



## ECHOES FROM THE HEART: UNCOVERING THE UNTOLD STORIES OF QUINQUAGENARIAN PROGRAM HOLDERS

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### Abstract:

This study utilized qualitative-narratological design to unfold the stories of five (5) quinquagenarian teachers designated as program holders from five (5) different schools within the municipality of Polomolok. This study used an in-depth interview to gather the data needed. The findings of the study revealed challenges for program holders, such as lack of preparation and experience, time constraints, financial barriers, disruptions to teaching, insufficient support and commitment, and limited resources for data collection and reporting. Meanwhile, in terms of how they cope with the challenges, establishing positive communication, collaboration and delegation, self-reflection and introspection, flexibility and learning from mistakes, and work-life balance and self-care are the ways they used to alleviate the challenges they are experiencing. Lastly, the program holders stated that professional growth, dedication to serve, building confidence and empathy, and teaching as a calling are the insights they have gained from their experiences. These narratives highlighted the need to recognize and celebrate the invaluable contributions of teachers who take the initiative and organize and manage school-wide programs. Their dedication and perseverance deserve deepest appreciation, as they play a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape.

**Keywords:** educational management, program holders, ancillary functions, workload, qualitative-narratology, Philippines

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## 1. Introduction

Teacher stress and burnout are a global concern, with research indicating that between 40% and 50% of teachers experience significant levels of stress and emotional strain. According to the research, teachers are increasingly required to perform many functions, such as educator, counselor, mentor, social worker, and program holder; this might result in an overwhelming workload and feelings of overwhelm, weariness, and even depression. Teacher burnout not only affects individual teachers' well-being, but it can also severely impact student learning results and the overall quality of education. UNESCO advises governments and educational institutions to combat teacher burnout by providing resources and support for teacher well-being and professional development, reducing workload and administrative tasks, and creating a positive school culture that values and supports teachers (UNESCO, 2019). Particularly, the Department of Education categorizes classroom teachers into teachers without ancillary functions and teachers with ancillary functions. Teachers with ancillary functions perform duties that are directly relevant to the classroom. Teachers who perform several ancillary duties frequently lose motivation, satisfaction, and competence and experience burnout. The Department of Education (DepEd) schools in the Philippines are struggling to achieve the essential requirements for boosting the quality of education. Variables, such as teachers' co-curricular activities and overlapping workloads, are cited as barriers to high-quality education in the nation (Anzaldo & Cudiamat, 2019). Furthermore, the overworked situation of public-school teachers in the Philippines is well-known, in addition to the burden confined to teaching and other non-teaching responsibilities. With this demand, actual teaching, along with many other functions and roles that teachers undertake, is gradually being disregarded because of the ancillary roles given to them (David *et al.*, 2019; Mateo, 2018). Based on the extensive reading of different related works of literature, only a few articles which tackled the stories and narratives about the experiences of teachers designated as program holders, especially in the local setting, were found. Thus, it encouraged the researchers to gather and understand the stories of program holders within the Municipality of Polomolok and find ways to sustain their courage and fortitude amidst challenges and difficulties. Moreover, this study can also become a basis for the concerned educational administrators to create programs and policies to help lessen the heavy load of teachers. This study examined the stories of quinquagenarian teachers who were also designated as school program holders. Moreover, I let the participants of this study relive in their minds the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms they had as program holders and listen to the stories they would narrate.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Teachers' Roles as School Program Holders

Teachers in public schools are now paired with various coordinators at their institutions. It must be stated that teachers' regular duties must be taken into account when assigning non-teaching tasks to them. While the teacher-librarian coordinator worked 3 hours of actual teaching time and 3 hours in the library, the feeding coordinator put in at least 2-3 hours. The coordinators provided three hours of instructional time and various ancillary services for guidance, school registrars, and school nurses/clinic teachers. The journalism coordinator is also tasked with teaching and overseeing one school newspaper (Llego, 2019; Townsend *et al.*, 2020). According to the data, teachers must spend more than eight hours per day performing their obligations as teachers. Teachers take home some of their unfinished work to ensure that they complete their mandated obligations. This seemed to them to be the ideal technique for meeting the workload's expectations (Ancho & Bongco, 2019; Gul *et al.*, 2021). A study revealed some of the challenges faced by school program holders or coordinators with ancillary roles in Hong Kong and Malaysia. The findings revealed that participants encountered difficulties with workload, communication, and balancing their many duties. However, most teachers around the world are distracted by the overlapping tasks and responsibilities that have been assigned to them. In fact, they have an additional obligation to execute that is already beyond their instructional functions, which adds weight to their heavy shoulders. Beyond their instructional roles, educators take on other non-teaching responsibilities in addition to instructing their students in school. Teachers can be allocated to other functions or support responsibilities (David *et al.*, 2019).

### 2.2 Multifaceted Lives of School Program Holders

Teachers are the foundation of schools, and they are responsible for a variety of important actions related to shaping students into valued members of society. The burden of a teacher is split into teaching duties, extracurricular and co-curricular duties, administrative duties, engagement with stakeholders, and communication. Ancillary services are responsibilities that teachers take on outside of the classroom to improve school performance, such as home visits, feeding programs, skill remediation, enhancement activities, coaching various contests, coordinators for multiple areas, counseling students, and mentoring co-teachers (Villanueva *et al.*, 2022). Studies presented that while educators generally express dissatisfaction with their workload, some components of it are perceived to be significantly more demanding than others. Particularly controversial among teachers are the increased demands for assessment, marking, and data entry, which are routinely made to conform with the supposed demands of accountability systems (Perryman & Calvert, 2020; Jerrim & Sims, 2021). It is commonly known that public school teachers in the Philippines are constantly overworked. The responsibility of public school educators includes not only teaching but also non-teaching responsibilities. Considering this pressure, genuine teaching is rapidly

being pushed aside by the plethora of other obligations and positions that teachers take on. Following the tragic suicides of two public school teachers in 2018, the Department of Education (DepEd) committed to reducing teachers' workload, the specifics of which remain unknown (Esguerra, 2018; Mateo, 2018).

### **2.3 Program Holders' Strategies to Thrive with Additional Responsibilities**

Thousands of teachers are leading the way in rethinking every aspect of their jobs, including their relationships with students, colleagues, and the community, the tools and techniques they use, their rights and responsibilities, the form and content of the curriculum, what standards to set and how to assess whether they are met, their preparation as teachers, ongoing professional development, and the very structure of the schools in which they work. In a nutshell, teachers are redefining themselves and their profession in order to better serve schools and students. To effectively serve the school, teachers must have the attitudes and skills to deal with the obstacles that come with having several supplementary functions (Markkanen *et al.*, 2019). It was revealed that teachers suffer from stress because of work overload. Yet, they continue to do their duties well. Regardless of how exhausted they are, they always give their all to complete their duties; hence, their performance is consistently excellent. Based on a study's findings, it is advised that school administrators must systematically provide balanced work for educators and monitor teachers' workloads to improve the quality of instruction in public schools. Teachers, on the other hand, should understand that teaching is a difficult profession and that they must be patient all of the time in order to avoid stress (Jomuad *et al.*, 2021). It was suggested that to avoid the consequences of excessive teacher stress, administrators must be proactive in regulating workloads while also encouraging joint accountability and ownership. It was also stressed that the concept of resilience has been connected to effective coping methods in a variety of circumstances. According to a study, program holders with supplementary tasks were also similar to employees in healthcare settings who showed higher levels of resilience and were more likely to adopt problem-focused coping mechanisms, such as seeking out resources and assistance. This shows that procedures aimed at increasing resilience may be advantageous to program holders (Blasé *et al.*, 2018).

## **3. Material and Methods**

This study was qualitative-narratological research by design. It is fit to use qualitative narrative research design to explore untold stories of teachers with multiple functions because it allows for an in-depth and nuanced analysis of the experiences of these teachers. Qualitative narrative research design allows researchers to explore these experiences more comprehensively and holistically (Tomaszewski *et al.*, 2020). Qualitative research entails gathering and interpreting non-numerical data (such as text, video, or audio) to comprehend thoughts, opinions, or experiences to gain in-depth insights into a topic or to generate authentic research ideas. It turns the world into a

collage of representations, manifested in various forms such as field notes, interviews, conversations, pictures, videos, and self-reported memos. Qualitative study at this stage requires an interpretive, naturalistic lens to view the surrounding environment (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

Specifically, the study used narratology, which aims to comprehend the occurrence and derive meaning from it by examining the stories recounted by the participants. This method typically focuses on making sense of people's lives through their narratives. Furthermore, one of the cornerstones of all qualitative studies is the participant's perceptions of the topic under study. The researcher acted as a narrator in a narrative inquiry. Thus, a component linked to the perception (subjectivity to some) of the studied subject characterizes qualitative research (Dhungana, 2022). Moreover, narratology is a suitable research design for studying program holders with multiple roles because it focuses on analyzing stories, narratives, and storytelling. In this context, the stories teachers tell about their experiences in different roles as program holders can provide valuable lessons about the difficulties, opportunities, and strategies they use to navigate their responsibilities (Sharma *et al.*, 2023).

In summary, narratology was suitable for this academic endeavor as it only aimed to narrate and analyze the various untold stories of the participants handling single or multiple ancillary roles as school program holders. This was done by conducting in-depth interviews with the research participants who are designated as program holders. Furthermore, the researcher extracted the most relevant statements of each participant from their narratives and grouped them according to themes. Finally, the researcher discussed these clustered experiences into stories of inspiring and thought-provoking anecdotes.

Purposive sampling was utilized to choose the study participants. According to Sarfo *et al.* (2021), purposive sampling is a sampling approach based on prior knowledge about a population and the objective of the research study in which the researcher utilizes personal judgment to determine the sample. For theoretical saturation, five (5) quinquagenarian teachers (ages 50-59 years old) designated as program holders from the municipality of Polomolok during the school year 2023-2024 were selected as participants. The researcher also required that the participants have at least five (5) years of experience, mainly as school program holders, to ensure sufficient experience and knowledge to contribute to the study.

As for the participants, they shared their stories about beginning, middle, and ending as program holders. Their beginning stories focused on the challenges they faced during their service as program holders. On the other hand, middle stories elaborated on their coping mechanisms for the challenges they encountered, and ending stories revealed the insights or the lessons they had learned along their journey as program holders. Participants of this study were teachers assigned to Dole Cannery Central Elementary School, Polomolok National High School, Perfecto B. Salada Elementary School, Poblacion Polomolok National High School, and Palkan National High School. These are some of the public schools in the Municipality of Polomolok.

## 4. Results and Discussion

This section displays the results of the research question that explored the challenges faced by teachers, how they coped with them, and the insights they gained while serving as school program holders. The information was collected through in-depth interviews and presented as their beginning, middle, and ending stories.

**Table 1:** Stories of Program Holders in School

Clustered Themes	Emergent Themes
<b>Challenges</b>	
Accepted responsibility despite lacking knowledge and experience and the need to attend training.	<b>Lack of Preparation and Experience</b>
Requiring extended work hours, managing overlapping activities, providing instant reports and meeting tight deadlines.	<b>Time Constraints</b>
Financial constraints and spend first policy.	<b>Financial Barriers</b>
Leaving classes with seatwork due to abrupt appearances and some conferences. Classes are neglected due to a regular teaching load while performing multiple roles at the same time.	<b>Disruptions to Teaching</b>
Challenges in realizing plans due to limited means, inconsistent commitment, lack of teacher aids, and the expectation to do more with less support.	<b>Insufficient Support and Commitment</b>
Difficulty in community connections and extensive data collection, along with the challenge of submitting reports with lacking resources.	<b>Limited Resources for data collection and reporting</b>
<b>Coping Mechanisms</b>	
Communicating for permission, training, and support from the school head through consultation and collaboration.	<b>Establishing Positive Communication</b>
Lighten workload through delegation and foster collaborative efforts with colleagues, administration, and stakeholders, while seeking guidance from experts and mentors.	<b>Collaboration and Delegation</b>
Self-learning based on the experiences and reflection.	<b>Self-reflection and Introspection</b>
Accept outcomes wholeheartedly, focus on solutions, stay connected, and embrace small wins while not fearing failure but instead strategizing new approaches.	<b>Flexibility and Learning from Mistakes</b>
Share thoughts and stress, set clear goals, visualize success, practice stress and time management and amusement strategies.	<b>Work-life Balance and Self-care</b>
<b>Insights</b>	
Received awards, new set of skills, and opportunities for achievements contributing to professional growth.	<b>Professional Growth</b>
Approach work with the mindset that it's for the good of everyone, give your all, stay positive, and sustain the advocacy of helping others access education.	<b>Dedication to Serve</b>
Stay focused, be consistent with what brings progress, and sustain passion. Improve confidence, develop a passion for caring and understanding, prioritize patience and empathy, and strive to give 100 percent.	<b>Building Confidence and Empathy</b>
By everything we do, we serve God. Recognize everything as a gift from God and aim to be a blessing to students and parents. View the work as a mission, expressing love and compassion to guide and make a difference in the lives of young people.	<b>Teaching as a Calling</b>

In-depth interviews with program holders surfaced a range of manifestations of their experiences as quinquagenarians or seasoned educators designated as program holders,

how they overcame a variety of challenges to guarantee the effective implementation of the various programs, and what insight and recommendations they could impart to their fellow educators or program holders as well.

The participants felt that being designated as a program holder is impactful aside from their teaching responsibilities. In every success of coping with the challenges encountered, there are many beautiful lessons in the lives of school program holders that could be shared with those who want to become a future program holder or coordinators. Despite the rigors of life for teachers with ancillary roles as program holders, they can still acquire positive gains from their experiences and are challenged to aspire for more advancement for themselves and their fellows.

#### **4.1 Lack of Preparation and Experience**

This theme suggested that participants were often designated as program holders without prior background and experience. An array of qualities, such as leadership, communication, problem-solving, and administrative expertise, are necessary to be a practical program holder. School coordinators' responsibilities are frequently broad and include a range of duties, including managing programs, planning events, and communicating with staff, parents, and students. Without enough training, people could find it challenging to meet all the demands of their position. Moreover, Pacaol (2021) noted that when someone has not had the chance to hone these abilities via training or practical experience, these varied demands may be too much to handle. Nevertheless, these teachers wholeheartedly accepted their ancillary tasks despite their doubts.

#### **4.2 Time Constraints**

This theme presented that school program holders often felt time pressured while fulfilling their various tasks related to their ancillary roles. In addition to developing programs, committee management, student support, parent involvement, budgeting, and other administrative responsibilities, school coordinators are in charge of various other work. In order to ensure that endeavors, events, and programs are successful, program holders can be held responsible, which increases pressure to produce favorable results. Because of this accountability, they may have a heavy workload as they try to live up to expectations. According to Shorosh and Berkovich (2022), they may have a high workload due to the broad spectrum of their duties and often face time demands. School coordinators occasionally have to deal with shortfalls in resources, such as low staffing, tight budgets, and inadequate resources. The amount of work that must be done to accomplish goals with little resources can increase. Also, a study by Werang (2018) supports this finding that teachers' emotional exhaustion is often directly connected to teachers' workload.

#### **4.3 Financial Barriers**

This theme revealed that program holders often have limited budgets to work. Due to various circumstances in the educational environment, program holders frequently deal

with difficulties related to financial constraints. Financial limitations and restricted budgetary allocations at the institutional level may limit coordinators' ability to administer and oversee various activities properly. It might be difficult for program holders to balance meeting programmatic requirements and staying within financial limits. The school coordinators' capacity to offer learners various learning opportunities and the overall quality of education may be impacted by budgetary obstacles. Additionally, obtaining external funding or organizing fundraisers may take significant time and energy away from primary coordination and teaching duties. Plaza and Jamito (2021) note that tight budgets can make implementing necessary actions for program operation challenging. Budgetary restrictions frequently affect schools, making it difficult for coordinators to carry out different projects and activities. Funding for staff, supplies, and other necessities may be difficult for coordinators to obtain, which might hamper their attempts to serve the school better. The constant concern over finances can show itself as a decline in output, an increase in absenteeism, and a diminished capacity to give their work their all.

#### **4.4 Disruptions to Teaching**

As described by most participants, this theme was one of their main issues whenever they left their teaching responsibilities to attend to sudden activities or emergencies related to their coordinatorship. Program holders oversee various areas of the school, such as developing activities, leadership to members, assistance for learners, and administrative duties. As new tasks emerge, the diversity of responsibilities can lead to unpredictability. As demonstrated by the research presented by Kim (2019) and Samaden (2021), there appears to be a relationship between teachers' increased ancillary duties and their decreased ability to set aside time for planning lessons and giving students insightful feedback. The implications highlight the complex balancing act educators must perform between their additional responsibilities and the essential educational responsibilities of their positions. Teachers may find it more difficult to devote enough time and attention to developing lesson plans and providing constructive feedback when they take on more administrative responsibilities.

#### **4.5 Insufficient Support and Commitment**

In this theme, participants described limited or lacking workforce support as one of their challenges. The lack of commitment may show up as a shortage of funds and staff members, which makes it difficult for coordinators to launch and maintain successful activities. The importance of the coordinators' work could not be acknowledged if there is not a shared commitment to the position and the programs they manage. This lack of assistance can cause frustration, exhaustion, and a decline in their capacity to do their duties efficiently. Furthermore, a lack of commitment on the part of colleagues may lead to inadequate cooperation and teamwork, which would impede the accomplishment of proposed initiatives. Moreover, it can be challenging to keep a program sustainable without sufficient commitment and support from colleagues. According to study results



by Larson *et al.* (2018), school program implementers encounter numerous difficulties that hinder the effective implementation of curriculum and programs. Some of the issues noted were the absence of program implementation guidelines, a lack of funding, excessive workloads, teachers' lack of commitment, the complexity of managing the program, and school heads' incapacity to oversee program delivery.

#### **4.6 Limited Resources for Data Collection and Reporting**

This theme put forward that because the participants involved are quinquagenarian or seasoned teachers, most struggled with limited data collection and reporting resources as part of their ancillary tasks. The absence of sufficient resources makes it difficult for coordinators to carry out in-depth assessments, monitor student development, and implement evidence-based methods in the current school setting, where data-driven decision-making is crucial. Budgetary restrictions have the potential to seriously harm student data, as indicated by Viac and Fraser (2020). Several individuals can still not afford expensive specialist data collection and reporting tools, making getting insightful information on their activities challenging. It is consistent with the research of Herrera and Caballes (2022), which reveals the complex challenges educators face who must contend with a shortage of resources, poor internet access, and a deficiency in ICT competencies. Although the internet is known as a potent tool, educators, including program holders, frequently find themselves in unfamiliar territory, overwhelmed and unable to adjust. These related issues paint a concerning picture of an unprepared system that fails to equip teachers with the necessary tools and training to succeed in a technologically advanced learning environment.

#### **4.7 Establishing Positive Communication**

This theme revealed that participants often sought support and communicated with school administrators and fellows to help them cope with some of their challenges. In order to create a culture of positive interaction inside the school, school coordinators are essential. Program holders are influential communicators between teachers, students, parents, and school administrators. They promote an environment of cooperation and support by facilitating the exchange of information. As García-Martínez *et al.* (2021) mentioned, program holders could collaborate with other teachers and school administrators to divide the effort and obligations. Together, they can use one another's skills and abilities to overcome challenges more successfully. Sims and Fletcher-Wood (2021) found that successful schools require collaborative efforts between teachers and administrators. Establishing an atmosphere of trust requires transparency, cooperation, and communication. Depending on positive communication with the school community helps foster the growth of a shared school vision.

#### **4.8 Collaboration and Delegation**

This theme highlighted participants asking for help from their fellows, for they might possess knowledge and skills that program holders lack. Working together and

delegating are critical skills for school coordinators as they manage the many facets of their duties. Program holders can leverage the combined knowledge and creativity of the school community to create more creative and successful programs by cultivating a collaborative culture. Concurrently, the skill of delegation allows coordinators to assign work effectively, realizing that they are not able to complete everything on their own. When teachers assign tasks to others, it gives team members and colleagues a sense of empowerment and ownership, freeing program holders to concentrate on long-term objectives and strategic planning. Teacher collaboration has linked advantages to successful schools, according to Bellia *et al.* (2021). Collaboration is essential for school growth strategies. It was mentioned that working with other educators can lead to benefits, including professional growth, a decreased workload, and better learners' focus. Through collaboration and delegation of work, it is said that any task can be lighter. Program holders might assign particular roles and responsibilities to volunteers, staff members, or teachers.

#### **4.9 Self-reflection and Introspection**

This theme focused on the importance of self-reflection and introspection. Program holders can develop a thorough awareness of their areas of strength and development by regularly evaluating their choices, behaviors, and interactions through self-reflection. Through introspection, they can ensure that their leadership style is coherent by balancing their values with their professional objectives. By engaging in this reflective process, coordinators can better adjust to changing trends in education, hone their tactics, and stay sensitive to the school community's needs. Moreover, Wang and Sun (2023) noted that teachers' ever-growing workloads both inside and outside of the classroom may make setting aside time for introspection appear like a luxury. Still, even with hectic schedules, teachers, including those who assume additional positions like program holders, need to make time for self-reflection. By taking a step back, thinking back on past experiences, and pinpointing areas that need improvement, teachers can better equip themselves to face the demands of their diverse responsibilities and eventually succeed in their careers.

#### **4.10 Flexibility and Learning from Mistakes**

This theme revealed that program holders encountered unavoidable negative situations but could still turn them into something good and meaningful. Because educational environments are dynamic, coordinators must adjust to shifting conditions, new trends in education, and unforeseen obstacles. They can adapt strategies, welcome creativity, and effectively address the various needs of students, teachers, and the larger school community when flexible. Accepting failures as opportunities for learning promotes a culture of continuing growth (Ronnie & Philip, 2021). Using the knowledge they have gained, these program holders can improve their procedures, initiatives, and programs. A similar researcher by Schechter (2021) asserted that gaining euphoria from learning from success makes us believe that things will continue to happen because we have that

feeling of "We did it!" When teachers are successful, we do not pressure ourselves to examine every aspect and draw conclusions. Only through challenges and setbacks can one acquire profound and noteworthy knowledge.

#### **4.11 Work-life Balance and Self-care**

In this theme, participants described achieving work-life balance through self-care as one of their most effective coping mechanisms. Coordinators frequently handle a variety of responsibilities, such as stakeholder engagement and program management, and long-term productivity and well-being depend on achieving a healthy work-life balance. Maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal obligations lowers stress, prevents burnout, and improves overall job satisfaction. Including self-care activities in program holders' schedules, such as taking frequent breaks, working out, and relaxing, guarantees that they have the energy and enthusiasm to do their tasks. Program holders can sustain their mental and emotional health by prioritizing self-care. It can help them maintain resilience, motivation, and attention in challenging situations (Owens *et al.*, 2018). School coordinators frequently have demanding positions, and burnout could result if they do not care for themselves. Preventing burnout and maintaining productivity and motivation can be achieved by investing in enjoyable activities and scheduling regular breaks.

#### **4.12 Professional Growth**

This theme presented that program holders described their experiences as part of their professional growth and impact on the community, wherein they were offered a lot of professional advancements that contributed to their current success not just as educators but as program holders as well. They were able to learn new abilities, hone their leadership techniques, and gain a deeper comprehension of educational methods by managing programs, working with diverse stakeholders, and overcoming obstacles. The belief that school coordinators are vital individuals with significant influence rather than merely parts of the mechanism was echoed by the study of Mayger and Hochbein (2021). These people have a profound awareness of their capacity to have a beneficial impact on youths, as well as on their families and the school community as a whole. Acknowledging this transformative potential, they prioritize developing inclusive strategies that support successful program implementation.

#### **4.13 Dedication to Serve**

This theme revealed that program holders consider their ancillary roles part of their dedication to inclusive and quality education. Program holders need to recognize their critical role in advancing inclusive, high-quality education, which is necessary for an all-encompassing approach to learning. Coordinators gain a deep awareness of the value of passion and dedication in their work through their dedication to meeting others' educational needs. This understanding goes beyond mundane concerns of coordinating to the fundamental principles of fulfilling the greater goal of education. In addition,

school coordinators are essential to the success of educational programs. However, they frequently work in the background and receive little credit for their efforts (Väyrynen & Paksuniemi, 2020). Nevertheless, these committed professionals give their all to their work, spearheading program ideas and helping many students. Acknowledging and appreciating their unwavering dedication is essential to guaranteeing their success going forward and optimizing the influence of educational initiatives within the school community.

#### **4.14 Building Confidence and Empathy**

As described by most participants, this theme is one of the impacts of having been designated as program holders. Aside from developing and growing professionally, these program holders also gained various experiences that built personal confidence and empathy for students. Program holders often interact with various stakeholders, such as administrators, parents, teachers, and students. Through such interactions, they gain a deep comprehension of the particular requirements and difficulties each school community faces. This realization fosters empathy, enabling educators to take a sympathetic and perceptive approach to their duties (Ruiz, 2024). A more encouraging and caring learning environment can be produced by program holders incorporating their experiences and personal development into their interactions with students, according to Bufali *et al.* (2023). Students benefit intellectually and personally since it encourages empathy, resilience, and personal growth, all of which are critical life skills for their success in the future.

#### **4.15 Teaching as a Calling**

In this theme, participants described their insights from being program holders as a beautiful gift and calling from God. Having a calling in education to serve as a program holder gives one a strong sense of direction and significance in what they do. This view recognizes the transforming power of educators on students' lives, instilling in them a feeling of purpose and divine mission. According to Bloom *et al.* (2021), meaningful dialogue is the foundation of education. A vocation's benefits and obligations merge for individuals who sense the call, developing into a deeply felt commitment. Teachers' influence on students' lives goes beyond a simple professional result; it becomes a motivating factor that elevates their employment from a job to a genuinely meaningful mission. When educators actively seek their career aspirations and discover significant meaning and purpose in their work, this sense of vocation flourishes.

### **5. Recommendations**

#### **5.1 Lack of Preparation and Experience**

Given the perspectives of program holders, it is expected to feel worried and anxious to handle programs of coordinator-ships firsthand without prior preparation and experience. However, despite feeling stressed at times due to an additional workload, it

is recommended that school coordinators continue to do their best to complete their tasks, and they have enjoyed and felt fulfilled in handling these ancillaries. These positive work attitudes should extend across all teachers as well.

### **5.2 Time Constraints**

Teacher-coordinators often have to juggle multiple roles, including teaching, administrative tasks, and coordination duties. It can lead to a demanding workload and time management challenges. For this reason, delegating tasks and responsibilities to support staff or colleagues is advised, which can help program holders manage their workload more effectively. Trusting others to handle specific responsibilities can be challenging but is often necessary.

### **5.3 Financial Barriers**

Program holders tend to have limited resources, which hinders their ability to implement quality educational programs and support services. Financial barriers also limit program holders' ability to access professional development opportunities, training, or seminars that can enhance their skills and effectiveness in their roles. Teacher-coordinators should be resourceful and creative to allocate funds for programs, initiatives, or projects effectively. It requires extra effort and ingenuity.

### **5.4 Disruptions to Teaching**

Teachers who take up roles within school programs take on extra obligations and tasks, hindering their skills to take out their teaching duties. Although their commitment to helping others is admirable, it is critical to understand and deal with the effects of these disturbances. To mitigate these disruptions, program holders can consider prioritizing tasks and use time management techniques to allocate time effectively to teaching and coordination duties.

### **5.5 Insufficient Support and Commitment**

It tends to happen because, without sufficient support and commitment from colleagues, the program may struggle to achieve its intended impact. Program holders may find it challenging to bring about meaningful change or improvement. Coordinators who are deeply committed to their programs may become frustrated and disheartened when they encounter resistance or apathy from others. To address these challenges, program holders must advocate for the program's importance and communicate its benefits to colleagues, students, and administrators. Encourage open dialogue with coworkers with a shared passion and vision for the program's goals and objectives.

### **5.6 Limited Resources for Data Collection and Reporting**

The results of this study also imply that limited data collection and reporting resources can result in reduced transparency, making it difficult for various stakeholders, including parents, school boards, and policymakers, to understand the school's performance and

make informed decisions. It is suggested that schools adopt simplified data collection processes by focusing on essential metrics and automating data collection where possible. It can help reduce the time and effort required for data reporting.

### **5.7 Establishing Positive Communication**

These ideas describe that program holders should initiate collaboration and communication among school heads and fellow teachers to collectively share their challenges and brainstorm solutions. It can lead to improved problem-solving efficiency and innovative approaches to overcome obstacles. Collaborative discussions ensure alignment on goals and initiatives among stakeholders. This alignment can lead to smoother implementation and a more unified approach to school improvement.

### **5.8 Collaboration and Delegation**

Further results imply that collaborating with other teachers and educational professionals allows program holders to tap into diverse expertise. This shared knowledge can lead to improved decision-making and the implementation of best practices. Effective collaboration also distributes responsibilities more evenly among teacher-coordinators and their colleagues. It can alleviate the workload burden and prevent burnout. An open communication and collaboration culture can create a more positive and supportive school environment. A healthy school culture benefits teachers and students, creating a more conducive learning atmosphere.

### **5.9 Self-reflection and Introspection**

The participants must apply self-reflection to help program holders identify sources of stress and develop strategies to manage it. Improved stress management can lead to reduced burnout and increased well-being. Also, through introspection, school coordinators can identify personal and professional growth areas. Self-improvement can lead to increased competence and effectiveness in their roles. When these two are acted together, it helps teachers acquire self-awareness, identify areas for improvement, and strive for professional progress.

### **5.10 Flexibility and Learning from Mistakes**

The participants also learn the importance of learning from mistakes. A flexible mindset allows teacher-coordinators to embrace innovation and adapt to changing educational landscapes. They can introduce new ideas and practices to enhance their teaching and ancillary roles. As program holders, we should not be afraid to take calculated risks; a willingness to learn from mistakes can result in creative and innovative initiatives that benefit the school community.

### **5.11 Work-life Balance and Self-care**

Results of the narratives present self-care practices help program holders manage stress and reduce the risk of burnout. They can sustain their passion and energy for teaching

and coordination over the long term. Self-care strategies strengthen teachers' emotional health and resilience; with supervision, it is being identified as a valuable self-care activity. Prioritizing self-care contributes to better mental health, reducing the risk of anxiety and depression. Teacher-coordinators can maintain a positive outlook and cope better with the demands of their roles.

### **5.12 Professional Growth**

Participants expand their skills and community impact through the experiences they encountered as program holders. They often experience professional and career growth due to the opportunities and become satisfied educators who are more likely to remain in the field, leading to a stable and experienced teaching and coordinatorship. Moreover, one of the critical elements in improving school operations was the program implementers' capacity to build trusting relationships and bring stakeholders together under a unified, student-centered vision that addressed the school's leading programs.

### **5.13 Dedication to Serve**

It implies that program holders are dedicated to serving the school community as best they can. They believed there were many students out there who needed extra and special attention to attain a better future regardless of their backgrounds. Advocating inclusivity and quality education creates a positive and supportive school culture. When students and teachers feel valued, this leads to a more welcoming and conducive learning environment.

### **5.14 Building Confidence and Empathy**

Participants' narratives also imply that aside from professional development and growth, program holders experienced a variety of experiences that helped students improve personal confidence and empathy. Program holders can create a more encouraging and caring learning environment by combining their experiences and personal development into student interactions. Students benefit intellectually and personally since it fosters empathy, resilience, and personal growth, all of which are vital life qualities for future success.

### **5.15 Teaching as a Calling**

In general, teaching and acting as a school coordinator with the mindset of serving God and blessing others is a significant and noble approach to education. Many educators see their work as a calling, a way to make a difference in the lives of their students and the community. Program holders need to see their work as a calling that can inspire and motivate others with their dedication and passion for education. This commitment can be contagious, encouraging others to embrace the same perspective.

## 6. Conclusion

The personal accounts of program participants highlight the dedication, passion, and perseverance of teachers who go above and beyond in the classroom to organize various school-wide programs. These extraordinary individuals have a significant impact on school operations and student lives. Teachers wear many hats - they become mentors, organizers, event planners, and educators. Their versatility and ability to juggle multiple responsibilities is genuinely admirable.

As a teacher and new program coordinator myself, I can relate to some of their experiences. In addition to teaching, I serve as a class adviser and coordinator for a Wash in Schools program. While challenging, hearing participants' stories inspired me to keep motivating students and providing opportunities for their growth and development. Completing this study has given me the confidence, optimism, knowledge, and skills to support our school as a program holder. These teachers do incredible work that deserves recognition. They are unsung heroes, and their stories are worth celebrating.

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### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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