Lived Experiences of School Heads with Administrative Tasks and Multiple Ancillary Functions

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Abstract

This phenomenological qualitative study investigated the lived experiences of school heads in handling administrative tasks and multiple ancillary functions within the context of the MATATAG Curriculum implementation in the Philippines. Ten school heads from the Divisions of Davao City and Davao Occidental participated in in-depth interviews. The study participants were chosen using a purposive sampling technique. The study revealed three major themes in their experiences: multifaceted leadership demands, time and resource management challenges, and stakeholder relationships and community engagement. School heads employed various coping mechanisms, including strategic workload management, seeking professional growth and support, and maintaining holistic well-being and communication. Key insights gained emphasized the importance of visionary and adaptive leadership, collaborative and efficient management, and data-driven decision-making. The findings highlight the complex nature of school leadership and the need for targeted support from educational authorities. Recommendations include streamlining administrative processes, providing specialized leadership training, and establishing work-life balance policies to enhance the effectiveness of school heads and improve overall educational outcomes.

Keywords: Administrative tasks, multiple ancillary functions, MATATAG Curriculum

I. Introduction

 The MATATAG Curriculum is a transformative initiative in the Philippine education system, striving to enhance learning by prioritizing essential skills, 21st century competencies, values education, and inclusivity. The Department of Education provides guidelines on the immediate removal of administrative tasks of public-school teachers for them to engage in classroom on a full-time basis, under permanent provision. however, while aiming to improve the quality of education in the Philippines, presents a significant challenge for school heads: the struggle to balance administrative tasks, ancillary functions, and a personal well-being. These challenge stems from the increased workload and responsibilities associated with the new curriculum, leaving school heads with limited time for worklife balance. Mahfouz, J. (2020) revealed that the most pressing challenges of school heads are balancing traditional administrative duties with new MATATAG related tasks, keeping pace with the curriculum's technology, providing adequate guidance and resources for teachers adapting to the new curriculum, managing increased demands from parents, community partners and education officials, and lastly coping with increased stress and workload.

The implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in the Philippines has significantly transformed the landscape of basic education (Kilag et al., 2024). While the primary focus of MATATAG is on improving student learning outcomes, its implementation has cascading effects on school administration, particularly on the workload and functions of school heads. Additionally, according to Colvard-Davis J.A. (2022) the school heads are now expected to be not only educational leaders but also change agents, technology advocates, and community liaisons.

Moreover, curriculum reforms worldwide have consistently expanded the roles of school leaders in Finland, the 2016 curriculum reform emphasized phenomenon-based learning, requiring school leaders to facilitate interdisciplinary teaching and collaborative planning (Naukkarinen et al., 2022). Similarly, Singapore "Teach Less, Learn More" initiative demanded that school leaders create environments conducive to student-centered, inquirybased learning (Lee et al., 2020). The implementation of MATATAG has significantly increased the administrative responsibilities of school heads, Kilag et al. (2024) found that school leaders report spending an additional 15-20 hours per week on MATATAG-related tasks, including curriculum mapping, monitoring of implementation, and reporting. This increase in workload often comes at the expense of other important leadership functions, such as instructional supervision and teachers mentoring. A survey by Garza, V. J. (2023) revealed that school heads felt underprepared to lead technology integration efforts in their schools.

According to Sario & Villocino, (2023), while the need for professional development has been acknowledged in existing literature. The implementation of the MATATAG curriculum in the Philippines presents a unique opportunity to study the evolving role of school heads in the context of significant educational reform. While initial research has provided valuable insights, the identified gaps highlight the need for more comprehensive, long-term, and comparative studies. Addressing these research gaps will not only contribute to a better understanding of MATATAG's impact on school leaders but also inform future policy decisions and support strategies for school heads.

1.1 Research Objectives

This study aimed to determine the lived experiences of the school heads handling administrative tasks and other ancillary functions in the MATATAG Curriculum. This study was guided by the following specific objective.

1.   What are the experiences of school heads handling administrative tasks and ancillary functions?

2.   What are the coping mechanisms employed by the principal in handling administrative tasks and ancillary   functions?

3. What are the learning insights of school heads in handling administrative tasks and ancillary functions?

1.2 Theoretical Lens

This study was anchored on the Role Theory, a framework for understanding how individuals perform specific roles in social contexts, has evolved over time, primarily in the early to mid-20th century. George Herbert Mead's work in social psychology, particularly his posthumously published Mind, Self, and Society (1934), laid the groundwork for understanding the self and social roles through interaction. In the 1950s, Talcott Parsons, in his sociological framework, integrated the concept of roles into his analysis of social systems, emphasizing how roles contribute to social order, as seen in his The Social System (1951). Robert K. Merton further developed the theory by introducing ideas such as role conflict and role strain, clarifying how individuals navigate multiple roles. Erving Goffman's The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1956) introduced the "dramaturgical approach," viewing social interactions as performances where individuals manage their roles in various contexts. Role theory, initially developed in the early 20th century, saw significant formalization in the 1950s through the works of these key scholars, and it has since evolved and found applications across various fields, including sociology, psychology, and organizational studies.

Furthermore, Role theory, is a framework for understanding how individuals navigate different social roles, provides valuable insights into the complexities faced by school heads. School heads wear multiple hats, acting as administrators, leaders, community liaisons, and crisis managers, often with overlapping responsibilities. These roles come with distinct expectations, such as efficiency in administration, visionary leadership, and effective community engagement. However, these expectations can clash, leading to role conflict. For instance, a school head might need to make budget cuts (administrative role) while simultaneously supporting teachers' professional development (leadership role). This conflict can cause stress and affect their effectiveness. To manage these challenges, school heads may negotiate role expectations with stakeholders and delegate tasks to focus on strategic leadership. The lived experiences of school heads are

deeply influenced by their roles, leading to both empowerment and challenges, such as burnout. Support networks and professional organizations can provide valuable resources and shared experiences. Ultimately, how school heads navigate their roles shapes their leadership style, impacting school culture and student outcomes. Understanding the dynamics of role theory can help provide better support and training for school leaders, ultimately enhancing educational environments for both staff and students.

II. Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized phenomenological qualitative research design. Qualitative research that aims to learn more about people's lived experiences. The process of research involves gathering and analyzing non-numerical data. It is used to gain a better understanding of people's beliefs, attitudes and experiences.

In the same context, Mason et al., (2020) stipulated that qualitative research should be strategically conducted in a way that is both flexible and contextual which means that decision should not only be based upon the sound research strategy but also on the ever-changing situations or context in which the research is taking place. Qualitative research is a different approach in studying humans. Qualitative research emphasizes exploring individual experience, describing phenomenon, and developing theory (Urcia, 2021).

Qualitative design and phenomenological approach allow the researchers to delve deeply into the subjective experiences of school heads in managing administrative tasks and ancillary functions in a new MATATAG Curriculum. It can shed light on the challenges they face, the coping mechanisms they employ, and meaningful aspects of their experiences, ultimately informing strategies to improve their well-being and effectiveness in their unique teaching roles. Phenomenology gathers individual experiences to a description of the commonality of lived experiences. It describes the common experiences of the participants based on a single phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). In this study, it is the most appropriate design to address the purpose of the study.

2.2 Participants Sampling

The participants of the study are the 10-school heads of Division of Davao City and Davao Occidental. They will be selected through purposive sampling technique with five participants to participate in the in-depth-interview (IDI) and another five for participants for focused group discussion (FGD). Creswell (2013) suggests that a reasonable sample size may range from 5-25 participants for a phenomenological study, and 10 participants is an adequate number for this study. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique whose objective is to produce a sample which the researchers logically assumed to be representatives of a given population (Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods, 2008). This implies that the researchers will choose a sample that will help them gain access to a subset of a particular group of people that best meet a given criteria based on the context of what the objectives of the study aim to find out. The researchers opted to explore a sample group that include school heads whose experiences range from three to ten years and who came from permanent residences within Davao City and Davao Occidental.

2.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations play a crucial role in research. The study upheld the rights and well-being of participants, fostering trust and transparency in the research process (Haven et al., 2022), thus respondents were asked to sign an informed consent before proceeding to the data collection. Moreover, the researchers considered the safety and wellbeing of individuals involved in studies to prevent harm or exploitation as advocated by Alessi, and Kahn (2023). In addition, protecting the privacy and confidentiality of participants'

data is essential for maintaining trust and respecting individuals' rights (Kang & Hwang, 2023). With this, sensitive information such as the participants' identities was protected, and their data was handled with integrity. Furthermore, ensuring fairness in research involves treating all participants equitably, especially vulnerable groups (Jankowski et al., 2022), thus, the researchers addressed issues of justice by avoiding discrimination, promoting inclusivity, and considering the impact of their studies on diverse populations. Finally, maintaining transparency throughout the research process enhances the credibility and integrity of the study (Alessi & Kahn, 2023). The researchers upheld transparency by maintaining openness in reporting methods, results, and findings fosters accountability, reproducibility, and trust among researchers, participants, and the public.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As shown in Figure 1, from the collected data during in-depth interview (IDI) of the participants, three (3) major themes have emerged in the experiences of school heads in handling administrative tasks and additional ancillary functions, these are the following: Multifaceted leadership demands, Time and resource management in educational administration, and stakeholder relationships and community engagement. Moreover, six (6) core values have been identified; role complexity, adaptation and learning, time management challenges, personal and professional impact, stakeholder engagement, and lastly delegation and team management.
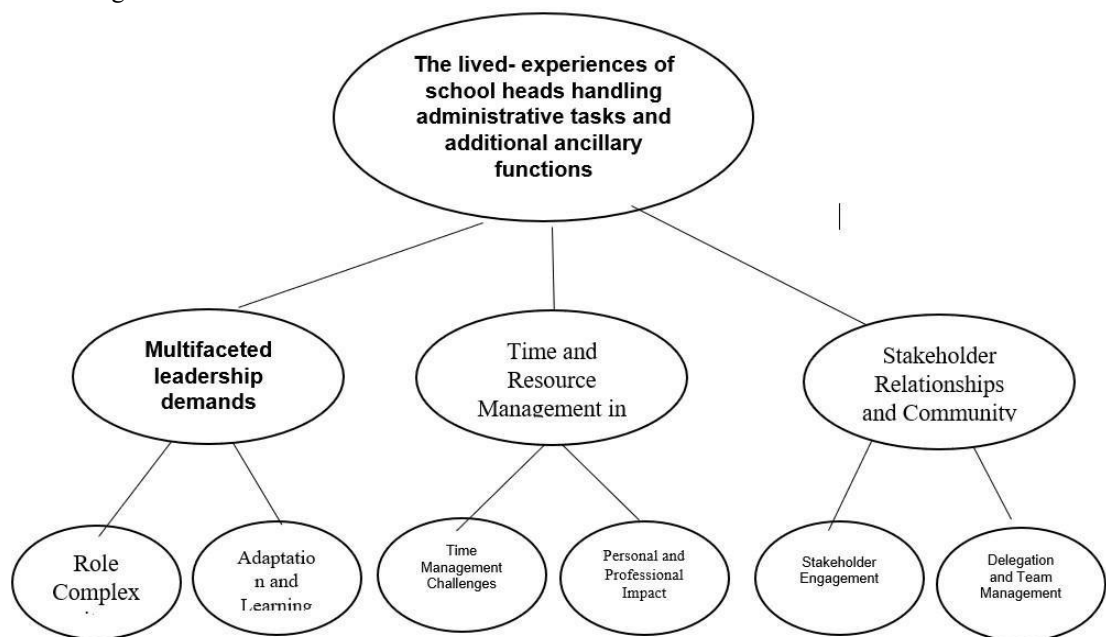

Figure 1. Lived Experiences of School Heads Handling Administrative Tasks and Ancillary Functions.

3.1 Multifaceted leadership demands

The experiences of public-school heads in handling administrative tasks and additional ancillary functions in the MATATAG Curriculum revealed a theme multifaceted leadership demand. This highlights the various challenges faced by school heads in their leadership roles. These include balancing leadership and

management, role overload, adapting to new curriculum era and time management. The same is true for the in-depth interview participants where good number of them had encountered the same experiences.

Informant Wonder woman readily admitted to her experiences with endurance, stating,

"We are responsible for the requirements to be accomplished both leadership and administrative functions".

One participant commented on the issue of role overload, noting the additional ancillary functions they had to handle besides administrative tasks.

"Particularly in small schools, school heads may take on more roles due to a lack of non-teaching staff. Balancing both administrative and non-academic tasks can lead to stress and exhaustion". (IDI#B, Line 5-7)

"We need to double efforts so that we all accommodate all task given and ancillaries even in time of difficulties and the price of all struggles is the expertise of everything and safe from complaint or failure due expertise of any angle of challenges". (IDI#A, Line 4-7)

The participants' experiences showcased their resilience. They demonstrated the ability to persevere through difficult situations and challenges, proving their capacity to handle both administrative tasks and ancillary functions effectively. School heads are tasked with a dual role that combines leadership and administrative functions. They must balance academic oversight with operational management, which often leads to a sense of role overload. This is particularly evident in smaller schools where resources may be limited, forcing school heads to take on additional responsibilities. The complexity of their role requires them to be versatile and adaptable, capable of guiding teachers and students academically while also handling tasks such as curriculum planning and teacher development.

The findings of this study align with recent research highlighting the increasing complexity of school leadership roles. School heads are required to balance traditional educational leadership with a growing array of administrative responsibilities (Hallinger & Walker, 2017). This dual role often leads to what Leithwood et al. (2020) term "role overload," particularly evident in resource-constrained environments. Moreover, the adaptability and continuous learning required of school heads, as highlighted in our findings, echo the concept of "adaptive leadership" proposed by Heifetz et al. (2009) and further explored in educational contexts by Drago-Severson and BlumDeStefano (2018). This adaptive approach is crucial in navigating the ever-changing landscape of educational policy and practice.

3.2 Time and resource management in educational administration

The second main theme that emerged is time and resource management in educational administration. Educational administration demands effective time and resources management due to limited time, scarce resources, and diverse stakeholder expectations. School heads can overcome these challenges by prioritizing tasks, using time management techniques optimizing resource allocation, collaborating with staff, and continuously learning. Effective time and resource management leads to improved school performance, increased teacher morale, enhanced student outcomes, and sustainable growth, making it a crucial element of effective leadership in education.

Juggling multiple tasks within limited time frames, Batman shared his experience:

"Juggling tasks like budgeting, managing staff, and implementing policies, while also overseeing extracurricular activities or parent-teacher meetings, can be difficult". (IDI#B, Line 2-4)

This was supported by Black Widow and Spider man when they said:
"I experience difficulties in adjusting time to cope up multi schedule of tasks to be given attention."". (IDI#A, Line 1-2)

"Very challenging, need to work overtime jud kay para maapas ang mga deadlines". (IDI#A, Line 1-2)
("it is very challenging; I need to work overtime because I need to meet the deadlines". (IDI#A, Line 1-2))

Time management emerges as a critical challenge for school heads, consistent with findings from studies across various educational contexts (Sebastian et al., 2018). The struggle to prioritize tasks amidst competing demands often results in extended working hours, impacting work-life balance. This aligns with research by Oplatka (2017), who found that school principals often experience work intensification and emotional labor. Additionally, the personal and professional impact of these demands on school heads is significant. Our findings resonate with studies on principal burnout and job satisfaction (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012; Wang et al., 2018). However, it's noteworthy that despite these challenges, many school heads in our study viewed their roles as opportunities for personal growth, supporting the notion of "positive leadership" in education (Cherkowski & Walker, 2018).

When pressed to explain work-life balance issues on his job, Green Lantern said:

"You cannot have the best of both worlds. Pressure is inevitable especially if you are overloaded with other functions aside from regular teaching. You needed to be like superhero all the time to accomplish the task" (IDI#E, Line 1-2)

The demands of the job significantly impact both the personal and professional lives of school heads. Many report difficulties in maintaining a work-life balance due to the need to work extended hours to complete their tasks. This often results in reduced time for family and personal activities. The overwhelming nature of juggling multiple duties can lead to stress and exhaustion. Despite these challenges, some school heads also recognize opportunities for personal growth and the development of diverse skills through their roles. Stakeholder relationships and community engagement

3.3 Stakeholder relationships and community engagement

The third main theme that emerged is stakeholder relationships and community engagement. This theme underscores the importance of building and maintaining relationships with various stakeholders in the school community, as well as the challenges associated with these interactions.

Working with stakeholders, ironman shared her experience:

"School heads regularly interact with teachers, staff, parents, and local authorities." (IDI#B, Line 12-13)
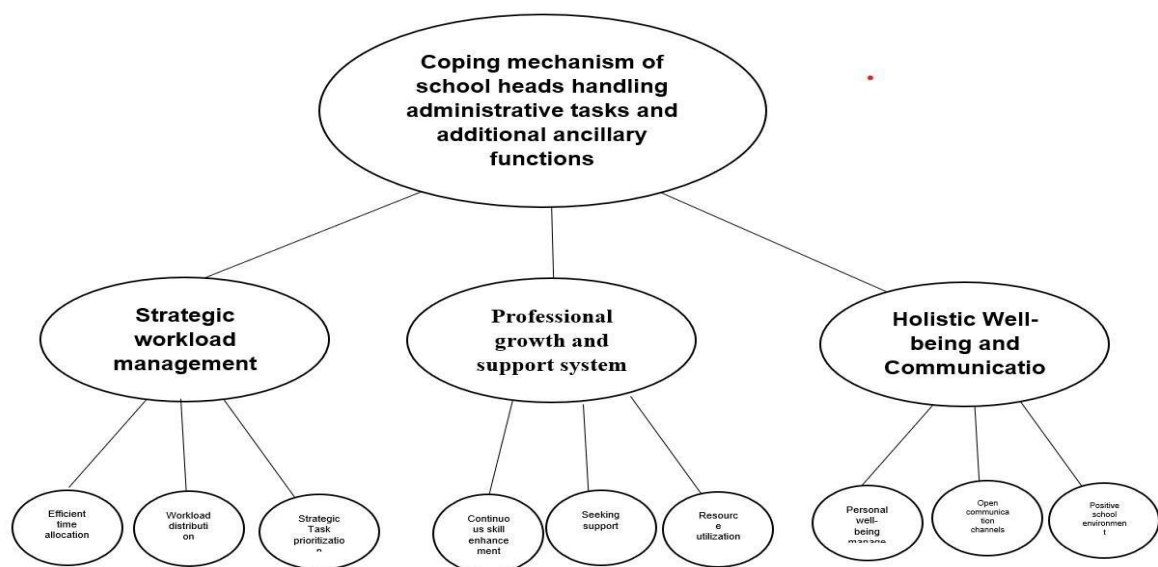
This was supported be Black Widow when she said:

"Building relationships with parents and the community is vital but can be challenging. School heads need to effectively communicate and engage stakeholders, which requires time and effort." (IDI#C, Line 5-7)

Captain America, when asked about work delegation, explained.

"Lisod e- balance and labi na wala pa me ADAS, so kami pa mag liquidates. Ang kauban nko na AO naa pod work na himoon, maybe its adjustment time pa but I need help from the teachers from now." (IDI#E, Line 2-4) (It's difficult to balance everything, especially without ADAS, so we are the one who must liquidate, my AO, also has a work to do, maybe it's still an adjustments period, but I need help from the teachers starting now)

The ability to delegate not only helps in managing the workload but also provides opportunities for developing leadership skills within the team. However, some school heads express difficulty in balancing tasks and the need for support from teachers and administrative staff. This is particularly evident in situations where there are resource constraints or when new systems (like ADAS) are not yet in place, requiring school heads to handle additional tasks like liquidation themselves.

The importance of stakeholder engagement and community relationships in school leadership is wellestablished in the literature (Arar et al., 2020; Epstein, 2018). The findings underscore the critical nature of these relationships while also highlighting the additional workload they create for school heads. This tension between the necessity and burden of community engagement reflects the evolving expectations of school leadership in increasingly diverse and complex social contexts (Khalifa et al., 2016). Further, the challenges in delegation and team management reported by school heads in our study align with research on distributed leadership in schools (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016). Effective delegation not only manages workload but also fosters leadership development within the school community, a key aspect of sustainable school improvement (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

Presented in Figure 2, from the collected data during in-depth interview of the participants, three (3) main themes have emerged in the coping mechanism employed by school heads in managing or handling administrative tasks and ancillary functions which are strategic workload management, professional growth

and support system, and holistic well-being and communication. Additionally, nine (9) core ideas have emerged: efficient time allocation, workload distribution, strategic task prioritization, continuous skill enhancement, seeking support resource utilization, personal well-being management, open communication channels, and positive school environment.

Further, school heads emphasize the importance of effective time management, including the use of schedules, calendars, and time blocking techniques. They often work overtime to ensure task completion and delegation of tasks to competent staff members and seeking support from colleagues and mentors is a crucial strategy for managing the workload. Meanwhile, School heads must recognize the importance of self-care and stress management techniques to avoid burnout and maintain their effectiveness. Additionally, maintaining clear and open lines of communication with teachers and staff is emphasized as an important aspect of effective school management. Furthermore, these themes reflect the multifaceted approach that principals take in coping with their administrative tasks and ancillary functions. They demonstrate a balance between managing practical workload issues, pursuing professional development, and maintaining personal and organizational well-being.

3.4 Strategic workload management

School heads juggling multiple responsibilities face a constant time crunch. Prioritizing tasks is important for them to maintain a smooth workflow. The way school heads manage their time directly impacts their effectiveness in fulfilling their roles within the school. Those who struggle with time management may find themselves overwhelmed and unable to effectively serve students and the school community.

Strategic workload management emerged as the first major theme under coping strategies of school heads in managing administrative tasks and ancillary functions. The participants' responses shed light on several core ideas during the in-depth interviews. The following core ideas are efficient time allocation, workload distribution and strategic task prioritization.

Here are some responses of the participants in relation to strategic workload plan as their form of coping strategy towards challenges and difficulties encountered.

"Effective use of time is key. They may use calendars, schedules, and to-do lists to stay organized and ensure nothing is overlooked." (IDI#B, Line 5-7).

"So far, to manage these administrative tasks and ancillary, I need to work overtime." (IDI#D, Line 27-28).

On saying that school heads must ask help from competent teacher, these are her utterances:

"We need help or ask help from our competent teachers." (IDI#E, Line 39-40).

"So far from large school, principals often delegate tasks to other staff members, trusting their team to handle certain responsibilities and lighten their workloads." (IDI#B, Line 3-4).

Another participant during IDI eagerly responded to the question about way of coping as teachers with multiple ancillary functions said:

"They focus on the most urgent and important tasks first, ensuring critical duties are completed on time." (IDI#B, Line 2-3).

This was supported by Batgirl when she said:

"I need to make a chart, unahon tong mga tasks na mga importante ug need na ipasa. Through this chart guided ka unsa ang unang ipasa na mga reports." (IDI#D, Line 33-35).

("I need to make a chart; these are the important tasks that need to be submitted. This chart will guide you on which reports to prioritize." (IDI#D, Line 33-35).

Grissom et al. (2021) emphasized the critical role of time management in school heads effectiveness, using time management techniques, such as calendars, schedules, and time blocking. Their study of 6,000 schools found that principals who allocate their time more effectively to high-leverage activities see greater school improvement. Additionally, the emphasis on delegation as a key strategy for workload management is supported by Bauer and Silver (2018), who found that effective delegation not only reduces principal workload but also contributes to the development of teacher leaders. This aligns with our findings that principals view delegation as a means of empowering their team and distributing leadership responsibilities.

Moreover, strategic task prioritization, as reported by principals in our study, resonates with the work of Sebastian et al. (2018), who found that successful principals are adept at prioritizing instructional leadership activities despite numerous managerial demands. This ability to prioritize effectively is crucial in the face of what Hornig et al. (2020) describe as the "intensification" of the principal's role in recent years.

3.5 Professional growth and support

Professional growth and support emerged as the second major theme under coping strategies of school heads in managing administrative tasks and ancillary functions. This theme highlights the importance principals place on continuous learning and leveraging various forms of support. It consists of three core ideas: continuous skill enhancement, seeking support, and resource utilization.

Both Thor and Rogue expressed similar sentiments when they said:

"They might attend workshops or training to improve their skills, making them more efficient in handling their responsibilities." (IDI#A, Line 11-12).

"We need for us to attend training or need coaching and mentoring from the higher personnel." (IDI#A, Line 2-3).

Spiderman also narrated his feelings towards seeking support.

" Principals often rely on the support of their administrative team, teachers, and even mentors for advice and assistance." (IDI#B, Line 11-12).

The data reveals that principals actively seek support from various sources. They rely on their administrative teams, teachers, colleagues, mentors, and professional networks for advice and assistance. This support-seeking behavior extends beyond just task completion, encompassing emotional support as well. It suggests that principals recognize the value of collaborative problem-solving and the importance of not working in isolation. This was aligned with the study of Shirrell (2021), who found who found that principals' professional networks play a crucial role in their ability to implement new practices and navigate challenges. This underscores the importance of fostering collaborative structures within the education system to support principal effectiveness.

Further, the commitment to continuous skill enhancement through training, workshops, and mentoring, as reported by principals in our study, is supported by Tingle et al. (2019), who found that ongoing professional development is crucial for principals to meet the evolving demands of their role. Their study of principal professional development programs highlights the positive impact of sustained, job-embedded learning opportunities on principal effectiveness. Additionally, the utilization of resources, including official guidelines and policy documents, as reported by principals in our study, reflects what Spillane and Lowenhaupt (2019) describe as the "policy implementation" aspect of the principal's role. Their work highlights how principals act as mediators between policy mandates and local school contexts, emphasizing the importance of staying informed about educational policies and best practices.

3.6 Holistic well-being and communication

The third theme underscores the importance principals place on maintaining personal health, fostering positive relationships, and creating a supportive school environment. This theme underscores the importance principals place on maintaining personal health, fostering positive relationships, and creating a supportive school environment. It comprises three core ideas: Personal well-being management, open communication channels, and positive school environment.

Here are the responses of the participants in relation to holistic well-being and communication as their form of coping mechanism.

" To avoid burnout, many principals make time for self-care, such as taking breaks or engaging in activities that help them relax and recharge." (IDI#B, Line 9-10).

When asked to share her stories about getting feedback from teachers, Green Lantern said:

" We need to be kind and have an open communication s akong mga sakop na teachers." (IDI#D, Line 2627)

"I need to be kind and communicate openly with my teachers"

The importance of maintaining open and kind communication with teachers and staff is consistently emphasized. Principals strive to create an environment where open dialogue is encouraged. This approach not only helps in managing tasks more effectively but also contributes to building a positive and collaborative school culture. The emphasis on kindness in communication suggests an awareness of the impact of leadership style on staff morale and overall school atmosphere.

The focus on personal well-being management, including strategies to avoid burnout, is supported by Maxwell et al. (2020), who found a strong correlation between principal well-being and school climate. Their study emphasizes the need for systemic support for principal well-being as a means of improving overall school outcomes.

The emphasis on open communication channels and fostering a positive school environment aligns with research by Daly et al. (2019) on the role of principals in shaping school culture. Their social network analysis of school leadership highlights how principals' communication patterns significantly influence teacher collaboration and school climate.

Presented in Figure 2, from the collected data during in-depth interview of the participants, three (3) main themes have emerged in the learning insights of school heads in managing or handling administrative tasks and ancillary functions which are Visionary and adaptive leadership, collaborative and efficient management, and datadriven decision making and accountability. Moreover, nine (9) core ideas have emerged: clear vision and strategic planning, adaptability and problem-solving skills, continuous learning and improvement, time and task management, delegation and collaboration, and stakeholder engagement and communication.

Shared Insights of School Heads in Handling Administrative Tasks and Ancillary Functions
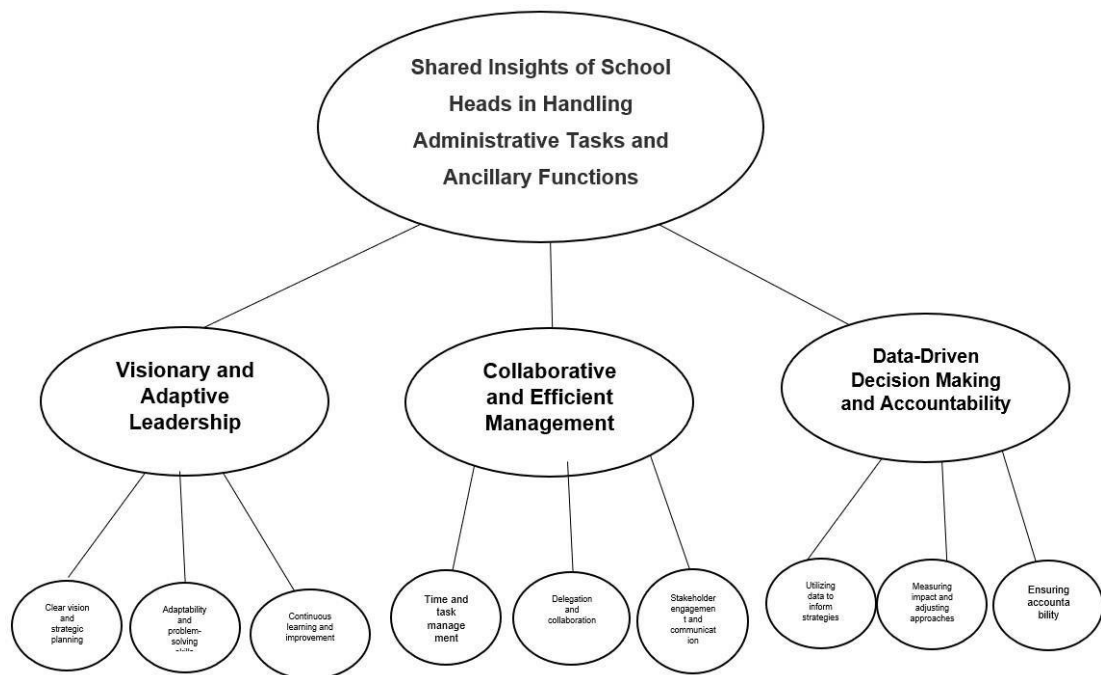

Figure 3. Learning Insights of school heads in handling administrative tasks
and ancillary functions.

3.7 Visionary and Adaptive Leadership

School heads expressed their personal insights, highlighting visionary and adaptive leadership as a first major theme which covers the following core ideas: clear vision and strategic planning, adaptability and problem-solving skills, and continuous learning and improvement.
Invisible woman was deeply passionate about sharing her story of dedication and commitment to the teaching profession, echoing the sentiment expressed by the participant.

"Effective school leaders understand that a clear vision is crucial for guiding administrative decisions and inspiring staff and students." (IDI#C, Line 18-20)." (IDI#C, Line 18-20)

"School head should recognize the importance of strong leadership, strategic planning in achieving the goals of the school." (IDI#C, Line 18-20)

School leaders recognize the crucial role of a well-defined vision in guiding decisions and inspiring staff and students. They understand that strategic planning is essential for achieving school goals and managing administrative tasks effectively. Additionally, School heads acknowledge the need for ongoing learning and adjustment, especially in the face of new challenges like curriculum changes. They view their broad knowledge base as a foundation for readiness, while recognizing the necessity of continuous improvement.

The first theme underscores the critical role of forward-thinking and flexibility in school leadership. Effective school leaders are characterized by their ability to articulate a clear vision and engage in strategic

planning, which serves as a compass for decision-making and a source of inspiration for staff and students alike (Bush, 2018).

3.8 Collaborative and Efficient Management

Collaborative and efficient management appeared the second major theme under shared insights of school heads in managing or handling administrative tasks and ancillary function. The analysis of in-depth interviews reveals several core ideas namely: Time and task management, delegation and collaboration, and stakeholder engagement and communication. The second major theme focuses on the practical aspects of school management and the importance of teamwork. Effective time and task management emerge as crucial skills for school leaders, especially when balancing administrative duties with instructional leadership. This finding corroborates research by Sebastian et al. (2018), who found that principals' time allocation significantly impacts school outcomes.

They shared the following insights:

"Managing their time efficiently becomes crucial, especially when balancing administrative work with instructional leadership." (IDI#B, Line 9-11)

"They also learn that effective delegation is crucial, as they can't do everything themselves." (IDI#B, Line 7-9)

"We should work closely with other school heads, teachers, and stakeholders to manage schools better and ensure student success." (IDI#D, Line 57-59)

Delegation and collaboration form another critical sub-theme, highlighting the shift from hierarchical leadership models to more distributed approaches. This aligns with Spillane's (2006) theory of distributed leadership, which posits that leadership practice is spread across multiple actors in a school setting. In addition, this finding echoes the work of Epstein (2011) on school, family, and community partnerships that stakeholder engagement and communication underscores the relational aspect of school leadership. Building strong relationships with teachers, staff, parents, and the community is seen as vital for achieving school goals and ensuring student success.

3.9 Data-Driven Decision Making and Accountability

Data- driven decision making and accountability appeared as the third major theme under shared insights of school heads in managing or handling administrative tasks and ancillary function. It explains different core ideas during in-depth interview, which include the following: utilizing data to inform strategies, measuring impact and adjusting approaches, and ensuring accountability.

Here are their insights.

"Utilizing data to inform decisions leads to more effective strategies and helps measure the impact of initiatives." (IDI#C, Line 47-49).

When inquired about her expertise in managing administrative tasks and other ancillary functions, Superwoman shared,

"Regular assessment of programs and practices ensures accountability and allows for timely adjustments (IDI#C, Line 50-51).

Regular assessment of programs and practices, allowing for timely adjustments, aligns with the concept of formative evaluation in organizational management (Patton, 2008). This approach enables continuous improvement and agile responses to change circumstances.

To do administrative tasks and ancillary functions entails huge responsibility, we need to assess the programs and practices to ensure accountability. This was echoed by our IDI participants, they said:

"Regular assessment of programs and practices ensures accountability and allows for timely adjustments" (IDI#C, Line 47-49).

"Utilizing data to inform decisions leads to more effective strategies and helps measure the impact of initiatives" (IDI#C, Line 47-49).

The sub-theme of ensuring accountability through regular assessments and data utilization reflects the increasing emphasis on transparency and effectiveness in educational leadership. This trend is consistent with the broader movement towards accountability in public sector management (O'Day, 2002).

These themes collectively paint a picture of effective school leadership as a complex, multifaceted role requiring vision, adaptability, collaborative skills, and data-driven decision-making. The interplay between these themes suggests that successful school leaders must balance seemingly contradictory demands: they must be visionary yet pragmatic, collaborative yet decisive, and data-driven yet responsive to the human elements of education.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This qualitative-phenomenological study was undertaken to determine the lived experiences of school heads in handling administrative tasks and ancillary functions. The qualitative data analysis derived from in-depth interview (IDI) with school heads responses reveals several key challenges they face in managing administrative tasks and ancillary functions. Time management emerges as a significant hurdle, as school heads juggle numerous responsibilities and strive to meet deadlines. Role overload is prevalent, particularly in smaller schools where school heads often shoulder additional duties due to staff shortages. Balancing leadership and management responsibilities adds to the pressure, demanding excellence in both academic guidance and operational tasks. Additionally, working with diverse stakeholders, including teachers, staff, parents, and local authorities, increases the complexity of their workload. The implementation of new curricula and policies frequently exacerbates this burden without sufficient support.

Further, In-depth Interview (IDI) was used to gather data. In analyzing of the study gathered, the study revealed that school heads employ a range of coping mechanism to navigate the challenges of administrative tasks based on urgency and importance is a common strategy, ensuring that critical matters receive immediate attention. Delegation of responsibilities to staff members effectively distributes the workload, allowing heads to focus on strategic initiatives. Effective time management techniques, such as utilizing calendars, schedules, and to-do lists, are widely implemented to optimize their time. Seeking support from colleagues, mentors, and professional networks provides valuable guidance and emotional support. Recognizing the importance of self-care practices is crucial for avoiding burnout, while continuous learning through training and workshops enhances skills and efficiency.

Furthermore, the qualitative insights gathered from In-Depth (IDIs) with school heads has revealed valuable learning insights regarding effective school administration. Strong leadership and strategic planning are emphasized as essential for achieving school goals. Adaptability and flexibility are crucial skills developed through handling diverse responsibilities, ensuring effective response to changing circumstances. Effective communication and collaboration with staff and stakeholders are recognized as vital for success, fostering a shared understanding and collective effort. Data-driven decision-making is increasingly valued, informing strategies and measuring impact. Finally, continuous improvement and self-reflection are seen as necessary for personal and professional growth, ensuring ongoing development and adaptation to the evolving challenges of school administration.

Furthermore, In-depth Interview (IDI) was used to gather data. In analyzing data of the study gathered, the researcher used the Miles and Huberman framework for qualitative data analysis. The narrative data were encoded and transcribed then grouped into themes.

Based on the responses from both the in-depth interview and focused group discussion, the study revealed that most of the participants experienced positive gains of their experiences as teachers with multiple ancillary functions. These are the ability to withstand hardship or adversity, steadfastness, risk taking competence and dogged perseverance. They were even challenged to aspire to more advancement for themselves and their profession. Coping mechanism of the participants includes strategic plan, sanguinity, maintaining work-life balance, and safety net. Despite the challenges, they account to share insights such as allegiance, bullishness, personal and professional growth and capacity building. Having multiple ancillary functions has a significant bearing on their part because it helped them to realize the fullness of the teaching profession. That teachers should be well rounded enough to accept responsibilities while improving their skills and competence as well.

The data gathered and the discussion of results highlight key challenges faced by school heads, necessitating targeted recommendations for various stakeholders. For the Department of Education, a comprehensive review of administrative requirements is crucial. Streamlining processes and reducing unnecessary paperwork can significantly alleviate the burden on school heads. Further, increasing administrative support, especially in smaller schools, will help distribute workload more effectively. The department should also prioritize the development of specialized leadership training programs focused on school leadership, time management, and delegation skills to equip school heads with the necessary tools for success. And finally, establishing work-life balance policies that protect personal time for school heads and staff will prevent burnout and promote well-being and a more sustainable work environment within the education system.

Moreover, Division Managers play a crucial role in supporting school heads and fostering a more effective education system. To achieve this, they should create platforms and opportunities for school heads to collaborate, share experiences, and solve problems collectively. Establishing formal mentorship programs pairing experienced school heads with newer ones will provide valuable guidance and support. Offering continuous professional development through regular workshops and trainings, implementing data driven decision making tools and providing training for effective data analysis will empower schools to make informed decisions and develop strategic plans.

School heads can enhance their leadership by prioritizing time management, fostering a collaborative leadership model, and prioritizing self-care. Continuous learning through professional development opportunities is important for staying ahead of evolving educational trends. Effective communication with stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and the community, is essential for building strong relationships and ensuring smooth operations. Finally, practicing adaptability allows school heads to navigate the dynamic educational landscape and effectively address diverse challenges.

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