# School Heads' Lived Experiences in Managing Teacher Shortages and Deployment Imbalances in Davao de Oro: Basis for Policy Enhancement

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## Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of school heads in managing teacher shortages and deployment imbalances in Davao de Oro, providing an empirical basis for policy enhancement in teacher deployment and workforce management. Specifically, it examined the challenges encountered, coping mechanisms and leadership practices employed, and perceived effects of staffing inadequacies on school operations, instructional delivery, teacher performance, and learner outcomes. Employing a qualitative phenomenological research design, the study involved fourteen (14) purposively selected public elementary and secondary school heads who had directly experienced teacher shortages and deployment imbalances. Data were gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns, shared experiences, and management responses. Findings revealed three major themes: persistent teacher shortages as barriers to effective school management, inequitable teacher deployment across schools, and adaptive leadership and resourcefulness among school heads. Participants described insufficient subject-specialist teachers, excessive teaching workloads, frequent scheduling adjustments, and delayed staffing assistance. To sustain educational services, school heads implemented strategic teaching assignments, team teaching, peer mentoring, collaborative planning, and coordination with division offices and community stakeholders. Despite these interventions, participants perceived continuing difficulties in instructional continuity, teacher well-being, individualized learner support, and overall school effectiveness. The study concluded that teacher shortages and deployment imbalances represent interconnected structural and administrative challenges requiring interventions beyond temporary school-level adjustments. Accordingly, proposed policy enhancements include needs-based teacher allocation, strengthened deployment monitoring, streamlined staffing procedures, targeted support for geographically disadvantaged schools, and institutionalized teacher retention and professional development initiatives. The study underscores the importance of incorporating school heads' firsthand experiences into educational governance and workforce planning to promote equitable teacher distribution, responsive school management, sustainable instructional delivery, and improved educational opportunities for learners across Davao de Oro.

*Keywords: Lived Experiences, School Heads, Teacher Shortages, Deployment Imbalances, Adaptive Leadership, Workforce Management, Policy Enhancement*