

The Relationship between Professional Development and Workload Management on the Support System of Teachers in Geographically-Isolated Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between professional development and workload management and their influence on the support system of teachers in geographically isolated schools in Bukidnon, specifically in Kitaotao, Quezon, and San Fernando during the school year 2025–2026. The study involved 380 public school teachers. It assessed professional development in terms of seminars, workshops, training, research and extension activities, and advanced academic studies. It also evaluated workload management in relation to non-teaching tasks, support activities, and administrative work, as well as the level of support system in terms of peer, administrative, institutional, and recognition support.

Findings revealed that teachers demonstrated high levels of professional development, with seminars and training as the most common. Workload management was also rated high, particularly in administrative tasks. The support system was likewise rated high, with administrative support receiving the highest rating.

Further analysis showed a significant relationship among professional development, workload management, and the support system. Both variables significantly predicted support, with workload management emerging as the strongest factor. The results suggest improving workload conditions and expanding professional development opportunities to strengthen teacher support systems.

Keywords: rural education, professional learning, workload balance, non-teaching responsibilities, teacher well-being

INTRODUCTION

Teachers who are assigned in geographically-isolated schools experience many challenges that affect both their work and personal well-being. These schools are often located in remote areas where access to resources and basic services is limited. Compared to teachers in urban areas, they work under more difficult conditions, which makes their responsibilities heavier. In Bukidnon, for instance, some teachers travel long distances on rough and unpaved roads just to reach their schools, which already drains their time and energy before teaching begins (Fabian et al., 2025). Similarly, difficult geographical conditions increase fatigue and reduce teachers' readiness to teach (Cruz & Manalo, 2018).

Aside from transportation issues, many remote schools lack essential facilities such as libraries, updated materials, technology, and even stable electricity. Communication is also a challenge due to weak internet and mobile signals, which limits supervision, feedback, and collaboration. Because of this, teachers may feel isolated, stressed, and less motivated (Rivera et al., 2022). Limited access to communication and professional support can also lower morale and reduce teaching effectiveness (Mendoza & Castillo, 2021). Additionally, opportunities for professional development are often limited. Many teachers cannot attend training and

seminars due to distance, cost, and lack of transportation (Lopez, 2019), and this situation contributes to professional isolation and slower career growth (De Guzman, 2020).

The teachers in geographically-isolated schools often rely on informal learning, such as sharing strategies with colleagues and learning through experience (Torres, 2023). Although helpful, these methods cannot fully replace structured training programs. Access to formal professional development remains unequal between urban and rural teachers (Garcia & Ramos, 2020; Villanueva & Torres, 2022). While the Department of Education has introduced online and blended learning programs, their effectiveness is still limited due to poor internet connectivity, lack of devices, and varying digital skills among teachers (Reyes & Bautista, 2024). Digital inequality continues to be a major barrier in supporting teachers' professional growth (Aquino & Reyes, 2021).

Another major concern is workload management. Teachers in remote schools often handle multiple roles, including teaching, administrative work, and community involvement, which increases stress and fatigue (Santos & Dela Cruz, 2021; Bautista, 2018). In Bukidnon, teachers commonly take on several responsibilities at once, leaving them with limited time to prepare lessons and support students (Fabian et al., 2025). Poor workload management can negatively affect teaching quality and student outcomes (Ramos & Perez, 2020). However, when workload is properly managed and supported by strong leadership and clear policies, teachers can perform better and feel more motivated (Lopez, 2019; Navarro & Santos, 2023; Reyes & Bautista, 2024). The professional development and workload management are closely connected and are important in strengthening the support system of teachers in geographically-isolated schools.

FRAMEWORKS

Professional development and workload management are both important factors that influence the support system of teachers, especially in geographically-isolated schools. Professional development helps teachers improve their knowledge, skills, and teaching practices through continuous learning such as trainings, seminars, research, and advanced studies (UNESCO, 2005; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In the Philippines, programs like LAC sessions and CPD support teachers' growth, even in remote areas (Garcia et al., 2024). Activities such as workshops, research, and extension programs enhance teachers' competence, confidence, and ability to respond to learners' needs (Narido & Quinito, 2026; Ulla, 2018). However, access to these opportunities is often limited in isolated schools due to distance, lack of resources, and financial constraints.

At the same time, workload management plays a significant role in teachers' performance and well-being. Teachers handle not only teaching but also many non-teaching and administrative tasks, which often lead to stress and reduced teaching time (Tarraya, 2024; Magtalas, 2024). Heavy workload can limit teachers' participation in professional development and affect their motivation and job satisfaction (Reyes et al., 2023; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Non-teaching duties, administrative work, and multiple roles are more challenging in geographically-isolated schools due to limited staff and support systems.

The support system of teachers, which includes administrative support, peer collaboration, institutional support, and recognition, is greatly influenced by both professional development and workload management. Strong support systems help teachers manage stress, improve teaching performance, and stay motivated (Barros & Dalonos, 2025; OECD, 2023). However, when workload is too heavy and professional development is limited, support systems become weaker.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

This study aims to examine the significant relationship between professional development and workload management and how these influence the support system of teachers in geographically-isolated schools in Division of Bukidnon, particularly in the school districts of Quezon, Kitaotao, and San Fernando during the school year 2025 - 2026. It specifically seeks to describe the level of teachers' professional development in terms of participation in seminars, workshops, and trainings, involvement in research and extension activities, and engagement in advanced academic studies. It also aims to assess the extent of workload management, including non-teaching tasks, support and management duties, and administrative responsibilities.

Additionally, the study intends to determine the level of support system available to teachers, focusing on peer support, administrative support, institutional support, and recognition and motivation. Furthermore, it examines the significant relationships among professional development, workload management, and the support system of teachers, and identifies which of these variables, either individually or in combination, best predict the support system of teachers in geographically-isolated schools.

METHODS

This study used a quantitative method, specifically a descriptive-correlational design, to examine the relationship between professional development, workload management, and the support system of teachers in geographically-isolated schools. The research was conducted in Division of Bukidnon, particularly in the school districts of Kitaotao, Quezon, and San Fernando. A total of 380 teachers from 28 public elementary and secondary schools were selected using simple random sampling to ensure fair representation. Data were gathered through face-to-face surveys using structured questionnaires, which were distributed during teachers' free time. The respondents were assured that their answers would remain private and confidential.

The study used standardized survey instruments adapted from previous studies to measure professional development, workload management, and support systems. These instruments underwent validation and pilot testing to ensure clarity and reliability. The results of the reliability test showed high Cronbach's alpha values of 0.906 for professional development, 0.908 for workload management, and 0.976 for the support system, with an overall reliability of 0.975, indicating that the instruments were highly reliable. The questionnaire included key indicators such as seminars and training, non-teaching and administrative tasks, and different forms of support like peer, administrative, and institutional support. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale to determine the level of each variable.

Before data collection, the researcher secured permission from the Schools Division Superintendent and followed proper ethical procedures, including informed consent and confidentiality, in line with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The researcher personally visited the schools to distribute and collect the questionnaires.

After gathering the data, the responses were organized, encoded, and analyzed using statistical tools. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the levels of the variables, while Pearson correlation was used to determine the relationships among them. Multiple regression analysis was also applied to identify which variables, either alone or combined, best predict the support system of teachers in geographically isolated schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Summary of mean scores of professional development of teachers

INDICATORS	MEAN	DESCRIPTIVE RATING	QUALITATIVE INTERPRETATION
Seminar/Workshop/Training	4.41	Agree	High professional development
Research and Extension Activities	4.13	Agree	High professional development
Advance Academic Studies	3.84	Agree	High professional development
OVERALL MEAN	4.18	Agree	High professional development

Legend:

Range	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
4.51 - 5.00	Strongly Agree (SA)	Very high professional development
3.51 - 4.50	Agree (A)	High professional development
2.51 - 3.50	Neutral (N)	Moderate professional development
1.51 - 2.50	Disagree (D)	Low professional development
1.00 - 1.50	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Very low professional development

The results show that teachers have a high level of professional development, with an overall mean of 4.18. Among the three areas, seminars, workshops, and trainings received the highest mean (4.41), followed by research and extension activities (4.13), while advanced academic studies had the lowest mean (3.84). This indicates that teachers are actively engaged in professional growth, especially in activities that are practical and directly useful in their teaching.

Teachers tend to participate more in seminars and trainings because these are easier to access and can be immediately applied in the classroom. Research and extension activities also show strong participation, reflecting teachers' involvement in collaborative and community-based efforts. However, engagement in advanced academic studies is lower, likely due to challenges such as limited time, financial constraints, and heavy workload.

The findings suggest that teachers value continuous learning and development. Professional development appears to be stronger in short-term and school-based activities rather than long-term academic pursuits. This is supported by studies showing that training programs are widely implemented and effective in improving teaching practices, while participation in advanced studies is often limited by practical constraints (Garcia et al., 2024; Sacote-Labadan & Tantiado, 2025; Casilao et al., 2025; Guzman, 2025).

The results highlight the need for a more balanced professional development system. While current programs successfully support training and collaboration, there is a need to strengthen support for advanced academic studies. Providing financial assistance, reducing workload, and improving institutional support can help teachers pursue higher education and further enhance their teaching effectiveness (Romorosa, 2025).

Table 2: Summary of mean scores of workload management of teachers

INDICATORS	MEAN	DESCRIPTIVE RATING	QUALITATIVE INTERPRETATION
Administrative Activities	4.31	Agree	High workload management
Non-Teaching Activities	4.27	Agree	High workload management
Support and Management Activities	4.03	Agree	High workload management
OVERALL MEAN	4.19	Agree	High workload management

Legend:

Range	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
4.51 - 5.00	Strongly Agree (SA)	Very high workload management
3.51 - 4.50	Agree (A)	High workload management
2.51 - 3.50	Neutral (N)	Moderate workload management
1.51 - 2.50	Disagree (D)	Low workload management
1.00 - 1.50	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Very low workload management

The results show that teachers have a high level of workload management, with an overall mean of 4.19. Among the areas, administrative activities received the highest mean (4.31), followed by non-teaching activities (4.27), while support and management activities had the lowest mean (4.03). This suggests that teachers are generally capable of handling their responsibilities, even in geographically-isolated schools where work demands are more challenging.

Teachers appear to be most focused on administrative tasks such as documentation, assessment, and reporting, which are essential for school operations. They are also highly involved in non-teaching responsibilities like communication, collaboration, and extracurricular activities. However, tasks related to support and management, such as coordination and additional teaching roles, are slightly more difficult to manage. Although teachers show strong adaptability and commitment, the differences in scores suggest that workload is not evenly distributed and may place more pressure on certain areas.

These findings are supported by studies showing that teachers often handle heavy administrative and non-teaching workloads, which can affect performance if not properly managed (Pamunag & Mosquera, 2025). Teachers may still demonstrate good workload management, but continuous demands can lead to burnout over time (Gamalo & Abellana, 2025). In the Philippine context, teachers commonly extend their work beyond official hours and rely on personal effort to meet expectations, highlighting their resilience (Bongco & Ancho, 2019). However, concerns about workload policies and fairness remain, emphasizing the need for better distribution of tasks (Tarraya, 2024).

The teachers demonstrate strong workload management across different responsibilities, reflecting their dedication and professionalism. However, the consistently high workload suggests a need for better support systems. Providing balanced task distribution, reducing excessive administrative duties, and strengthening institutional support can help protect teachers' well-being and improve teaching effectiveness in geographically isolated schools.

Table 3: Summary of mean scores of support system of teachers

INDICATORS	MEAN	DESCRIPTIVE RATING	QUALITATIVE INTERPRETATION
Peer Support	4.41	Agree	High support system
Administrative Support	4.34	Agree	High support system
Institutional Support	4.29	Agree	High support system
Recognition and Motivation Support	4.27	Agree	High support system
	4.33	Agree	High support system

Legend:

Range	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
4.51 - 5.00	Strongly Agree (SA)	Very high support system
3.51 - 4.50	Agree (A)	High support system
2.51 - 3.50	Neutral (N)	Moderate support system
1.51 - 2.50	Disagree (D)	Low support system
1.00 - 1.50	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Very low support system

The results show that teachers experience a high level of support system, with an overall mean of 4.33. Among the different areas, peer support received the highest mean (4.41), followed by administrative support (4.34), institutional support (4.29), and recognition and motivation support (4.27). This indicates that teachers generally feel well-supported in their school environment across different dimensions.

Peer support stands out as the strongest aspect, showing that teachers rely heavily on collaboration, teamwork, and strong relationships with colleagues. Administrative support is also high, suggesting that school leaders play an important role in guiding and assisting teachers. Although institutional support and recognition are still rated high, their slightly lower scores imply that there is room for improvement in providing resources, welfare programs, and incentive systems. The results reflect a positive and supportive environment but also highlight the need for a more balanced approach.

These findings are supported by studies showing that strong support systems, including peer collaboration and leadership support, improve teacher effectiveness and student outcomes (Garcia et al., 2024). Positive collegial relationships also help teachers adapt and grow professionally (Ancho & Arrieta, 2021). In the Philippine context, teachers often depend on peer support to manage workload and maintain motivation (Bongco & Ancho, 2019). Additionally, administrative and institutional support, including recognition and resources, contribute to better performance and job satisfaction (Abulon et al., 2020). Strengthening support systems is therefore essential for improving both teacher well-being and education quality (Sinsay-Villanueva et al., 2025).

The teachers experience strong support in their schools, especially from peers and administrators. However, improving institutional resources and recognition systems can further strengthen this support. A well-balanced and comprehensive support system is important to sustain teacher motivation, enhance teaching quality, and achieve better learning outcomes.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis of Professional Development and Workload Management on Support System of Teachers

VARIABLES	CORRELATION COEFFICIENT (R.VALUE)	PROBABILITY
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT		
Seminar/Workshop/Training	.504**	.000
Research and Extension Activities	.342**	.000
Advance Academic Studies	.220**	.000
WORKLOAD MANAGEMENT		
Non-Teaching Activities	.739**	.000
Support and Management Activities	.703**	.000
Administrative Activities	.693**	.000
All correlations are significant at $p < 0.01$.		

The results show that both professional development and workload management are strongly connected to the support system of teachers. All variables have significant relationships, which means that when teachers improve their skills and manage their tasks well, they are more likely to feel supported in their schools. This highlights the importance of both continuous learning and proper workload handling in strengthening teacher support.

For professional development, participation in seminars, workshops, and trainings has a moderate relationship with the support system, showing that teachers who join these activities feel more supported. Research and extension activities also have a significant connection, suggesting that involvement in research helps teachers grow and gain more support. Advanced academic studies show a weaker but still significant relationship, meaning that pursuing higher education can also improve access to support, although to a lesser extent. Studies support these findings, explaining that professional development improves teacher competence and strengthens school support (Linda Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Mark Anthony Ulla, 2018; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019).

In terms of workload management, all areas show strong relationships with the support system. Non-teaching activities have the strongest connection, followed by support and management activities, and administrative tasks. This means that how teachers manage their responsibilities, especially tasks outside teaching, greatly affects the level of support they experience. Research shows that proper handling of workload improves teacher well-being and support systems (Einar M. Skaalvik & Sidsel Skaalvik, 2017). Strong leadership and effective management practices also help improve institutional support (Kenneth Leithwood et al., 2020), while heavy administrative demands can influence teacher performance and support (Katrien Ballet & Geert Kelchtermans, 2009).

The findings show that workload management has a stronger influence than professional development, but both are important in building a strong support system for teachers. Teachers who are engaged in professional growth and can manage their responsibilities effectively are more likely to feel supported in their work. This suggests that schools should improve training opportunities while also ensuring fair and manageable workloads. A balanced approach can help improve teacher well-being, performance, and the overall quality of education.

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis Between Professional Development and Workload Management Towards Support System of Teachers

Coefficients						
MODEL	UNSTANDARDIZED		STANDARDIZED		t	Sig.
	COEFFICIENTS		COEFFICIENTS			
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	.533	.161			3.318	.001
Professional Development						
Seminar/Workshop/Training	0.173	0.036	0.17		4.866	0
Workload Management						
Non-Teaching Activities	0.342	0.053	0.345		6.427	0
Administrative Activities	0.22	0.039	0.256		5.571	0
Support and Management Activities	0.155	0.047	0.18		3.317	0.001
a. Dependent Variable: Support System of Teachers						
R = 0.803	R ² = 0.645	F = 170.121	Prob. = 0.000			

REGRESSION EQUATION:

$$Y = 0.533 + 0.173(X_1) + 0.342(X_2) + 0.220(X_3) + 0.155(X_4),$$

where:

Y^{\wedge} denotes the support system of teachers

X_1 is the professional development

X_2 is non-teaching activities

X_3 is administrative activities

X_4 is the support and management activities

The results show that both professional development and workload management have a strong effect on the support system of teachers. All the variables included in the analysis significantly contribute to improving teacher support. Among them, seminars, workshops, and trainings, as well as non-teaching, administrative, and management activities, all play important roles. However, non-teaching activities stand out as the strongest predictor, meaning that how teachers manage tasks outside classroom teaching has the biggest impact on how supported they feel.

The findings also show that the model has strong explanatory power, with 64.5% of the support system explained by these variables. This means that most of the factors affecting teacher support are already captured in the study, although some factors are still not included. The overall result is statistically significant, confirming that both professional development and workload management, whether individually or combined, can predict the level of support teachers experience. Because of this, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Research shows that participating in training and professional development helps improve teacher effectiveness and strengthens support systems (Linda Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Workload, especially non-teaching responsibilities, also plays a major role in shaping teachers' working conditions and access to support (Einar M. Skaalvik & Sidsel Skaalvik, 2017). In addition, strong leadership and effective school management help build better support systems for teachers (Kenneth Leithwood et al., 2020).

The study shows that improving training opportunities and managing workload properly especially non-teaching tasks can greatly strengthen the support system of teachers. Schools should focus on both professional growth and fair workload distribution to create a more supportive and effective teaching environment.

CONCLUSIONS

The teachers situated in geographically-isolated schools demonstrate a high level of professional development, especially in seminars, workshops, and trainings that are more accessible and directly useful in their teaching. However, participation in advanced academic studies is lower due to challenges such as limited time, financial constraints, and heavy workload. At the same time, teachers show a strong ability to manage their workload, handling administrative, non-teaching, and support-related responsibilities effectively. Despite this, administrative and non-teaching tasks are more demanding, which may lead to imbalance and could affect teachers' efficiency and well-being in the long run.

In terms of support, teachers generally experience a strong support system, particularly from their peers and school administrators. However, institutional support and recognition systems are less emphasized and still need improvement. The findings confirm that professional development and workload management are not only significantly related to the support system of teachers but also serve as strong predictors of it. This highlights the importance of improving both areas to create a more balanced, supportive, and effective teaching environment in geographically isolated schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that policymakers and the Department of Education authorities focus on improving the working conditions of teachers in geographically-isolated schools. This includes providing enough resources, better infrastructure, and stronger institutional support to create a more balanced and supportive environment. There is also a need to develop policies that ensure fair workload distribution, offer financial assistance such as scholarships, and create flexible programs that allow teachers to pursue advanced academic studies despite time and financial limitations.

Schools and administrators are encouraged to strengthen professional development programs by offering more structured and long-term opportunities, such as partnerships with higher education institutions and flexible learning options. At the same time, reducing excessive administrative and non-teaching tasks through clerical support and digital systems can help ease teachers' workload. Teachers themselves are encouraged to continue engaging in professional growth, especially in research and further studies. Future researchers are also advised to explore other factors like teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and student outcomes to better understand and improve the support system in different educational settings.

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