

"REST OR REFRESH? MEETING TEACHERS' TRUE NEEDS FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING"

by:

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The chronic issue of teacher burnout in the Philippine public school system clearly shows that the question is less about choosing between "rest" or "refreshment" and more about addressing fundamental systemic needs. For years, the professional lives of Filipino teachers have been characterized by an overwhelming workload, a significant portion of which is administrative and non-teaching in nature. This heavy burden severely cuts into the six hours of actual classroom teaching mandated by Republic Act No. 4670, or the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers, forcing educators to sacrifice their time for lesson planning, paper checking, and personal rest. The true need, therefore, is not simply a break from work, but a substantial, policy-driven reduction of the workload to a manageable level, ensuring that the time "incidental to normal teaching duties" is actually used for professional preparation and genuine mental and emotional recovery, not just an extension of the administrative grind.

In recognition of this crisis, the Department of Education (DepEd) has taken initial, significant steps. For instance, DepEd Order No. 2, s. 2024, was issued to immediately remove administrative tasks from teachers' workload, assigning them instead to school heads and non-teaching personnel. Furthermore, the Department released DepEd Order No. 005, s. 2024, to rationalize teachers' workload, clarify the maximum of six hours of actual classroom teaching, and provide guidelines for the payment of teaching overload. These memoranda are vital admissions from the Department that their educators have been "overworked, underpaid, and under supported," a condition repeatedly lamented by teachers' groups like the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT). These policies aim to

reclaim the teacher's time for their primary function: teaching, thereby transforming forced "rest" into genuine "refreshment" by allowing them to focus on pedagogical excellence.

However, policies on paper are only the first step; their consistent, effective implementation is the true challenge. Reports indicate that despite the new directives, many schools still lack the sufficient administrative personnel necessary to absorb the non-teaching tasks, forcing teachers to continue juggling multiple roles—from club adviser to temporary librarian or property custodian. The long-term wellness and effectiveness of the teaching workforce hinges on DepEd's commitment to fully staff schools with administrative support and consistently monitor workload compliance. Real refreshment for the Filipino teacher means a work environment where professional growth, focused lesson delivery, and personal well-being are naturally integrated, not a luxury snatched from the few hours outside a crippling 50-to-60-hour work week. Only when the systemic roots of overwork are addressed can educators truly rest and return to the classroom with the renewed energy and focus that quality education demands.

References:

Republic Act No. 4670, or the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers

Executive Order (EO) No. 174, s. 2022

DepEd Order No. 2, s. 2024

DepEd Memorandum No. 048, s. 2025

DepEd Order No. 83, s. 2003