

# Factors Affecting Teacher Workload in Low-Enrollment Schools: A Survey of Sarawak State Schools, Malaysia

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## Abstract

Student achievement and educator motivation could be impacted by teacher workload. The future of the nation is affected by student achievement. Educators in today's world are dealing with a greater variety of challenges. This article's purpose is to explore the factors that influence the workload of teachers in low-enrollment schools. To obtain data, a questionnaire was distributed to students in low-enrollment schools in Sarawak. A total of 159 academic teachers from a low enrollment school responded to the Google Form questionnaire. According to the findings of the study, the factor of additional teacher duties contributes the most to the workload of teachers in low enrollment schools, followed by the factor of limited

school infrastructure and a shortage of teachers. In addition, the unbalanced staffing policies and inequality in administrative leadership are the fourth and fifth factors that affect the workload of teachers in schools in less enrollment. In addition, the shift in educational culture, teachers' clerical duties that limit their time for preparing teaching materials, careless school management, teachers' task instructions that are not planned by the school, the increase in online systems and educational applications that require teachers to enter data, and the inadequate time allotted to complete tasks everything contribute to the increased workload of teachers. In addition, the researcher proposed several solutions to the problem of teacher workload. The implications of this study provide researchers and education policy practitioners with the knowledge and direction necessary to ensure that the workload of teachers, particularly in low-enrollment schools, continues to be in accordance with school transformation standards between 2021-2025.

**Keywords:** Additional Teacher Duties, Limited School Infrastructure, Lack of Teachers

### **Introduction**

The Malaysian Ministry of Education has identified educational deficiencies that must be closed so that the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013-2025 can increase access, equity, and quality. The educational divide between urban and rural areas refers to disparities in infrastructure provision and teacher distribution, particularly in low-enrollment schools, indigenous people school (*Orang Asli* schools), and schools in rural areas.

In Malaysia, the majority of primary schools are classified as low-enrollment schools (LES), which are schools with fewer than 150 students. Nearly ninety percent of schools with fewer than 100 students are in poor condition and confront the problem of inadequate funding, facilities, and trained teachers. Existing staffing standards are incompatible with the requirements of schools with fewer students, such as the shortage of rehabilitation teachers who practice combined class instruction. LES is incomplete and typically consists of tiny huts.

In Malaysia, the implementation method for institutions with fewer students is combined classes. It is a class created because there are fewer than 15 students in the school year, which is insufficient to establish a normal class. The implementation of combined classes or multigrade teaching, which involves educating a class spanning multiple school years. A combined class may include pupils from two or three years of schooling (e.g., Years 1 and 2, or Years 1, 2, and 3). A teacher will be required to teach multiple school years simultaneously in a combined class.

It is not uncommon for a single classroom to contain students who are in the first, second, or even third year of their educational journey. The quantity of available teachers is another factor that is considered when determining the criteria for merging classes. For instance, a school that has three teachers can merge pupils who have attended the same school for a total of three years to create a single class. In contrast, a school with four or five teachers is able to accommodate children who are in both their first and second years of education in the same classroom. However, in most cases, the number of teachers in a school that uses combined classes does not go over five persons. This is because the distribution of teachers in a specific school is determined by the proportion of the total number of courses in the institution.

Methods of instruction and education that are not like those used in conventional schools Choosing and planning proper teaching strategies to arrange the classroom is essential to

ensure that teaching and learning activities are carried out efficiently and that no pupils are left behind. Teachers should make it a top priority to help their first-year students adjust to school life. Last but not least, Malaysian schools with low student populations have a variety of challenges in terms of the teaching staff, facilities, finances, improvement, and staffing norms, among other issues. However, even though there are fewer students in their classrooms, the educators and administrators who are assigned to those schools make every effort to ensure that their pupils accomplish at the best possible level.

### **Study Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to

- a) Identify the factors that affect the workload of teachers in low enrolment schools.
- b) Recommend the best steps in dealing with the problem of increasing the workload of teachers in low enrolment schools.

### **Literature Review**

In today's educational system, educators are actual people who encounter a wide range of obstacles in their quest to create exceptional learners. Educators face a wide range of difficulties in their quest to plant good seeds and nurture capable blooms.

Currently, teachers are not only facilitators in the classroom but also administrators, gardeners, carpenters, school cleaners, nutrition officers, school asset officers, school discipline problem-solvers, charity workers, etc. When it comes to coordinating programs and sports activities at the district, state, national, and international levels, teachers are increasingly overburdened (Marshall et al., 2023). Teachers are also required to attend meetings regarding education policy, changes in the structure of education, the introduction of educational applications, and departmental and non-governmental cooperation programs. Indirectly, teachers will feel burdened by outside responsibilities. The workload of female instructors is greater than that of male teachers (Rofof'ah, 2023). This obviously places a heavy burden on teachers, particularly those in schools with minimal enrollment (Dinia et.al., 2023; Wahdiniawati et al., 2023).

Teachers in Malaysia have less time to really teach their students since they have to complete out so much documentation for the Ministry of Education Simangunsong (2023) about their students. The workload of educators is further impacted by the need to create a wide variety of files that vary by subject area, assignment, course, and so on. According to both Shuib et al (2023); Yusoff et al (2023), researchers on the role of teachers in schools believe that clerical labor requiring data input owing to numerous online applications and also demands from the Education department itself causes teachers to lose attention when teaching in class.

It has become evident that there is a teacher shortage in low-enrollment education institutions in the state of Sarawak (Ismatiah et al., 2023; Chai Ali et al., 2022). This teacher scarcity problem exists in both urban and rural regions (Carver-Thomas et al., 2023). Depending on the options, a subject will be improperly taught due to a shortage of teachers. Additionally, option teachers play an essential role in fostering the students' development in accordance with the specific knowledge they possess. The dearth of option teachers will prevent a task from being completed with the necessary expertise (Lindqvist, 2022). When

there is a teacher shortcoming in a school, other teachers will have to take on more than ten crucial responsibilities, leaving them with no time for their families. This circumstance will cause teachers to spend less time preparing instructional materials instead of spending time with students.

The infrastructure of a school also has an impact on the intellectual development of its students and teachers (Esfandiari & Meihami, 2023). Electricity supply, clean water, robust and safe school buildings, cutting-edge technical equipment, the Internet, good road or transportation facilities, and so on are examples of infrastructure that are critical in the development of civilized people from both cognitive and physical perspectives. If basic educational facilities are not provided, teachers and students will be discouraged from completing the teaching and learning process (Qazi et al., 2023). As a result, authorities must prioritize infrastructure improvements, particularly for low-enrollment schools in remote locations.

Teachers' workloads are impacted by inequitable administrative leadership, according to research by (Mokhtar and Norman, 2023). When assigning work to educators, seniority is typically a factor. should not be used in educational management, as a lack of harmony in the transfer of information has a negative impact on students. In addition, low-enrollment schools should have a staffing policy that is fair and takes into account the abilities of current educators. When there is a problem with staff distribution, a single teacher may be asked to take on multiple responsibilities, which can lead to burnout (Md & Ismail, 2022). The Malaysian Ministry of Education should examine the issue of staffing data for schools with low enrollment so that the burden on teachers can be reduced and quality teachers and pupils can be developed.

### **Methodology**

This study aims to identify and analyze the factors that impact teachers' burden in low-enrollment schools. This investigation is descriptive and quantitative in nature. The survey method is used to identify the factors that affect the burden of teachers. This survey was conducted in rural schools that had low enrollment in the Malaysian state of Sarawak. This research involved 159 educators, including the resulting survey was disseminated via social media communities with a focus on information gathering. There are just two questions in this survey, both of which ask teachers in schools with low enrolment about the causes that affect their workload and the solutions they believe are essential. Microsoft Excel was used to evaluate the data, and the results were visualized in clear charts. middle school administrators. To capture information, a Google form-based questionnaire was utilized.

### **Findings**

In schools that have low enrollment, the lack of teachers increases the burden on teachers. This is demonstrated by the findings of this study, which indicate that 82.3% of teachers strongly agree that teacher workload exists due to teacher shortage. only 0.6% of respondents disagreed with the statement. Overall, 99.4% of respondents concur that the increased workload of educators in low-enrollment schools is due to the teacher shortage. Figure 4.1 illustrates this point of view.

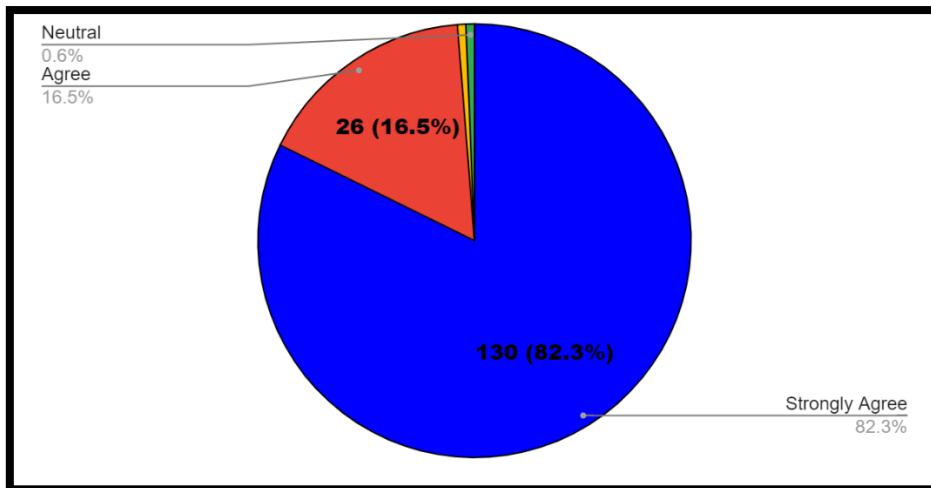


Figure 4.1 Teacher shortage factors in low enrollment school that contribute to teacher workload

Inequality in the leadership of school administrators in schools with limited enrollment is also one of the findings of this study. According to figure 4.2, 43 percent of teachers agree that the unequal distribution of administrative leadership in schools with fewer students causes an increase in teacher workload. While 20.3 percent of teachers disagree that there is no prejudice in school administration, there is no bias in school administration. However, 36.7% of teachers reported that the issue of inequality in administrative leadership is neutral and does not contribute to the increase in teachers' burden in low-enrollment schools.

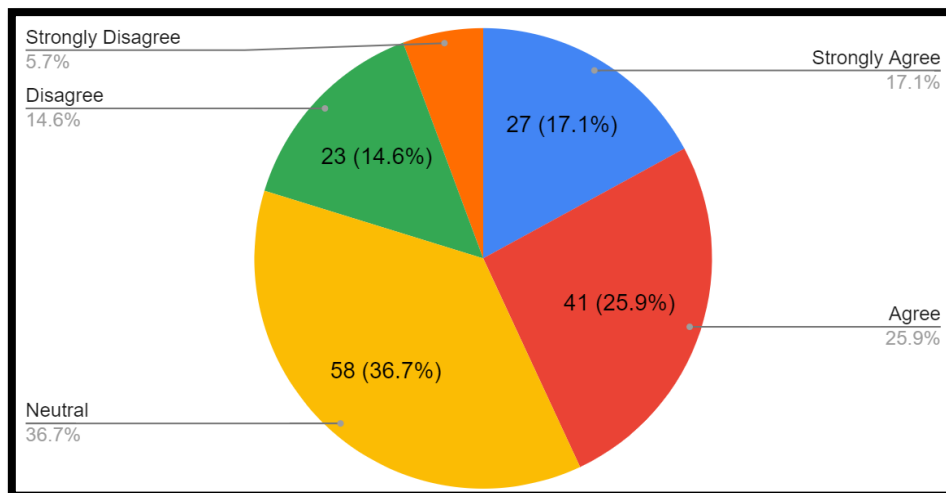


Figure 4.2 Administrator Leadership Inequality Factors in Low-Enrollment Schools Contributing to Teacher Workload

In Low-Enrollment Schools, additional teacher duties become a burden for educators. The results, shown in figure 4.3, indicate that 93.7% of teachers strongly agree that they confront a variety of additional tasks in schools with fewer students, which increases their workload. However, a small percentage of teachers, as few as 3.7%, disagreed with the statement that additional duties for educators are not burdensome. Thus, it is evident that the majority of teachers in Low-Enrollment Schools encounter extra duties that not only increase their workload but also complicate their daily responsibilities.

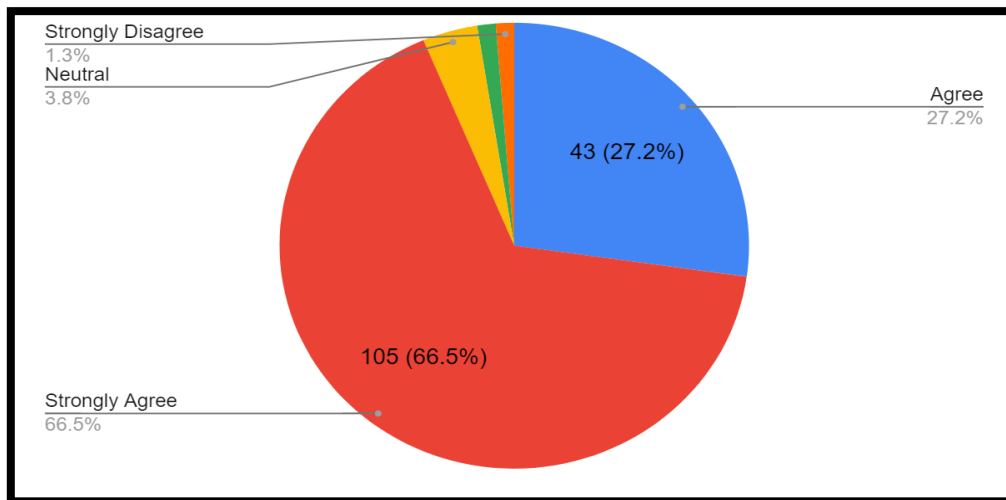


Figure 4.3 Additional Duties Factors Contributing to Teacher Task Load at Low Enrollment Schools

Figure 4.4 demonstrates how disproportionate staffing policies in low-enrollment schools lead to excessive workloads for teachers. According to the findings, 72.1% of educators agree that an imbalanced staffing policy at low-enrollment schools is a major factor in teachers' increased workload. While only 2.5% of educators are in opposition to the idea that teachers' workloads are unaffected by the staffing policy imbalance that occurs in low-enrollment schools. Some educators, however, are on the fence about the staffing policy inequity that may affect the increased workload of teachers in low-enrollment schools.

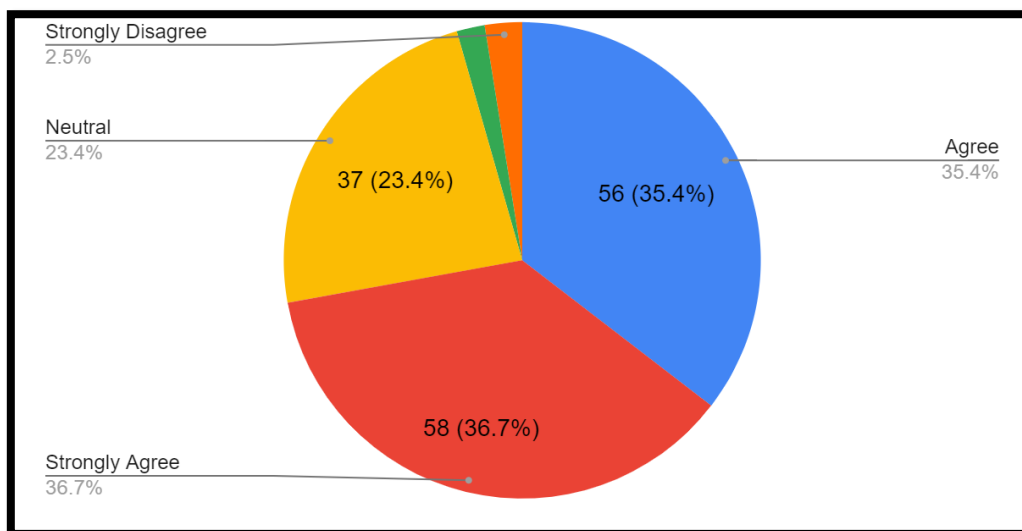


Figure 4.4 Unbalanced Staffing Policy Factors Contributing to Teacher Workload in low enrollment school

The facilities and infrastructure of low enrollment school also play a significant role in determining teacher workload. Figure 4.5 demonstrates that the limited infrastructure in low enrollment school has a significant impact on the increase in teachers' workload, with 89.9 percent of teachers supporting and agreeing with the statement. While only 3.2% of teachers

disagreed with the statement that limited infrastructure has no impact on the burden of teachers in low enrollment school, the majority of teachers agreed. It is evident that infrastructure plays a significant role in facilitating the affairs and duties of teachers, particularly in reducing their labor in carrying out the daily school routine.

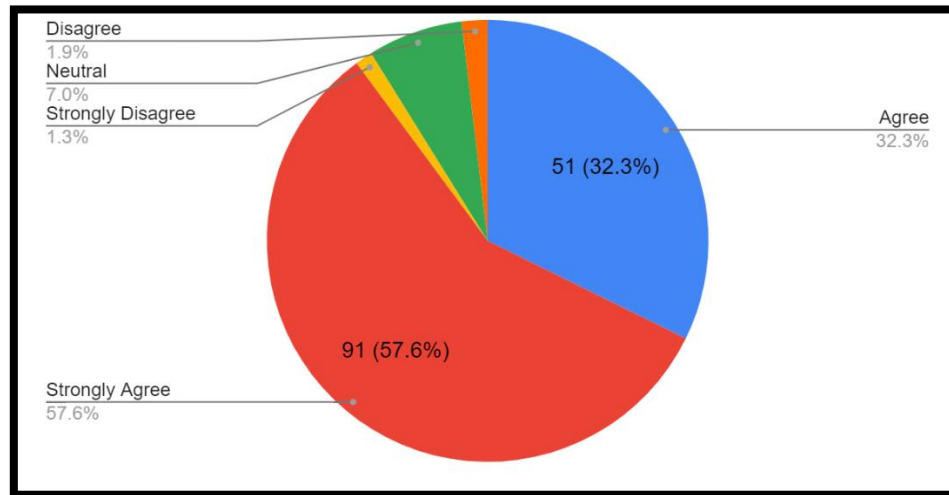


Figure 4.5 Infrastructure factors that contribute to the teacher's burden in low enrollment school

**Discussion**

This study identifies five major contributors to teachers' workload in low enrollment school in Sarawak. Among the five main factors in question, the factor of additional teacher duties contributes the most to the increased workload of teachers low enrollment school in Sarawak, followed by the limited school infrastructure factor and the lack of teachers. In addition, the unbalanced staffing policy and administrative leadership inequality are the fourth and fifth factors that influence the workload of teachers in low enrollment school. Furthermore, there are other factors that contribute to the teacher's burden. Figure 5.0 illustrates this point.

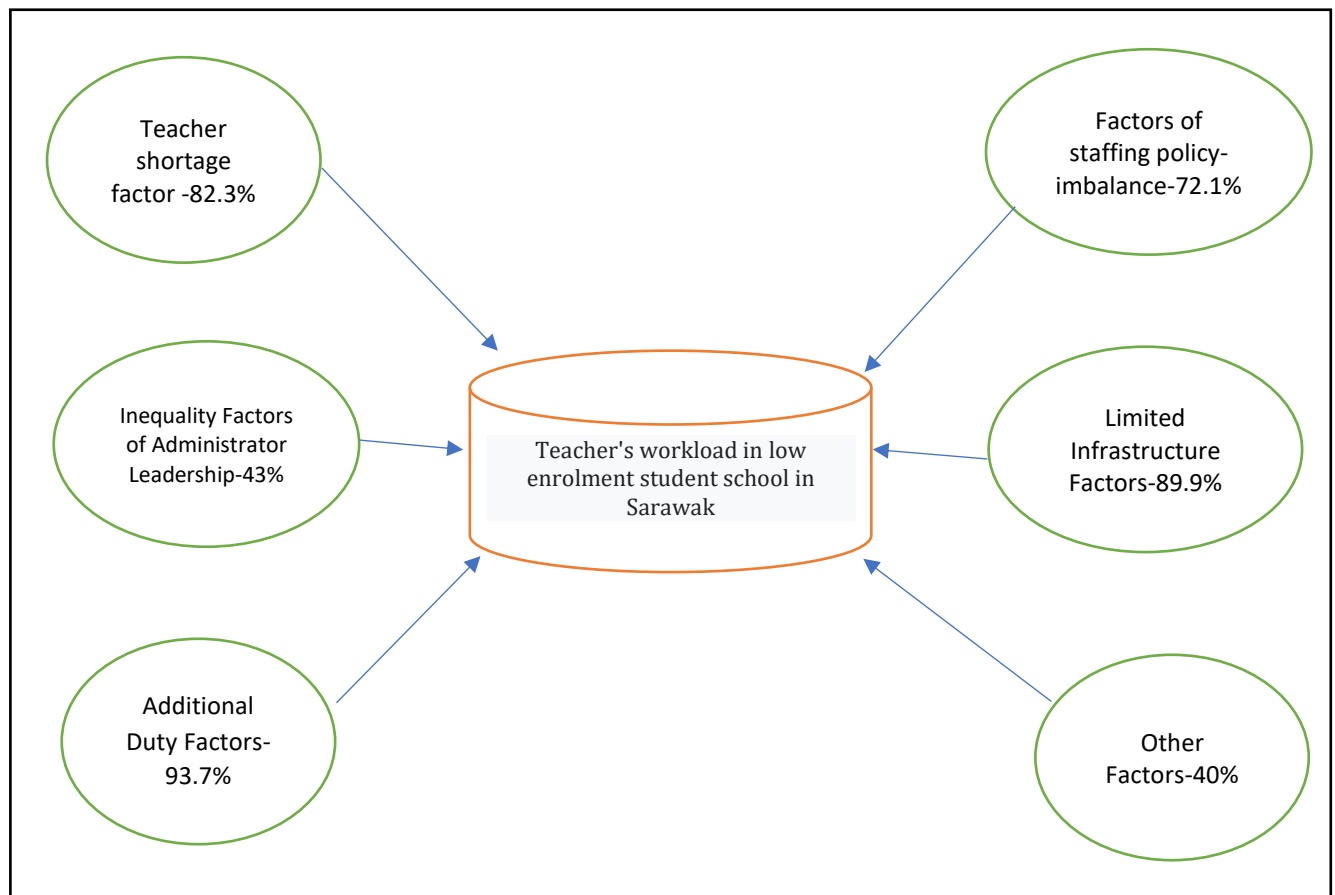


Figure 5.0: Factors influencing teacher workload in low enrollment school

### Conclusion

The change in the culture of education, the clerical duties of teachers that limit the time for preparing teaching materials, careless school management, unplanned teacher task instructions by the school, the District Education Office, and the State Department of Education, the increase in online systems and educational applications that require teachers to key in data, and the allotted time to complete these tasks all contribute as other factors that increased workload of teachers. Moreover, duties that exceed the teacher's abilities also impact the teacher's workload (Zeitlin, 2021). In addition, teachers are burdened by administrative duties that have been delegated to them. Consequently, teachers become victims of tension, which leads to confusion in the teaching and learning process as well as the creation of human capital.

Researchers and respondents have proposed several strategies for reducing the workload of teachers. The amount of clerical labour performed by teachers should be reduced. Non-academic teachers should be responsible for entering pupil data, asset data, financial data, and meeting data, so that academic teachers can focus on learning and facilitation. Furthermore, additional teacher duty should be avoided. Teachers should only perform the essential duties of teaching in the classroom, but the reality is that they perform external duties such as various programme meetings outside of school, sports officials at various levels, and participation in cooperation programmes with non-governmental organisations that have less of an impact on students and teachers.



Additionally, the government should prioritise infrastructure for low enrollment school. The government should rehabilitate deteriorating school buildings and communication routes, provide a stable internet network, cafeteria facilities, and improve school infrastructure. A solid infrastructure can encourage both educators and pupils to realize the goals of education by fostering an environment of equilibrium. It is also proposed that the Ministry of Education mandate the hiring of qualified teaching assistants from the local community. This can aid instructors in carrying out clerical duties at school and aid in the optimal management of the classroom. The distribution of option teachers without favoritism to low enrollment school is an example of fair administration at the level of the Education Department that can help address the problem of teacher shortages according to option. Figure 6.0 shows suggestions for reducing the workload of low enrollment school teachers.

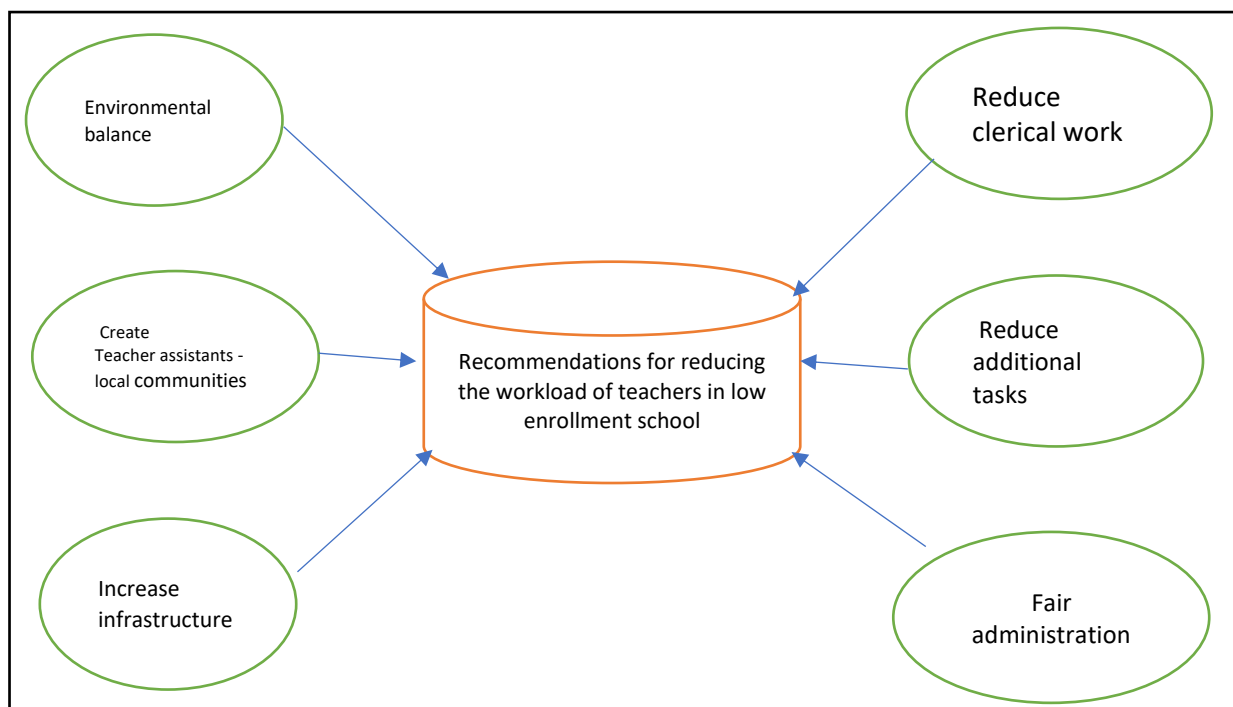


Figure 6.0: Measures to alleviate the workload of Teachers in low enrollment school in Sarawak

### Conclusion

Clearly, the lack of educators, increasing teacher duties, insufficient infrastructure, imbalanced staffing practices, and unequal leadership from school administrators are the five key variables that affect the workload of teachers in this education. Other factors that are discussed that add to the teacher's workload include: seniority issues, shifts in the culture of education, an explosion of online systems and new applications in education, work in areas that are outside of the teacher's expertise, and an excess of departmental programmes and extracurricular activities that teachers are expected to participate in. Therefore, it is imperative that the authorities in the State of Sarawak examine the workload of teachers, particularly those working in low enrollment school. Increases in teacher professionalism and student achievement can naturally be fostered and increased on a worldwide scale if the problem of teacher workload in low enrollment school can be addressed and resolved. In order to improve the quality of teachers and students in accordance with the certain points,

the government should give consideration and take action on the strategies discussed and recommended in this research.

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