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The Dynamics of Administrative Control in Teacher Professional Development

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the dynamics of administrative control in teacher professional development (TPD) in the Oroquieta City Division, Misamis Occidental, during School Year 2025–2026. Using a qualitative descriptive–narrative design, the study explored the perspectives of eight teachers and two school heads selected purposively from public schools. Data from expert-validated, semi-structured interviews were analyzed thematically. Findings showed that administrative control operated through policies, supervision and monitoring, structured professional development, reporting and documentation, and communication systems. Participants described both benefits—clear direction, accountability, and instructional feedback—and constraints, particularly workload, time pressure, and limited professional discretion. The study concludes that administrative control is most conducive to meaningful professional learning when its accountability functions are paired with flexible, developmental support. Hence, they recommended simplified reporting, relevant training, balanced accountability, collaborative leadership, and attention to teacher well-being.

Keywords: *administrative control; teacher professional development; school leadership; teacher autonomy; qualitative research*

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Introduction

Teacher professional development (TPD) is an ongoing process through which teachers strengthen pedagogical knowledge, professional judgment, and instructional practice. Effective professional learning is sustained, collaborative, and closely connected to classroom needs rather than confined to one-off training or documentation exercises (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). School leadership and organizational conditions influence whether teachers can translate professional learning into improvements in their daily practice.

In the Philippines, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers establish expectations for professional growth and career-long learning (Department of Education [DepEd], 2017). DepEd has also institutionalized the recognition of professional development programs and credit mechanisms through national issuances (DepEd, 2020a, 2020b). These structures seek to ensure consistency and accountability, yet they also place teacher learning within systems of supervision, performance monitoring, and reporting. DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024, which addresses the removal of administrative tasks from public school teachers, further illustrates the policy concern about competing demands on teachers' time (DepEd, 2024).

Administrative control can be enabling and constraining at the same time. Clear standards, observation feedback, and organized learning opportunities can support teacher development; however, repetitive compliance tasks and rigid monitoring may reduce the time and discretion required for reflective practice. Wermke and Salokangas (2021) frame this tension in relation to teacher autonomy, while self-determination perspectives underscore the importance of autonomy, competence, and supportive professional relationships for sustained motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2020). Instructional leadership offers another perspective: the value of monitoring depends partly on whether it is paired with coaching and developmental feedback (Hallinger, 2021).

Although policies describe what school systems should require and support, they do not fully explain how teachers and school heads experience administrative control in particular divisions. The Oroquieta City Division provides a relevant setting for exploring the coexistence of accountability demands and opportunities for professional learning. Context-specific qualitative accounts can illuminate which administrative practices are perceived as useful and which become barriers to meaningful development. Thus, this study therefore explored the dynamics of administrative control in teacher professional development in the Oroquieta City Division during School Year 2025–2026. It addressed three questions: (1) What forms of administrative control are implemented and experienced by teachers and school heads? (2) How do participants describe their supportive and constraining effects on TPD? and (3) What insights can inform strategies that balance accountability with meaningful professional growth?

Methods

The study employed a qualitative descriptive–narrative research design in selected public elementary and secondary schools in the Oroquieta City Division, Misamis Occidental, during School Year 2025–2026. Ten participants—eight teachers and two school heads—were purposively selected on the basis of their experience with school administration and professional development; teachers had at least three years of teaching experience, while school heads had at least two years of administrative experience. Data were gathered using a researcher-developed, expert-validated semi-structured interview guide aligned with the study questions. Following the necessary institutional coordination and informed consent procedures, individual interviews were conducted, transcribed, and examined using the six-phase thematic analysis framework of Braun and Clarke, as reported in the thesis. Confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the protection of participant information were observed in accordance with the study's ethical procedures and the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The findings represent participants' contextual experiences rather than statistically generalizable or causal estimates.

Results and Discussions

The analysis was organized around the three research questions. The tables summarize the original thesis codes and their corresponding themes; selected participant accounts illustrate how the themes were interpreted. The themes should be read as qualitative patterns, not as rankings or prevalence estimates.

Table 1. Forms of Administrative Control in Teacher Professional Development

Theme	Representative codes from the thesis
Policy-Based Administrative Control Systems	Implementation of DepEd policies and guidelines; Compliance with division memoranda and standards; Structured rules, procedures, and frameworks; Alignment with curriculum and professional standards
Supervision and Monitoring Mechanisms	Classroom observations and instructional supervision; Performance evaluation (RPMS, IPCRF); Monitoring of teaching practices and student outcomes; Feedback and post-observation conferences
Structured Professional Development Programs	Required participation in trainings, INSET, and LAC sessions; Division seminars, workshops, and webinars; Mentoring and coaching programs; Capacity-building and continuous learning activities
Documentation and Reporting Requirements	Submission of reports, portfolios, and documentation (MOVs, certificates); Lesson plan checking and accomplishment reports; Attendance monitoring and compliance records; Reflection papers and development plans (IDP)
Communication and Implementation Structures	Communication through memos, meetings, and group chats; Orientation and dissemination of guidelines; Use of official announcements and digital platforms; Regular follow-ups and monitoring systems

Five interrelated mechanisms were identified: Policy-Based Administrative Control Systems, Supervision and Monitoring Mechanisms, Structured Professional Development Programs, Documentation and Reporting Requirements, Communication and Implementation Structures. Participants characterized control as a policy-based system that organizes professional work, communicates expectations, and tracks compliance. One participant explained that administrative control includes "policies, guidelines, monitoring, and reporting requirements" that guide teachers' work (P1). This suggests that administrative structures provide predictability and consistency, but their implementation also determines the amount of procedural work attached to professional learning.

Classroom observation, performance appraisal, and post-observation feedback were described as mechanisms for monitoring and instructional improvement. Structured learning activities, including in-service training and Learning Action Cell sessions, established formal opportunities for development. Documentation and communication systems supported accountability and coordination, while also expanding the tasks teachers had to complete. The findings thus show that administrative control extends beyond a single supervisory practice to a connected set of school-level routines.

These findings are supported by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who emphasized that effective professional development requires structured learning opportunities, continuous feedback, collaboration, and sustained institutional support. Similarly, Hallinger (2011) highlighted the importance of instructional leadership in establishing clear expectations, monitoring teaching practices, and promoting continuous school improvement. OECD (2019) further emphasized that school leadership, teacher appraisal, and professional collaboration play significant roles in strengthening teaching quality and professional growth. However, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) noted that excessive administrative demands and work-related pressures may contribute to teacher stress and emotional exhaustion. These perspectives reinforce the findings that administrative control serves both regulatory and developmental functions, suggesting that effective school management requires balancing policy compliance, accountability mechanisms, and meaningful professional learning opportunities without imposing unnecessary administrative burdens on teachers.

Table 2. Supportive and Constraining Effects of Administrative Control

Theme	Representative codes from the thesis
Structured Guidance and Professional	Provides clear standards, structure, and direction; Helps

Accountability (Support)	organize tasks and responsibilities; Ensures alignment with DepEd standards and goals; Promotes accountability and consistency
Instructional Improvement and Professional Growth (Support)	Feedback from classroom observations and evaluations; Access to trainings, mentoring, and learning opportunities; Identification of strengths and areas for improvement; Encourages reflection and continuous learning
Administrative Workload and Time Constraints (Constraint)	Excessive paperwork and documentation requirements; Time-consuming reports and compliance tasks; Reduced time for lesson preparation and innovation; Pressure from deadlines and monitoring
Restricted Professional Autonomy (Constraint)	Limited flexibility in teaching strategies; Strict compliance with guidelines and procedures; Reduced creativity and innovation in teaching; Prescriptive approaches to instruction
Dual Impact on Motivation and Engagement (Support–Constraint)	Motivation influenced by balance of support and burden; Encouragement through recognition and feedback; Stress and fatigue due to workload demands; Reduced engagement when requirements are excessive

Participants described administrative control as both a resource and a burden. Supportive experiences involved clearer professional expectations, organized responsibilities, instructional feedback, and access to training. For example, one participant stated that administrative control provides "clear guidelines on what to do" (P1). These accounts are consistent with the developmental purpose of instructional leadership: standards and monitoring can become constructive when they inform coaching, reflection, and targeted learning (Hallinger, 2021).

At the same time, participants reported that extensive paperwork, time-consuming reporting, and rigid compliance demands competed with preparation, instruction, and professional learning. The thesis also identified constraints on professional autonomy and motivation. These narratives echo the autonomy–control tension discussed by Wermke and Salokangas (2021): systems designed to ensure quality may inadvertently narrow teachers' discretion. The qualitative evidence does not establish the size of these effects; it identifies how participants understood their consequences in daily school work.

Table 3. Insights for Balancing Administrative Control and Professional Growth

Theme	Representative codes from the thesis
Streamlined and Efficient Administrative Processes	Reduce excessive and repetitive paperwork; Simplify documentation and reporting systems; Use of standardized templates and digital platforms; Minimize redundant compliance requirements
Needs-Based and Relevant Professional Development	Align trainings with teachers' needs and classroom realities; Focus on practical, classroom-based learning; Provide differentiated and flexible learning opportunities; Ensure applicability of training to teaching practice
Balanced Accountability and Professional Autonomy	Allow flexibility in teaching approaches and implementation; Set realistic deadlines and expectations; Encourage innovation and teacher-led initiatives; Provide room for contextualized teaching strategies
Collaborative and Supportive Leadership Practices	Strengthen mentoring, coaching, and collaboration; Promote peer learning (LAC, mentoring, coaching); Provide continuous feedback and guidance; Encourage shared decision-making and teacher voice
Holistic Support and Teacher Well-being	Prioritize teacher well-being and motivation; Recognize teacher efforts and achievements; Provide emotional and professional support systems; Maintain work-life balance

	and reduce burnout

Participants proposed improvements that preserved accountability while reducing unnecessary procedural demands. Their priorities included streamlined administrative processes, professional development responsive to actual classroom needs, realistic expectations, greater flexibility in teaching approaches, collaborative leadership, and teacher well-being. As one participant observed, "Reducing redundant requirements would help lessen our workload" (P10). This recommendation illustrates a practical distinction between essential evidence of performance and duplicated reporting that adds little instructional value.

The themes indicate that balanced administrative strategies should combine clear standards with developmental feedback and room for teacher judgment. Standardized templates and accessible digital processes may simplify routine reporting, but their value depends on whether they actually reduce workload. Similarly, professional development is more likely to be meaningful when school leaders provide relevant opportunities, protect time for participation, and engage teachers in planning and reflection. These insights complement the intent of DepEd's 2024 directive on removing administrative tasks while remaining grounded in the experiences of the study participants (DepEd, 2024).

Conclusions

Administrative control in the Oroquieta City Division was experienced as a dual-purpose system: it supported teacher professional development through standards, supervision, structured learning opportunities, and accountability, but also constrained it through administrative workload, time pressure, and limitations on professional autonomy. This suggest that the issue is not the presence of administrative control alone, but the manner in which school leaders implement and balance regulatory and developmental responsibilities.

Recommendations

School heads and administrators should review reporting and monitoring requirements to eliminate duplication, simplify documentation, and establish realistic timelines while preserving necessary accountability. They should prioritize needs-based professional development, regular mentoring, constructive observation feedback, collaborative decision-making, and protected time for teachers' professional learning. Teachers are encouraged to engage in reflective practice and peer collaboration, while policymakers may use the findings as local input when assessing the implementation of workload-reduction and professional development policies. Future studies should examine these issues across more schools and divisions and may use comparative or mixed-method designs to assess the broader applicability of the themes.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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