

Balancing Leadership and Management of School-in-Charge's Dual Roles

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Abstract. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to obtain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of school-in-charge in balancing their dual roles of both leading schools and teaching. The 10 participants were purposely selected based on their positions and functions. Semi-structured interview was conducted to gather the data and their responses were evaluated to evaluate data saturation. Thematic analysis was conducted to analyze the data using Creswell's mode of analysis. The analysis reveal that School-In-Charges handle both administrative and instructional duties, managing complex and overlapping responsibilities. Despite challenges such as limited support and heavy workloads, they show resilience and find fulfillment in school and student progress. To cope, they adopt effective practices like collaboration and time management. While the dual role can impact their well-being, it also fosters personal and professional growth, shaping them into more capable and reflective leaders. The experiences of the participants highlight the need for targeted support, training, and clear role definitions to help them effectively manage dual responsibilities. Strengthening these areas can enhance school leadership, improve performance, and promote the well-being of those in charge.

Keywords: Dual roles; Leadership; Lived experiences; School-in-charge; Workload management

1.0 Introduction

In many remote and resource-constrained areas, particularly in barangay schools, there is a shortage of formally designated principals. To address this gap, the Division Superintendent appoints School-In-Charge (SIC) personnel—usually teachers with at least three years of teaching experience—to manage these schools. Despite lacking the full authority of principals, SICs are tasked with overseeing both administrative and academic functions, often while continuing their duties as class advisers.

According to DepEd Order No. 66, s. 2010 (Revised Guidelines on the Appointment and Functions of School

Heads), a School-In-Charge is designated by the Division Superintendent to perform the functions of a principal in the absence of a formally appointed school head. The School-In-Charge is responsible for overseeing the overall administration and supervision of the school, implementing school policies and programs, managing personnel and resources to ensure effective school operations and providing leadership in instructional supervision and school improvement initiatives. This official mandate underscores the critical role of SICs in ensuring continuity of leadership and quality education delivery in schools without a principal.

The dual role of SIC and class adviser is critical in ensuring that school's function despite limited leadership resources. However, this dual responsibility creates significant challenges. Research highlights that managing both administrative duties and classroom responsibilities simultaneously can lead to role conflict, emotional strain, and difficulty in excelling in either role (Torrino & Naparan, 2024). These challenges are compounded by limited institutional support and time constraints, especially in multigrade schools where instructional demands are already high.

Current leadership frameworks (Bush, 2020; Mendoza & De Jesus, 2024) emphasize the integration of leadership and management functions. However, most studies focus on principals and headteachers, leaving the experiences of SICs largely unexplored. Given the unique context of barangay schools and the pivotal role of School-In-Charge's, there is a clear gap in understanding how these mid-level leaders navigate their dual roles without compromising school and classroom outcomes.

This study aims to explore the experiences of School-In-Charge personnel in schools who simultaneously fulfill leadership and classroom management roles. Specifically, it seeks to investigate how School-In-Charge perceive their dual responsibilities as school leaders and class advisers, identify the strategies School-In-Charge use to balance administrative duties and classroom management, and examine the challenges and barriers School-In-Charge face in these dual roles provide recommendations to improve support systems for School-In-Charge to enhance school leadership and instructional outcomes.

The significance of this study lies in its focus on a largely overlooked group of educational leaders whose roles are essential to the functioning of many remote schools. By amplifying the voices of School-In-Charge, this research contributes to a more inclusive understanding of educational leadership in the Philippine context. Furthermore, the findings may inform policy and practice, helping education authorities provide better institutional support, professional development, and resources to these crucial school leaders.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

Phenomenology Research Design was used in the conduct of this study to explore the lived experiences of School-In-Charge in balancing their dual roles as a classroom teacher and school managers. Phenomenology places emphasis on how they experience challenges and insights in managing both roles of teaching and leading the schools. Using this approach, the researchers look into the innermost life experiences of the schools-In-Charge, considering the dual roles they have as teachers and leaders of a school, how they cope up with the challenges they encounter and what insights they can share to others about their roles in teaching and leading schools.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in selected schools. These schools were chosen due to their accessibility, relevance to the study, and representation of the educational context in the area. This location ensured a sufficient sample size of potential participants and access to rich, firsthand accounts of the experiences and challenges within educational administration, facilitated by the presence of numerous SIC-managed schools.

2.3 Research Participants

In the selection of the participants, this qualitative-phenomenological study followed the idea of Creswell (2013) and in using a sample size between five to twenty-five. Considering this proposal, the researchers chose (10) Schools-In-Charge from selected schools. These participants were chosen to have diverse experiences, challenges and insights of the school-In-Charge in balancing their dual roles as classroom teachers and school leaders. The study, therefore, focused on a small but purposeful sample to extract rich detailed descriptions from the schools-

In-Charge's experiences and perceptions on their dual roles as teachers and school leaders. The criteria for inclusion stipulated that participants should be a School-In-Charge, both handling regular classes and leading and managing the school they are assigned to, to ensure that they would be able to reflect meaningfully on their experiences.

2.4 Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview tool is used in this study to investigate SIC's lived experiences juggling several roles and responsibilities. Open-ended questions from Creswell's (2013) framework for qualitative research were used in a semi-structured interview guide. The purpose of the guide is to record the voices, lived experiences, and insights of school-in-charge leaders who are juggling management and leadership duties. The difficulties they encountered, their coping mechanisms, and what are their insights to be shared with others of their dual roles were the main topics of these inquiries. Because it was semi-structured, participants were able to contribute personal and in-depth ideas with flexibility. Every interview was done in-person to guarantee a more thorough and intimate comprehension of their actual leadership experiences.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

This study follows six stages. Firstly, the researcher introduced the study and responded to inquiries from participants. Second, official permission was acquired by confirming ethical compliance. Third was the validation process. Phase four asking permission and giving consent that we are allowed to conduct and interview assuring them that their responses will be anonymized and remain confidential. In phase five, in-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured tools and lastly, transcription and analysis occurred in phase seven, focusing on discovering patterns and themes.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were maintained throughout the study, with informed consent obtained, and confidentiality and voluntary participation of the respondents ensured. Following this extensive process, the research captured rich ongoing insight of School-In-Charge (SIC) lived experiences, challenges they encountered and their insight to be shared by others on their dual roles as school leaders and classroom managers. In this study, ethical treatment of participants was given high priority, specifically ensuring that participants would not be caused any kind of harm or discomfort during the study process. Informed consent was sought from the respondents before the study was undertaken. It stated explicitly the purpose, procedures, and possible outcomes. The different School-In-Charge in selected schools as participants in this study, were thoroughly informed that their privacy and confidentiality would be highly respected and personal data was securely kept. Their participation was entirely voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any stage without any repercussions. The whole study process involved open and truthful communication, transparency, and respect for the dignity and well-being of all the participants.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Managing Multifaceted Professional Responsibilities

This theme highlights the inherently demanding role of school-in-charge. Their role transcends mere administration; it's a multifaceted leadership position demanding a unique blend of skills, vision, and unwavering commitment. SIC's face a multitude of responsibilities spanning administration, instruction, student welfare, community relations, and navigating ever-evolving educational landscapes:

"The lived experiences of being a School-in-Charge who serve in dual roles as both teachers and school leaders, often referred to as School Improvement Coordinators, encompass a range of challenges, rewards, and strategies for managing responsibilities." (SIC1)

"I attend meetings, develop school plans, and manage co-teachers." (SIC 2)

"I asserted the administrative tasks take precedence over teaching because of roles since instead of teaching due to ASAP reports to be submitted, teaching responsibility is left behind which makes it disadvantageous to my learners to cope learning on that time or day. If there are meeting, workloads will be left behind." (SIC3)

"I often struggle to manage my time effectively." (SIC9)

"heavy workload tied to being a school-in-charge including preparing liquidation reports, completing urgent related documents, attending meetings, and participating in seminars." (SIC6)

"balancing teaching responsibilities with leadership duties." (SIC7)

Managing dual roles as both a teacher and a school leader presents a complex balancing act that requires significant time management, prioritization, and adaptability. School-in-Charge professionals, or School Improvement Coordinators, must navigate a demanding landscape where administrative duties often overshadow teaching responsibilities. This can detract from their primary mission of education, as seen when pressing tasks like report submissions take precedence over classroom engagement. The challenge lies in finding a sustainable equilibrium between these demands, ensuring that neither role is compromised. This dual responsibility can lead to a heavy workload, as evidenced by the need to prepare various reports, attend an array of meetings, and participate in ongoing professional development. As such, these individuals must cultivate a robust set of strategies, including effective delegation, strategic planning, and self-care, to maintain their well-being while fulfilling their multifaceted roles. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that their leadership enhances, rather than hinders, the educational experience for both themselves and their learners. Provide students with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in an increasingly interconnected world (Llego, M. A. 2022). SICs must balance their instructional role with broader leadership and management functions, which can be very demanding.

Resilience and Fulfillment in Professional Life

The theme emphasizes that effective and resilient leaders are driven by a sense of purpose, a commitment to student success, teacher development, and the overall well-being of the school community. The pursuit of fulfillment suggests that these leaders seek intrinsic rewards and satisfaction from making a positive impact, even amidst the pressures. However, the ability to directly influence both classroom learning and the overall school environment can indeed make this challenging work deeply fulfilling:

"Working as a school in-charge is challenging yet a fulfilling one." (SIC5)

"Striking a balance between these dual roles remains a daily challenge, one that requires continuous adjustment and resilience." (SIC6)

" involves constantly switching between teaching and leading which can be overwhelming but also fulfilling." (SIC8)

"but it is fulfilling when I was able to rise above these challenges, and I guess it gave me happiness that money could not buy." (SIC7)

Balancing the roles of teaching and leading as a school in-charge can feel like walking a tightrope; each step demands focus, agility, and perseverance. The dual responsibilities require one to constantly shift gears from nurturing young minds in the classroom to making strategic decisions that shape the educational environment. This dynamic can be overwhelming at times, as it involves not only managing daily tasks but also addressing unforeseen challenges with grace and poise. However, the rewards of this balancing act are profound. The fulfillment comes from witnessing students grow and succeed, knowing that your leadership contributed to their achievements. It's a poignant reminder that the value of such work isn't measured in monetary terms, but in the lasting impact made on the lives of others. The dual role of a School-in-Charge as both teacher and leader likely presents a constant balancing act, demanding significant resilience and adaptability. Along with opportunities for career advancement and recognition, teachers' passion for education and learning motivates them to take on leadership roles (Aquino et al., 2023). Facilitative leadership aims to empower followers to make decisions and promote better team communication and productivity (Shonk, 2024). This sense of purpose and joy, derived from overcoming obstacles and making a difference, is perhaps the most significant reward of all.

Effective Professional Practices

The theme in this question comes from the specific research question: "How do the heads cope up with the challenges they encountered in their dual roles of both teaching and leading schools?" This theme discusses how the School-in-charge in dual roles face the constant challenge of balancing teaching and leading responsibilities. In order to remain effective, they develop key professional practices focused on time management and leveraging their unique position. This includes meticulous organization, collaborating with colleagues and finding ways to integrate their classroom insights into their leadership decisions.

School-in-Charge said:

"I personally juggle the dual roles of teaching and leading often face unique challenges but I cope these challenges by balancing

time management and prioritization, effective communication and collaboration, professional development or updating on best practices and address the evolving demands (of) as our roles; self-care and work-life balance, and leveraging strengths and seeking support from colleagues and stakeholders.” (SIC 1)

“cope with challenges through prioritizing tasks, building strong support systems, collaborating with stakeholders and embracing continuous learning and professional development.” (SIC2)

“Collaboration among teaching staff, stakeholders, and parents is really needed and delegating workload among teachers.” (SIC3)

“Having proper time management in handling both teaching and leadership roles. I make sure to plan my day well, set priorities, and follow the schedule so that I can satisfy both responsibilities without being overwhelmed.” (SIC 4)

“Manage their time effectively, delegate tasks, and prioritize.” (SIC7)

“Effective Time Management: Prioritization of tasks: I schedule my day meticulously, allotting specific times for teaching, administrative tasks, and meetings.” (SIC9)

Balancing the dual roles of teaching and leadership is a multifaceted challenge that demands a diverse set of skills and strategies. From the insights shared, it's evident that effective time management is a cornerstone of success in these roles. By meticulously scheduling the day and prioritizing tasks, individuals can ensure they are addressing both teaching and administrative responsibilities without becoming overwhelmed. Furthermore, the importance of collaboration and building strong support systems cannot be overstated. Engaging with colleagues, stakeholders, and parents fosters a sense of community and shared responsibility. This collaboration not only helps in delegating tasks but also in gaining varied perspectives that can enhance decision-making and problem-solving.

Continuous learning and professional development are also crucial. Staying updated with best practices and evolving educational demands ensures that leaders are equipped to meet challenges head-on. This commitment to growth reflects an adaptability and openness to change, which are vital in the ever-evolving landscape of education. Lastly, self-care and maintaining a work-life balance are essential. By taking care of their own well-being, educators can bring their best selves to their professional roles, ultimately benefiting their students and colleagues alike. In summary, the integration of these strategies creates a robust framework for successfully navigating the complexities of teaching and leadership.

These responses from the school-in-charge individuals implies that they manage their dual roles through careful planning and prioritization of tasks. They emphasize open communication with colleagues and stakeholders. Delegating responsibilities is a key strategy they use in order to handle their workload. In addition, they also recognize the importance of continuous learning and seeking support in order to successfully manage the demands of their multifaceted roles. The key to managing these challenges lies in a combination of effective strategies. First and foremost, time management is crucial. By setting clear priorities and creating a structured schedule, individuals can ensure that they allocate appropriate time for teaching, administrative duties, and personal development.

Personal and Professional Well-Being and Growth

This theme is derived from the same research question that states: “How do the heads cope up with the challenges they encountered in their dual roles of both teaching and leading schools?” This theme encapsulates the constant demands of dual roles which often lead to significant stress and pressure on their personal well-being. The school-in-charge report struggles with time scarcity and blurred work-life boundaries. To cope, they often employ strategies like seeking support from colleagues and continuously trying to manage their workload.

School-in-Charge said:

“I prioritized having proper time management and creating clear goals. I started each day by arranging my tasks, making sure to schedule precise periods for both teaching and administrative duties. I ensure that I'm staying organized and focused on what needs immediate attention.” (SIC5)

“Working late into the evenings or over weekends has become a common way to catch up, though this can lead to fatigue and, at times, burnout.” (SIC6)

“As a SIC, I cope with the challenges by staying organized, seeking support from colleagues, and staying grounded in my purpose. It's not always easy, but teamwork and passion keep me going.” (SIC8)

"We cope by prioritizing, delegating when possible, and building strong relationships with our staff. Open communication and clear expectations are key. Time management is critical, and we often find ourselves working long hours to balance everything." (SIC10)

Effective time management and prioritization are regularly highlighted in the responses of the SIC's as essential for managing their dual roles. They also emphasize the importance of collaboration with stakeholders, including staff and teaching aides from the local government unit, to share responsibilities in order to lighten their workloads. They also acknowledge the long hours and personal sacrifices often required to balance teaching and administrative duties effectively. Open communication and clear expectations within the school community are also seen as vital for successful coping.

More recent local study in the Philippines, merged three themes from their findings: school heads' performance reviews, their challenges in carrying out their dual responsibilities, and the coping mechanisms they use to do so. They found their dual position to be both tough and rewarding, and they used various coping mechanisms to deal with their difficulties. Their performance in their twin duties was acknowledged and valued, and their efforts toward them were outstanding. Thus, teachers in rural areas who served as school administrators need to manage their time in doing their huge responsibilities (Torrino & Naparan, 2024). Ultimately, the following key aspects emerged from their observations: distribution of chances for professional growth, funding for more support personnel and instructional materials, acquisition of school equipment and facilities, designate a school leader who does not have a teaching load and exhibit resilience (Sibay & Gonzales, 2024).

In addition, study on Time Management Strategies of School Administrators Towards Effective Administration in the Western Philippines, pointed out that school administrators created time management techniques such as assigning responsibilities, establishing priorities, controlling distractions, creating written plans, and creating schedules. These time management strategies were focused on the administrative supervision of the school administrators. These time management strategies could make the school operation smooth and easy and help them accomplish the administrators' tasks efficiently (Naparan & Tulod, 2021)

These studies suggest that being a school head, particularly in rural or underserved areas of the Philippines, is a complex and challenging job that calls for a great deal of institutional support, resources and personal resilience in addition to strong leadership abilities and efficient time management. The results highlight the necessity of recognizing the complexity of both roles and putting policies in place that enable school administrators to successfully carry out their multiple duties and ultimately improve the quality of education.

Proactive Professional Effectiveness

This theme emerged from the research question "What are the insights of SIC in their dual roles of both teaching and leading school that can be shared with others?" SIC2 and SIC4 highlighted the importance of being proactive to deal with the pressures of instructional and administrative work. Most leadership practices were rigorous, focusing on networking and overseeing school operations (Dellomas & Deri, 2022). Flexibility enables SICs to address both expected and unexpected demands while maintaining a positive school environment. Both agreed that being proactive—through strategic planning, anticipating issues, and remaining flexible—helps them deal with the responsibilities of their dual roles more effectively. Through establishing distinct goals, and managing their own time, they can remain calm in a stressful environment. This promotes good leadership development that allows them to thrive in difficult and more resilient learning environments.

"Being flexible, open, and thoughtful work well for me as a SIC." (SIC2)

"Balancing teaching and leadership duties become easier when you remain organized, establish clear priorities, and schedule your task in advance." (SIC4)

Research has indicated that a proactive professional approach is necessary in handling dual roles in school. For instance, Ambid (2024) research ascertained that proactive leadership determines the work quality and motivation of the teacher favorably. Proactive leadership helps in promoting productive change, conquering obstacles, and optimizing opportunity in various scenarios. The research also underscored the important aspect for school leaders is to foster proactive ability to build a culture of continuous improvement and professional growth.

Further research by Thompson (2023) noted that the critical element of proactive leadership is anticipating barriers and opportunities. This remains in advance by searching for things in the pipeline that would significantly contribute to the success of the organization.

Collaborative Growth and Impact

The results indicated that SICs, as instructional leaders and teachers, play a pivotal role in stimulating collaboration to drive their professional development and enhance teaching. SIC6 and SIC10 emphasized that holding both positions enabled them to bridge the gaps between leadership decisions and classroom realities, rendering their advice more relatable and effective. By participating in collaborative activity planning and best practice demonstrations, SICs were able to establish trust and facilitate reflective discussion among teachers, leading to more integrated teaching strategies and increased student achievement. Their dual role also allowed them to pinpoint specific areas for growth based on their immediate classroom experience, making them authoritative change agents. The collaboration fostered and maintained by SICs has produced valuable positive results within the school. It has brought increased teacher commitment, as teachers feel more valued, involved, and supported in decision-making. The SICs' support for these collaborative systems reinforces team bonds, constructs a shared vision of teaching and learning, and inspires school improvement on a sustainable level.

"One key realization is that leadership is not about doing everything alone-it's about building strong partnerships with colleagues, stakeholders, and the community to create a supportive and sustainable environment for both teaching and learning." (SIC6)

"My experience highlights the importance of strong teacher-leader relationships. Being in the classroom gives me a unique understanding of teachers' needs and challenges which informs my leadership decisions. This direct connection fosters trust and collaboration, leading to more effective school improvement." (SIC10)

In reflecting upon the insights shared, it becomes evident that leadership within educational settings transcends the traditional notion of a solitary figure at the helm. Instead, it emphasizes the strength found in collaboration and community engagement. The first passage highlights the transformative power of partnerships, underscoring that true leadership involves rallying a collective of diverse voices to foster an environment conducive to growth and learning. This collaborative approach not only supports educators but also enriches the learning experiences of students by drawing from a wide array of perspectives and expertise.

The second response delves into the pivotal role of teacher-leader relationships. It suggests that leaders who maintain a direct connection with the classroom gain invaluable insights into the daily realities faced by teachers. This proximity not only informs leadership decisions but also builds a foundation of trust. When teachers feel understood and supported, they are more likely to engage actively in school improvement initiatives, leading to more meaningful and lasting changes.

From my perspective, these ideas align with the evolving demands of modern education systems. In an era where challenges are increasingly complex, fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual respect is essential. Leaders who prioritize empathy and active listening can create a more inclusive and responsive educational environment. By valuing the voices of teachers and stakeholders, leaders can craft solutions that are not only innovative but also deeply rooted in the authentic needs of their communities. This collaborative ethos is key to navigating the ever-changing landscape of education and ensuring that both teachers and students thrive. Related study emphasized the essential of collaboration in the learning environment in handling both administrative and teaching tasks. A study from Torrino & Naparan (2024) revealed that collaboration with the teachers and stakeholders enhance the effectiveness of dual responsibilities. Collaboration is a technique to work hand in hand in the organization to achieve the common goal. This practice means exchanging knowledge, asking for ideas and opinions, and gaining a better sense of work. Through this, they will efficiently finish a task within a given time. Another study from Dunn (2023) A collaborative leader in education doesn't assert a vision; they co-create one. By engaging all the stakeholders, they make sure the educational goals appeal to everyone. This common vision creates a sense of shared ownership, compelling everyone to strive for it with the same passion.

4.0 Conclusion

School-In-Charges face numerous challenges in balancing instructional and administrative responsibilities while

meeting the expectations of both supervisors and the school community. This dual role often limits their capacity to fully focus on instructional leadership due to the constant demands of daily operations. This study underscores the need for mindful learning, resilience, and a holistic approach to leadership and management by identifying the specific barriers SICs encounter. It highlights the value of cultivating a growth mindset that supports continuous learning and professional advancement. Maintaining such a mindset involves engaging in meaningful collaboration and dialogue that reinforce core values and reflective practices. These strategies not only help SICs thrive in their dual roles but also promote sustainable leadership within the school system.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Author 1: Conceptualization, data gathering, data analysis, writing the results and discussion for theme 1, editing of introduction.
 Author 2: Data gathering, data analysis, writing the abstract and introduction.
 Author 3: Data gathering, writing the results and discussion for theme 2.
 Author 4: Data gathering, writing the results and discussion for theme 3.
 Author 5: Data gathering, writing the results and discussion for theme 4.
 Author 6: Data gathering, writing the results and discussion for theme 5.
 Author 7: Data gathering, writing the methods and conclusion.
 Author 8: Data gathering, writing the results and discussion for theme 6.
 Author 9: Editing of title, abstract, method, and conclusion.

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7.0 Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

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