
Teachers with Ancillary Roles: A Phenomenology of Multi -Tasking in Public Schools

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ABSTRACT: This qualitative phenomenological study explored the challenges experienced by the teachers of Fatima District, Division of General Santos City who are handling multi-grade classes and ancillary roles, their coping strategies on the challenges encountered and their insights. With the use of purposive sampling technique, 10 teachers from the District were randomly selected for the of Focus Group Discussion 5 teachers for the conduct of in-depth interview. The data gathered were analyzed with the use of Thematic Analysis. Results of the analysis came up with seven major themes: ancillary roles and multi-task requires sacrifice; multi-tasks affect teacher's personal and professional growth; love for work; workload management; have qualities to value various aspects of work; advocating proper training and seminars; and be a pillar of a thriving educational which answered the three objectives of the study.

KEYWORDS: ancillary roles. challenges, coping strategies, educational management, experience, insights, multi-tasking, Philippines, teachers, workloads

I. INTRODUCTION

The world is rapidly evolving through technology that influence how people function day to day. This influence became evident in almost every aspect of the current society particularly in the educational systems. As expectations have risen within the classrooms, there are more and more educational technology being utilized into academic concerns and the surge of what is called multitasking. Multitasking is considered one of the most impressive aspects of the human cognitive system, an ability to manage and execute multiple tasks. In schools, multitasking of teachers had garnered increase critical attention in recent years (Alquizar, 2019). According to David, et.al, (2019), teachers can be assigned to several additional functions or support roles. They are not just called to perform their task as classroom teacher but also given extra non-teaching functions as additional workloads called ancillary services. However, teachers receive much lesser compensation as compared to the other professions. They are overloaded and burdened yet underpaid. Likewise, the intensified workload of teachers has been noted as an undesirable consequence of school management (Timperley, et.al, 2020). A school teacher spend much of his time in the classroom planning, preparing, structuring, instructing, rating students' works, attending meetings submitting required documents, monitoring and giving attention to the student's needs, getting involved in a variety of student co-curricular and extracurricular activities, and communicating with parents about their child's academic progress in school. As a result, students would not be able to cultivate their multiple intelligences, and their learning experiences and performance would not be enhanced (Cabuquin, 2022). Tasks that were left undone due to lack of time and pressure given by the school can cause the teachers the feeling of uneasiness with so much weight on their shoulders (Klassen, et.al, 2020). Teachers, specifically those who are teaching in public schools, have numerous tasks to accomplish and attend to, which are comparable to the reduction of their energy. This kind of work stress stuns the teachers and disturbs them in various aspects, sometimes negatively on their work performance within their school (Hendawi, 2020).

By this, the researcher believes that teachers are overworked and so their mental and physical health can also be an utmost concern if not taken into consideration. As observed by the researcher, teachers in the multi-grade schools of Fatima District, General Santos City experience being mentally, physically and emotionally stressed and suffering from sleeping problems, and feeling miserable due to multiple functions they need to comply. It is because of the very challenging job of a teacher, as well as they are overburdened with multiple ancillary functions that they cannot refuse.

II. METHOD

The participants of the study were 15 multi-grade teachers who came from the six (6) schools in South Fatima District of General Santos City Division. The study used purposive sampling in determining the participants since the study focused only the multi-

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grade teachers with ancillary functions in the Department of Education. The strategy that was used in purposive sampling was criterion sampling which involved selecting the target participants who qualified with the inclusion criteria provided by the researcher in accordance with the existing phenomenon and purpose of the study. The inclusion criteria for the study were: (1) should be a public-school multi-grade teacher in South Fatima District, Division of General Santos City; (2) should have more than one additional non-teaching assignment or ancillary functions; (3) one who was willing to participate in the conduct of the study; and (4) should be in the teaching service for more than one year. In addition, the participant's ancillary functions were identified by the researcher based on the memorandum issued by the school head. Teachers who had not met the inclusion criteria were excluded in the selection process. Among the 15 participants who participated in the study, 10 of them were randomly chosen for the focus group discussion and 5 for the in depth interview.

The study was conducted at public multi-grade schools in the Department of Education, Division of General Santos City particularly at South Fatima District, where the researcher was employed as a public-school multi-grade teacher. The six multi-grade schools clustered in the district were as follows: School A, School B, School C, School D, School E, and School F. The research instrument used in the study was Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and In-depth Interview (IDI). A set of guide questions was prepared based on the guidelines of Creswell (2018). The guide questions contained three (3) main questions and a total of nine (9) sub-questions aimed to explore the lived experiences of multi-grade teachers with multiple ancillary functions, their coping mechanisms, and shared insights.

The research instrument was a researcher made. Hence, it underwent validation of the panel of experts for improvement. There were five validators who examined the instrument. These validators were graduates of doctorate and master's degree and had full experience in the field of research. Based on the result, the validators gave an overall rating of 8.75 with a verbal description of "good". This means that the instrument was ready for distribution and utilization. The study utilized a qualitative method of research. It aimed to explore the lived experiences of the public-school multi-grade teachers having multiple ancillary functions as well as their coping strategies. According to Creswell, et. al, (2018), qualitative method used interpretive and theoretical frameworks to study problems addressing complex, detailed social or human problems. Likewise, phenomenology has its characterization on the qualities of induction and description, as cited by Velez (2021). The everyday experiences of the phenomena of an individual were examined and defined by how they interpret the world. In this study, the transcendental phenomenological approach was suitable for this qualitative research because it focused on the lived experiences of the teachers with multiple ancillary functions and how they coped with their multiple assignments (Creswell, 2018). In the conduct of data gathering, the researcher sought first an approval from the Division Superintendent. The participants were also informed about the plan to record the conversation and the consent of the participants was strictly followed. Before the actual interview, the teachers voluntarily participated by affixing their signatures to the consent form provided by the researcher. The data gathered was analyzed through thematic approach. Analysis of thematic patterns allows the researcher to understand how ideas and concepts are established. The procedure that was utilized by the researcher in transcribing and analyzing the data included bracketing, horizontalization, theme clustering, descriptions, and synthesis of the experience. In this qualitative inquiry, the researcher established the four issues of trustworthiness that Terry (2019) mentioned in evaluating interpretive research work: the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The responses of the teacher-participants during the in-depth interview were the primary sources of data for analysis. The data were coded accordingly, and these codes formed part of the priori coding that was employed in the study.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Experiences of Teachers with Multiple Ancillary Functions

Teachers viewed ancillary functions as additional tasks and responsibilities aside from their primary role as classroom instructors and implementer of school curricula relevant to teaching. As curriculum implementers in the Department of Education, teachers were knowledgeable as to their regular workload. Normally, they were only given six (6) hours of actual teaching while the remaining two (2) hours must be spent and used for other teaching –related functions such as checking of papers or learner's outputs, home visitations, preparation of teaching plans, consultation with the parents or students, teachers' meetings and other activities in the school.

In reality, teachers in schools are having difficulties to manage these two (2) hours even for the lesson preparation only. If the teacher handles six (6) different classes in a day with learners who have different characteristics and needs, he or she has to prepare also six (6) teaching plans per day. Besides, teachers must also need to do and accomplish tasks relevant to their ancillary roles which assigned to them and considered as their extra job.

Presented in Table 1 are the major themes and core ideas on the experiences of the school teachers with multiple ancillary functions.

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Table 1. Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Experiences of Teachers with Multiple Ancillary Functions

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Ancillary Roles and Multi-task Requires Sacrifice	difficulty in time management
	lack of trainings and seminars
	stress management challenge
	poor internet connection
Multi-tasks affect Teacher's Personal Growth	affects teachers mentally and physically

B. Teachers Coping Strategies with the Challenges of Having Multiple Ancillary Functions

Ancillary functions consume time for the teachers to comply the assigned tasks. In reality, there are teachers who carry their school work at home. Instead of spending their time for the family, they utilized their time beyond their working hours for a responsibility that is not their main duty as teachers. Teacher's main role is to deliver instruction. And so, they must be rewarded if they accept additional responsibilities, especially that there are special assignments that require full attention. These ancillary functions sometimes affect their role as classroom teacher. That is why, they have to find ways how to cope with the challenges that they have encountered being instructional experts given with extra responsibilities outside teaching.

The second objective in this study was the coping strategies of the teachers with multiple roles aside from teaching. On the interview conducted, the responses gathered from the participants had came up with the themes, love for work and workload management as their coping strategies to handle multi-tasks in the workplace. Table 2 shows the major themes and core ideas on the coping strategies of the teachers with ancillary roles.

Table 2. Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Teachers Coping Strategies with the Challenges of Having Multiple Ancillary Functions

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Love for Work	be proactive
	overcome difficulties
	acceptance on the nature of work
Workload Management	ask assistance from the experts

C. Insights of the Teachers with Multiple Ancillary Functions

Teacher's dedication for work is common and evident in any educational institutions. In the public schools, teachers are bombarded with so many tasks especially those who are assigned in the remote areas where only few teachers are working. In the current study in which aside from being tasked to handle multi-grade classes, teachers were also given so many ancillary roles. However, despite of the challenges that they had encountered, still they were able to handle them and found that their coping strategies had worked effectively. The third objective of this study determined the insights gained by the multi-grade teachers after they had experienced difficulties and challenges in handling multiple ancillary roles in the workplace. Table 3 presents the results of the major themes and core ideas on insights that multi-grade teachers can be shared to others.

Table 3. Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights of Teachers Having Multiple Ancillary Functions

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Have Qualities to Value Various Aspects of Work	reflect positive qualities and strategies
Advocating Proper Training and Seminars	seek assistance from the experienced and experts
Be a Pillar of a Thriving Educational Community	encourage active participation of parents
	promote collaboration of education environment

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Teachers have a great responsibility not only to educate the young mind but also to educate the heart of the learners. To mould every learner into a better individual is a crucial task in which teachers needs sacrifice, dedication, perseverance, and patience. In dealing multi-grade classes in a remote areas with limited internet connection, inadequate instructional materials to be utilized in the delivery of instruction, and bombarded with ancillary roles, teachers really need sacrifice. As educators whose teaching philosophy is anchored with the idea that teaching is not only a profession but also a call and a vocation, teachers always find

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ways how to overcome struggles in the practice of their profession. A teacher who is patient to his work demonstrates perseverance and dedication. Despite of the many challenges that teachers encounter in the workplace, he has to bear in mind always that the career he had chosen requires love for work. If the teacher possesses these personal qualities, he can manage and overcome all these challenges and difficulties.

As an educator and one of the multi-grade teachers in Fatima District of General Santos City Division, I understand how the teachers handled classes and accomplished the tasks and responsibilities outside teaching assigned to them. Hearing from their experiences and insights, I really admire their passion in teaching the learners with different levels of maturation, interest, capabilities, and even cultural background. Truly, educators have great love of their work. Aside from being classroom teachers, they are also accepting special assignments which are beyond their main responsibility. All of these are for the benefit and welfare of the children in school. I, being a teacher, understand that all programs and activities in schools are designed for the learners. And so whatever task given to me I do it also thinking that learners are the reason why I am working in the school.

Considering that teachers are still positive to cope with the challenges they have experienced as multi-grade teachers having ancillary roles and still practice their profession with love and perseverance, may I recommend these to address this dilemma in different schools of Fatima District where teachers are handling multi-grade classes and assigned with different ancillary roles: For the Department of Education through the Division Office, may provide an orientation for newly appointed coordinators, and curriculum or department heads so that they will be guided and directed as to the nature of their assigned job. The workload of every teacher may also be evaluated. Systematic and evidenced-based approach are necessary to lessen the teachers' workload. A thorough and accurate time-use study can clearly show what tasks should be assigned to teachers and which should be and what should be removed from their responsibilities. Perks (2019) stated that a good workload allocation causes teachers to become more efficient and effective on their job function. A good workload must be transparent, fair, and be based on the teachers' capacity to comply and handle the tasks. Additionally, given the limited number of teaching personnel, the School Head may distribute extra assignments fairly among teachers. Teachers on the other hand, may also create a checklist of what do and accomplish according to urgency and necessity for them to manage effectively their time and work- life balance efficiently. As a researcher, I recommend the future researchers that further researches may be conducted to uncover the other underlying factors relevant to the challenges encountered by the teachers having multi-tasks and ancillary roles outside teaching. They are encouraged to conduct related studies on the importance of workload management in accomplishing the functions and responsibilities in any of the educational institutions, both private and public schools.

My role in this qualitative inquiry encompasses a great responsibility since I am the instrument which the data is collected. Firstly, I established relationship to my participants to have a genuine interaction and to minimize from false roles that might influence the data generated. I know that building relationship with them will build an atmosphere of trust and confidence; and secondly, as the researcher, I provided enough explanation of the purpose of the study and how the study should be taken from them.

As a teacher, I felt that I also have similar experience with my participants, since I am also teaching multi-grade classes and given ancillary roles which are extra job for me. Their challenges, difficulties and struggles are also mine. Likewise, I can say that I also have experienced their coping strategies with the challenges that they have encountered. As a researcher, I have observed and understood how the teacher-participants responded and supported my research endeavor. They knew that they are the first to benefit the outcome of the current study. Their voice will be heard by the higher authorities and there will be a chance to address their concerns. Hearing from the participants' sharing of experiences, challenges and insights, I appreciate how they find ways to fully accomplish the tasks assigned to them by their school heads. It is true that handling multi-grade classes is not easy, most especially that they are teaching in the remote areas and most of the learners are belonged to the Indigenous Group with diverse cultures. Their flexibility as educators and instructional experts were being challenged. Besides, they have also expressed how they successfully overcame their multi-tasks outside teaching as they consider the welfare of the learners and most of all their love towards their profession. It has always been their guiding principle that they are educators and they are for teaching as a call and a vocation.

As to the conduct of the study, my greatest realization as an educator who happened to teach also multi-grade classes is that I have learned a lot of things in this research journey. I have realizations and practices that need be improved. My passion in teaching and love towards my learners will be my powerful weapon to continue searching for knowledge and develop my skills so that I can provide what is expected from me by my learners and the whole school community.

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