

TITLE: VOICES OF TEACHERS IN BALANCING THEIR WORKLOAD DISTRIBUTION IN INTEGRATED SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of teachers in managing workload balancing within selected integrated schools in the Maragusan district. Rooted in the growing complexities of educational settings, particularly in schools where teachers are expected to juggle instructional, administrative, and co-curricular roles, this research aimed to understand how these overlapping responsibilities affect their professional effectiveness and well-being. Employing a qualitative phenomenological design, the study gathered in-depth insights from twelve teacher participants through semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which revealed several core themes: overlapping roles, emotional and physical exhaustion, lack of clear workload policies, adaptive coping strategies, and the critical importance of institutional and peer support. The findings indicated that workload imbalance is a systemic issue exacerbated by unclear guidelines, resource limitations, and inconsistent leadership support. Teachers relied heavily on time management, peer collaboration, and personal discipline to navigate their responsibilities, yet these strategies were often insufficient in the absence of structural reforms. The study underscores the need for context-specific workload policies, enhanced administrative support, and the integration of teacher voices in school planning. It highlights that sustaining teaching quality in integrated schools requires both systemic responsiveness and a culture of shared accountability. These insights can inform policy development, leadership training, and support programs that promote equitable workload distribution and teacher well-being.

Keyword: *educational administration, workload balancing, integrated schools, teacher experiences, qualitative research, instructional responsibilities, school operations, phenomenological study*

1. TITLE - VOICES OF TEACHERS IN BALANCING THEIR WORKLOAD DISTRIBUTION IN INTEGRATED SCHOOL

Balancing faculty workload is a crucial factor in sustaining teacher well-being and maintaining the quality of education. In integrated school settings, where multiple grade levels are managed under one institution, teachers are often tasked with overlapping responsibilities that require constant adjustment and prioritization. The challenge lies not only in the volume of work but also in how educators strive to balance instructional, administrative, and co-curricular duties within limited time and resources. Without clear policies or standardized workload frameworks, this balancing act becomes more difficult, often resulting in stress, reduced job satisfaction, and potential burnout. In the Philippine context, where structural integration has been intensified by educational reforms, many teachers continue to face these demands with little systemic guidance or institutional support (Abenir and Llaneta, 2021) [1].

Globally, balancing workload has become a persistent challenge for teachers in integrated educational settings. In Australia, faculty members are expected to juggle teaching across grade levels, administrative responsibilities, and coordination tasks, which require constant adjustment and prioritization. Gabet et al. (2023) [2] emphasized that the

lack of clear boundaries often forces teachers to find personal strategies to balance multiple demands, though this balancing act frequently results in stress and reduced job satisfaction. Such conditions highlight the importance of institutional support in helping educators manage their diverse roles without compromising their well-being.

In the Philippines, particularly in provinces such as Laguna, the integration of basic education levels under the K–12 reform has intensified the need for teachers to balance various responsibilities. Educators are often tasked with handling multi-level teaching assignments alongside administrative and co-curricular duties, yet they lack formal workload differentiation to guide this balancing process. Abenir and Llaneta (2021) [3] observed that teachers in integrated schools frequently struggle to maintain balance due to overlapping roles that are not matched with adequate support or compensation. Similarly, Dela Cruz et al. (2020) [4] noted that the absence of a unified workload policy across DepEd and CHED leaves faculty members to navigate these responsibilities on their own, often relying on personal coping mechanisms to balance their work.

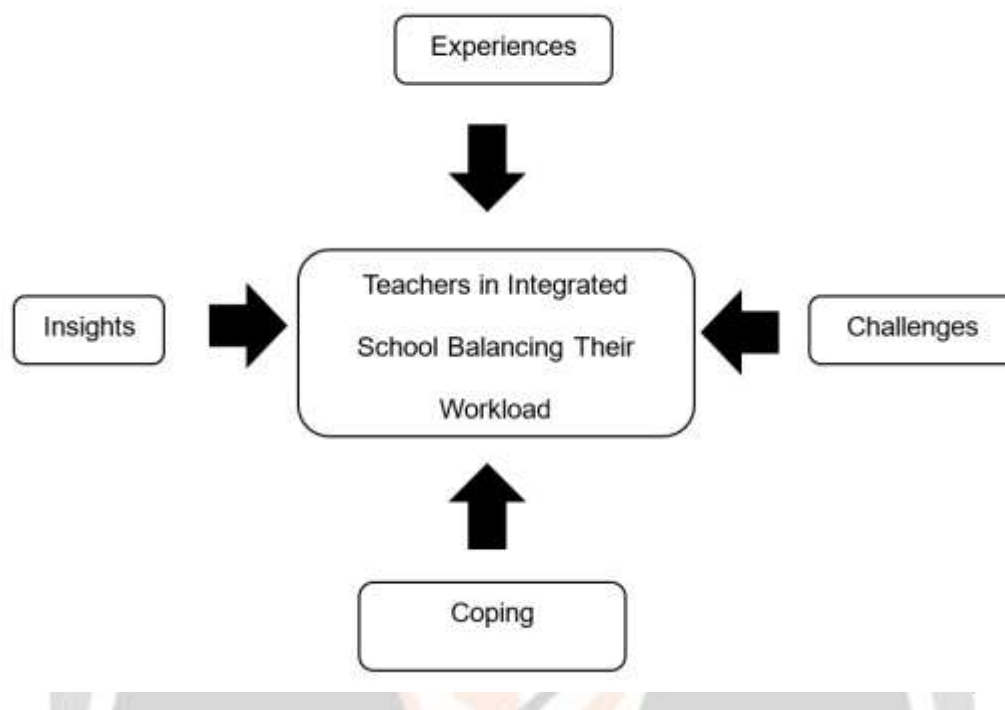
At the local level, based on my own experience as a teacher in an integrated school in the Municipality of Maragusan, I often face responsibilities that extend well beyond conventional classroom instruction. Aside from handling multi-grade teaching assignments, I am also tasked to serve on various school committees, manage student organizations, and perform administrative duties such as preparing reports and assisting with school documentation. These overlapping roles, which are not always reflected in formal job descriptions, create a constant struggle to balance multiple expectations at once. Many times, I am asked to attend to last-minute administrative tasks, facilitate co-curricular events, or participate in community outreach activities while still ensuring that my classes are effectively managed. Such situations often make me feel overloaded and unclear about where my responsibilities should begin and end. This balancing act reflects the operational realities in integrated school settings, where limited personnel and resources lead to multiple functions being consolidated into a single teaching role.

Despite these demands, there remains a lack of formal policy or workload guidelines that account for the breadth and complexity of teachers' duties in integrated schools. As a result, many educators report feelings of burnout, inefficiency, and diminished professional fulfillment. Current local research tends to focus on instructional challenges or student outcomes, but rarely delves into the systemic operational pressures that shape teachers' daily experiences. This study sought to address that gap by exploring how teachers in integrated schools perceive, navigate, and adapt to the operational demands of their profession, shedding light on the lived realities behind the structures of school operations in the Philippines.

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and understand the lived experiences of teachers in balancing their workload distribution within integrated school settings. Using in-depth interviews (IDI) as the primary data-gathering method, the study focuses on six purposively selected participants from integrated schools in the Municipality of Maragusan. It sought to examine how these teachers manage overlapping responsibilities across multiple grade levels, subjects, and administrative tasks, and how such demands influence their professional well-being and performance. By capturing their challenges, coping strategies, and personal insights, this study aimed to give voice to their experiences and provide perspectives that may inform policy development and improve workload management practices in the Philippine basic education system.

3. Conceptual Framework



4. Research Questions

To guide this qualitative inquiry, the study adopted a phenomenological and exploratory approach, aiming to understand how faculty members experience, interpret, and respond to their workload within different institutional structures.

The following research questions was developed to explore these phenomena in depth:

1. What are the lived experiences of teachers in integrated school balancing their workload?
2. What challenges do teachers encounter while striving to balance multiple responsibilities in integrated schools?
3. What coping mechanisms do teachers develop to maintain balance in managing workload-related pressures in integrated schools?
4. What insights do teachers gain from the experiences on workload distribution in integrated school?

5. Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This phenomenological study focused on what are the lived experiences of teachers in balancing workload distribution in integrated school settings, particularly their challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights in managing both teaching and non-teaching responsibilities. It was conducted during the school year 2025–2026 to capture current and relevant experiences of teachers in the field. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological design using in-depth interviews (IDI) to collect narratives and perspectives that reflect the realities of workload balancing. The participants included six purposively selected teachers from integrated schools who handle multiple responsibilities across grade levels and school functions with a 3 years' experience. The study was situated in six integrated schools in the Municipality of Maragusan, Davao de Oro, Pamintaran Integrated School, Parasanon Integrated School, Katipunan Integrated School, Coronobe Integrated School, New Panay Integrated School, and Tigbao Integrated School. The delimitation of this study is that it focused solely on teachers with teaching loads in integrated schools and excludes administrators without classroom assignments, non-teaching staff, and teachers

from non-integrated institutions. Moreover, as it only involved six participants, the findings do not seek to generalize across all integrated schools but instead aim to provide rich, contextualized insights into the voices of teachers in balancing their workload.

6. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically utilizing the phenomenological approach. A qualitative design is appropriate because it emphasizes meaning-making and seeks to understand social phenomena from the participants' perspectives (Creswell and Poth, 2018) [5]. Phenomenology, in particular, allowed the researcher to explore and interpret the lived experiences of teachers, capturing their challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights through in-depth descriptions (Moustakas, 1994) [6]. The goal is not to generalize findings, but to gain a deeper understanding of how workload is experienced and interpreted by faculty members working in structurally integrated institutions. Through interviews and thematic analysis, this design facilitated the uncovering of shared patterns and unique perspectives that reflect the realities of teachers navigating complex, multi-level responsibilities in a unified school system.

By choosing a phenomenological qualitative design, this study prioritized the voices and experiences of faculty, aligning with its objective to capture the lived complexities of academic work under integrated education. This approach also supports the generation of grounded insights that may inform future policy reforms and institutional practices related to workload planning and teacher well-being.

7. Research Participants

The participants of this study were selected faculty members from six integrated schools in the Municipality of Maragusan, Davao de Oro, namely: Pamintaran Integrated School, Parasanon Integrated School, Katipunon Integrated School, Coronobe Integrated School, New Panay Integrated School, and Tigbao Integrated School. These schools were identified and selected based on the official list of integrated schools under the Maragusan District, ensuring coverage of diverse geographic and institutional contexts within the municipality.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on teachers who are directly involved in both instructional delivery and additional academic or administrative responsibilities across multiple grade levels. Their lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights will help uncover the realities of balancing workload distribution in integrated school settings.

To be included in the study, participants must be full-time faculty members in one of the six identified integrated schools, have at least three years of teaching experience in an integrated school setting, have experience handling multiple grade levels or combining academic and non-academic responsibilities, and be willing and able to participate in an in-depth interview.

Excluded from the study were teachers with less than three years of experience in integrated schools, non-teaching staff or administrators without teaching loads, faculty members who were on leave during the data collection period, and those who declined or withdrew consent at any stage of the research. This careful selection ensured that participants can make meaningful contributions to the study's aim of exploring the voices of teachers in balancing their workload distribution in integrated school contexts.

8. CONCLUSIONS

With workload balancing as the central focus of this investigation, the lived experiences of teachers in integrated schools revealed how instructional, administrative, and co-curricular responsibilities intersect in complex and often overwhelming ways. The study found that teachers navigate role ambiguity, time constraints, inadequate institutional support, and unclear operational guidelines factors that significantly affect their professional effectiveness and personal well-being. Despite these challenges, the participants demonstrated resilience and adaptability through personal strategies such as time management, prioritization, collaboration with peers, and reflective practices. Their narratives also underscored the need for a more responsive and inclusive school culture where leadership support, clear policies, and equitable task distribution are not just encouraged but institutionalized.

The insights drawn from this study reinforce the understanding that sustainable teaching and effective school operations are deeply interconnected. A functional school system is not solely dependent on resource availability or policy presence but is also shaped by shared accountability, ethical workload management, and a deep respect for teachers' voices and capacities. By addressing systemic gaps and fostering a collaborative, well-supported environment, schools can create operational conditions that empower teachers to thrive in their instructional roles. These findings may inform the development of localized workload policies, teacher support frameworks, and leadership practices that prioritize both educational quality and educator well-being..

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