

Unburdened Chalk: Exploring Teachers' Perspectives on the Elimination of Administrative Tasks

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study explored public elementary school teachers' perspectives on the elimination of administrative tasks under the Department of Education's MATATAG Agenda and DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024. Specifically, it examined how the policy shaped teachers' workload, well-being, instructional focus, professional values, and insights on workload reform. Eight public elementary school teachers from the Kiblawan North and South Districts, Division of Davao del Sur, participated in in-depth interviews. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis involving familiarization, coding, theme development, theme review, and reporting. Findings revealed four major thematic areas: positive perception of administrative task reduction; improved workload and well-being through greater instructional focus and learner support;

reframing of professional purpose toward outcome-oriented and humanistic teaching; and the realization that streamlined systems restore the core mission of teaching. Teachers described relief, reduced stress, renewed motivation, better instructional preparation, strengthened professional identity, and increased responsiveness to learners. However, persistent workload issues such as multigrade teaching, assessment demands, and residual school roles remained evident. The study concludes that administrative task elimination is a meaningful policy intervention, but its long-term effectiveness depends on adequate support staff, clear delegation, school-level monitoring, teacher voice, and sustainable workload management systems.

Keywords: *administrative task elimination, MATATAG Agenda, teacher workload, teacher well-being, instructional focus, educational policy reform*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a central role in shaping learners' academic growth and educational experiences. However, their effectiveness is often constrained by excessive administrative responsibilities that reduce time for lesson planning, student engagement, assessment, and professional development. In the Philippines, policy reviews have shown that teachers are frequently assigned non-instructional duties related to personnel administration, facilities custodianship, records management, financial documentation, program implementation, and general administrative support. To address this issue, the Department of Education issued DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024, which mandates the immediate removal of administrative tasks from public school teachers and the reassignment of such tasks to school heads and non-teaching personnel (Department of Education, 2024; Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2024).

Although the policy seeks to protect teachers' instructional time, implementation realities differ across school contexts. Small, rural, and resource-limited schools often lack sufficient non-teaching personnel, causing teachers to continue assisting with documentation, coordination, and school operational work. Thus, a policy-practice gap emerges: administrative tasks may be formally removed, but residual responsibilities may remain informally carried by teachers.

The issue is not unique to the Philippine context. International studies show that administrative overload contributes to teacher stress, emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, and weakened organizational commitment (Hagermoser Sanetti et al., 2021; Van Waeyenberg et al., 2020). Conversely, systems that clarify teacher roles, protect instructional time, and provide administrative support report stronger professional satisfaction and improved educational conditions (Maaranen & Afdal, 2020; OECD, 2020; Óskarsdóttir et al., 2020). Locally, teachers continue to experience multitasking pressures that affect morale, efficiency, and instructional quality (Arañas, 2023; Blanco et al., 2022; Gallardo & Rabe, 2025; Tolibas & Lydia, 2022).

Despite growing discussions on workload reform, few studies have qualitatively examined how teachers themselves experience the elimination of administrative tasks. This study addressed that gap by exploring the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in selected schools of Kiblawan North and South Districts, Division of Davao del Sur. It focused on teachers' perspectives, perceived effects on workload and well-being, emerging values and philosophical underpinnings, and insights gained from the implementation of administrative task elimination.

Literature Review

Teacher Workload and Administrative Burden

Teacher workload is a multidimensional concern that includes instructional, administrative, emotional, and organizational responsibilities. When non-instructional tasks accumulate, teachers experience greater time pressure, cognitive overload, and reduced capacity to focus on classroom teaching. The Job Demands–Resources perspective explains that excessive job demands, when not matched by adequate resources, increase strain and reduce work engagement (Bakker et al., 2023). Studies on teacher workload similarly show that administrative and reporting requirements are associated with stress and burnout, particularly when teachers have limited control over time and work processes (Pan & Zhou, 2021; Pressley, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023).

Teacher Well-Being, Motivation, and Professional Identity

Teacher well-being is closely linked to motivation, retention, and instructional effectiveness. Teachers who experience manageable workload conditions are more likely to report satisfaction, resilience, and commitment to the profession (Capone & Petrillo, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). Autonomy-supportive and responsive school leadership also strengthens teacher identity by clarifying expectations and affirming the professional value of teaching (Collie, 2021; Liu et al., 2021). In this sense, eliminating administrative tasks may function not only as an operational reform but also as a welfare strategy that recognizes teachers' primary role as instructional professionals.

Instructional Focus and Learner-Centered Practice

Reducing non-teaching burdens allows teachers to invest more time in lesson design, feedback, remediation, enrichment, and differentiated instruction. Existing literature emphasizes that effective teaching requires protected time for planning, reflection, and student support (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Hattie, 2023; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). International evidence further suggests that teachers who spend more time on instruction and less on administrative work report stronger job satisfaction and professional commitment (OECD, 2020; Toropova et al., 2021). These studies support the assumption that administrative task elimination can enhance instructional responsiveness and improve learning conditions.

MATATAG Agenda and Policy Implementation

The MATATAG Agenda aims to improve foundational learning and strengthen teacher support by streamlining responsibilities and clarifying school roles. DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024 specifically requires the removal of administrative tasks from public school teachers and their transfer to non-teaching personnel (Department of Education, 2024). However, implementation depends on staffing adequacy, task delegation, leadership support, and contextual realities. Philippine studies indicate that ancillary duties, multigrade teaching, and limited support personnel continue to affect teachers' workload and well-being even when reforms are introduced (Arañas, 2023; Dinero & Oco, 2024; Tutor & Elbanbuena, 2024). This highlights the need for localized qualitative evidence on how policy reforms are experienced by teachers in actual school settings.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore teachers' lived experiences regarding the elimination of administrative tasks. This approach was appropriate because the study sought to understand teachers' subjective meanings, emotional responses, professional reflections, and practical experiences under the MATATAG Agenda. The design enabled the researcher to capture detailed narratives on how task elimination influenced workload, well-being, instructional focus, and professional identity.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in selected public elementary schools in Kiblawan North and South Districts, Division of Davao del Sur, Region XI. These schools represented rural and semi-urban public elementary contexts with varying levels of personnel, resources, and support systems. Ihan Elementary School served as one of the primary research sites because it had experienced the implementation of administrative task elimination while still operating within practical school-level constraints.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants were eight public elementary school teachers who had first-hand experience with administrative task elimination under DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024. Purposive sampling was used to select teachers who could provide rich and relevant insights into the phenomenon. Participants were required to be currently teaching in the selected districts, to have more than five years of teaching experience, to have handled three or more administrative tasks in the previous years, and to be willing to participate voluntarily.

Research Instrument

The primary instrument was an in-depth interview guide composed of open-ended questions aligned with the study's research questions. The guide elicited teachers' perspectives on administrative task elimination, perceived effects on workload and well-being, emerging values and principles, and insights gained from their experiences. A background information form was also used to collect relevant participant information such as teaching experience, grade level handled, and previous designations.

Table 1. Interview Guide Matrix

Research Question	Guide Question	Probing Focus
Teachers' perspectives on task elimination	How do you describe your perspectives on the elimination of administrative tasks?	Initial thoughts, feelings, and perceived meaning of the policy
Effects on workload and well-being	How has the elimination of administrative tasks influenced how you view your work and well-being?	Instructional focus, stress, workload, and student support
Philosophical underpinnings and core values	What values or guiding principles emerged from task elimination?	Role clarity, collaboration, support systems, and learner-centered teaching
Insights gained from task elimination	What reflections or insights have come up since the elimination of administrative tasks?	Lessons learned, recommendations, and sustainability of reform

Data Gathering Procedure

After securing permission from concerned school authorities, the researcher identified eligible participants through coordination with school administrators. Written invitations and informed consent forms were provided before the interviews. In-depth interviews were scheduled at times convenient to the teachers and were conducted in

private and safe settings. With permission, the interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and reviewed for accuracy. Data collection was undertaken within the approved research period and was guided by ethical standards of confidentiality, voluntariness, and respect for participants' professional experiences.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview transcripts. The process involved familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, organization of codes into broader themes, review of themes in relation to the research questions, and reporting of the findings using representative participant statements. The analysis focused on recurring patterns of meaning related to workload, well-being, instructional focus, role clarity, institutional support, and teacher insights.

Ethical Consideration

The study observed ethical standards in qualitative research. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. Participants were assured that their identities, schools, and responses would remain confidential. Interview data were used solely for academic and research purposes. The researcher also practiced reflexivity to minimize bias during data collection and interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative data yielded four major thematic areas corresponding to the study's research questions. These themes show how teachers interpreted the elimination of administrative tasks, how the policy influenced their work and well-being, what values emerged from the reform, and what insights they gained from the experience.

Teachers' Perspectives on the Elimination of Administrative Tasks

The first major theme was Positive Perception of Administrative Task Reduction. Teachers viewed the removal or simplification of administrative work as a meaningful intervention that allowed them to refocus on instruction. Their responses reflected relief, happiness, gratitude, motivation, and renewed hope. One participant stated that the policy made the workload more manageable, while another expressed that the system finally recognized how overloaded teachers had been. These views indicate that administrative task elimination was experienced not merely as a procedural change but as an acknowledgment of teachers' professional struggles. The finding supports studies showing that reduced job demands enhance motivation, well-being, and instructional engagement (Bakker et al., 2023; Pan & Zhou, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023).

Table 2. *Thematic Summary of Teachers' Perspectives on Administrative Task Elimination*

Overarching Theme	Major Theme	Sub-themes	Illustrative Statement
Perspectives of teachers on administrative task elimination	Positive perception of administrative task reduction	Relief, happiness, and motivation	"I felt relieved and grateful because it helped reduce pressure and allowed me to concentrate on my core duties as a teacher." (P2)
Perspectives of teachers on administrative task elimination	Positive perception of administrative task reduction	Reduced stress and workload through simplified reports	"Some reports have simplified or removed, and deadlines became more manageable." (P6)
Perspectives of teachers on administrative task elimination	Positive perception of administrative task reduction	Improved instructional preparation and teaching quality	"I now have more time for lesson planning, which is more important as a teacher." (P5)

Perspectives of teachers on administrative task elimination	Positive perception of administrative task reduction	Renewed hope, motivation, and empowerment	“For the first time, I felt that the system recognized how overloaded teachers have been.” (P7)
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Effects on Teachers’ Workload and Well-Being

The second major theme showed that eliminating administrative tasks improved teachers’ workload and well-being by increasing focus on teaching, professional satisfaction, instructional planning, and responsiveness to learners. Teachers reported having more time to prepare lessons, review student work, plan meaningful activities, and provide individual support. This shift reflects the importance of protected instructional time in improving classroom practice and teacher satisfaction. However, the findings also revealed that persistent workload concerns remained, including multigrade teaching, assessment responsibilities, and residual school tasks. Thus, the policy was beneficial but not sufficient by itself. It must be supported by staffing, coordination, and broader workload management. These findings align with literature showing that workload composition affects teacher well-being and retention (OECD, 2020; Toropova et al., 2021; Viac & Fraser, 2020).

Table 3. *Thematic Summary of Effects on Workload and Well-Being*

Overarching Theme	Emerging Theme	Illustrative Statement
Effects of eliminating administrative tasks on workload and well-being	Increased focus on teaching and professional satisfaction	“Since administrative tasks were removed, my workload has become more focused on teaching.” (P8)
Effects of eliminating administrative tasks on workload and well-being	Reallocation of time toward instructional planning and support	“Mas daghan nakog time para sa akuang mga bata than sa administrative task.” (P1)
Effects of eliminating administrative tasks on workload and well-being	Strengthened student support and responsiveness to learner needs	“I’m able to spend more time preparing my lessons, reviewing students’ work, and supporting students individually.” (P5)
Effects of eliminating administrative tasks on workload and well-being	Persistent tasks affecting workload and well-being	“There is still a heavy workload because I teach three grade levels and still have other tasks.” (P6)

Philosophical Underpinnings and Core Values Emerging from Task Elimination

The third major theme was Reframing Professional Purpose Toward Outcome-Oriented and Humanistic Teaching. Teachers recognized that efficient school systems, role clarity, support mechanisms, collaboration, and continuous professional growth enable more effective teaching. The elimination of administrative tasks encouraged teachers to move away from compliance-driven work and toward learner-centered practice. They emphasized mentorship, collaborative planning, stronger support systems, and dynamic teaching approaches. This finding suggests that workload reform can reshape teachers’ professional philosophy by affirming that teaching should focus on meaningful learning outcomes and holistic learner development. It supports studies emphasizing professional collaboration, effective professional development, and teacher agency as conditions for improved instructional quality (Admiraal et al., 2021; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Postholm, 2020).

Table 4. *Thematic Summary of Philosophical Underpinnings and Core Values*

Overarching Theme	Major Theme	Sub-themes	Illustrative Statement
Core values made due to administrative task elimination	Reframing professional purpose toward outcome-oriented and humanistic teaching	Efficient systems as enablers of effective teaching	“Our school introduced a new mentorship program pairing experienced teachers with newer staff members.” (P3)
Core values made due to administrative task elimination	Reframing professional purpose toward outcome-oriented and humanistic teaching	Valuing efficiency and role clarity	“They clarified responsibilities and strengthened support systems for teachers.” (P2)
Core values made due to administrative task elimination	Reframing professional purpose toward outcome-oriented and humanistic teaching	Collaboration and continuous professional growth	“We now have more professional development workshops and LAC sessions.” (P8)
Core values made due to administrative task elimination	Reframing professional purpose toward outcome-oriented and humanistic teaching	Dynamic, creative, student-centered learning	“Learners get more say in what they learn and see how it connects to the real world.” (P3)

Teachers’ Insights from Their Experiences on Task Elimination

The fourth major theme was A Streamlined System Restores the Core Mission of Teaching. Teachers realized that effective teaching requires time, focus, well-being, and supportive institutional systems. They emphasized that their primary responsibility is learners, not paperwork. Reduced clerical demands helped them reconnect with the purpose of teaching, strengthen professional identity, and recognize the value of teacher voice in policy refinement. These insights show that administrative task elimination restores clarity in teachers’ roles and strengthens their commitment to learner-centered practice. The finding is consistent with literature indicating that supportive leadership, teacher autonomy, and meaningful professional voice improve engagement, motivation, and instructional effectiveness (Collie, 2021; Collie & Martin, 2020; Liu et al., 2021).

Table 5. *Thematic Summary of Teachers’ Insights Gained from Task Elimination*

Overarching Theme	Major Theme	Sub-themes	Illustrative Statement
Teachers’ insights from task elimination	A streamlined system restores the core mission of teaching	Prioritizing instructional quality and meaningful teaching time	“Effective teaching requires time and focus. Reducing workload helps teachers regain motivation and passion.” (P7)
Teachers’ insights from task elimination	A streamlined system restores the core mission of teaching	Strengthening teacher well-being for better educational outcomes	“Teacher well-being directly impacts the quality of education we provide.” (P8)
Teachers’ insights from task elimination	A streamlined system restores the core mission of teaching	Reinforcing teaching identity through responsive school systems	“Clear task delegation and strong administrative support are essential for effective teaching.” (P2)
Teachers’ insights from task elimination	A streamlined system restores the core mission of teaching	Instructional relevance, capacity building, and teacher voice	“It is important to keep listening to teachers’ feedback to ensure changes really help teaching and student learning.” (P8)

Synthesis of Findings

Across the four thematic areas, the study revealed that the elimination of administrative tasks produced positive emotional, professional, and instructional outcomes for teachers. It reduced stress, created more time for lesson preparation, improved responsiveness to learners, and strengthened teachers' sense of professional purpose. At the same time, the findings showed that reform sustainability depends on structural support. Without adequate administrative personnel, clear delegation, monitoring systems, and school-level workload management, teachers may continue to experience residual burdens. Therefore, administrative task elimination should be understood as a foundational reform that must be supported by comprehensive staffing, leadership, and professional development systems.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that public elementary school teachers generally perceived the elimination of administrative tasks as a positive and meaningful policy reform. Teachers experienced relief, motivation, and renewed professional energy because the reduction of non-instructional duties allowed them to focus more on teaching and learner support.

The elimination of administrative tasks improved teachers' workload and well-being by reallocating time toward lesson planning, checking learners' work, providing feedback, and supporting students individually. However, the persistence of multigrade teaching, assessment demands, and residual responsibilities indicates that workload reform must be supported by broader structural interventions.

The policy also encouraged teachers to reframe their professional purpose toward outcome-oriented and humanistic teaching. Efficient systems, role clarity, institutional support, collaboration, and teacher voice emerged as core values that sustain effective teaching. Overall, the study affirms that administrative task elimination helps restore the core mission of teaching, but its long-term success depends on consistent implementation, adequate staffing, and responsive school leadership.

Recommendations

1. The Department of Education may strengthen the implementation of DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024 by ensuring that schools have sufficient non-teaching personnel to absorb administrative and clerical responsibilities formerly assigned to teachers.
2. School heads may institutionalize clear task delegation systems, regular workload monitoring, and transparent coordination mechanisms so that teachers are not informally reassigned administrative functions after their official removal.
3. Schools may develop localized workload management plans that address not only administrative tasks but also other persistent demands such as multigrade teaching, assessment load, coordinators, and committee assignments.
4. Professional development programs may focus on instructional planning, learner support, collaborative teaching, and teacher well-being so that the time gained from task elimination is converted into improved classroom practice.
5. CHED and teacher education institutions may integrate workload management, professional boundaries, and instructional prioritization into pre-service and graduate education programs to prepare future teachers and school leaders for balanced professional practice.
6. Future researchers may conduct longitudinal and comparative studies across different divisions, school sizes, and staffing conditions to determine how administrative task elimination affects teacher well-being, instructional effectiveness, and student learning outcomes over time.

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