

A DepEd Teacher III's struggle with work overload despite job security: A case study

Karen Rhede T. Manulat*

University of the Visayas, Cebu City, Philippines

Dr. Regina P. Galigao

Cebu Technological University, M. J. Cuenco Avenue Cor R. Palma St., Cebu City, Philippines

ABSTRACT

The following paper analyzes the reasons for the resignation of a mid-career public secondary school teacher in the Philippines, focusing particularly on the impact of a high workload on teacher burnout and turnover. Based on Maslach and Leiter's Burnout Theory and the Job Demands-Resources theory, the paper discusses the impact of a long time spent in the stressful environment characterized by high workload, organizational pressures, and limited autonomy on the development of emotional exhaustion and lack of job satisfaction, leading to teacher quitting. Through an analysis of Philippine and international literature, it can be noted that in the Philippine case, teachers assume various roles other than the educational one. It is found that non-financial issues such as increased workload, role conflicts, and absence of organizational backing play a crucial part in the decision making process of leaving teaching by teachers, even if financial benefits may be enough. The existence of "multitasking culture" and lack of demarcation between work and private life also contribute to stress, particularly for midcareer teachers responsible for mentoring other staff members. It shows weaknesses of current teacher retention policy and offers some solutions such as organizational backing, clear role differentiation, workload control, and psychological counseling.

Keywords: Teacher burnout, workload management, educational administration, Philippines.

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INTRODUCTION

The case of Teacher A, a 38-year-old Teacher III at a secondary-level government-run school in one of the provinces of the Visayas region, provides a compelling and illustrative entry point into a broader and increasingly urgent issue facing the Philippine public education system. Having taught under the Department of Education (DepEd) for over 12 years and having earned recognition for outstanding performance and impressive leadership skills during school-based capacity development exercises, Teacher A represents a profile of professional competence and institutional investment. Yet despite these achievements, she submitted her

*Corresponding author / Email: kareversity@gmail.com

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resignation in early 2024, citing exhaustion and fatigue attributable to a workload that consistently surpassed the prescribed eight-hour shift per day due to the volume of administrative tasks, reporting responsibilities, and other duties layered upon her core teaching functions. Her experience is neither exceptional nor isolated. Research confirms that Filipino teachers commonly devote long hours to their work, with their time substantially consumed by responsibilities that extend well beyond classroom instruction (Second Congressional Commission on Education [EDCOM II], 2023; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2019).

The departure of Teacher A from the profession after more than a decade of service, and notably after she had obtained regular earnings and job security through government employment, shifts the explanatory focus away from inadequate remuneration as the primary driver of attrition and toward the debilitating effects of work overload. Studies reveal that intense workload and bureaucratic pressure rank among the leading causes of teacher exhaustion in the Philippines and in other educational systems worldwide (Bautista et al., 2022; David et al., 2019). This form of exhaustion is theoretically grounded in the construct of burnout, which Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) defined as a condition characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment suffered by professionals working under persistently demanding conditions. Burnout, understood through this framework, is not merely a personal failure of resilience but a structural consequence of working environments that impose demands exceeding the resources and capacities available to the individual. The case of Teacher A illustrates precisely this dynamic, wherein the compounding of administrative, documentary, and instructional responsibilities created conditions incompatible with sustained professional engagement.

The consequences of work overload in education extend beyond individual well-being and carry direct implications for instructional quality. There is ample evidence that excessive workload impairs teaching effectiveness, as overburdened teachers find insufficient time to prepare lessons, engage meaningfully with students, and fulfill their professional aspirations (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2017; OECD, 2020). This deterioration in instructional capacity ultimately undermines the very educational outcomes that teacher deployment is intended to achieve, creating a systemic contradiction in which the conditions of work erode the quality of the work itself. Globally, workload remains one of the most significant sources of occupational stress and voluntary attrition among educators, a pattern documented consistently across national and international contexts (Ingersoll, 2001; UNESCO, 2021).

In the Philippine context, this problem is further compounded by a well-documented culture of non-teaching task accumulation. National studies and policy reports indicate that Filipino teachers allocate considerable time to administrative matters such as documentation, reporting, and other duties that fall outside their core teaching obligations, effectively expanding the scope of their professional responsibilities far beyond what is formally prescribed (EDCOM II, 2023; Philippine Institute for Development Studies [PIDS], 2019; OECD, 2019). This pattern raises a fundamental and pressing question about whether the current workload assigned to teachers under existing DepEd regulations is practically feasible for sustained career engagement, particularly for mid-career professionals who have demonstrated institutional commitment and are therefore most consequential to lose.

The resignation of a competent and tenured public school teacher due to workload excessiveness thus crystallizes a critical systemic concern. It brings into focus the need to examine not only the structural conditions that produce unsustainable workloads but also the lived experience of teachers who must navigate those conditions on a daily basis while maintaining their professional obligations and personal well-being. International evidence further substantiates this concern, as research consistently identifies work overload as a crucial determinant of whether teachers remain in or exit their careers (Ingersoll, 2001; OECD, 2020;

UNESCO, 2021). Taken together, these converging lines of evidence, spanning personal narrative, national policy documentation, and global empirical research, establish a compelling

and multi-layered rationale for the present case study, which seeks to examine in depth the experiences of a DepEd Teacher III navigating work overload despite the security afforded by permanent government employment.

Statement of the problem

This case study examined the professional experiences of Teacher A, a 38-year-old Teacher III with over 12 years of service in a secondary-level government-run school in the Visayas region of the Philippines, with the aim of understanding how work overload contributes to burnout and voluntary resignation despite the presence of job security. The study was grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks, namely Maslach and Leiter's Burnout Theory and the Job Demands-Resources model of Demerouti and colleagues, and employed qualitative case study analysis drawing on the participant's documented professional narrative and the broader body of Philippine and international scholarly literature.

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. What specific forms of work overload did Teacher A experience as a tenured DepEd Teacher III, and how did these manifest in her daily professional life?
2. How did the accumulated work overload contribute to the development of burnout as defined by the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment?
3. In what ways did organizational factors such as role conflict, limited professional autonomy, and inadequate institutional support influence Teacher A's decision to resign despite having job security?
4. What implications do the findings of this case hold for DepEd's existing workload policies and teacher retention strategies?

METHODOLOGY

This study is grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks that together provide a robust conceptual basis for examining the relationship between work overload, occupational exhaustion, and professional attrition among teachers. The first is the Burnout Theory advanced by Maslach and Leiter, which identifies and describes three core dimensions associated with the phenomenon of burnout in professional settings. The first dimension, emotional exhaustion, refers to the experience of emotional overextension and the depletion of one's emotional capacity as a direct result of occupational pressures (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, 2001; Maslach and Leiter, 2016). The second dimension, depersonalization, describes a state of detachment or impersonality in one's interactions with the recipients of one's services, and may be understood as a form of emotional distancing or the development of cynical attitudes toward those one is professionally obligated to serve (Maslach et al., 2001). The third dimension, personal accomplishment, captures a reduction in one's subjective sense of competence and achievement within the work setting, reflecting a deterioration of the professional self-concept over time (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Taken together, these three dimensions constitute a comprehensive framework for understanding how sustained occupational demands erode the psychological and emotional foundations of professional engagement.

The relevance of Burnout Theory to the teaching profession is well-established in the scholarly literature, as teaching is widely recognized as an occupation that demands a particularly high degree of emotional effort from its practitioners. Teachers are expected not only to deploy their knowledge and pedagogical skills in the service of student learning but also to regulate their emotions effectively while managing complex relationships with students, parents, and institutional requirements. Research affirms that teachers regularly perform emotional labor as an integral and demanding component of their professional role, rendering them highly susceptible to emotional exhaustion when this labor is compounded by stressful working conditions and organizational pressures (Hochschild, 1983; Yin, 2015; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2017). The Burnout Theory thus provides a conceptually precise and empirically grounded lens through which to interpret the experiences of teachers who, despite demonstrated competence and institutional commitment, find themselves unable to sustain professional engagement under conditions of chronic work overload.

The second theoretical framework informing this study is the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model developed by Demerouti and colleagues, which offers a complementary structural explanation for how organizational conditions produce stress, exhaustion, and eventual withdrawal from employment. The JD-R model proposes that when the demands of a job are high and the resources available to meet those demands are insufficient, employees are at heightened risk of experiencing stress, emotional depletion, and ultimately disengagement from their work (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli, 2001; Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Within this framework, job demands refer to the physical and psychological requirements of a role, including heavy workload, time constraints, and the need to juggle multiple competing responsibilities simultaneously (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job resources, by contrast, encompass organizational support, adequate time, professional autonomy, and access to facilities and tools that enable individuals to fulfill their tasks effectively while mitigating work-related stress (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017).

The JD-R model is particularly valuable as a framework for explaining how organizational factors generate work-related stress and occupational dissatisfaction, and how these conditions contribute to higher rates of employee turnover over time. Empirical research conducted within the JD-R paradigm has consistently demonstrated that excessive workload is among the most significant predictors of emotional exhaustion among teachers and is closely associated with increased intentions to leave the profession (Bakker et al., 2014; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2017). Furthermore, the combination of inadequate resources and escalating demands within educational contexts has been shown to drive even experienced and otherwise committed teachers toward occupational withdrawal as a response to chronic work stress (Hakanen et al., 2006; Collie et al., 2012). Together, the Burnout Theory and the JD-R model form an integrated theoretical foundation that situates the present case study within a well-developed scholarly tradition, providing the conceptual tools necessary to examine in depth the lived experience of a seasoned DepEd teacher whose professional trajectory was decisively shaped by the structural conditions of work overload.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion of a qualitative case study examining the professional experiences of one participant, Teacher A, a 38-year-old Teacher III with over 12 years of service in a secondary-level government-run school in the Visayas region of the Philippines. The study employed a case study research design grounded in the Burnout Theory of Maslach and Leiter and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model of Demerouti and colleagues. Data were gathered through the analysis of the participant's documented professional narrative, and the findings are interpreted in direct relation to the objectives of the

study, which sought to examine the nature and consequences of work overload experienced by a tenured DepEd teacher despite the presence of job security. The discussion that follows situates the case within the broader landscape of Philippine public school teacher workload,

professional attrition, and organizational conditions, drawing on relevant national and international scholarly literature to contextualize and deepen the interpretive analysis.

The multitasking burden and workload intensification

The experiences of Teacher A are not isolated but rather reflect a systemic pattern that has been extensively documented in studies of the Philippine public school system. Research has consistently shown that teachers in Philippine public schools are burdened with workloads that extend far beyond their instructional functions, as they are compelled to simultaneously perform the roles of classroom teacher, clerical staff, and program implementer (David et al., 2019; EDCOM II, 2023). In Teacher A's case, her daily work duration consistently surpassed the prescribed eight-hour shift, driven by the accumulation of administrative tasks, documentary reporting, and program-related responsibilities layered on top of her core teaching duties. Scholars have characterized this phenomenon as a multitasking environment, wherein teachers must manage several concurrent and competing assignments within a single professional role (Ballet and Kelchtermans, 2009; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2017). This multitasking culture, as it has been termed in the literature, produces a recognizable set of consequences including extended working hours, the erosion of boundaries between professional and personal life, and the accumulation of severe mental and emotional strain.

The breadth and depth of non-teaching responsibilities assumed by Filipino teachers have been documented not only in local studies but also in comparative international research. The OECD (2019), UNESCO (2021), and David et al. (2019) have all reported that Filipino teachers frequently work beyond their contracted hours and take on additional duties in the absence of adequate support staff and teaching assistants within educational institutions. The burden of repetitive paperwork and bureaucratic compliance further compounds the instructional demands already placed upon teachers, effectively transforming the professional role of a public school teacher into one that requires the simultaneous performance of multiple distinct job functions without proportionate institutional support. This structural condition is directly reflected in Teacher A's experience, wherein the accumulation of responsibilities across more than a decade of service ultimately became incompatible with sustained professional engagement.

Vulnerability of mid-career teachers and role conflict

The findings of this case study are particularly significant in light of the documented vulnerability of mid-career teachers to occupational stress and role conflict. Research indicates that as teachers accumulate experience and professional recognition, they become increasingly likely to be assigned leadership responsibilities, coordination functions, and organizational roles that exist alongside, rather than in replacement of, their regular teaching duties (Day and Gu, 2009; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Teacher A's profile illustrates this dynamic precisely: her recognized competence and leadership skills during school-based capacity development exercises made her a candidate for expanded responsibilities, yet the institutional framework offered no corresponding reduction in her instructional or administrative load. The result was a form of role conflict wherein the expectation of simultaneous instructional excellence and

organizational contribution created conditions of chronic overextension. This role conflict, documented consistently in the literature on teacher burnout, is recognized as a primary driver of emotional exhaustion, particularly when teachers perceive that their multiple obligations cannot all be fulfilled to the standards they set for themselves (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2017; Ballet and Kelchtermans, 2009).

Job dissatisfaction despite adequate remuneration

A particularly instructive dimension of Teacher A's case is that her resignation occurred after she had obtained regular earnings and the financial security associated with permanent government employment, underscoring that economic compensation alone is insufficient to retain teachers when the non-pecuniary conditions of work are unsustainable. Research affirms that heavy workload and reduced professional autonomy are independently and significantly associated with diminished job satisfaction and compromised well-being among teachers, irrespective of salary levels (Collie et al., 2012; Ingersoll, 2001; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2017). Teachers who testify to conditions of excessive task demands and constrained decision-making autonomy consistently report declines in professional motivation and instructional effectiveness, suggesting that the psychological dimensions of the work environment carry equal or greater weight than monetary considerations in determining career sustainability. The case of Teacher A validates this finding at the individual level, as her departure was explicitly attributed to exhaustion and fatigue rather than to financial grievance, thereby positioning her resignation within the category of attrition driven by organizational and structural factors rather than economic ones.

Furthermore, empirical research grounded in the JD-R model has demonstrated that high job demands combined with low levels of professional autonomy produce elevated rates of emotional exhaustion and stronger intentions to leave the profession among teachers (Borman and Dowling, 2008; Johnson, Kraft, and Papay, 2012). Teacher A's situation embodies this combination precisely: her job demands were consistently high due to the breadth of her instructional, administrative, and program-related responsibilities, while her capacity to exercise autonomous judgment over her workload and priorities was constrained by institutional requirements and hierarchical expectations. The JD-R framework thus provides a theoretically coherent explanation for the trajectory from high demand and low resource conditions to emotional exhaustion and, ultimately, voluntary professional withdrawal.

Implications for teacher retention and human resource management

The resignation of Teacher A from a position of permanent employment and professional recognition exposes a fundamental inadequacy in the retention strategies employed within the public school human resource management system. Current research on teacher retention emphasizes that organizational factors, rather than financial incentives alone, are the primary determinants of whether teachers choose to remain in or exit the profession (Ingersoll, 2001; OECD, 2020). Studies on teacher mobility have consistently found that a substantial proportion of teachers who leave the profession do so in response to stress caused by work overload, bureaucratic burden, and poor working conditions rather than as a consequence of inadequate remuneration (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2017; Collie et al., 2012). Teacher A's case contributes a rich and contextually grounded illustration of this pattern within the Philippine public education system, demonstrating that when retention strategies fail to address non-pecuniary sources of dissatisfaction, even highly competent and institutionally invested teachers become candidates for attrition.

The broader systemic implications of this finding are significant. If experienced and recognized teachers such as Teacher A are compelled to resign due to unsustainable workload conditions, the public education system risks losing precisely those educators who have accumulated the professional capital necessary for effective instruction and school-based

leadership. The departure of mid-career teachers with strong performance records not only disrupts educational continuity within individual schools but also contributes to a longer-term erosion of institutional knowledge and leadership capacity within the public school system as a whole.

The findings of this case study collectively address the central objective of examining how work overload affects the professional sustainability of a tenured DepEd Teacher III despite the presence of job security. The case of Teacher A reveals that the convergence of intensified task demands, role conflict, bureaucratic burden, and constrained professional autonomy produced conditions that were incompatible with sustained career engagement, ultimately resulting in voluntary resignation. These findings resonate strongly with the theoretical frameworks of Maslach and Leiter's Burnout Theory and Demerouti and colleagues' JD-R model, both of which predict that high demands combined with insufficient resources and autonomy lead to emotional exhaustion and professional withdrawal. The case contributes empirically grounded evidence to the growing body of Philippine and international literature calling for structural reforms in teacher workload management, more meaningful retention strategies that address organizational conditions, and institutional recognition of the non-instructional labor performed by public school teachers. The conclusions and recommendations drawn from these findings are presented in the succeeding chapter.

CONCLUSION

The case of Teacher A illuminates a fundamental and deeply consequential flaw in how the Philippine public education system conceptualizes and addresses teacher retention. Her resignation from a position of permanent employment, after more than twelve years of recognized service, demonstrates that monetary benefits alone are insufficient to sustain teachers' professional commitment when the non-monetary conditions of work have become untenable. Scholarly literature corroborates this finding, as research consistently shows that teachers are most likely to exit the profession not because of inadequate salaries but because of high workloads and role overloads that erode their capacity for sustained professional engagement (Ingersoll, 2001; Borman and Dowling, 2008). Within the Philippine context specifically, studies have established that teachers are compelled to devote a disproportionate share of their professional time to administrative duties and documentation rather than to their core instructional responsibilities, a structural imbalance that has been directly linked to burnout and occupational dissatisfaction (David et al., 2019; EDCOM II, 2023). Teacher A's experience of consistently exceeding the prescribed eight-hour working day due to the accumulation of administrative tasks, reporting obligations, and program-related responsibilities is a lived manifestation of precisely these structural conditions.

The findings of this case study further reinforce a substantial body of empirical literature connecting workplace stress to teacher burnout and voluntary attrition. Teachers who are subjected to persistently high work demands, role complexity, and continuous occupational stress are particularly susceptible to developing burnout, a condition characterized by emotional exhaustion, chronic fatigue, and diminished professional motivation (Maslach et al., 2001; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2017). These dimensions of burnout, as theorized by Maslach

and Leiter and operationalized through the Job Demands-Resources model of Demerouti and colleagues, have been empirically demonstrated to exert a powerful influence on teachers' decisions to resign from their positions (Bakker et al., 2014; Hakanen et al., 2006). Critically, this phenomenon is not unique to the Philippine context. Cross-national research conducted across diverse educational systems has consistently identified heavy workload as one of the foremost predictors of teacher turnover globally, affirming that the structural conditions documented in Teacher A's case reflect a universal challenge facing public education systems that fail to align the demands placed on teachers with the organizational resources and support provided to them (OECD, 2020; UNESCO, 2021).

In light of these findings, any serious attempt to improve the quality and sustainability of public education in the Philippines must extend well beyond salary reforms and encompass substantive structural changes to the conditions of teaching. The literature is unambiguous in its emphasis on the importance of supportive working environments wherein institutional demands are balanced by adequate organizational resources, and wherein teachers are afforded the professional autonomy and administrative support necessary to perform their instructional roles effectively and with dignity (OECD, 2020; UNESCO, 2021). Recommendations arising from this study are therefore directed at multiple levels of the educational system. At the school and district levels, it is recommended that DepEd undertake a systematic review and reduction of non-teaching administrative burdens imposed on classroom teachers, including documentation requirements, reporting tasks, and program implementation duties that could be managed by dedicated administrative personnel. At the policy level, the development and enforcement of workload standards that define and limit the scope of non-instructional responsibilities assigned to teachers is strongly warranted. Furthermore, granting teachers greater autonomy over professional decisions and providing meaningful institutional backing for their well-being are identified in the literature as critical factors in sustaining teacher commitment and reducing turnover intentions (Ingersoll, 2001; Collie et al., 2012).

If the working environment for teachers does not undergo meaningful reform, the pattern illustrated by Teacher A's resignation will continue to repeat itself at the expense of the public education system's capacity and continuity. Empirical research has established that when occupational stress reaches a threshold that exceeds an individual's coping resources and no adequate organizational mechanisms exist to mitigate the burden, teachers will withdraw from their positions as an act of self-preservation, prioritizing personal and familial well-being over professional obligations (Maslach et al., 2001; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2017). The departure of competent, experienced, and institutionally recognized teachers such as Teacher A represents an irreplaceable loss not only to individual schools but to the broader educational system, as the professional capital, mentorship capacity, and institutional knowledge accumulated over years of service cannot be readily transferred to replacement personnel. This case study therefore concludes with a call for urgent, evidence-informed, and human-centered reforms to teacher workload policy and human resource management in Philippine public education, reforms that recognize the intrinsic value of teacher well-being as both an ethical imperative and a prerequisite for achieving sustainable improvements in educational quality.

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