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Wearing Multiple Hats: A Phenomenological Inquiry into Teachers' Lived Experiences in Balancing Classroom Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Teachers performed responsibilities that extended considerably beyond classroom instruction, particularly in elementary schools where they handled multiple learning areas and assumed various school-based assignments. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of teachers at Villa Agullana Elementary School in Maddela, Quirino, as they balanced classroom instruction with additional professional responsibilities. Specifically, the study examined the challenges teachers encountered, the strategies they employed, the support systems they utilized, and the meanings they constructed from performing multiple roles. The researchers employed purposive criterion sampling to select teachers who had direct experience with the phenomenon. Data were gathered through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and were analyzed using a phenomenological approach informed by Moustakas (1994). The analysis involved identifying significant statements, developing meaning units, clustering related meanings, and constructing themes that represented the participants' shared experiences. Trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability following Lincoln and Guba (1985). The inquiry revealed the complexity of teachers' professional experiences as they navigated instructional demands alongside additional school responsibilities. The study underscored the importance of appropriate workload distribution, collegial collaboration, administrative support, and organizational mechanisms that protected teachers' instructional responsibilities while recognizing their broader contributions to school operations.

Keywords: classroom instruction, elementary teachers, lived experiences, multiple roles, phenomenology, teacher workload

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Introduction

Teaching has long been recognized as a multidimensional profession that encompasses responsibilities extending beyond the direct delivery of classroom instruction. Teachers not only facilitated learning but also prepared instructional materials, assessed learners, maintained records, communicated with parents and other stakeholders, participated in school programs, and performed administrative and organizational functions. International evidence has demonstrated that teachers devote substantial professional time to activities outside direct classroom teaching, including lesson planning, assessment, teamwork, professional development, and administrative work (OECD, 2020).

The complexity of these responsibilities became particularly evident in elementary education. Elementary teachers often handled multiple learning areas and responded to learners with varying developmental characteristics, abilities, interests, and educational needs. The early years of education were particularly important because they established foundational literacy, numeracy, communication, and socio-emotional competencies that influenced learners' subsequent educational experiences. The World Bank et al. (2022) emphasized the critical importance of foundational learning, particularly literacy and numeracy, in addressing learning poverty and ensuring children's continued educational development.

Teachers' professional responsibilities, however, were not confined to instruction. Within school organizations, teachers were often assigned additional roles such as program coordinators, committee members, information system managers, journalism advisers, disaster risk reduction coordinators, and information and communications technology coordinators. These assignments contributed to the implementation of school programs and institutional operations but also added dimensions to teachers' existing instructional responsibilities.

The metaphor "wearing multiple hats" captured the experiences of teachers who simultaneously performed these diverse professional functions. A classroom teacher could serve as an instructor, assessor, adviser, coordinator, organizer, records manager, technology facilitator, and community liaison within the same professional environment. Biddle (1986) explained through Role Theory that individuals occupied social positions accompanied by expectations regarding their behavior and responsibilities. When several expectations operated simultaneously, individuals could experience tensions associated with role conflict, role overload, and competing responsibilities.

The demands associated with multiple responsibilities could also be understood through the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) explained that job demands required sustained physical or psychological effort, whereas job resources helped individuals accomplish work objectives, reduce the effects of demands, and facilitate professional development. Within teaching, lesson preparation, classroom management, assessment, documentation, deadlines, and assignments could constitute job demands. Conversely, administrative support, collegial collaboration, adequate resources, professional competence, and autonomy could function as resources that helped teachers navigate these demands.

Global concerns regarding teacher workload and working conditions further demonstrated the importance of examining teachers' professional experiences. UNESCO (2024) emphasized that improving teachers' working conditions and strengthening professional support were essential components of addressing teacher shortages and creating sustainable education systems. Understanding workload therefore involved more than determining the number of tasks assigned to teachers; it required examining how educators actually experienced those responsibilities.

At Villa Agullana Elementary School in Maddela, Quirino, teachers performed classroom instruction while also participating in various school programs and organizational responsibilities. Their experiences

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provided an important context for examining how teachers negotiated competing professional expectations while attempting to maintain meaningful and responsive classroom instruction.

Although quantitative investigations could measure workload, stress, job satisfaction, or performance, numerical indicators alone could not completely capture how teachers interpreted and made meaning of their everyday professional experiences. Phenomenological inquiry was therefore considered appropriate because it sought to understand the essence of individuals' lived experiences of a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Accordingly, this study **explored** the lived experiences of teachers at Villa Agullana Elementary School as they balanced classroom instruction with multiple professional responsibilities. It specifically examined the challenges they encountered, the strategies they employed, the support they received, and the professional meanings they constructed from the experience of wearing multiple hats.

Review of Related Literature

The Expanding Professional Roles of Teachers

Teachers' work encompassed a broad range of instructional and non-instructional activities. OECD (2020) reported that teachers allocated professional time not only to classroom teaching but also to lesson preparation, assessment, administrative work, communication, collaboration, and professional development. These responsibilities demonstrated that contemporary teaching extended beyond conventional perceptions of teachers as classroom instructors.

The expansion of teachers' responsibilities reflected the increasingly complex functions performed by schools. Teachers participated in activities associated with curriculum implementation, learner support, school improvement, community engagement, technology integration, and institutional management. These additional functions contributed to school operations but could also compete with the time and attention teachers devoted to instructional responsibilities.

UNESCO (2024) emphasized that teachers required supportive working conditions to perform their professional responsibilities effectively. The global concern regarding teacher shortages further highlighted the importance of examining teachers' workload, professional support, and well-being. Thus, understanding teachers' experiences of multiple responsibilities became essential in developing sustainable school environments.

Elementary Teachers and Multiple-Subject Instruction

Elementary teaching involved distinctive instructional demands because teachers commonly facilitated learning across several subject areas. Unlike specialized teachers who concentrated primarily on one discipline, elementary teachers often moved between literacy, numeracy, language, values education, and other learning areas throughout the school day.

This arrangement required considerable pedagogical flexibility. Teachers needed to understand curriculum competencies, prepare different instructional materials, employ developmentally appropriate strategies, and assess learner progress across several domains.

The importance of these responsibilities became even more pronounced in the early grades. Foundational learning served as an essential basis for subsequent educational achievement. The World Bank et al. (2022) emphasized that children's ability to read and understand age-appropriate material represented a critical foundation for further learning. Consequently, competing responsibilities that affected teachers' opportunities to prepare and deliver instruction warranted careful examination.

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Teacher Workload and Competing Responsibilities

Teacher workload involved both visible and less visible forms of professional labor. Classroom teaching represented only one component of teachers' work. Lesson preparation, assessment, checking learner outputs, documentation, meetings, parent communication, school activities, and administrative tasks contributed to teachers' overall workload (OECD, 2020).

The Job Demands-Resources Model provided a useful perspective for interpreting these experiences. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) proposed that demanding aspects of work required sustained effort and could result in strain when adequate resources were unavailable. In contrast, job resources supported goal attainment, reduced the effects of demanding working conditions, and promoted professional development.

Applied to teachers, the framework suggested that additional assignments did not necessarily produce identical experiences for all educators. Teachers' experiences depended partly on the resources available to them, including time, collegial relationships, administrative support, technological resources, professional competence, and opportunities for collaboration.

Role Conflict and Multiple Professional Identities

Role Theory also offered a relevant framework for understanding teachers' experiences. Biddle (1986) described roles as patterns of expectations associated with particular social positions. Individuals frequently occupied several roles simultaneously, and difficulties could arise when the expectations attached to these roles competed with one another.

Teachers occupied the central professional role of educators but also performed roles as advisers, coordinators, committee members, records managers, mentors, and school activity organizers. When an urgent assignment coincided with lesson preparation, assessment, remediation, or classroom responsibilities, teachers were required to negotiate competing expectations.

However, multiple roles could also provide opportunities for professional growth. Additional responsibilities could expose teachers to leadership, organizational management, technology, communication, and collaborative decision-making. Consequently, teachers' experiences could not be understood solely through the concept of burden. A qualitative inquiry was necessary to determine how teachers themselves interpreted the challenges and opportunities associated with their multiple responsibilities.

Teacher Well-Being and Professional Sustainability

Teacher well-being represented an important dimension of educational quality and sustainability. UNESCO (2024) identified working conditions, professional support, and recognition as important considerations in strengthening the teaching profession. Excessive or poorly managed demands could potentially affect teachers' professional experiences, while supportive environments could facilitate resilience and continued engagement.

Teachers also demonstrated agency in responding to professional demands. They developed routines, prioritized responsibilities, collaborated with colleagues, utilized technological resources, and adapted their practices according to circumstances. The ways in which teachers navigated these responsibilities reflected not only individual coping mechanisms but also the organizational conditions within which they worked.

Research Gap

Previous research and international reports provided substantial information regarding teacher workload,

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job demands, professional responsibilities, and working conditions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; OECD, 2020; UNESCO, 2024). However, broad quantitative indicators and international findings did not fully explain how elementary teachers experienced multiple responsibilities within a particular school environment.

Moreover, existing workload measures could determine the amount or frequency of teachers' responsibilities but could not completely explain the meanings teachers attached to those experiences. There remained a need for contextualized qualitative research that placed teachers' voices at the center of the investigation.

This study addressed this gap by examining the lived experiences of teachers at Villa Agullana Elementary School. Through phenomenological inquiry, the study provided opportunities for teachers to describe how they navigated classroom instruction alongside their additional responsibilities and how these experiences shaped their professional lives.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored primarily in Role Theory and was complemented by the Job Demands-Resources Model.

Role Theory provided a framework for understanding how individuals occupied several social and organizational positions that carried particular expectations (Biddle, 1986). Within the context of the study, teachers performed the role of classroom instructors while simultaneously assuming other functions associated with school programs, committees, information management, technology, and organizational activities.

Role Theory helped explain how competing expectations could emerge when responsibilities associated with different professional roles occurred simultaneously. Teachers encountered situations in which instructional preparation, assessment, learner support, documentation, and additional assignments required attention within overlapping periods.

The Job Demands-Resources Model further provided a lens for examining the conditions that influenced how teachers navigated these responsibilities. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) differentiated between job demands, which required sustained effort, and job resources, which facilitated goal accomplishment and helped individuals manage demanding working conditions.

Within this study, classroom responsibilities, multiple learning areas, deadlines, documentation, and additional school assignments were viewed as potential job demands. Collegial collaboration, administrative assistance, professional competence, available technology, organizational support, and effective work routines were considered potential job resources.

Together, these frameworks guided the interpretation of participants' narratives and allowed the study to examine both the challenges associated with multiple professional responsibilities and the resources that enabled teachers to manage them.

Statement of the Problem

The study **explored** the lived experiences of teachers at Villa Agullana Elementary School in balancing classroom instruction with multiple professional responsibilities.

Specifically, it **sought** answers to the following questions:

1. How did teachers describe their lived experiences of balancing classroom instruction with other school responsibilities?

2. What challenges did teachers encounter while performing multiple professional roles?

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3. What strategies did teachers employ to manage competing responsibilities?
4. What forms of collegial and administrative support did teachers experience while performing multiple roles?
5. What meanings and professional realizations did teachers derive from their experiences of wearing multiple hats?

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the meanings teachers attached to their experiences of balancing classroom instruction with multiple professional responsibilities. Phenomenology was deemed appropriate because it enabled the researchers to examine both what the participants experienced and how they made sense of those experiences, with emphasis placed on their narratives rather than on statistical measurement of workload (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The study was conducted at Villa Agullana Elementary School in Villa Agullana, Maddela, Quirino, which provided a relevant setting because the teachers handled classroom instruction while simultaneously performing various school-based responsibilities. The participants consisted exclusively of teachers from the school who had firsthand experience of managing instructional duties alongside additional assignments, and they were selected through purposive criterion sampling based on their active engagement in teaching, experience with one or more additional responsibilities, capacity to articulate their experiences, and willingness to participate voluntarily (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A semi-structured interview guide served as the primary research instrument and contained open-ended questions that elicited detailed accounts of the participants' daily responsibilities, challenges, time-management practices, coping strategies, support systems, significant experiences, and professional realizations, while probing questions were used to obtain clarification and deeper descriptions where necessary (Moustakas, 1994). Before data collection, the researchers secured permission from the appropriate school authorities, explained the purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, and ethical provisions of the study, and obtained informed consent from all participants. Individual interviews were then scheduled at appropriate times, audio-recorded with permission, transcribed verbatim, and repeatedly reviewed to ensure familiarity with the participants' narratives, while confidentiality was maintained through the use of participant codes and the removal of personally identifiable information. The interview data were analyzed using a phenomenological approach informed by Moustakas (1994), in which the researchers read and reread the transcripts, identified significant statements, assigned meanings to relevant units, clustered related meanings into categories, compared these categories across participants, and organized them into overarching themes that represented common dimensions of the teachers' experiences. Textural descriptions were developed to explain what the participants experienced, while structural descriptions were constructed to explain how they experienced the phenomenon, and these were integrated to determine the overall essence of the shared experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985); credibility was strengthened through in-depth interviewing, probing, repeated engagement with the transcripts, and verification of interpretations, while transferability was enhanced through detailed descriptions of the setting, participants, and phenomenon, dependability was supported through documentation of research procedures and analytical decisions, and confirmability was strengthened through reflexive documentation and the maintenance of an audit trail showing how codes, categories, and themes were derived from the data. Ethical principles were observed

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throughout the study, as participants were informed of their right to decline questions or withdraw from the research, confidentiality was protected, audio recordings and transcripts were securely stored and accessed only for research purposes, and the researchers ensured that participation did not unnecessarily interfere with the teachers' classroom responsibilities.

Results and Discussion

The phenomenological analysis revealed five interconnected themes that captured how teachers at Villa Agullana Elementary School experienced the challenge of balancing classroom instruction with additional professional responsibilities. The participants' narratives showed that teaching was experienced not as a single professional function but as an accumulation of instructional, administrative, coordinative, technological, and organizational responsibilities. Although these roles created pressures related to time, workload, and competing priorities, participants also described ways in which they adapted, collaborated, and derived professional meaning from their experiences.

Theme 1: Wearing Many Hats: Teaching Beyond the Classroom

The first theme captured the participants' realization that their work as teachers extended considerably beyond classroom instruction. They described themselves as teachers first, but their daily responsibilities also required them to perform functions associated with school programs, documentation, information management, extracurricular activities, technology, and other organizational responsibilities. Participants experienced their professional roles as interconnected rather than separate because additional assignments often became embedded in their regular teaching routines.

One participant **described** the experience:

"Being a teacher did not end when I finished teaching my lessons. After the class, there were reports, records, programs, and other responsibilities that I still had to attend to. Sometimes, I felt that I was doing several jobs in one day." - Teacher 1

Another participant **shared**:

"There were times when I was teaching, but I was also thinking about the documents that I needed to submit or an activity that I needed to prepare. I had to shift from being a classroom teacher to being a coordinator depending on what was needed." - Teacher 2

The accounts illustrated what "wearing multiple hats" meant within the participants' everyday professional lives. Their experiences were characterized by continuous transitions from one responsibility to another. Teaching remained their primary responsibility, yet additional school functions became inseparable from how they experienced their work.

The findings reflected Biddle's (1986) Role Theory, which explained that individuals could occupy several roles, each carrying particular expectations. The teachers occupied overlapping professional roles, and each role required particular behaviors, competencies, and responsibilities. Their experiences therefore demonstrated that teacher workload could not be understood solely by examining classroom teaching hours.

The finding corresponded with evidence from England. The Department for Education (2023) found that teachers undertook numerous administrative activities and continually prioritized these alongside their instructional responsibilities. Administrative work included communication, documentation, data-related activities, and other tasks necessary for school functioning. Similarly, England's Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders study reported that general administrative work remained one of the tasks teachers most frequently perceived as consuming excessive amounts of their professional time (Department for Education, 2025).

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The experience was also consistent with research in the Philippines. Somosot et al. (2025), in a phenomenological inquiry involving teachers who performed multiple ancillary functions, reported that teachers simultaneously handled roles such as coordinators, moderators, statisticians, and other school responsibilities while maintaining their teaching assignments. Their participants similarly encountered difficulties associated with time constraints, administrative pressure, workload, and limited institutional support.

The convergence between the experiences at Villa Agullana Elementary School and those documented in other educational contexts suggested that the expansion of teachers' work beyond classroom instruction was not merely an individual problem. Rather, it represented a broader organizational reality in which teachers were increasingly expected to contribute simultaneously to instructional delivery and school operations.

At the same time, the participants did not necessarily reject their additional roles. Instead, they recognized these responsibilities as part of their contribution to the school. The difficulty emerged when several roles demanded attention simultaneously. Thus, the essence of this theme was not simply "having many tasks" but continually shifting professional identities while attempting to remain responsive to learners.

Theme 2: Racing Against Time: Navigating Competing Demands

The second theme revealed that time became one of the participants' most valuable and contested professional resources. Teachers described situations in which lesson preparation, classroom teaching, assessment, learner concerns, reports, school programs, meetings, and responsibilities occurred within overlapping periods.

One participant **recalled**:

"The most difficult part was when everything became urgent at the same time. I had lessons to prepare and pupils to attend to, but I also had reports with deadlines. I had to decide what needed to be done first because I could not do everything at once." -Teacher 3

Another participant **explained**:

"There were days when I brought work home because there was not enough time during school hours. I wanted to prepare better for my pupils, but sometimes the other responsibilities also needed immediate attention." - Teacher 4

These narratives revealed that the teachers did not simply experience a high quantity of work; rather, they experienced competing demands for the same limited time. The tension became particularly significant when non-instructional responsibilities intersected with activities directly related to learners.

The participants' experiences supported the Job Demands-Resources framework of Bakker and Demerouti (2007). Time pressure, overlapping deadlines, documentation, and additional assignments functioned as job demands because they required sustained cognitive and emotional effort. When several demands occurred simultaneously, participants experienced pressure to reorganize their priorities.

This finding paralleled Collie's (2023) investigation of teachers in Australia. The study identified time pressure as an important job demand associated with teacher well-being and turnover intentions. Job resources, particularly supportive leadership and positive relationships with colleagues and students, were associated with more favorable professional outcomes. The comparison suggested that time pressure was not simply an issue of individual organization; it was embedded within the structure and expectations of teachers' work.

Research involving teachers across 24 European countries likewise showed that additional tasks functioned as significant job demands and were negatively related to satisfaction with the teaching profession (Admiraal & Røberg, 2023). Their findings reinforced the participants' descriptions that

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additional responsibilities became particularly demanding when they competed with core instructional activities.

Evidence from England further supported this interpretation. A national study of teachers' working lives found that only a minority of teachers and leaders regarded their workloads as acceptable, while administrative work consistently remained among the activities perceived as requiring excessive time (Department for Education, 2025). During the COVID-19 period, See (2024) similarly reported that teachers in England experienced increased workload and devoted substantial time to administrative duties and planning rather than actual teaching.

The participants' narratives therefore suggested that the critical issue was not merely the presence of additional assignments. Instead, difficulties arose when teachers lacked protected time to complete these responsibilities without compromising lesson preparation, assessment, or personal time.

Phenomenologically, time was experienced as something teachers continuously negotiated. They prioritized, postponed, accelerated, and sometimes extended work beyond school hours. "Racing against time" therefore represented both a practical challenge and an emotional dimension of their lived experience.

Theme 3: Finding a Way Through: Adapting, Prioritizing, and Setting Boundaries

Despite the demands they encountered, participants did not remain passive. The third theme revealed how teachers developed practical strategies to maintain control over their responsibilities. They learned to prioritize tasks, prepare ahead, use available technology, organize schedules, combine related activities, and distinguish between responsibilities requiring immediate attention and those that could wait.

A participant **explained**:

"I learned to list what I needed to accomplish and arrange them according to urgency. If I knew there was a deadline, I tried to prepare earlier. It was not always possible, but having a plan helped me avoid becoming overwhelmed." - Teacher 5

Another participant **stated**:

"Technology helped me a lot, especially with records and reports. I saved templates and organized my files so that I would not start from the beginning every time. I learned that I needed a system." -Teacher 2

Another teacher emphasized the importance of protecting instructional priorities:

"When I was already inside the classroom, I tried to focus on my pupils. The other work could wait if it was not urgent. I did not want the children to receive less attention because I had another assignment." - Teacher 3

These experiences demonstrated professional agency. Rather than simply enduring workload pressures, participants constructed routines that allowed them to exercise some control over their work. Prioritization became a central strategy because not all responsibilities could be addressed simultaneously.

This finding corresponded with Australian research by Werner-Seidler et al. (2024), in which teachers identified time management, boundary setting, work-life balance, relationship management, and help-seeking as important practical skills for protecting teacher well-being. Their study also showed that teachers preferred practical strategies suited to the realities of school contexts rather than generalized messages about self-care.

The findings also aligned with Ostermeier et al. (2023), who reported that autonomy, employee voice, supportive supervision, and organizational policies could mitigate some of the negative effects associated with workload and work-life conflict. This suggested that individual time-management strategies were valuable but could not fully compensate for excessive organizational demands.

Within the Philippine context, Pagela (2024) examined administrative workload among public school

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teachers in Cagayan and reported that teachers employed coping mechanisms to respond to administrative demands that affected lesson organization and well-being. This contextual similarity was particularly relevant because the teachers in the present study likewise worked within a Philippine public-school environment where instructional and administrative responsibilities frequently intersected.

The participants' strategies therefore represented more than personal coping. They reflected the professional knowledge teachers accumulated through experience. They gradually learned what required immediate attention, what could be scheduled, which tasks could be simplified, and when assistance needed to be sought.

However, the findings also suggested that adaptability should not be interpreted as evidence that excessive workload was harmless. The teachers' ability to "find a way through" demonstrated resilience and professional competence, but sustainable workload management also depended on organizational conditions and available resources.

Theme 4: We Carry the Load Together: Collegial and Administrative Support

The fourth theme highlighted the importance of relationships in helping participants manage their responsibilities. Teachers described colleagues as sources of practical assistance, information, encouragement, and emotional support. Participants also recognized the role of school leadership in creating conditions that either eased or intensified the experience of multiple responsibilities.

One participant **shared**:

"There were responsibilities that would have been much harder if I had done them alone. My co-teachers helped when I did not know something, and we shared ideas and materials. That made the work lighter." - Teacher 4

Another participant **explained**:

"When the school head understood that we had many things to accomplish and gave us enough time or guidance, the work became easier. Knowing that someone understood our situation was already a form of support." - Teacher 1

A third participant **emphasized** reciprocity among colleagues:

"We helped one another because we knew that everyone had responsibilities. Sometimes I helped them with ICT, and there were also times when they helped me with activities or documents. We did not have to carry everything alone." - Teacher 5

These accounts revealed that collaboration operated as both a practical and psychological resource. Participants experienced support when colleagues shared knowledge, assisted with unfamiliar tasks, exchanged materials, or simply understood the pressures associated with multiple assignments.

This finding strongly supported the Job Demands-Resources Model. Collegial relationships and supportive leadership functioned as job resources that helped participants respond to demanding working conditions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

International findings provided strong parallels. In Australia, Kingsford-Smith et al. (2023) found that teacher collaboration positively predicted teacher well-being across rural, regional, and metropolitan schools, whereas workload and student-behavior stress negatively predicted well-being. Particularly relevant to Villa Agullana Elementary School was the finding that collaboration remained beneficial regardless of geographical school context.

Similarly, Willis et al. (2024) found in their qualitative inquiry with Australian teachers that supportive and caring leadership, collegiality, collaboration, mentoring, trust, and positive professional relationships were perceived as important contributors to teacher well-being. Participants in that study especially valued leaders who listened to teachers and responded meaningfully to their needs rather than providing

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superficial well-being interventions.

Werner-Seidler et al. (2024) likewise reported that Australian educators viewed supportive leadership and positive staff relationships as essential components of effective teacher well-being initiatives. Their participants emphasized that school leaders needed to participate actively in supporting teachers rather than placing responsibility for well-being entirely on individual educators.

Research across European countries also demonstrated the importance of organizational culture. Admiraal and Røberg (2023) found that collaborative and participative school cultures represented important job resources associated with teacher job satisfaction.

The experiences of the Villa Agullana teachers therefore suggested that workload was not experienced purely at the individual level. The same professional demand could feel substantially different depending on whether teachers experienced isolation or collaboration. In this sense, "we carry the load together" captured the collective dimension of teacher resilience.

The finding also indicated that administrative support involved more than encouragement. Participants valued practical understanding, clear communication, reasonable expectations, guidance, and flexibility. Support therefore became meaningful when it changed the actual conditions under which teachers performed their responsibilities.

Theme 5: More Than a Burden: Finding Growth and Purpose in Multiple Roles

The final theme captured the complexity of participants' interpretations of their experiences. Although teachers acknowledged the pressures associated with multiple responsibilities, they also identified opportunities for professional learning, confidence, leadership, adaptability, and a broader understanding of their contribution to the school.

One participant **reflected**:

"At first, some responsibilities were difficult because I was not familiar with them. But eventually I learned. I became more confident, especially when I realized that I could do things that I had not done before." - Teacher 2

Another participant **shared**:

"The additional work was tiring, but I also learned from it. I became more organized and learned how to communicate with different people. It helped me grow not only as a teacher but also as a person." - Teacher 5

Another participant **connected** these responsibilities to a sense of service:

"Sometimes it was difficult, but when I saw that the activity helped the school or the pupils, I felt that the effort was worth it. It reminded me that teaching was not only about finishing lessons." - Teacher 1

The participants therefore constructed a nuanced meaning of their multiple roles. Additional responsibilities were experienced simultaneously as demands and opportunities. They required effort and sacrifice but also created occasions for teachers to acquire competencies beyond their classroom routines. This interpretation extended the Job Demands-Resources perspective because professional experiences were not determined solely by the quantity of work. The meaning attached to responsibilities, the availability of resources, and the extent to which teachers experienced professional accomplishment also shaped how demands were interpreted.

Collie (2023) demonstrated that professional growth constituted an important dimension of teacher well-being and that job resources such as autonomy-supportive leadership and positive professional relationships were associated with more favorable outcomes. This supported the present finding that demanding responsibilities could coexist with perceptions of development when teachers experienced competence, support, and meaning in their work.

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The finding also resonated with Australian qualitative research in which teachers identified accomplishment and positive professional experiences alongside stress and workload as dimensions of teacher well-being (Willis et al., 2024). Their findings showed that teacher well-being was not simply the absence of stress but also involved relationships, professional development, accomplishment, and meaningful work.

A Philippine phenomenological study of novice school heads who simultaneously taught and led schools in geographically challenging contexts similarly revealed that participants learned through their experiences and professional training while navigating multiple responsibilities (Sibay & Gonzales, 2024). Although the roles and contexts differed, the study illustrated how demanding dual responsibilities could become sites of experiential learning and professional development.

Nevertheless, the participants' narratives did not suggest that professional growth justified unlimited additional responsibilities. Instead, their experiences indicated that growth emerged when teachers were able to make meaning from challenges and when adequate professional and organizational resources were available.

Thus, "more than a burden" represented the participants' capacity to reinterpret demanding experiences as opportunities for learning and contribution without denying the pressures associated with those experiences.

The Essence of the Phenomenon: Holding the Classroom at the Center While Wearing Many Hats

Across the five themes, the phenomenological essence of the teachers' experiences was captured by the idea of holding the classroom at the center while wearing many hats. Participants experienced teaching as a continuous negotiation among multiple responsibilities, but their accounts consistently positioned learners and classroom instruction as the central reference point from which other professional responsibilities were evaluated.

Teachers shifted between instructional and non-instructional roles, negotiated limited time, developed strategies to maintain control over competing tasks, relied on professional relationships, and constructed personal and professional meaning from their experiences. Their accounts showed that wearing multiple hats was neither entirely burdensome nor entirely developmental. Rather, it represented a dynamic professional experience in which pressure, adaptation, collaboration, commitment, and growth coexisted.

This interpretation was consistent with international research showing that teachers' professional experiences were shaped by the interaction between job demands and job resources rather than by workload alone (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Collie, 2023; Kingsford-Smith et al., 2023). Workload, additional responsibilities, and time pressure could produce strain, while supportive leadership, collaboration, autonomy, and professional relationships could mitigate those demands and promote engagement and professional growth.

The findings also demonstrated why solutions focused exclusively on individual resilience or time management would have been insufficient. The participants certainly developed strategies for managing their responsibilities, but their experiences were embedded within organizational structures. International evidence similarly suggested that teacher well-being required attention to workload, leadership, professional relationships, autonomy, and organizational conditions rather than simply encouraging individual teachers to cope more effectively (Ostermeier et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2024; Willis et al., 2024).

Ultimately, the teachers' narratives portrayed professional commitment as an active process of continually negotiating responsibilities while attempting to preserve the quality of their classroom instruction. They

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accepted broader responsibilities as part of school life, adapted when demands intensified, supported one another when difficulties arose, and derived professional growth from experiences that initially challenged them. At the same time, their experiences underscored the need for school systems to recognize that teachers' capacity to wear multiple hats depended on whether adequate time, collaboration, leadership, and organizational support were available.

The study therefore revealed that balancing classroom instruction with additional school responsibilities was not simply an issue of teachers having "too much work." It was experienced as an ongoing negotiation of professional identity, time, responsibility, relationships, and purpose. At the center of this negotiation remained the teachers' commitment to their learners a commitment that guided how they prioritized responsibilities and gave meaning to the multiple roles they performed.

Conclusion

The study explored the lived experiences of teachers at Villa Agullana Elementary School as they balanced classroom instruction with multiple professional responsibilities. Using phenomenological inquiry, the researchers examined the phenomenon from the perspectives of teachers who had directly experienced the simultaneous demands associated with classroom teaching and additional school assignments.

The study recognized that teachers' professional responsibilities extended beyond direct classroom instruction. Their work involved various instructional, organizational, and school-based functions that required them to continuously negotiate professional priorities. Role Theory provided a framework for understanding the expectations attached to teachers' multiple professional roles (Biddle, 1986), while the Job Demands-Resources Model helped explain how demands and available resources interacted within their professional experiences (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

The phenomenological approach placed teachers' voices and experiences at the center of the inquiry. Rather than reducing their responsibilities to workload indicators, the study examined how teachers personally understood and navigated the realities associated with wearing multiple hats.

The final conclusions regarding the specific challenges, coping strategies, support systems, and professional meanings should be directly derived from the actual emergent themes and participant narratives. Doing so would ensure that the conclusions remained faithful to the phenomenological character of the research and accurately represented the experiences of teachers at Villa Agullana Elementary School.

Recommendations

Based on the actual themes generated by the study, the school administration could review the distribution of additional assignments among teachers and consider mechanisms that protected adequate time for lesson preparation, assessment, and learner support. and committee responsibilities could also be distributed according to teachers' existing workloads, expertise, and instructional demands.

The school could further strengthen collegial collaboration and task-sharing mechanisms where these were identified by participants as important sources of support. Administrative processes and documentation requirements could be streamlined when possible to reduce unnecessary duplication and allow teachers to concentrate more effectively on instructional responsibilities.

Future researchers could extend the inquiry to other elementary schools in Maddela or across Quirino Province to explore similarities and differences in teachers' experiences. Comparative qualitative studies could also examine how teachers' experiences differed according to grade level, number of assignments, school size, or length of teaching experience.

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