

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS IN THE REMOVAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS AND TEACHING QUALITY IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study examined at how instructional focus mediated the relationship between the removal of administrative tasks and teaching quality among public elementary school teachers. It determined the extent of administrative task removal across policy, workload, support, and implementation domains; assessed teachers' instructional focus and teaching quality; analyzed the relationships between these variables; tested the mediating effect of instructional focus; and identified emerging principles based on teachers' and school heads' experiences, challenges, and performance.

A convergent parallel mixed-methods research design was employed with public elementary schools in the Second Congressional District of Quezon Province. Quantitative data were gathered from 361 respondents, including 273 teachers and 88 school heads, selected at random, using a validated, pilot-tested researcher-made questionnaire. Structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data from ten carefully selected key informants. Quantitative data were evaluated using descriptive statistics, Spearman rho correlation, and mediation analysis, while qualitative data were explored using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The findings from both strands were integrated to strengthen interpretation.

The results revealed that administrative task removal was implemented to a great extent, while instructional focus and teaching quality were both evident to a very great extent. Significant positive correlations were found between administrative task removal, instructional focus, and teaching quality. Instructional focus significantly mediated the relationship between administrative task removal and teaching quality, implying that reduced administrative workload enhances teaching quality primarily by strengthening teachers' focus on instruction.

Despite ongoing implementation and resource issues, qualitative outcomes revealed lower stress, increased motivation, better lesson preparation, smoother classroom routines, stronger learner engagement, and improved learner support. Based on these findings, the Integrative Instruction Centered Workload Model was presented to enhance long-term instructional improvement and effective policy implementation under the MATATAG Agenda.

Keywords: *administrative tasks, instructional focus, teaching quality, integrative model, experiences, challenges, performance of teachers*

1. Introduction

Teachers are the prime movers in driving transformation throughout the nation (Junio, 2024). Their performance influences the future of society, as they have a fundamental

responsibility to teach and nurture the next generation (Arañas, 2023). Likewise, competent teachers not only provide new knowledge but also stimulate, encourage, and guide pupils towards scholastic excellence, personal growth, and analytical reasoning. Their capacity to establish captivating educational settings, design instructional approaches that accommodate diverse learning preferences, deliver valuable feedback, and cultivate a nurturing classroom environment has a substantial impact on students' academic performance, self-worth, and enduring learning behaviors (Araneta et al., 2020; Prince-Ifoh, 2022). However, their teaching performance is often affected by administrative tasks, ancillary work, and assignments unrelated to instruction (Arañas, 2023).

Similarly, teachers in international settings, such as in Europe and Asia, undertake additional administrative tasks and responsibilities, serving as secondary caretakers, counselors, entertainers, motivators, and even investigators (Prince-Ifoh, 2022). Although these duties do not directly involve teaching, they are essential for the day-to-day operation of schools. Ancillary services are provided in schools in countries such as Indonesia to meet national education requirements.

Likewise, in the Philippines, the distribution of these services is determined by the teachers' competence. Occasionally, experienced educators may decline these tasks, resulting in their assignment to newly hired teachers or those with less teaching responsibilities (Araneta & Catalan, 2020; Arañas, 2023). Within the DepEd, the predominant ancillary duties typically involve positions such as SBM Coordinator, Brigada Eskwela Coordinator, Disaster Risk Reduction Management Coordinator, Feeding Coordinator, Gulayan sa Paaralan Coordinator, School Canteen In-charge, Sports Coordinator, Learning Area Coordinator, EBEIS and LIS Coordinator, as well as various other coordination responsibilities (DepEd, 2024). These multiple tasks hinder the teachers in fully performing their best in the field of teaching, which also negatively influences the performance of their learners, their relationship with their colleagues, their professional growth, job satisfaction, and well-being.

Hence, recognizing the importance of improving the quality of teachers' performance and the seriousness of the administrative responsibilities they bear, the Department of Education (DepEd) has implemented DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024. This order aims to significantly change the distribution of roles within the Philippine public school system, with a specific focus on reducing teachers' administrative workload (DepEd, 2024). The main goal of this directive is to reduce the non-teaching tasks educators must perform, so they can devote more time and attention to teaching in the classroom and helping students learn. The expected result is a more efficient educational setting where instructors may focus on their primary duties and enhance their performance in achieving the DepEd MATATAG Agenda. However, the effective completion of this requirement depends on having sufficient resources, especially training opportunities and the ability to hire additional non-teaching personnel as needed.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the relationship and mediating role of instructional focus to the extent of removal of administrative tasks and teaching quality.

This specifically aimed to answer the following research problems:

1. What is the extent of removal of administrative tasks of public elementary school teachers in terms of:

1.1. Policy Awareness and Understanding;

- 1.2. Teacher Workload Reduction;
- 1.3. Curriculum Programming;
- 1.4. Administrative Support Structures;
- 1.5. Resource Management;
- 1.6. Training and Professional Development;
- 1.7. Monitoring and Evaluation; and
- 1.8. Challenges and Barriers to Implementation?
2. What is the extent of public elementary school teachers' instructional focus in terms of
 - 2.1. Instructional Planning;
 - 2.2. Strategizing Instruction;
 - 2.3. Monitoring and Assessing Students' Progress;
 - 2.4. Collaborating with Colleagues;
 - 2.5. Fostering Learning Environment; and
 - 2.6. Motivation and Engagement?
3. What is the extent of public elementary school teachers' teaching quality in terms of:
 - 3.1. Content Knowledge and Pedagogy;
 - 3.2. Learning Environment and Diversity of Learners;
 - 3.3. Curriculum, Planning, Assessment and Reporting;
 - 3.4. Community Linkages and Professional Engagement; and
 - 3.5. Personal Growth and Professional Development?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the extent of removal of administrative tasks and:
 - 4.1. Instructional Focus; and
 - 4.2. Teaching Quality?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the instructional focus and teaching quality?
6. Does the instructional focus significantly mediate the relationship between the implementation of administrative removal and the teaching quality?
7. What are the emerging principles from the experiences, challenges, and performances of elementary public-school teachers and school heads upon the removal of administrative tasks?
8. What integrative workload model can be proposed based on the experiences, challenges, and performance of elementary public-school teachers and school heads upon the removal of administrative tasks?

2. Methodology

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to comprehensively investigate the impact of administrative task removal on teaching quality, with instructional focus as a mediating factor. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed independently, and then merged during the interpretation phase to provide a holistic understanding of the research problem. This approach allowed for triangulation of findings and a more nuanced exploration of the relationships between variables within the context of public elementary schools.

The study involved two groups of respondents from public elementary schools in the Second Congressional District of Quezon Province. For the quantitative phase, 361 participants were randomly selected, including 273 teachers and 88 school heads, representing diverse grade levels, years of service, and school contexts. In the qualitative phase, 10 key informants (teachers and school heads) were purposively chosen for their direct involvement in instructional leadership

and classroom practice. These participants were proportionally drawn from eight districts to ensure representation and capture a range of experiences and perspectives.

Quantitative data was gathered using a researcher-designed survey questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale, assessing the extent of administrative task removal, instructional focus, and teaching quality. The questionnaire underwent content validation by education specialists and pilot testing with a sample group to ensure clarity and relevance. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to ensure internal consistency. Qualitative data was collected through a structured interview guide with open-ended questions designed to explore experiences, challenges, and emerging principles related to administrative task removal.

The research procedure began with securing research permits and formal endorsements from the Department of Education. The quantitative phase involved distributing the survey questionnaire in both digital (Google Forms) and printed formats to ensure full participation. A brief orientation was provided to respondents, emphasizing data confidentiality and the voluntary nature of participation. In the qualitative phase, in-depth interviews were conducted with purposively selected participants, either face-to-face or online, and audio-recorded with consent. Transcripts were then prepared for thematic analysis.

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean) to determine the extent of administrative task removal, instructional focus, and teaching quality. Spearman's rho was used to examine the relationships between key variables, while regression-based mediation analysis with path analysis was employed to determine whether instructional focus mediates the relationship between administrative task removal and teaching quality. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach, to identify recurring patterns and themes. Findings from both strands were then integrated to develop an evidence-based integrative workload model.

3. Results and Discussion

This presents the study's findings in tabular form, along with corresponding analyses and interpretations, to draw relevant conclusions and set forth recommendations.

Table 1. Summary of the Extent of the Removal of Administrative Tasks of Public Elementary School Teachers

Domains	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. Policy Awareness and Understanding	4.10	0.64	Great Extent
2. Teacher Workload	4.14	0.68	Great Extent
3. Curriculum Programming	4.06	0.63	Great Extent
4. Administrative Support Structures	4.16	0.63	Great Extent
5. Resource Management	4.14	0.62	Great Extent
6. Training and Professional Development	4.29	0.59	Very Great Extent
7. Monitoring and Evaluation	4.10	0.65	Great Extent
8. Challenges and Barriers to Implementation	3.85	0.80	Great Extent
Overall	4.11	0.66	Great Extent

Legend: 1.00 – 1.80=Very Low Extent, 1.81 – 2.60= Low Extent, 2.61 – 3.40=Moderate Extent, 3.41 – 4.20=Great Extent, 4.21 – 5.00=Very Great Extent

Table 1 presents a summary of the extent of the removal of administrative tasks of public elementary school teachers across eight domains. The overall result had a Grand Mean of 4.11 (SD = 0.66), interpreted as a Great Extent, indicating that the policy was generally implemented effectively across schools.

These are explained by the way schools prioritized instructional improvement and teacher development when administrative duties were reduced. The strongest outcome in training and professional development suggests that freed time was largely redirected toward teaching-focused seminars, CPD activities, and instructional improvement initiatives. This pattern mirrors earlier findings discussed in the study, in which teachers consistently reported attending fewer administrative training sessions and more pedagogy-centered programs. High ratings in administrative support structures, workload reduction, and resource management further indicate that the presence of non-teaching staff, clearer task delegation, and improved internal systems played an important role in easing teachers' daily responsibilities.

However, the comparatively lower means for challenges and barriers reflect persistent issues, including uneven implementation across schools, limited support staff in some contexts, and the continued assignment of administrative work despite the policy. These findings imply that its success depends on sustained leadership commitment, consistent guidelines, and adequate staffing. Hence, based on the findings, the schools may strengthen coordination mechanisms, standardize implementation practices, and regularly review task allocation to prevent the re-emergence of administrative overload.

Table 2. Summary of the Extent of Public Elementary School Teachers' Instructional Focus

Domains	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. Instructional Planning	4.33	0.60	Very Great Extent
2. Strategizing Instruction	4.37	0.72	Very Great Extent
3. Monitoring and Assessing Students' Progress	4.40	0.60	Very Great Extent
4. Collaborating with Colleagues	4.37	0.59	Very Great Extent
5. Fostering Learning Environments	4.47	0.56	Very Great Extent
6. Motivation and Engagement	4.44	0.57	Very Great Extent
Overall	4.40	0.61	Very Great Extent

Legend: 1.00 – 1.80=Very Low Extent, 1.81 – 2.60= Low Extent, 2.61 – 3.40=Moderate Extent, 3.41 – 4.20=Great Extent, 4.21 – 5.00=Very Great Extent

Table 2 presents the summary of the extent of public elementary school teachers' instructional focus across six instructional domains. The overall result shows a Grand Mean of 4.40 (SD = 0.61), interpreted as a Very Great Extent, indicating that teachers consistently demonstrated a strong instructional focus following the reduction of administrative tasks.

The results can be attributed mainly to the removal of administrative and non-instructional tasks, which allowed teachers to redirect time, effort, and cognitive energy toward teaching-related responsibilities. This means that with fewer clerical demands and compliance requirements, teachers were able to engage more deeply in lesson planning, apply a variety of instructional strategies, monitor learner progress more consistently, and provide timely feedback.

Also, clear role delegation and the presence of support staff reduced interruptions during instructional hours, while supportive school leadership helped protect teaching time and legitimize instructional work as the primary priority. These conditions appear to have strengthened teachers' professional autonomy and confidence. This also enables them to create inclusive learning environments, collaborate meaningfully with colleagues, and sustain learner motivation. The findings further imply that maintaining administrative task reduction can lead to more coherent, responsive, and learner-centered instructional practices, which are essential for improving teaching quality and student outcomes.

Table 3. Summary of the Extent of Public Elementary School Teachers' Teaching Quality

Domains	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	4.39	0.56	Very High Extent
2. Learning Environment and Diversity of Learners	4.40	0.56	Very High Extent
3. Curriculum and Planning and Assessment and Reporting	4.46	0.55	Very High Extent
4. Community Linkages and Professional Engagement	4.39	0.55	Very High Extent
5. Personal Growth and Professional Development	4.42	0.55	Very High Extent
Overall	4.41	0.55	Very High Extent

Legend: 1.00 – 1.80=Very Low Extent, 1.81 – 2.60= Low Extent, 2.61 – 3.40=Moderate Extent, 3.41 – 4.20=High Extent, 4.21 – 5.00=Very High Extent

Table 3 presents a summary of the extent of public elementary school teachers' teaching quality across five major domains. The overall result shows a Grand Mean of 4.41 (SD = 0.55), which is interpreted as a Very High Extent, indicating a consistently high level of teaching quality among the respondents.

These positive and high ratings across all domains may be attributed to improved instructional focus brought about by the reduction of administrative workload. This also shows that if the teachers are freed from excessive clerical duties, reporting requirements, and non-instructional assignments, they are better positioned to concentrate on lesson planning, assessment, learner support, and professional growth toward better quality of teaching. Also, strong curriculum

alignment and assessment practices suggest that teachers had sufficient time to reflect on instructional goals and learner outcomes.

Likewise, high ratings in learning environment and diversity indicate that teachers were able to respond more thoughtfully to learners' varied needs. For teachers, this support sustains professional confidence, motivation, and instructional effectiveness. For learners, it results in clearer instruction, inclusive classrooms, and more meaningful assessment and feedback. Furthermore, at the school level, the findings imply that policies supporting workload reduction contribute to stronger instructional systems, improved stakeholder engagement, and a more collaborative professional culture. These outcomes emphasize the importance of institutionalizing support structures that protect teachers' time for teaching-related tasks.

Table 4. Significant Relationship between the Extent of Removal of Administrative Task and Instructional Focus

Removal of Administrative Task	Instructional Focus					
	Instructional Planning	Strategizing Instruction	Monitoring and Assessing Students' Progress	Collaborating with Colleagues	Fostering Learning Environment	Motivation and Engagement
Policy Awareness and Understanding;	.586**	.495**	.531**	.561**	.492**	.579**
Teacher Workload	.613**	.535**	.538**	.554**	.536**	.557**
Curriculum Programming;	.570**	.515**	.538**	.564**	.497**	.559**
Administrative Support Structures;	.620**	.564**	.574**	.612**	.533**	.612**
Resource Management;	.537**	.450**	.514**	.530**	.501**	.577**
Training and Professional Development;	.622**	.506**	.650**	.629**	.571**	.631**
Monitoring and Evaluation; and	.620**	.500**	.612**	.602**	.543**	.577**
Challenges and Barriers to Implementation	.349**	.289**	.314**	.367**	.326**	.361**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 4 tests the significance of the relationship between the removal of administrative tasks and instructional focus. Based on the results, instructional focus such as instructional planning, strategizing instruction, monitoring and assessing students' progress, collaborating with colleagues, fostering a learning environment, and motivation and engagement are positive and significantly related to the removal of administrative tasks at a 0.01 level of significance. In

contrast, challenges and barriers to implementation showed only weak-to-moderate correlations ($r = .289$ to $.367$), suggesting that unresolved barriers may limit the positive effect of task removal.

The study's findings indicate that eliminating administrative activities is positively associated with greater instructional focus. Previous studies highlight the benefits of reduced workload (Li & Li, 2023; Xu, 2023), the necessity of regulations safeguarding classroom time (Ghulamudin, 2020), and the significance of teachers' awareness of policies (Laxmi, 2023). Research by Digale (2021), Kimosop (2018), Thomas and Onyango (2022), Hermawan and Olayiwola (2024), Alcantara and Chao (2022), Tosun and Bostanci (2024), and Kim (2019) also emphasizes how well-designed systems, streamlined curricula, and administrative support help teachers concentrate on teaching. All of this research supports the notion that teachers may devote more time and effort to instructional planning, student engagement, and overall teaching quality when administrative burdens are reduced.

Additionally, the literature establishes a connection between instructional focus and the reduction of administrative tasks. Effective resource management has advantages (Ritonga, 2024; Paglomutan, 2024), but its influence is constrained by inadequate processes and resources. Teachers may continue to function despite resource limitations, according to Olaivar and Loayon (2022) and Remirata and Ramada (2024), but boosting resource availability and management systems, combined with reducing administrative involvement, increases instructional focus. The significance of administrative assistance in optimizing the advantages of professional growth, monitoring, and assessment is supported by research by Costa et al. (2022), Huynh (2022), Agustina et al. (2023), Badrudin et al. (2020), and Huang (2020). Lastly, research by Saini et al. (2021) and Vanbuel (2022) shows that challenges, including inadequate training and poor communication, may affect instructional focus, although teachers often adapt despite these difficulties.

Table 5. Significant Relationship between the Extent of Removal of Administrative Tasks and Teaching Quality

Removal of Administrative Task	Teaching Quality				
	Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	Learning Environment and Diversity of Learners	Curriculum & Planning & Assessment and Reporting	Community Linkages and Professional Engagement	Personal Growth and Professional Development
Policy Awareness and Understanding;	.552**	.519**	.481**	.560**	.526**
Teacher Workload	.578**	.565**	.500**	.576**	.530**
Curriculum Programming;	.575**	.556**	.513**	.588**	.537**
Administrative Support Structures;	.602**	.597**	.550**	.609**	.563**
Resource Management;	.561**	.555**	.534**	.543**	.531**
Training and Professional Development;	.619**	.642**	.595**	.641**	.634**
Monitoring and	.546**	.548**	.503**	.530**	.586**

Evaluation; and						
Challenges and Barriers to Implementation		.317**	.337**	.304**	.320**	.296**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The study's results showed a positive and significant relationship between the extent of administrative task reduction and teaching quality at the 0.01 level of significance. The different domains of teaching quality, including content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment and diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development, are positively and significantly correlated with reduced administrative tasks, as shown in the table. The correlation coefficients often show moderate-to-high positive associations, ranging from .296 to .642. This implies that teachers see improvements in these crucial areas of teaching quality when administrative responsibilities are decreased. Notably, "Training and Professional Development" and "Administrative Support Structures" exhibit particularly strong positive relationships, suggesting that teachers are better able to participate in professional development and benefit from support systems when they are relieved of administrative responsibilities, ultimately improving the quality of their instruction. The overall trend demonstrates a definite improvement in teaching quality when administrative responsibilities are reduced, even as "Challenges and Barriers to Implementation" shows weaker but still significant positive correlations.

The results of this study suggest that eliminating administrative duties improves the quality of instruction. Numerous studies demonstrate the beneficial effects of administrative support and workload reduction on different facets of teaching. For instance, Zahurin et al. (2024) showed that automated administrative systems improved instructional time and teacher satisfaction, while Nevenglosky et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of administrative assistance in bolstering curriculum work. Kim (2019) said that teachers can focus more on lesson planning and student support when administrative constraints are reduced, thereby improving instructional outcomes. According to Thomas and Onyango (2022), administrative resources and clear instructions improve curriculum implementation, underscoring the importance of administrative support in fostering high-quality instruction.

In addition, when bureaucratic demands are reduced, prior research highlights the importance of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for enhancing teaching quality. While Huang (2020) emphasized the need for data-based monitoring for enhancing policy implementation, Agustina et al. (2023) observed that monitoring and assessment increased teaching quality and accountability. Huynh (2022) also found that instructors' training burden increased due to insufficient administrative support, thereby reducing their preparedness to implement the curriculum. This highlights the necessity of organized support systems to improve teaching quality. Lastly, Pressley and Ha (2021) found that supportive and adaptable administrative leadership enhanced teacher engagement and reduced stress, demonstrating its close connection to professional involvement and pedagogy. Collectively, these studies show that minimizing administrative workloads and providing strong support networks are essential to improving teaching quality in a variety of ways.

Table 6. Significant Relationship between the Instructional Focus and Teaching Quality

Instructional Focus	Teaching Quality				
	Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	Learning Environment and Diversity of Learners	Curriculum & Planning & Assessment and Reporting	Community Linkages and Professional Engagement	Personal Growth and Professional Development
Instructional Planning	.659**	.695**	.683**	.708**	.712**
Strategizing Instruction	.523**	.549**	.529**	.544**	.541**
Monitoring and Assessing Students' Progress	.679**	.695**	.694**	.684**	.719**
Collaborating with Colleagues	.684**	.727**	.695**	.730**	.707**
Fostering Learning Environment	.694**	.778**	.720**	.663**	.704**
Motivation and Engagement	.746**	.781**	.751**	.753**	.741**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 6 shows the significant relationship between teachers' instructional focus and their teaching quality across five domains. Based on the results, teaching quality indicators such as content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment and diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development are all significantly related to instructional focus at a 0.01 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the instructional focus and teaching quality is rejected.

An essential component in improving teaching quality in a variety of aspects is instructional focus. According to Wu, Wang, and Shih (2025), effective instructional planning lays the foundation for mastery of evidence, meets the needs of a variety of learners, and enhances instruction as a whole. According to De Guzman and Astillero (2025), who linked the elimination of administrative duties to an increased emphasis on instructional strategies, this is supplemented by strategic instruction, which allows teachers to adapt their approaches to diverse contexts, creating inclusive and stimulating learning.

As stated by Sepe (2021), regular monitoring and evaluation of students' progress are also essential, as they enable teachers to identify learning gaps, adjust their strategies, and provide immediate feedback. According to Andaya and Qunito (2025), collaboration among colleagues further improves teaching quality by enabling teachers to share ideas and address a variety of learner needs through shared techniques. Lastly, Umubyeyi et al. (2021) and Skinner and Raine (2022) support the idea that creating a good learning environment, combined with motivation and engagement, greatly improves teaching quality by encouraging classroom management, learner participation, and diversity. Together, these components highlight the significance of a targeted

and encouraging teaching strategy, which improves the performance environments for students and teachers.

Table 7. Analysis of Instructional Focus as a Significant Mediator in the Relationship between Implementation of Administrative Removal and Teaching Quality

Mediation Estimates			95% Confidence Interval			
Effect	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Z	p
Indirect	0.522	0.0377	0.4481	0.596	13.84	< .001
Direct	0.145	0.0382	0.0705	0.22	3.8	< .001
Total	0.667	0.0358	0.5973	0.737	18.66	< .001

The robust indirect effect related to instructional focus, which obtained an estimate of 0.522, is a significant result of the study. This suggests that administrative elimination improves instructional focus, which in turn enhances teaching quality. A 95% confidence interval of 0.4481 to 0.596, which does not include zero, provides strong evidence of the statistical significance of this indirect pathway. Additional statistical evidence supports the strong reliability of this mediating effect, with a Z-score of 13.84 and a p-value < .001.

The analysis also showed a direct impact of administrative removal on teaching quality, estimated at 0.145, in addition to the indirect pathway. This implies that even when the mediating role of instructional focus is neglected, administrative improvements have a favorable effect on teaching quality. With a Z-score of 3.8, a p-value < 0.001, and a 95% confidence range of 0.0705 to 0.22, this direct link is likewise statistically significant. With a confidence interval ranging from 0.5973 to 0.737, the total impact, including both direct and indirect contributions, is 0.667, suggesting a generally positive correlation.

Thus, the findings clearly show that the relationship between the employment of administrative removal and teaching quality is mediated by instructional focus. According to the results, enhancements or changes in instructional focus account for a significant share of the beneficial effects of administrative adjustments on teaching effectiveness. This emphasizes instructional focus as an essential means by which administrative decisions ultimately affect the standard of instruction in educational settings.

In line with the observed indirect effect of instructional focus, studies conducted in the Philippines by Algar et al. (2025) and Ferrer (2025) demonstrate how assigning non-teaching responsibilities to administrative staff directly improves instructional preparedness and effectiveness. Consistent with the direct and total effects found in the analysis, Christensen and McIsaac (2023) used international quantitative methods to confirm a significant relationship in which fewer administrative tasks lead to improved instructional focus and, ultimately, better teaching quality. All of these results highlight how important it is to remove administrative burdens to maximize teachers' capacity to focus on instruction, thereby improving the overall quality of education.

Table 8. Path Estimates on the Analysis of Instructional Focus as a Significant Mediator in the Relationship between Implementation of Administrative Removal and Teaching Quality

Path Estimates				95% Confidence Interval		Z	p	
Variables		Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper			
Administrative Task Removal	→	Instructional Focus	0.728	0.0347	0.6601	0.796	20.96	< .001
Instructional Focus	→	Teaching Quality	0.717	0.0389	0.6406	0.793	18.43	< .001
Administrative Task Removal	→	Teaching Quality	0.145	0.0382	0.0705	0.22	3.8	< .001

Legend: Significant @ $p \leq 0.05$

Table 8 presents the path estimates examining instructional focus as a mediating variable in the relationship between the implementation of administrative task removal and teaching quality. The results show a strong and significant direct effect of administrative task removal on instructional focus (estimate = 0.728, $p < .001$), indicating that reducing non-teaching responsibilities substantially increases teachers' ability to concentrate on core instructional tasks. Likewise, instructional focus demonstrates a strong and significant effect on teaching quality (estimate = 0.717, $p < .001$). This confirms that higher levels of focus are closely associated with improved teaching outcomes. Although a direct relationship between administrative task removal and teaching quality is also evident (estimate = 0.145, $p < .001$), the magnitude of this effect is notably smaller than that of the indirect paths. Generally, these results suggest that instructional focus is a key mechanism by which administrative task removal influences teaching quality.

The findings imply that reducing administrative workload does not improve teaching quality in isolation, but primarily through strengthening teachers' instructional focus. This also indicates that when teachers are freed from tasks such as report preparation, data encoding, and ancillary assignments, they gain time and cognitive space to plan lessons, refine instructional strategies, assess learners' progress, collaborate with colleagues, and sustain motivation and engagement.

These imply positive translation to clearer priorities, deeper instructional decision-making, and greater professional satisfaction for teachers. Likewise, for learners, findings indicate a more responsive instruction, better-organized learning experiences, timely feedback, and classrooms that are more engaging and supportive. These results generally indicate that instructional focus serves as the bridge between policy reforms aimed at workload reduction and actual improvements in classroom practice. The findings also suggest that policy initiatives should be accompanied by school-level systems that actively protect teachers' instructional time to ensure that administrative relief is translated into meaningful teaching improvements.

These findings are also supported by Dovale et al. (2020) that instructional focus allows teachers to prioritize planning and implementation, which supports the strong path from

instructional focus to teaching quality observed in this study. Similarly, De Guzman and Astillero (2025) reported that reducing administrative tasks enhanced teachers' instructional engagement, consistent with the strong effect of administrative task removal on instructional focus found here. Zhang et al. (2021) also noted that teacher agency and focus are essential for learner-centered instruction, reinforcing the mediating role identified in this analysis. In contrast to studies that treat workload reduction as having a direct and uniform effect on teaching quality, the current results clarify that its influence is largely indirect and operates through instructional focus. This distinction strengthens the evidence that instructional focus is not merely an outcome of reform but a critical mechanism that determines whether the removal of administrative tasks leads to sustained improvements in teaching quality.

Table 9. Thematic Analysis on the Emerging Principles from the Experiences of Elementary Public-School Teachers and School Heads upon Removal of Administrative Tasks

Theme	Initial Code/s	Sub- Theme/s	Description of Theme
Less Stress, More Motivation	Relief; Reduced Stress; Motivation	Emotional Relief; Renewed Drive	Teachers experienced reduced stress and emotional burden, which led to renewed motivation and readiness to perform their teaching duties effectively.
Teaching Becomes the Main Focus	Instructional Focus; Role Clarity	Teaching Priority; Professional Identity	Removal of administrative tasks allowed teachers to refocus on teaching as their primary role, strengthening their sense of purpose and identity as educators.
Better Lesson Preparation	Lesson Planning; Preparation; Creativity	Intentional Planning; Learner-Centered Design	Teachers used the recovered time to prepare lessons more thoughtfully, creatively, and in ways that better matched learners' needs.
Smoother Use of Class Time	Uninterrupted Instruction; Pacing	Lesson Flow: Time Management	Fewer administrative interruptions improved lesson pacing and continuity, allowing teachers to maximize instructional time.
More Engaged Learners	learner engagement; participation	interactive learning; active involvement	Improved preparation and focus enabled teachers to deliver more engaging lessons, leading to higher student participation and interest.
Better Support for Learners	feedback; assessment; remediation	individualized support; responsive teaching	Teachers were able to give more feedback, conduct remediation, and provide individual support when administrative demands were reduced.

Theme 1: Less Stress, More Motivation

The qualitative analysis revealed the dominant theme of "Less stress, more motivation," reflecting teachers' positive emotional and psychological responses to administrative task removal, leading to relief, reduced pressure, and renewed enthusiasm. This suggests that administrative duties previously strained teachers' time and mental capacity, hindering their instructional focus.

The resulting reduced stress enables teachers to be more emotionally stable, confident, and committed, positively impacting teaching quality and creating a supportive learning environment, aligning with findings from De Guzman and Astillero (2025), Skinner and Raine (2022), and Martin et al. (2023), who also emphasized the benefits of reduced administrative burdens on teacher morale, motivation, and engagement.

Theme 2: Teaching Becomes the Main Focus

The second dominant theme, "Teaching becomes the main focus," highlights how administrative task removal redirected teachers' attention and energy back to instruction, strengthening their sense of role clarity and reinforcing teaching as their primary responsibility. This clearer instructional focus led to improved lesson preparation, more thoughtful classroom decisions, and greater satisfaction, resulting in more focused instruction, better learning continuity, and stronger teacher-student relationships. These findings align with studies by Zhang et al. (2021), who noted that excessive administrative demands weaken teachers' instructional agency, and Washington (2025), who emphasized that instructional leadership improves when compliance-driven tasks are reduced.

Theme 3: Better Lesson Preparation

The qualitative analysis revealed "Better lesson preparation" as a dominant theme, illustrating how administrative task removal enabled teachers to plan lessons more thoughtfully, creatively, and responsively to learners' needs, strengthening a critical foundation of effective teaching. This suggests that reduced administrative burdens directly support instructional depth and planning quality, allowing teachers to address diverse learning needs and adjust instruction accordingly, resulting in clearer explanations and more engaging activities for students. These findings align with studies by Wu, Wang, and Shih (2025), who found that support and reduced non-instructional demands improved instructional planning, and Rehiraky (2025), who reported that greater autonomy and fewer constraints led to more responsive lesson planning.

Theme 4: Smoother Use of Class Time

The qualitative analysis identified "Smoother use of class time" as a dominant theme, illustrating how administrative task removal improved lesson flow, pacing, and continuity during classroom instruction, allowing teachers to maximize instructional time and sustain meaningful learning activities. This aligns with research by Sepe (2021), who found that reduced non-teaching responsibilities improved time management during blended learning, Schildkamp et al. (2021), who emphasized that administrative overload limits teachers' ability to use class time for assessment and feedback, and Santos et al. (2022), who noted that uninterrupted instructional time strengthens formative assessment practices.

Theme 5: More Engaged Learners

The qualitative analysis revealed "More engaged learners" as a dominant theme, indicating improved student participation, interest, and responsiveness following the reduction of administrative tasks, as teachers' increased instructional focus and better lesson preparation translated into more active and meaningful learner involvement. This aligns with findings from Santos et al. (2022), who reported that regular formative assessment and focused instruction increased learner motivation, and Gess-Newsome et al. (2022), who emphasized that teacher autonomy promotes active participation and collaboration, reinforcing that reduced administrative demands allow teachers to re-engage learners more effectively.

Theme 6: Better Support for Learners

The qualitative analysis highlighted "Better support for learners" as a key theme, indicating teachers' increased capacity to provide timely feedback, remediation, and individualized assistance after administrative tasks were reduced, enabling them to shift their attention from compliance to direct learner support. This enhances teachers' instructional confidence and learners' academic progress by addressing learning gaps and strengthening academic confidence. These findings align with Sepe (2021), who emphasized that reduced non-teaching responsibilities enabled teachers to monitor learners' progress more effectively, and Schildkamp et al. (2021), who found that administrative overload limited teachers' ability to analyze learner data and provide timely support, reinforcing the link between quality teaching and dedicated focus on students' learning needs.

Table 10. Thematic Analysis on the Emerging Principles from the Challenges of Elementary Public-School Teachers and School Heads upon Removal of Administrative Tasks

Theme	Initial Code/s	Sub-Theme/s	Description of Theme
Uneven policy implementation	inconsistency; unclear guidelines; uneven workload	lack of uniformity; role confusion	Differences in how the policy was applied across schools and districts created confusion, uneven workloads, and difficulty adjusting to the new system.
Limited support staff and resources	lack of staff; limited resources; infrastructure issues	staffing gaps; resource constraints	While support staff enabled implementation, shortages in personnel, materials, and infrastructure continued to limit full instructional focus.
Classroom and learner-related pressures	class size; behavior issues; learner needs	classroom management pressure	Classroom realities such as large classes, learner behavior, and immediate support needs continued to challenge teachers' instructional focus.
Adjustment and transition difficulties	unclear transition; lack of training	adaptation challenges; learning curve	Teachers faced challenges adjusting to the new system due to unclear guidance, limited orientation, and varying practices across schools.
Growth through adaptability	adaptability; flexibility; resilience	professional growth through challenge	Despite challenges, teachers developed adaptability, resilience, and problem-solving skills, helping them cope with change and sustain teaching quality.

Theme 1: Uneven Policy Implementation

The analysis of challenges revealed "Uneven policy implementation" as a major theme, highlighting difficulties experienced due to inconsistent application of the administrative task removal policy across schools and districts, leading to confusion, uneven workloads, and delays in realizing the intended benefits of the reform. This aligns with studies by Aithal and Aithal (2020), who noted that education reforms often lose effectiveness when implementation varies due to weak guidelines, and Gultom et al. (2021) and Kumar and Chander (2023), who found that uneven policy rollout and lack of shared understanding slowed reform progress and created additional workload.

Theme 2: Limited Support Staff and Resources

The qualitative analysis identified "Limited support staff and resources" as a theme, indicating that despite administrative task removal, teachers continued to face structural challenges, emphasizing that the policy's effectiveness was tied to the availability of support personnel, instructional materials, and adequate infrastructure. This reinforces the need for workload reduction policies to be reinforced by adequate institutional support, aligning with findings from De Guzman and Astillero (2025), who reported that administrative relief is most effective when schools have sufficient support staff, Skinner and Raine (2022), who argued that motivation and engagement improve with both administrative and material support, and Martin et al. (2023), who showed that reduced bureaucratic demands paired with strong organizational support lead to higher teacher engagement.

Theme 3: Classroom and Learner-Related Pressures

The qualitative analysis revealed "Classroom and learner-related pressures" as a theme, highlighting the persistent instructional challenges teachers faced even after administrative tasks were reduced, such as large class sizes, learner behavior issues, and immediate student support needs, demanding significant time and emotional energy. This aligns with research by Gultom et al. (2021), who noted similar challenges in Indonesia despite policy adjustments, and Kumar and Chander (2023), who found that inadequate resources and overcrowded classrooms limited teachers' ability to fully benefit from reform initiatives.

Theme 4: Adjustment and Transition Difficulties

The qualitative analysis identified "Adjustment and transition difficulties" as a theme, capturing the challenges teachers and school heads encountered while adapting to the new system following administrative task removal, marked by uncertainty, unclear role definitions, limited orientation, and inconsistent application across schools. This aligns with Aithal and Aithal (2020), who reported that unclear guidelines slowed effective reform rollout, and Kumar and Chander (2023), who observed teacher confusion during NEP 2020 implementation due to insufficient

orientation, with the present findings adding a grounded perspective on how teachers gradually adapted through collaboration and flexibility.

Theme 5: Growth through Adaptability

The qualitative analysis revealed "Growth through adaptability" as a theme, showcasing how teachers and school heads developed resilience, flexibility, and professional maturity while navigating challenges accompanying administrative task removal, viewing these challenges as opportunities for growth rather than disengagement. This aligns with Arimbhi et al. (2021), who noted that unclear guidelines forced implementers to rely on flexibility, with the present study extending this understanding by showing adaptability as a positive developmental outcome of administrative task removal, suggesting that even amid imperfections, teachers gain space to grow professionally, contrasting with Varghese (2023), who warned that misalignment between policy and capacity could undermine reform goals.

Table 11. Thematic Analysis on the Emerging Principles from the Performance of Elementary Public-School Teachers and School Heads upon Removal of Administrative Tasks

Theme	Initial Code/s	Sub-Theme/s	Description of Theme
Better planning, better teaching	more planning time; improved lesson design; preparation	thoughtful planning; clear and engaging lessons; aligned activities	Teachers reported stronger teaching performance when administrative tasks were reduced because they had more time to prepare clear, engaging, and organized lessons.
Smoother classroom routines	smoother routines; proactive management; teacher presence	consistent routines; quicker response; positive environment	Teachers described improved classroom management as preparation time and teacher presence increased, supporting smoother routines and faster responses to learners' needs.
Stronger assessment and feedback	more time for assessment; feedback quality; monitoring progress	formative assessment; early gap spotting; data-based adjustment	Teachers reported better performance in monitoring learning because they could assess more often, provide timely feedback, and adjust instruction based on learner progress.
Higher student engagement and results	engagement increase; improved scores; active participation	interactive learning; improved achievement; timely completion	Teachers linked improved performance to stronger learner engagement and better achievement, as evidenced by increased participation, deeper classroom responses, and improved test outcomes.
Overall performance growth	performance growth; instructional focus; confidence	perceived improvement level; teaching quality gain	Across respondents, teachers reported clear performance growth, ranging from moderate to significant or outstanding, linked to improved instructional focus and teaching quality.

Theme 1: Better Planning, Better Teaching

The analysis of teachers' performance revealed "Better planning, better teaching" as a dominant theme, illustrating how administrative task removal enabled teachers and school heads to strengthen their instructional preparation and overall teaching quality, leading to more thoughtful, organized, and engaging instruction. This aligns with Andaya and Qunito (2025), who found that reducing non-teaching responsibilities allowed teachers to engage more deeply in lesson planning, De Jong, Meirink, and Admiraal (2022), who reported that minimized administrative pressures led to greater cognitive effort in pedagogical design, and Calilung and Villanueva (2023), who showed that teachers became more intentional in lesson preparation when clerical tasks were delegated, reinforcing the central role of preparation in instructional performance.

Theme 2: Smoother Classroom Routines

The analysis of teachers' performance identified "Smoother classroom routines" as a dominant theme, illustrating how administrative task removal strengthened teachers' ability to manage classrooms more consistently and effectively, with teachers becoming more present, attentive, and organized during instruction. This aligns with De Jong, Meirink, and Admiraal (2022), who emphasized that reduced administrative pressure allows teachers to focus on instructional flow, and Calilung and Villanueva (2023), who found that when teachers were relieved of clerical duties, they demonstrated more consistent classroom management, reinforcing the role of instructional focus in sustaining smooth and effective classroom routines.

Theme 3: Stronger Assessment and Feedback

The analysis of teachers' performance identified "Stronger assessment and feedback" as a key theme, reflecting improved teachers' ability to monitor student learning, provide timely feedback, and refine instruction after administrative task removal, with teachers reporting better performance when they had sufficient time and focus to design assessments and respond to learning needs. This aligns with De Jong, Meirink, and Admiraal (2022), who emphasized that minimizing administrative demands allows teachers to engage more deeply in assessment, and Calilung and Villanueva (2023), who observed that teachers became more systematic in monitoring student learning when clerical tasks were delegated, reinforcing the role of timely, data-informed assessment in improving teaching performance.

Theme 4: Higher Student Engagement and Results

The analysis of teachers' performance revealed "Higher student engagement and results" as a dominant theme, reflecting observable improvements in learners' participation, motivation, and academic outcomes following administrative task removal, with increased instructional focus and better-prepared lessons translating into more active classroom interaction and improved learner performance. This aligns with Skinner and Raine (2022), who emphasized that student engagement increases when teachers can focus on instruction, Martin et al. (2023), who found that

reduced bureaucratic interruptions led to higher classroom interaction, and Capone and Lepore (2022), who showed that learner-centered environments promote motivation when institutional pressures are minimized.

Theme 5: Overall Performance Growth

The analysis of teachers' performance identified "Overall performance growth" as a dominant theme, reflecting a holistic improvement in instructional focus, teaching quality, and professional confidence following administrative task removal, with teachers consistently describing noticeable gains in their effectiveness as educators. This aligns with De Guzman and Astillero (2025), who reported that workload reduction enhanced teachers' self-efficacy, Andaya and Quinito (2025), who emphasized that instructional focus supported by enabling policies leads to sustained professional growth, and Zhang et al. (2021), who showed that teachers perform better when organizational structures protect instructional time.

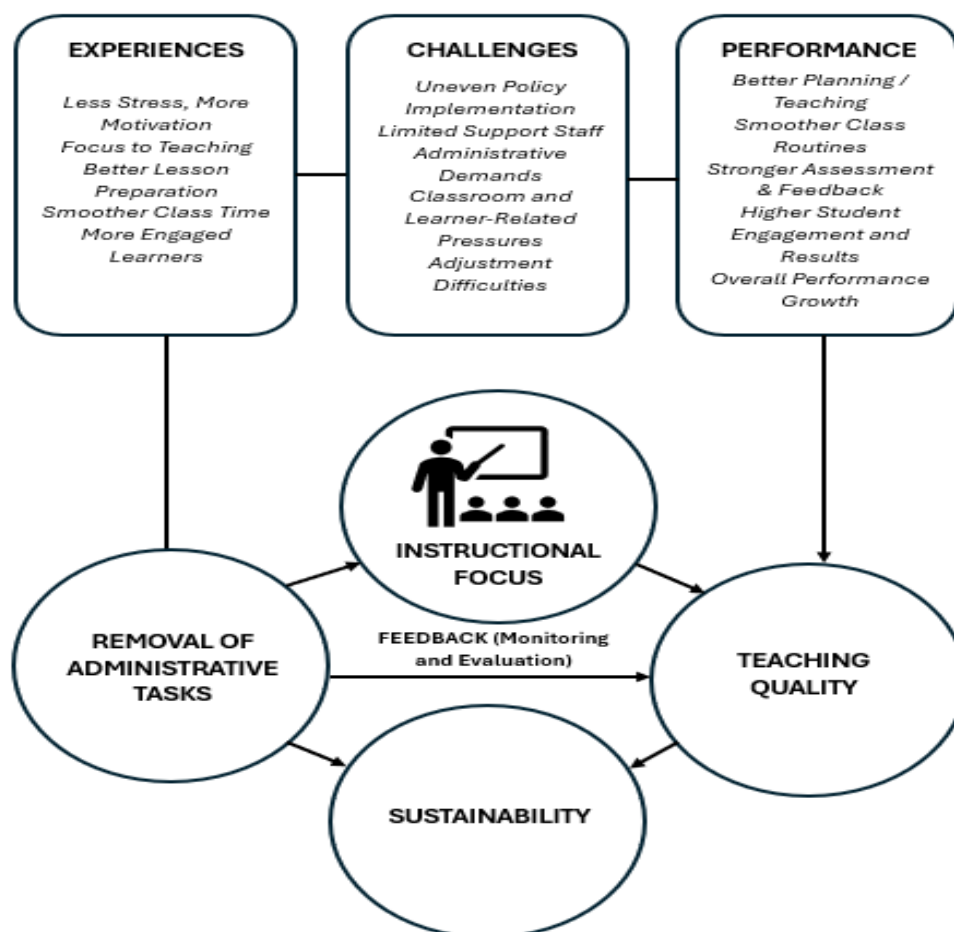


Figure 1. Integrative Instruction – Centered Workload Model

Figure 1 shows the Integrative Instruction-Centered Workload Model that is proposed based on the research results. This illustrates how removing administrative tasks reshapes teachers' work, strengthening instruction and sustaining teaching quality. At the foundation of the model is the removal of administrative tasks, which reduces non-teaching demands that previously competed with classroom responsibilities. This change directly influences teachers' experiences, where they report less stress, renewed motivation, clearer focus on teaching, better lesson preparation, smoother use of class time, and more engaged learners. These positive experiences reflect the immediate personal and professional effects of workload reduction.

At the same time, the model recognizes challenges that remain present even after administrative tasks are reduced. These include uneven policy implementation across schools, limited support staff, ongoing administrative demands, classroom and learner-related pressures, and adjustment difficulties during transition. These challenges explain why workload reform alone support systems, clear guidelines, and consistent implementation is not enough and why they are needed. Teachers and school heads respond to these challenges by developing adaptability, flexibility, and resilience, which become part of the instructional process rather than barriers to it.

At the center of the model is instructional focus, which serves as the connecting mechanism between workload reform and teaching outcomes. With fewer administrative distractions, teachers are able to concentrate on planning, classroom management, assessment and feedback, motivation and engagement, and learner support. Instructional focus is strengthened through continuous feedback, monitoring, and evaluation, allowing teachers and school heads to reflect on practice and make timely adjustments.

As instructional focus improves, the model shows clear gains in performance, including better planning and teaching, smoother classroom routines, stronger assessment and feedback practices, higher student engagement and results, and overall performance growth. These improvements lead to enhanced teaching quality, which then feeds into sustainability. Sustainability represents the long-term goal of the model, where improved teaching practices, supported by reduced administrative workload and strong instructional focus, can be maintained over time. Generally, the model highlights that meaningful workload reform must center on instruction, address challenges, and support continuous improvement to achieve lasting teaching quality.

4. Recommendations

This study recommends that DepEd officials strengthen the implementation of the MATATAG Agenda through consistent application, monitoring, and support, while policymakers should use the findings to refine policies and provide sustainable support. School heads should establish clear internal systems, prioritize instructional leadership, and support professional development. Teachers should actively engage in instructional practices and provide feedback, while non-teaching staff should support school operations through defined roles and continuous training. Learners should leverage improved instruction and provide feedback, and stakeholders should actively participate in school initiatives. Future research should replicate and extend this study to explore long-term effects and additional influencing factors.

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