

Establishing a Balance Between Leadership Priorities: A Qualitative Study on How School Heads Manage Their Time for Administrative and Instructional Tasks

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the time management practices of school heads in balancing administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision in Socorro, Surigao del Norte. The purpose of the study was to examine how school heads allocate their time, identify the strategies they employ in managing their dual leadership roles, and determine the barriers that affect efficient time management. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were gathered from ten school heads through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that school heads devote more time to administrative tasks, such as report preparation, meetings, compliance requirements, and stakeholder concerns, due to their urgent, deadline-driven nature. Although instructional supervision is recognized as essential, it is often postponed, interrupted, or rescheduled. School heads utilize strategies such as prioritization, scheduling, delegation, time-blocking, and collaboration; however, they continue to face challenges, including heavy workloads, overlapping deadlines, limited personnel support, frequent interruptions, and connectivity issues. The study highlights that administrative leadership tends to be reactive and compliance-based, while instructional leadership requires planned, focused, and protected time. Based on the findings, a localized capacity-building program, Project BALANCE, was developed to strengthen school heads' time-management practices. The study contributes to improving leadership efficiency by emphasizing the need for institutional support and structured time management systems in enhancing both administrative and instructional performance.

Keywords: Time Management Practices, Administrative Leadership, Instructional Supervision, School Heads, Capacity-Building Program

INTRODUCTION

School heads serve as key leaders in the educational system, responsible for ensuring both effective school operations and quality teaching and learning. In the Philippine context, Republic Act No. 9155 and the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) emphasize the dual responsibility of school heads to perform both administrative and instructional leadership functions.

Recent policy reforms, such as DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024, administrative tasks were shifted from teachers to school heads, thereby increasing their workload. This has created a complex environment where school heads must balance compliance-related responsibilities with instructional supervision. The challenge is even more evident in geographically isolated areas

such as Socorro, Surigao del Norte, where limited connectivity, transportation issues, and resource constraints affect leadership practices.

While administrative tasks are necessary for school operations, excessive workload often reduces the time available for instructional leadership, such as classroom observation, teacher coaching, and curriculum monitoring. Thus, effective time management becomes a crucial leadership competency.

This study aims to explore how school heads manage their time between administrative and instructional responsibilities, identify the strategies they use, examine the challenges they encounter, and develop a localized capacity-building program to support improved leadership practices.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aimed to examine the time management practices of school heads in balancing administrative tasks and instructional supervision in Socorro, Surigao del Norte.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do school heads allocate their time between administrative tasks and instructional supervision?
2. What strategies do school heads employ in managing their time effectively?
3. What barriers hinder school heads in managing their time efficiently?
4. What similarities and differences exist in managing administrative and instructional leadership roles?
5. What capacity-building program can be developed based on the findings of the study?

SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

This study examined the time management practices of school heads in balancing administrative tasks and instructional supervision. It involved ten (10) school heads from Socorro East and West Districts in Surigao del Norte, representing both elementary and secondary levels.

The study was limited to the experiences, strategies, and challenges of school heads during the third quarter of the 2025–2026 school year. It did not include teachers, students, or other stakeholders as primary respondents, nor did it employ quantitative measures or generalization beyond the study locale.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Existing literature highlights that school heads play a dual role in educational leadership, balancing administrative duties and instructional supervision. In the Philippine context, Republic

Act No. 9155 (2001) and the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (Department of Education, 2020) emphasize that school leaders are responsible for managing school operations while promoting teaching and learning. Studies indicate that administrative workload, including reporting requirements and compliance tasks, often consumes a significant portion of school heads' time, limiting their ability to focus on instructional leadership (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Ni et al., 2024; Gümüş et al., 2024).

Research emphasizes that effective time management involves prioritization, scheduling, delegation, and workload distribution. Patzak, Zhang, and Vytasek (2025) highlighted that task planning and organization improve productivity and performance. Similarly, Ayeni (2020) found that structured scheduling enables school leaders to balance administrative and instructional responsibilities more effectively, while Seth and Ntirandekura (2022) and Addo-Fordwuor et al. (2024) emphasized that delegation is a key strategy in reducing workload and improving efficiency.

Instructional leadership, particularly classroom observation and teacher coaching, has been shown to positively influence teaching quality and student outcomes. Grissom, Loeb, and Master (2013) emphasized that principals who devote time to instructional supervision contribute to improved student achievement, while He, Guo, and Abazie (2024) found that active instructional leadership supports teacher professional development. However, Donaldson, Mavrogordato, Youngs, and Dougherty (2024) noted that instructional supervision is often implemented as a compliance activity rather than a developmental practice due to time constraints.

Despite these strategies, challenges such as limited personnel support, frequent interruptions, heavy workloads, and poor infrastructure contribute to time-management difficulties. Ni et al. (2024) and Cansoy, Gümüş, and Walker (2025) identified workload and organizational demands as major barriers affecting school heads' effectiveness. Additionally, in geographically isolated settings, contextual constraints such as limited resources and poor connectivity further affect leadership practices (Volante et al., 2025; Dacer et al., 2025).

These factors are particularly evident in remote areas like Socorro, Surigao del Norte, where geographic isolation and limited infrastructure compound the challenges faced by school heads. According to Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020), leadership effectiveness is influenced by contextual conditions, with school environments significantly shaping how leaders manage their responsibilities.

Furthermore, literature distinguishes administrative leadership as urgent and compliance-driven, while instructional leadership is developmental and requires protected time (Shaked, 2025; Gümüş et al., 2024). This distinction explains why school heads often struggle to maintain a balance between the two roles.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on:

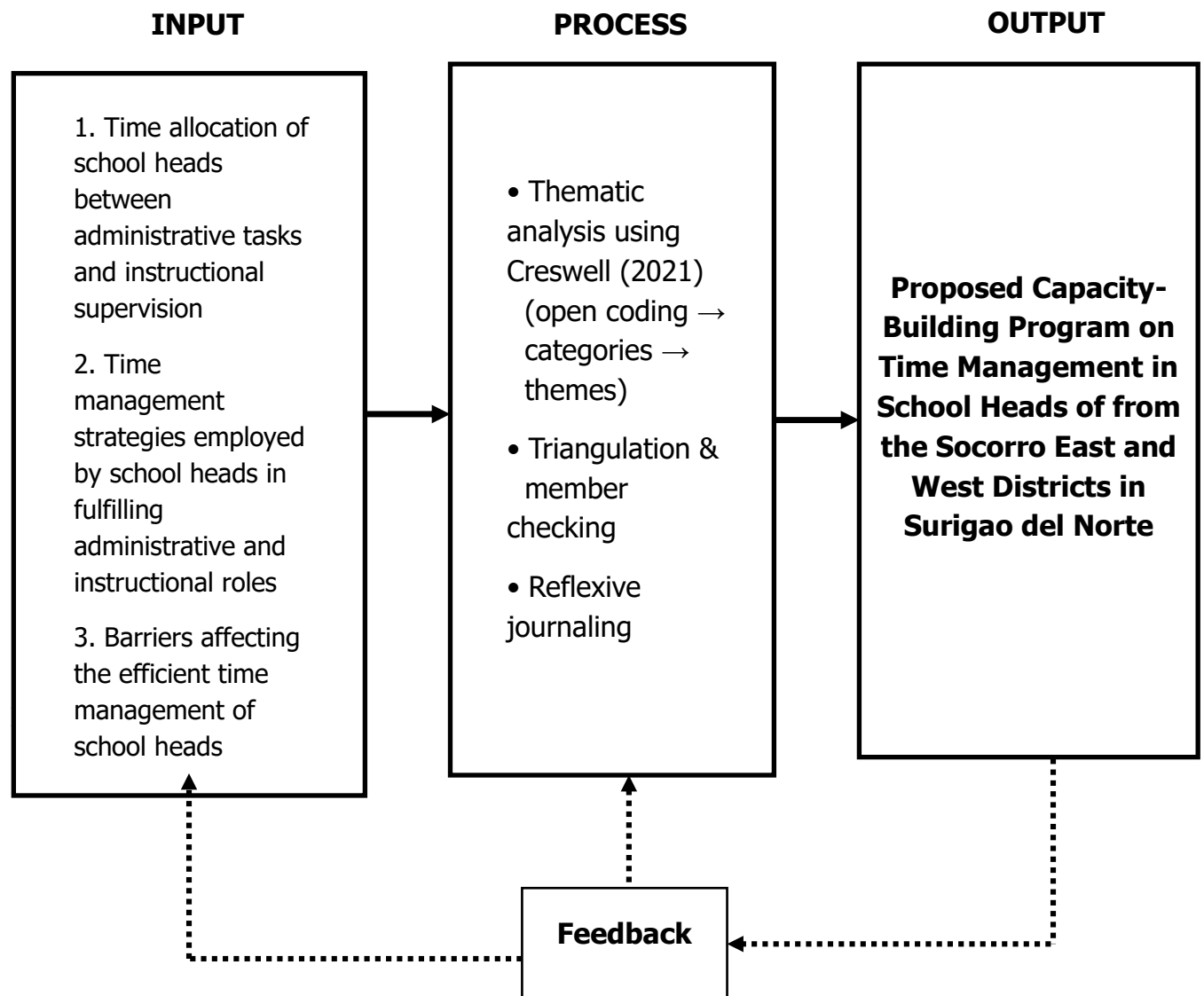
Time Management Theory, which explains how individuals organize and prioritize tasks to maximize efficiency and productivity.

Instructional Leadership Theory, which emphasizes the role of school heads in improving teaching and learning through supervision and support.

Role Theory, which explains how multiple responsibilities can lead to role conflict, overload, and challenges in task prioritization.

These theories support the examination of how school heads manage competing responsibilities in their roles.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the time management practices of school heads as they balance administrative tasks and instructional supervision.

Research Design

The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gather detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences, practices, and perspectives in their real working environment. This design was suitable because the study aimed to understand the strategies, barriers, and decision-making processes of school heads rather than to measure variables quantitatively.

Research Steps

The study followed a systematic set of steps to ensure the proper conduct of the research process. It began with an extensive review of related literature and studies to establish the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the investigation. This was followed by the development of the research design and the preparation of the semi-structured interview guide, which was aligned with the study's objectives. The instrument was then subjected to expert validation and pilot testing to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability.

After finalizing the research instrument, the researcher secured the necessary permissions from the appropriate authorities to conduct the study. Once approval was obtained, the researcher identified and selected the participants using purposive sampling based on the established criteria. The data collection phase followed, during which interviews were conducted with the selected school heads, and responses were audio-recorded and supplemented with field notes.

Subsequently, the collected data were transcribed verbatim and carefully reviewed for accuracy and completeness. The researcher then conducted thematic analysis to identify significant statements, assign codes, group similar responses, and develop themes based on patterns observed in the data. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, member checking, triangulation, and reflexive journaling were employed throughout the analysis process.

Finally, the results were interpreted in relation to the research questions and existing literature, leading to the formulation of conclusions and recommendations. Based on the findings, a localized capacity-building program was developed to address the identified needs of school heads in managing their time between administrative tasks and instructional supervision.

Research Participants and Sampling

The participants of this study were ten (10) school heads from the Socorro East and Socorro West Districts in Surigao del Norte, representing both elementary and secondary schools.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select the informants based on their direct involvement in performing both administrative tasks and instructional supervision. The inclusion criteria required that the participants:

- are currently serving as school heads, head teachers, or officers-in-charge;
- perform both administrative and instructional leadership functions;
- have at least three (3) years of experience in school leadership; and
- are willing to participate in the study.

This ensured that the participants could provide relevant, experience-based, and meaningful information aligned with the study's objectives.

Data Collection Procedure

The data for this study were gathered using a semi-structured interview guide designed to elicit information on school heads' time allocation, time management strategies, and challenges encountered in balancing administrative and instructional responsibilities. The interview guide was developed based on related literature and was subjected to expert validation and pilot testing to ensure clarity and relevance.

Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher obtained permission from the relevant authorities and explained the purpose of the study to the participants. Informed consent was obtained before the interviews were conducted.

Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 75 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' permission. Field notes were also taken to capture important observations and contextual details during the interview process.

Data Analysis Methods

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Creswell (2021), enabling the researcher to systematically examine participants' responses and identify meaningful patterns. The process began with the verbatim transcription of the interview responses to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data. This was followed by reading and re-reading the transcripts to gain familiarity and develop a general understanding of the participants' experiences. The researcher then identified significant statements and assigned codes to relevant segments of the data. These codes were further analyzed and grouped into categories based on similarities and relationships, resulting in emerging themes that reflected the study's core ideas. The themes primarily focused on how school heads allocate their time, the strategies they employ, the barriers they encounter, and the comparison between administrative and instructional leadership roles. To support the coding and organization process, NVivo software was used, enabling more systematic and efficient analysis of qualitative data.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed several validation techniques. Member checking was conducted by allowing participants to review and confirm the accuracy of their responses and interpretations. In addition, triangulation was used by comparing interview data with field notes and observations to strengthen the credibility of the results. Reflexive journaling was also maintained throughout the research process to minimize researcher bias and enhance the reliability and validity of the interpretations.

Research Hypothesis and Validation

This study aimed to test the hypothesis that applying effective time management practices among school heads would enable them to balance administrative tasks and instructional supervision more efficiently. The hypothesis was validated by examining how school heads used specific time management strategies, such as prioritization, scheduling, delegation, and time blocking, in their daily leadership responsibilities.

Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical standards throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their participation was voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by using coded identifiers instead of names.

All data, including recordings and transcripts, were securely stored and used only for research purposes. Participants were also given the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Study Limitations

This study was limited to ten (10) school heads in Socorro, Surigao del Norte, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. The study also focused only on the experiences and perceptions of school heads and did not include quantitative measurement of time management practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOP 1: Time Allocation of School Heads Between Administrative Tasks and Instructional Supervision

The study revealed that school heads in Socorro, Surigao del Norte allocate a significant portion of their time to administrative tasks. The findings showed that administrative responsibilities consume most of their working hours, particularly report preparation, compliance requirements, meetings, and daily school operations. These tasks are often prioritized because they are deadline-driven and closely monitored by higher offices.

As a result, school heads tend to attend first to paperwork and operational concerns before engaging in instructional supervision. This indicates that time allocation is largely influenced by urgency and accountability requirements rather than predetermined instructional priorities.

At the same time, instructional supervision is recognized as important but often interrupted or postponed. School heads reported that while they plan classroom observations and teacher coaching, these are frequently affected by urgent administrative concerns, unexpected meetings, and stakeholder issues. This disrupts the continuity of instructional supervision, particularly in providing timely feedback to teachers, which is essential for improving teaching practices.

Furthermore, the study found that time allocation depends on urgency and deadlines, resulting in a flexible and reactive approach to time management. School heads adjust their schedules based on the day's most urgent tasks, which often leads to frequent changes to their planned activities.

SOP 2: Time Management Strategies Employed by School Heads

Despite the challenges they face, school heads employ various time management strategies to manage their responsibilities. These strategies include prioritizing urgent tasks,

scheduling activities, delegating responsibilities, time-blocking, using checklists and reminders, collaborating with school personnel, and rescheduling unfinished tasks.

School heads attempt to protect time for instructional supervision when possible by designating specific days or dividing their time between instructional and administrative tasks. These practices show that school heads are aware of the importance of balancing their roles and making efforts to maintain a structured workflow.

However, the findings indicate that while these strategies are helpful, their effectiveness is often limited by external factors such as heavy workload, limited personnel support, and frequent interruptions.

SOP 3: Barriers Affecting the Efficient Time Management of School Heads

The study identified several barriers that hinder effective time management among school heads. These include heavy administrative workload, overlapping deadlines, limited staff support, frequent interruptions, connectivity issues, multiple roles, and contextual challenges related to geographic isolation.

These barriers highlight that time management is not only an individual concern but is also influenced by structural and organizational factors. In particular, insufficient personnel and the demands of compliance tasks increase the workload of school heads, making it difficult to allocate time for instructional supervision.

SOP 4: Comparison of Time Management in Administrative and Instructional Leadership Roles

The findings revealed clear differences between administrative and instructional leadership roles. Administrative leadership is urgent, compliance-based, and reactive, requiring immediate attention to reports, documentation, and operational concerns. In contrast, instructional leadership is developmental and requires planned, focused, and protected time for activities such as classroom observation, teacher coaching, and feedback.

This difference explains the difficulty school heads experience in balancing these roles, as administrative demands often take precedence over instructional activities. While both roles require planning, prioritization, and flexibility, instructional supervision is more likely to be postponed when responsibilities overlap.

SOP 5: Proposed Capacity-Building Program

Based on the study's findings, there is a clear need for a localized capacity-building program to support school heads in improving their time-management practices. The study proposes Project BALANCE (Building Administrative Leadership and Nurturing Classroom Excellence), which focuses on strengthening strategies in prioritization, scheduling, delegation, workload management, and protection of instructional supervision time.

This program is designed to help school heads address the challenges identified in the study and improve their ability to balance administrative tasks and instructional responsibilities more effectively

SUMMARY

The study revealed that school heads allocate most of their time to administrative tasks due to the urgent and compliance-driven nature of these tasks. Instructional supervision, although considered important, is often interrupted or postponed. School heads apply strategies such as prioritization, scheduling, delegation, and time-blocking; however, these are constrained by challenges including heavy workloads, limited personnel support, and frequent interruptions. Overall, administrative responsibilities tend to take precedence, making it difficult for school heads to maintain a consistent balance between administrative and instructional leadership roles.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, it is concluded that school heads in Socorro, Surigao del Norte, experience difficulty in balancing administrative and instructional responsibilities due to the dominance of administrative workload. While they recognize the importance of instructional supervision, their ability to carry it out consistently is hindered by urgent tasks, deadlines, and environmental constraints.

The study further concludes that effective time management among school heads requires not only individual strategies but also institutional support. The imbalance between administrative and instructional roles highlights the need for structured systems that protect instructional supervision time and reduce unnecessary administrative burden.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. School heads should strengthen the use of structured time management strategies such as scheduling, prioritization, and time blocking.
2. Schools should implement delegation systems to distribute administrative tasks among available personnel.
3. Educational authorities should streamline reporting requirements to reduce administrative workload.
4. School heads should establish protected schedules for instructional supervision to ensure consistency.
5. The proposed Project BALANCE program should be implemented to enhance time management practices.
6. Future researchers may conduct similar studies in other contexts or use larger samples for broader analysis.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools were used in this study to improve the grammar, structure, and clarity of the written content. However, all data collection, analysis, interpretation, and conclusions were conducted solely by the researcher. The researcher remains fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, and academic integrity of this work.

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