environment, affecting teacher-student relationships and ultimately impacting student learning outcomes. Studies by Skaalvik (2017) highlight the link between excessive administrative tasks and increased stress levels among teachers, potentially leading to burnout and a revolving door of educators.

Finding Balance: A Sustainable Solution

The administrative tasks undertaken by teachers play a vital role in the Zimbabwean education system. However, neglecting the potential downsides of an overburdened workload can have detrimental effects. Finding a healthy balance between efficient administration and quality teaching is critical for creating a sustainable and supportive environment where both teachers and students can thrive

Professional Development Hindrance:

Professional development often involves acquiring new skills or enhancing existing ones. Teachers require time for ongoing professional development to stay updated on new teaching methods and curriculum changes (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). However, when teachers are swamped with administrative tasks, they may not have the bandwidth to participate in training programs such as in-service training or workshops that could boost their skill set (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

This lack of time for professional development can potentially impact the quality of instruction and hinder educational innovation. According to a report by the National Education Association (NEA, 2018), teachers' limited time for professional development due to excessive administrative duties hinders their ability to enhance their teaching practices and stay abreast of educational advancements. The report further emphasizes that the demands of paperwork, grading, and other administrative responsibilities often take precedence over professional growth opportunities (NEA, 2018).

Furthermore, the pressure to meet standardized testing requirements and accountability measures can add to the burden on teachers' time, leaving little room for professional development (Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003). The need to complete paperwork, attend meetings, and fulfill various administrative obligations can leave teachers feeling overwhelmed and stretched thin, making it difficult for them to allocate time and energy towards their own professional growth (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

The consequences of limited professional development time extend beyond individual teachers. It can have broader implications for the entire education system. Without adequate opportunities for ongoing learning and skill development, teachers may struggle to adapt to changing educational trends and implement innovative teaching strategies (Harris & Jones, 2010). This, in turn, may hinder the overall progress and improvement of the education system.

In order to address this hindrance, it is crucial for educational institutions and policymakers to recognize the importance of providing dedicated time and resources for teachers' professional development (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Schools can consider implementing strategies such as reducing administrative burdens, providing protected time for professional growth, and offering relevant and meaningful professional development opportunities (Harris & Jones, 2010). Additionally, collaboration among teachers, where they can share best practices and learn from one another, can also contribute to their professional growth (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

The limited time available for professional development due to excessive administrative tasks poses a hindrance to teachers' ability to enhance their teaching practices and keep pace with educational advancements. It is crucial for educational stakeholders to prioritize and support teachers' professional growth by providing dedicated time, reducing administrative burdens, and fostering collaborative learning environments. By addressing this hindrance, we can empower teachers to continually develop their skills and drive educational innovation.

Reduced Collaboration and Innovation:

Excessive administrative duties limit the time teachers have for collaboration with colleagues. Constantly dealing with administrative tasks can drain creativity and innovation among teachers. They may feel stuck in routine activities, limiting their ability to think outside the box and come up with new ideas that could propel their professional development. This can hinder the exchange of ideas, development of innovative teaching methods, and ultimately create a less dynamic learning environment for students. Brown (2018) found that teachers who are overwhelmed with administrative responsibilities are less likely to engage in innovative teaching practices or provide personalized attention to students. This highlights the detrimental effect of administrative burdens on teachers' ability to foster a stimulating and engaging classroom environment. Collaboration is essential for professional growth and the sharing of best practices. Anderson et al. (2021) highlights the positive impact of collaborative practices among teachers, emphasizing the need to alleviate administrative burdens to foster a culture of collaboration and innovation in schools. They assert, "When teachers have the time and opportunity to collaborate, they can exchange ideas, discuss challenges, and learn from one another's experiences, leading to improved instructional practices and better student outcomes" (Anderson et al., 2021, p. 45). Collaboration enables teachers to tap into a collective wisdom, learn from diverse perspectives, and refine their instructional approaches.

Furthermore, collaborative environments provide opportunities for teachers to experiment with new teaching methods and receive feedback from their peers (Shulman, 2004). By sharing their experiences and expertise, teachers can collectively explore innovative strategies that cater to the diverse needs of students. As Hord (1997) emphasizes, "Collaboration is a powerful vehicle for professional learning, allowing teachers to combine their knowledge and skills to create new and effective instructional approaches" (p. 78). However, excessive administrative tasks can impede collaboration by consuming valuable time that could be dedicated to collaborative endeavours. McKinsey & Company (2010) points out that teachers spend a significant amount of time on administrative duties, limiting their opportunities for collaboration and hindering the potential for instructional improvement. They state, "An excessive focus on administrative tasks can eat into teachers' time, reducing their opportunities for collaboration and depriving them of the chance to benefit from others' expertise" (McKinsey & Company, 2010, p. 12).

To overcome this hindrance, educational leaders and policymakers must prioritize the reduction of administrative burdens on teachers. Streamlining administrative processes, providing administrative support staff, or implementing technology solutions can free up teachers' time and enable them to engage in meaningful collaboration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). By fostering a collaborative culture and encouraging regular opportunities for teachers to share ideas, schools can create an environment that values innovation and continuous improvement.

In conclusion, excessive administrative duties limit teachers' time for collaboration and hinder their ability to nurture creativity and innovation. Collaborative practices among teachers are crucial for professional growth, sharing of best practices, and the development of innovative teaching methods. To foster collaboration and innovation, it is essential to alleviate administrative burdens and create a supportive environment that values and promotes collaboration among educators.

Focus on Compliance over Learning:

A system overburdened with paperwork often prioritizes data collection and documenting procedures over fostering a love of learning. This can stifle creativity in the classroom and put more emphasis on standardized testing rather than deeper understanding and critical thinking skills.

In their book "The Overload Syndrome," Grant et al. (2022) argue that excessive administrative tasks shift the focus from teaching and learning to compliance, undermining the holistic development of students. Teachers may end up complying with the requirements as per statutes or policies at the expense of lesson delivery. When faced with supervision requirements from internal or external supervisors, teachers tend to

spend time updating their schemes and record books to meet the expected requirements, which at times compromises the quality of data capture, analysis, accuracy, and lesson attendance.

The focus on compliance over learning not only affects teachers and students but also has broader implications for community and social development. When the educational system prioritizes paperwork and administrative tasks, it can lead to disconnection between schools and the community they serve. The community may perceive schools as bureaucratic institutions more concerned with meeting regulations than with the personal and social development of students. Furthermore, the emphasis on compliance can hinder the development of strong community-school partnerships. Community involvement and engagement play a vital role in fostering a supportive and enriching educational environment. When teachers are overwhelmed with administrative burdens, they have limited time and energy to engage with the community, collaborate with parents, and involve local organizations in the educational process (Kohonen, 2011). This lack of collaboration and partnership can result in missed opportunities for community-based learning, mentoring programs, and valuable resources that can contribute to students' social and emotional development.

The compliance-driven focus also impacts the social development of students. When the education system prioritizes standardized testing and compliance, there is a risk of narrowing the curriculum and neglecting important aspects of social and emotional learning. Students may experience increased pressure and stress to perform well on tests, leading to a focus on rote memorization rather than developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills (Blum, 2019). This can hinder their ability to navigate real-world challenges and contribute meaningfully to society. To address these challenges, it is crucial for educational policymakers and stakeholders to strike a balance between compliance and a comprehensive approach to education. Reducing administrative burdens on teachers and providing them with the necessary support can free up time for meaningful instruction and engagement with the community. Emphasizing a broader set of skills and competencies, including social-emotional development, critical thinking, and creativity, can foster a more well-rounded education that prepares students for active participation and positive contributions to their communities.

The focus on compliance over learning in education systems burdened with administrative tasks not only hampers the holistic development of students but also has implications for community and social development. It is essential to find a balance that values both compliance and a comprehensive approach to education, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and community-school partnerships. By alleviating administrative burdens and promoting a learner-centered approach, we can create an educational system that empowers students and cultivates socially responsible citizens.

THE COST FOR STUDENTS

Less Engaging Learning Experiences:

When teachers are constantly pulled away from classroom instruction to deal with administrative tasks, students suffer. They lose valuable time for interactive learning activities, discussions, and personalized instruction, resulting in less engaging learning experiences. Ramirez et al. (2023) noted that students in schools with high administrative workload experienced lower levels of engagement and academic achievement compared to schools with a balanced workload. This highlights the negative impact of administrative burdens on the quality of education students receive.

Engaging learning experiences are crucial for students' cognitive and social development. They foster curiosity, critical thinking, and active participation in the learning process. However, when administrative tasks consume teachers' time, the opportunities for these experiences diminish. As Albert Einstein once said, "It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge." When teachers are burdened with administrative duties, they may struggle to create an environment that sparks joy and enthusiasm for learning. Moreover, less engaging learning experiences can lead to disengagement and apathy among students. When lessons become monotonous and lack creativity, students may lose interest and

become passive recipients of information rather than active participants in their education. This sentiment is echoed by educational researcher John Dewey, who emphasized the importance of active learning: "If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow." By prioritizing administrative tasks over innovative teaching practices, we risk robbing students of the opportunity to develop essential skills for their future.

Additionally, the limited interaction and personalization resulting from excessive administrative duties can hinder students' academic progress and individual growth. Students have diverse learning needs, and personalized attention from teachers is instrumental in addressing these needs effectively. However, when teachers are overwhelmed with paperwork and administrative responsibilities, they may struggle to provide the individualized support and feedback that students require. This can lead to a lack of progress and hinder students' ability to reach their full potential.

To mitigate the impact of administrative burdens on students, it is crucial to prioritize the reduction of paperwork and administrative tasks. By streamlining processes, implementing technology solutions, or providing administrative support staff, teachers can reclaim valuable time for meaningful interactions with students. As education advocate Malala Yousafzai once stated, "One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world." By alleviating administrative burdens, we enable teachers to focus on what truly matters—nurturing the potential of each student and creating transformative learning experiences.

The excessive administrative workload placed on teachers has a significant cost for students. It results in less engaging learning experiences, diminished student engagement, and hindered academic progress. To provide students with the education they deserve, it is crucial to prioritize the reduction of administrative tasks and create an environment that fosters creativity, personalization, and active participation. By doing so, we can ensure that students receive the quality education they need to thrive and succeed in an ever-changing world.

Limited Emotional Connection:

The administrative burden can create a physical and emotional distance between teachers and students. This can hinder the development of positive relationships, which are crucial for fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment. Emotional support enhances students' motivation and overall academic success (Bryant, 2021). The author emphasizes the significance of teacher-student relationships in promoting positive student outcomes, indicating that excessive administrative tasks limit opportunities for meaningful connections. When teachers are overwhelmed with administrative responsibilities, they may struggle to allocate sufficient time and energy to build strong emotional connections with their students. As a result, the classroom environment may become transactional, focusing primarily on delivering content and meeting administrative requirements rather than nurturing meaningful relationships. The absence of emotional connection can lead to a sense of detachment and disengagement among students.

Research has consistently shown that positive teacher-student relationships contribute to various aspects of students' development, including academic achievement, social-emotional well-being, and even future success in adulthood (Roorda et al., 2011). These relationships provide a sense of belonging, trust, and emotional support that create a safe space for students to take risks, express themselves, and engage in collaborative learning. However, when administrative tasks become the priority, teachers may have limited time to dedicate to individual students, understand their unique needs, and provide the emotional support they require.

Moreover, the limited emotional connection resulting from excessive administrative burdens can have broader implications for community and social development. Education is not just about acquiring knowledge; it is also about developing social skills, empathy, and a sense of community responsibility. When teachers have the time and emotional capacity to forge meaningful connections with their students, they can serve as role models, mentors, and advocates for their holistic development.

Positive teacher-student relationships can extend beyond the classroom and impact the broader community. Students who feel connected to their teachers are more likely to feel a sense of belonging within the school environment, leading to increased engagement and reduced behavioural issues (Roorda et al., 2011). This positive school climate can have a ripple effect, fostering a stronger sense of community among students, families, and school staff. When schools prioritize building emotional connections, they create a nurturing environment that promotes social development and a sense of shared responsibility.

To address the limited emotional connection caused by administrative burdens, it is essential to create supportive structures and allocate resources that allow teachers to prioritize building relationships with their students. This can include professional development opportunities focused on social-emotional learning, reducing paperwork and administrative tasks, and providing adequate support staff to assist with administrative responsibilities. By fostering positive teacher-student relationships, we not only enhance the educational experience for students but also contribute to the overall well-being and social development of the community.

The administrative burden placed on teachers has a detrimental impact on the emotional connection between teachers and students. This lack of connection hinders the development of positive teacher-student relationships, leading to reduced motivation, disengagement, and limited social development. Prioritizing the creation of supportive environments that allow for meaningful connections enhances student outcomes, promote a sense of community, and contribute to broader social development.

Reduced Individualized Support:

With less time to dedicate to each student, teachers might struggle to identify and implement effective instructional strategies tailored to diverse student needs, ultimately impacting academic outcomes. Struggling students may fall through the cracks without personalized attention and support, leading to lower achievement and disengagement from the learning process. According to a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019), heavy administrative workload negatively affects teachers' ability to provide individualized support, resulting in achievement gaps among students. The report highlights that teachers who are burdened with excessive administrative tasks have limited opportunities to assess students' progress, provide timely feedback, and adjust their instructional methods accordingly. As a consequence, students with specific learning needs, such as those requiring additional support or belonging to marginalized backgrounds, may be disproportionately affected by the lack of individualized attention.

Every student is unique, with their own strengths, challenges, and learning styles. It is essential for teachers to have the time and resources to identify these individual differences and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. However, when administrative tasks take precedence, teachers may resort to standardized approaches that do not effectively address the specific needs of each student. As educational reformer Horace Mann once said, "Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men." Reducing administrative burdens empowers teachers to provide the individualized support necessary to bridge achievement gaps and promote equal opportunities for all students.

The lack of individualized support resulting from excessive administrative workload not only affects academic outcomes but also hampers community and social development. Education plays a vital role in shaping responsible and engaged citizens who contribute positively to society. However, when students do not receive the personalized attention and support they need, they may become disengaged, disenchanting, and disconnected from their communities.

Individualized support goes beyond academic assistance; it also involves understanding students' backgrounds, experiences, and aspirations. Forging meaningful connections and tailoring instruction to their unique needs allows teachers to cultivate a sense of belonging and empower students to realize their full potential. This personalized approach to education fosters empathy, inclusivity, and social awareness, which are essential for building strong, cohesive communities. Furthermore, when students receive personalized

support, they are more likely to develop self-confidence, resilience, and a growth mindset. These qualities are not only crucial for academic success but also for navigating the challenges of life beyond the classroom. By investing in individualized support and reducing administrative burdens, we equip students with the tools they need to become active participants in their communities, capable of making meaningful contributions.

To address the issue of reduced individualized support, it is crucial to provide teachers with the necessary resources, support staff, and professional development opportunities. Additionally, leveraging technology can help automate administrative tasks, freeing up valuable time for teachers to focus on personalized instruction and support. Prioritizing individualized attention creates an educational environment that fosters academic success, social development, and community engagement. Excessive administrative workload hampers teachers' ability to provide individualized support, resulting in achievement gaps and limited social development among students. A reduction in administrative burdens and promotion of personalized attention can help to bridge these gaps, empower students to reach their full potential, and cultivate a sense of community and social responsibility.

Loss of Focus on 21st Century Skills

The emphasis on administrative tasks can leave little room for developing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills – essential skills needed for success in the 21st century. Students may miss out on opportunities to develop these skills, limiting their future prospects. In their publication "Preparing Students for the 21st Century," the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP, 2020) highlights the importance of integrating 21st-century skills into the curriculum and warns against the detrimental impact of excessive administrative burdens on skill development. These skills, often referred to as the "Four Cs" – critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration – are considered vital for students to thrive in an ever-evolving, globally connected world.

Administrative tasks often require a significant amount of time and energy from teachers, leaving limited space for them to design and implement innovative teaching strategies that foster 21st-century skills. Instead, the focus may shift towards fulfilling administrative requirements and standardized testing, which primarily assess rote memorization rather than higher-order thinking and problem-solving abilities. Neglecting the development of 21st-century skills hinders students' ability to adapt to complex challenges, think critically, and come up with creative solutions. These skills are not only crucial for academic success but also for personal growth, career readiness, and active citizenship. In an era marked by technological advancements, globalization, and rapid changes in the job market, students need to be equipped with the ability to think critically, generate innovative ideas, effectively communicate their thoughts, and collaborate with others from diverse backgrounds.

Additionally, the loss of focus on 21st-century skills due to administrative burdens can have far-reaching consequences for community and social development. A workforce that lacks critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills may struggle to address societal issues, innovate, and contribute to the betterment of their communities. The challenges faced by our society, such as climate change, inequality, and technological advancements, require individuals who can think critically, adapt to new situations, and work collaboratively to find sustainable solutions.

Moreover, the development of 21st-century skills goes beyond individual success; it is intricately linked to the overall well-being and progress of communities. When students are equipped with these skills, they are more likely to become active participants in their communities, engage in civic discourse, and contribute to positive social change. Critical thinking skills enable individuals to question prevailing norms and systems, fostering a society that values diversity, equity, and justice. To address the loss of focus on 21st-century skills caused by administrative burdens, it is essential to prioritize curriculum and instructional practices that promote these skills. This can be achieved by providing professional development opportunities for teachers, integrating project-based learning and real-world problem-solving activities into the curriculum, and leveraging technology to enhance student engagement and creativity. By creating a learning environment

that cultivates 21st-century skills, we empower students to become active contributors to their communities and agents of social change.

Excessive administrative burdens can lead to a loss of focus on developing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills which are key components of 21st-century skills. When these skills are neglected, we limit students' future prospects and hinder their ability to navigate the complexities of the modern world. Furthermore, the lack of emphasis on 21st-century skills has implications for community and social development, as it undermines our collective ability to address societal challenges and create positive change.

Discouragement of Aspiring Teachers:

New teachers witnessing the overwhelming workload may be discouraged from entering the profession. This can exacerbate existing teacher shortages, ultimately impacting the entire education system. It is crucial to attract and retain quality educators to ensure the continuity of high-quality education. Darling-Hammond et al. (2018) emphasize the need to address administrative burdens to attract and retain talented individuals in the teaching profession, highlighting the direct link between workload and teacher recruitment. When aspiring teachers witness the heavy administrative burdens placed on educators, they may become discouraged and reconsider their career choice. This discouragement can contribute to a decline in the number of individuals entering the teaching profession, exacerbating existing teacher shortages.

Teacher shortages have significant implications for community and social development. Quality education is the foundation of a thriving community, and teachers play a crucial role in shaping the next generation. When there is a shortage of qualified teachers, the quality of education may suffer, leading to lower academic achievement and limited opportunities for students. This can perpetuate cycles of inequality, as students from marginalized backgrounds or those in underserved communities are disproportionately affected by teacher shortages.

Furthermore, teacher shortages can hinder community development by limiting access to educational resources and support systems. Teachers not only impart knowledge but also serve as mentors, role models, and sources of guidance for students. When there is a shortage of teachers, students may lack the necessary guidance and support to navigate their educational journey and make informed choices about their future. This can have long-term consequences for community development, as individuals may face challenges in accessing higher education, securing employment, and contributing positively to their communities.

To address the discouragement of aspiring teachers and mitigate teacher shortages, it is crucial to reduce administrative burdens and create a supportive working environment for educators. Teachers can focus on their core mission of teaching and nurturing students by streamlining administrative tasks and providing adequate resources and support staff. Additionally, offering competitive salaries, professional development opportunities, and mentorship programs can attract and retain talented individuals in the teaching profession, ensuring a steady supply of qualified educators. Moreover, community involvement and support are essential in addressing teacher shortages and promoting social development. Collaborative efforts between educational institutions, local governments, and community organizations can help raise awareness about the importance of teaching and advocate for policies that prioritize the well-being of educators. To create an environment that attracts aspiring educators, fosters their professional growth, and ultimately benefits the entire community there is need to value and support teachers.

The discouragement of aspiring teachers due to overwhelming administrative burdens can contribute to teacher shortages and impact the education system as a whole. Teacher shortages have significant implications for community and social development, including limited access to quality education and reduced support systems for students. As mentioned before, reducing administrative burdens, creating a supportive working environment, and fostering community involvement, we can attract and retain talented educators, ensure high-quality education, and promote the overall well-being and development of communities.

FINDING SOLUTIONS

To tackle the problem of overwhelming administrative tasks and enhance effective teaching and learning, the following solutions can be implemented:

Streamlining Administrative Processes:

To mitigate the burden of clerical work on teachers and students, various technological solutions have been proposed. For example, Learning Management Systems (LMS) can automate administrative tasks such as grade tracking and attendance recording (Liu et al., 2019). Furthermore, digital tools like Google Classroom can facilitate communication between teachers and students while reducing the need for paper-based records (Baker & Ingram, 2017). Utilizing technology to automate tasks and implementing online platforms for submitting reports can significantly reduce paperwork and administrative burden. However, it is essential to note that the implementation of these technologies does not entirely eliminate clerical work but rather streamlines it. Therefore, ongoing efforts are required to continuously assess and optimize these systems to minimize their impact on teaching and learning (Liu et al., 2019). This streamlining allows teachers to focus more on instructional activities.

Providing Adequate Administrative Support:

Furthermore, schools can consider redistributing administrative responsibilities among staff members to alleviate the workload on teachers. This may include hiring support staff or utilizing parent volunteers for certain clerical tasks which may allow educators to focus more on their core responsibilities of teaching and supporting student learning. Allocating administrative assistants or clerical staff to handle routine tasks, such as data entry and paperwork, allows teachers to devote more time and energy to instruction and student support. Adequate support can alleviate the burden on teachers and improve their overall efficiency. In their publication "Supporting Effective Teaching," the National Education Policy Centre (NEPC, 2021) recommends the provision of administrative support as a means to reduce workload and enhance teachers' effectiveness.

Professional development and Collaboration between School Leadership and Teachers

Professional development programs aimed at enhancing time management skills and organizational strategies can also empower teachers to better manage their workload and prioritize instructional activities over administrative duties. Additionally, fostering a culture of collaboration and teamwork within schools can enable educators to share resources, divide tasks efficiently, and collectively address challenges related to excessive clerical work.

Establishing consistent communication and collaboration between school administrators and teachers is key. This collaboration can facilitate the identification and prioritization of highly effective teaching methods, thereby minimizing the need for excessive paperwork. It also ensures that administrative decisions align with teachers' expertise and classroom needs.

The Wallace Foundation (2023) highlights the importance of collaborative relationships between school leaders and teachers, emphasizing the need for shared decision-making processes to address administrative burdens effectively.

Community and Parental Support:

Engaging parents and volunteers to assist with administrative tasks can alleviate some of the burden on teachers. Encouraging community involvement and parental support can create a sense of shared responsibility and lighten the workload for educators.

In their report "Building Parent-Teacher Partnerships," the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA, 2023) emphasizes the positive impact of community and parental involvement in reducing administrative burdens for teachers.

Focus on Teacher Well-being:

Prioritizing teacher well-being through stress management programs, time management strategies, and professional development opportunities can help teachers cope with a demanding workload. Supporting their overall well-being ultimately benefits both teachers and students. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, 2022) emphasizes the importance of teacher well-being in creating a positive school culture and recommends comprehensive support programs as a means to alleviate workload-related stress.

CONCLUSION

The burden of excessive clerical work on teaching and learning is a pressing issue that requires attention. The recognition of the detrimental effects of overwhelming administrative tasks and implementing solutions can allow the creation of an environment where teachers can truly thrive and dedicate their expertise to fostering a love of learning in their students. Addressing this issue not only improves the quality of education but also has far-reaching implications for community and social development. By streamlining administrative processes, providing adequate support, fostering collaboration, seeking community involvement, and prioritizing teacher well-being, we can alleviate the burden of excessive clerical work and create a more conducive environment for effective teaching and meaningful learning experiences.

When teachers are freed from the shackles of excessive administrative tasks, they can devote more time and energy to developing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills in their students. This, in turn, equips the younger generation with the necessary tools to address complex societal challenges, contribute to their communities, and create positive social change.

Moreover, by valuing and supporting our educators, we signal the importance of education as a cornerstone of community development. Teachers play a vital role in shaping the future by nurturing the minds and futures of our students. When we prioritize their well-being and provide them with the necessary resources and support, we create a ripple effect that extends beyond the classroom.

A collaborative effort from all stakeholders, including educational institutions, policymakers, community organizations, and parents, is crucial in empowering our educators and ensuring that education goes beyond the confines of the school walls. By working together, we can create an educational ecosystem that not only fosters academic excellence but also cultivates engaged citizens who are equipped with the skills and mindset to contribute positively to their communities.

The study recommends that educational leaders and policymakers should concern themselves with the adoption and implementation of measures aimed at reducing administrative burdens on teachers. A host of measures to achieve this have been discussed in this paper which include providing administrative staff, streamlining administrative processes and using technological solutions in administrative work. The time freed can allow teachers to engage in collaborative work with their peer and refine their teaching methods. It also recommends that educational institutions and policy makers see the value in creating time and setting aside resources for the professional development of teachers. This can be achieved by ensuring that professional development opportunities are made available, administrative burdens are reduced to create this time and also by having study leave from work.

It was also seen that excessive administrative burden were hindering the teaching and development of 21st century skills amongst the learners and their teachers. To resolve this it is recommended that project based training and real-world-problem solving activities be included into the curriculum leveraging on technology

as a way of enhancing students' creativity and participation in the learning. It further recommends that technology be utilized in automating administrative tasks so as to free up time for teachers to engage in personalized instruction and support for learners which has been shown to create a conducive learning environment necessary for social development, academic success and community engagement. The study recommends that policy development be cognoscente of the challenges placed on both the teachers and students when the former are strained by administrative duties leaving little to no time for their main professional duties or development. This has also been seen to cause limited emotional connection between teacher and students as teachers are often stressed and under pressure from administrative burdens. The study recommends that there must be set up support structures and additional resources be set aside that allow teachers to prioritize the building of relationships with their students. The study notes there have to be a reduction in paperwork, social emotional training of teachers and adequate support staff for administrative work. The research also highlighted the negative effects of administrative burdens on students and recommends that it is necessary to streamline administrative processes and implement technology solutions which will enable teachers to reclaim valuable time for meaningful interactions with students. The study also recommends that policy makers and institutional leaders strive to find a balance between compliance with administrative tasks and a comprehensive approach to education that fosters creativity, encourages critical thinking, and promotes community-school partnerships. It proposes a significant lessening of administrative burdens and the promotion of a learner-centered approach that can create an educational system which empowers students and produces socially responsible citizens. The research noted the increasing discouragement of aspiring teachers and teacher shortages due to administrative burdens. It recommends creating a supportive working environment for educators allowing them to focus on their core mission of teaching and nurturing students. It recommends the government to offer competitive salaries, professional development opportunities, and mentorship programs that can attract and retain talented individuals in the teaching profession, ensuring a steady supply of qualified educators. The study also recommends the increased community involvement and support as essential in addressing teacher shortages and promoting social development. It calls for collaborative efforts between educational institutions, local governments, and community organizations that help to raise awareness about the importance of teaching and advocating for policies that prioritize the well-being of educators.

Conclusively, addressing the burden of excessive clerical work on teaching and learning is a requires collective action which includes streamlining administrative processes, providing support, fostering collaboration, seeking community involvement, and prioritizing teacher well-being, we can create an educational landscape that empowers both teachers and students, while also driving community and social development. Let us join forces to unleash the full potential of education in shaping a brighter future for all.

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