

Who Gets and Why: A Phenomenological Study on How School Heads Allocating Ancillary Assignments to Teachers

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Publication Date: 2025/06/18

Abstract: This study explored the experiences of school heads in promoting accountability among public school teachers, with a specific focus on the challenges they face when allocating ancillary assignments, the coping mechanisms they employ, and the insights they gain. Understanding these experiences is important for improving leadership practices and strengthening accountability systems in schools. A qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach was employed to capture the lived experiences of five public school heads of Asuncion, Davao del Norte. Data were collected through in-depth interviews using an interview guide and were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and themes. The findings revealed six main challenges faced by principals: unequal workload distribution, lack of clear guidelines, resistance from teachers, mismatch between teachers' skills and tasks, time constraints, and limited resources. To cope, school heads employed strategies such as ensuring fair workload distribution, clarifying expectations, communicating openly, matching tasks to teachers' strengths, prioritizing tasks, and seeking additional resources. Insights gained included the importance of fairness, matching tasks to strengths, and fostering open communication to build trust and teamwork. The study highlights the need for clear policies, responsive leadership, and supportive practices that enhance teacher motivation and cooperation. The findings have practical implications for school heads, the Department of Education, teachers, and policymakers in improving task allocation and accountability systems.

Keywords: School Heads, Teacher Accountability, Ancillary Assignments, Leadership, Coping Strategies, Public Schools.

How to Cite: Jocelyn A. Parcon; Remigilda Gallardo (2025) Who Gets and Why: A Phenomenological Study on How School Heads Allocating Ancillary Assignments to Teachers. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 10(6), 891-897. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25jun796>

I. INTRODUCTION

The allocation of special assignments to teachers, such as subject coordinators or club moderators, impacts their professional growth and school engagement. Understanding how these decisions are made provides insight into leadership styles, school culture, and fairness within the organization.

Research from various countries shows that special assignments for teachers are often influenced by seniority, competence, relationships, and cultural norms. In the U.S., seniority often outweighs merit, while in Europe and Asia, formal criteria are undermined by biases and hierarchical traditions.

In the Philippines, favoritism and patronage are common, affecting teacher morale and fairness. Public school teachers often face increased workloads without proper support or compensation, leading to burnout. In Davao City, a lack of transparency and clear criteria in assigning roles further reduces teacher motivation.

This study examined the lived experiences of school heads in Asuncion, Davao del Norte regarding the allocation of special assignments to teachers. By exploring these experiences, the research aimed to contribute to the broader discourse on equitable practices in educational leadership and to provide recommendations for more transparent and fair decision-making processes in schools.

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of school heads in assigning special roles to teachers using a phenomenological approach. It sought to gain deeper insights into leadership practices, organizational culture, and teacher morale, with the goal of guiding educational leaders and policymakers toward more transparent and equitable assignment practices.

Research shows that special assignments can both boost and undermine classroom performance. When these roles align with teachers' development goals and receive administrative support, they foster leadership skills and professional growth. Conversely, excessive workload, stress, or perceptions of unfairness can detract from teaching effectiveness and job satisfaction. Empowering teachers through participatory decision-making and transparent

allocation—while respecting cultural leadership norms—helps balance added duties with classroom responsibilities and optimizes both morale and performance.

This study was grounded in Role Theory and Equity Theory. Role Theory, as proposed by Katz and Kahn (1978), explained how additional responsibilities, such as special assignments, impacted teachers' performance and job satisfaction by creating role conflicts or overload, especially when expectations were unclear or support was lacking. Equity Theory, developed by Adams (1965), focused on perceptions of fairness in the allocation of roles. It suggested that when teachers perceived assignments as fair and merit-based, they were more motivated and engaged, whereas unfair distributions led to feelings of being undervalued and reduced performance.

II. METHOD

This study used a qualitative phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of school heads regarding special assignment allocation. Phenomenology focuses on understanding experiences from the participants' perspectives and was chosen to capture detailed, personal insights and meanings. This approach allowed for a deeper and more authentic understanding of how school heads perceive and interpret the assignment process.

This study was guided by key philosophical assumptions: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. It adopted a constructivist ontology, viewing reality as subjective and shaped by individual experiences. The epistemological stance was subjective, emphasizing knowledge co-created through interaction between researcher and participants. Axiology acknowledged the role of values in research, with the researcher's beliefs seen as integral to the process and managed through reflexivity. Methodologically, the study used a phenomenological approach to deeply explore the lived experiences of school heads and teachers regarding special assignment allocation.

The researcher's qualitative assumptions were based on the belief that reality was socially constructed through personal experiences and interactions. This aligned with the constructivist paradigm, which viewed knowledge as subjective and shaped by individuals' meanings. These assumptions guided the study's approach, data collection, and analysis in exploring how school heads allocated special assignments and their impact on classroom performance.

The study involved five school heads from Asuncion, Davao del Norte, chosen for their key leadership roles in allocating special assignments to teachers. Using purposive sampling, participants were selected based on specific criteria: currently serving as school heads, at least three years of leadership experience, involvement in assignment allocation within the past year, and willingness to participate in in-depth interviews.

The interview guide was the main research tool, featuring open-ended questions that encouraged school heads to share their experiences with assigning special roles to teachers. Its semi-structured design ensured key topics were covered while allowing flexibility for participants to provide detailed, personal insights. Probing questions helped explore specific areas in depth, enabling a rich and comprehensive understanding of the topic.

The study primarily used in-depth interviews (IDIs) with a semi-structured guide to collect data. This qualitative method allowed the researcher to engage closely with school heads, capturing detailed and context-rich insights about their experiences in allocating special assignments to teachers.

The researcher used thematic analysis to examine the data, starting with familiarizing themselves by reading the transcripts thoroughly. They then generated initial codes to capture key elements, grouped these codes into broader themes, and clearly defined each theme with detailed descriptions and supporting quotes. Finally, the researcher produced a report that integrated the themes into a coherent discussion addressing the research questions, using participants' direct quotes to authentically represent their perspectives.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

School heads faced several challenges in allocating special assignments to teachers, including unequal workload distribution, lack of clear guidelines, teacher resistance, skill-task mismatches, time pressures, and limited resources and support. These factors made the assignment process difficult and complex.

To overcome challenges in assigning special roles, school heads used practical strategies such as promoting fairness and transparency, clarifying expectations, communicating openly to address concerns, matching tasks to teachers' strengths, prioritizing tasks, managing time efficiently, and seeking additional resources and support.

School heads learned that fair, clear assignments build trust and cooperation, matching tasks to strengths boosts motivation and effectiveness, and open communication reduces resistance while strengthening teamwork.

The study revealed that school heads encountered several challenges in allocating special assignments to teachers. These included unequal workload distribution, unclear guidelines, teacher resistance, mismatches between teachers' skills and tasks, time constraints, competing priorities, and limited resources and administrative support.

To manage these challenges, school heads employed various coping strategies. They focused on fair and transparent workload distribution, clarified guidelines and expectations, maintained open communication to address teacher concerns, matched tasks to teachers' strengths and interests, prioritized tasks to manage time effectively, and sought additional resources and support.

From their experiences, school heads gained valuable insights. They recognized that fair and clear task assignments build trust and cooperation among teachers. Matching tasks to teachers' strengths increased motivation and effectiveness, while open communication reduced resistance and strengthened teamwork.

The challenges in assigning special tasks highlight the need for school leaders to create clear, fair, and structured systems to prevent distrust and dissatisfaction among teachers. Effective leadership requires balancing workloads, clarifying expectations, and ensuring adequate resources. The coping strategies used by school heads show the importance of adaptive leadership that promotes fairness, communication, and leverages teachers' strengths, suggesting a need for leadership training in these areas. The

insights from school heads stress that accountability should focus not just on compliance but also on fostering trust, motivation, and teamwork.

The Department of Education should create clear policies for fair distribution of ancillary assignments and provide training to enhance school heads' leadership and accountability. School heads should ensure transparent communication, fair workloads, and match tasks to teachers' strengths while encouraging feedback and support. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate and engage openly, fostering teamwork and accountability. Students benefit from this environment and should be involved in promoting fairness and responsibility. Future research could explore the long-term effects of accountability practices and compare perspectives across regions and school types.

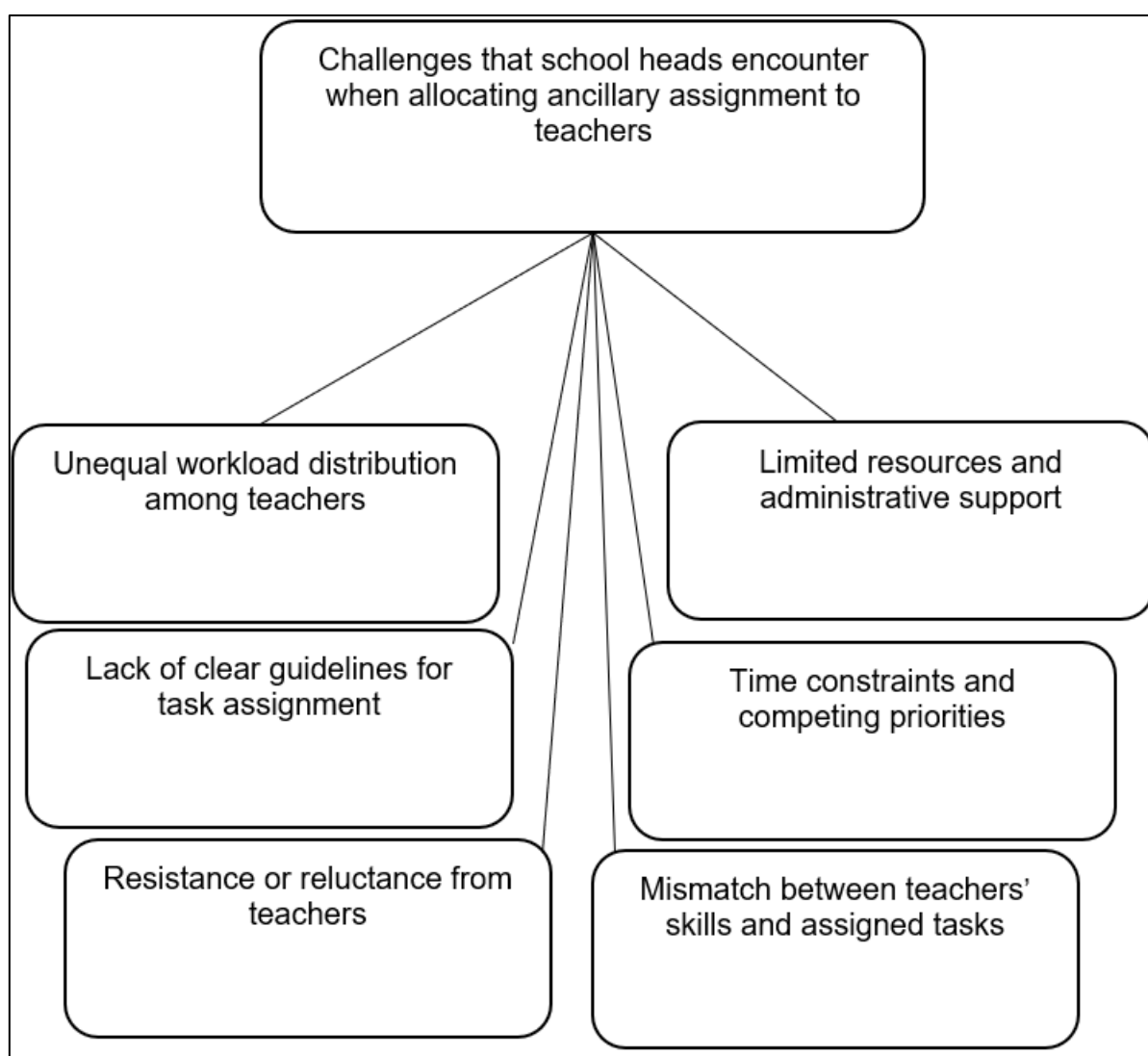


Fig 1: Challenges that School Heads Encounter When Allocating Ancillary Assignment to Teachers

Figure 1 presents a synthesis of the multifaceted challenges school heads encounter when allocating ancillary assignments to teachers. It highlights six major themes: unequal workload distribution, lack of clear task assignment guidelines, teacher resistance or reluctance, mismatch between teachers' skills and assigned tasks, time constraints and competing priorities, and limited resources and administrative support. These interconnected challenges underscore the complexity of the school leadership role, where decisions must balance fairness, capability, motivation, and available support. The figure illustrates how unequal task distribution can lead to perceptions of favoritism, while unclear guidelines and mismatched skills further complicate task delegation.

Additionally, the persistent issue of limited time and resources forces school leaders to make difficult compromises, often relying on teacher goodwill rather than institutional backing. Overall, Figure 1 reflects the critical need for structured policies, strategic task alignment, and stronger support systems to ensure effective and equitable management of ancillary responsibilities in schools.

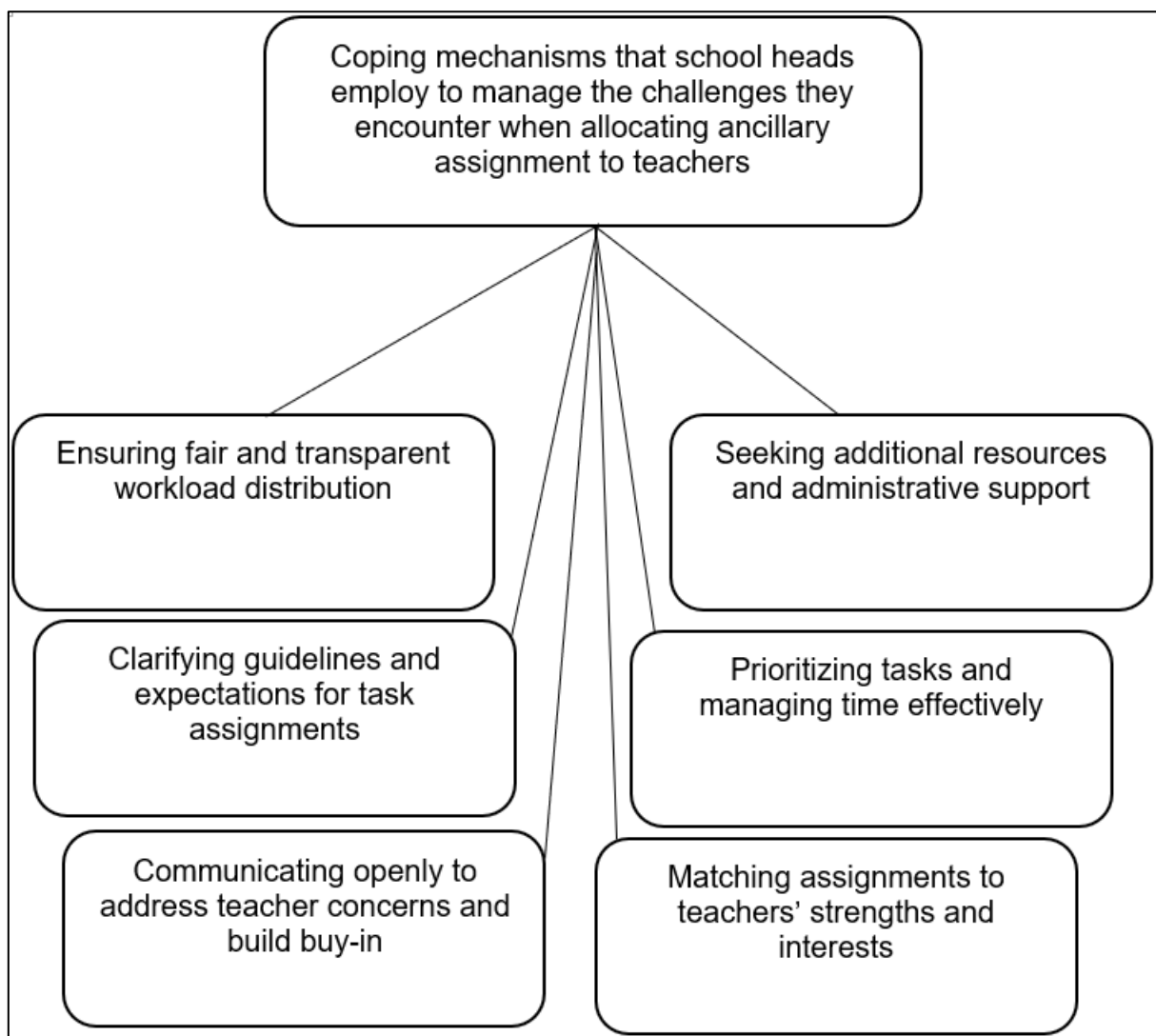


Fig 2. Coping Mechanisms that School Heads Employ to Manage the Challenges they Encounter When Allocating Ancillary Assignment to Teachers

Figure 2 presents the coping mechanisms employed by school heads to manage challenges in allocating ancillary assignments to teachers. These include ensuring fair and transparent workload distribution, clarifying guidelines and expectations, communicating openly to address concerns, matching tasks to teachers' strengths and interests, prioritizing tasks and managing time effectively, and seeking additional resources and support. These strategies help reduce resistance, prevent overload, and build trust and collaboration among staff. By applying these approaches, school heads not only improve task implementation and teacher motivation but also create a more supportive and efficient school environment, as supported by relevant studies and direct insights from school leaders.

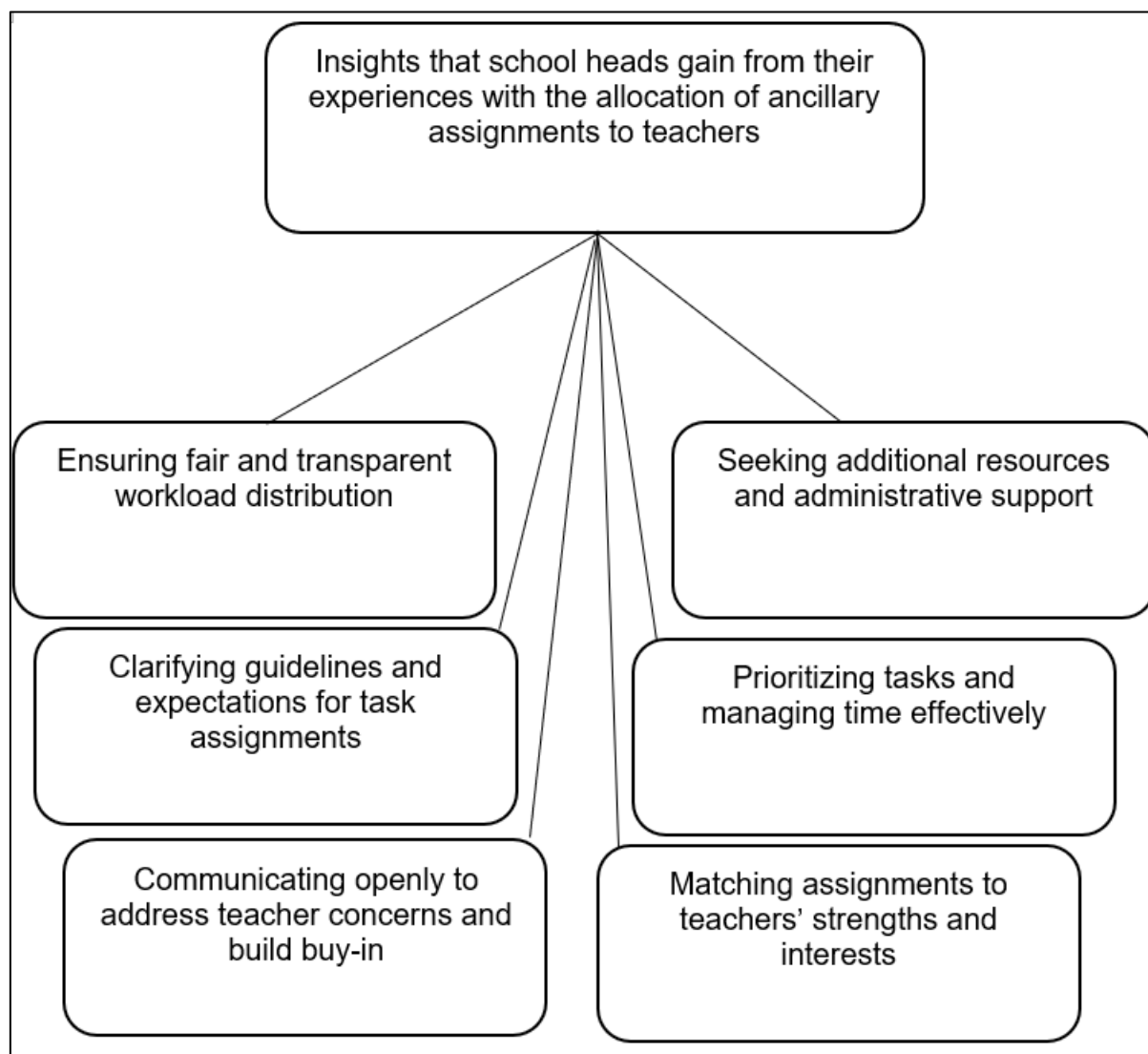


Fig 3. Insights that School Heads Gain from their Experiences with the Allocation of Ancillary Assignments to Teachers

Figure 3 illustrates the key insights school heads gain from their experiences in allocating ancillary assignments to teachers. These insights include the importance of fair and clear task assignment, which builds trust and cooperation among teachers; the value of matching tasks to teachers' strengths to increase motivation and effectiveness; and the role of open communication in reducing resistance and fostering teamwork. School heads observed that when teachers perceive the allocation process as transparent and just, they are more cooperative and willing to collaborate. Additionally, aligning assignments with teachers' skills and interests enhances task quality and boosts morale. Open and honest communication further strengthens relationships, as it allows teachers to express concerns and feel included in decision-making. Together, these insights help school leaders create a supportive and efficient work environment where teachers feel respected, motivated, and engaged.

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