Exploring Workspaces through Photovoice: A Case of Teachers in a Very Large Integrated Public High School

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Abstract

This study examined the personal experiences and beliefs of secondary school teachers regarding their workspaces, concentrating on the areas set aside for teaching-related activities during ancillary hours. Qualitative Photovoice research methods were combined and included: visual narrative capture via photovoice; semi-structured interviews capturing beliefs, narratives, experiences; and focus group discussion capturing ideal workspace attributes, including the conceptual ideals and physical structure/prosocial-altruistic norms inherent to the workspace. Through attentive discussions and interview sessions following the visual narrative component, this research sought to understand the impact of such spaces on teacher well-being, pedagogical practices, and professional satisfaction. Preliminary findings indicated the prevailing "dual nature" of teacher workspaces, portraying distinctly difficult school-based experiences in underlying spatial contexts such as inadequate space, lack of privacy, poor environmental conditions such as elevated noise levels and heat, limited environmental resources, and unreliable internet resources. These conditions often drove the teachers to their home spaces for work requiring sustained attention. The study also recorded teachers' ideal workspaces and underscored the importance of private offices, purposeful design, and uninterrupted technology. The study concluded that although the school workspace acted as an important center for collaboration, its boundaries compelled the use of the home environment for some work, showcasing a complicated interplay not always fully explored in literature. The results highlighted the imperative need for intentional design and policy modifications in public large-scale schools to increase supportive physical workspaces, as these factors greatly affect teaching effectiveness and the general climate of education.

Keywords: *teacher workspaces, photovoice, educational environment, teacher well-being, ancillary hours*

Introduction

The workspace of teachers represents a fundamental yet often overlooked dimension of the educational ecosystem, particularly within public secondary schools in the Philippines. These spaces significantly influence teachers' effectiveness, well-being, and job satisfaction. Across the country, many teachers contend with inadequate or non-dedicated communal areas that limit opportunities for focused lesson preparation, meaningful collaboration, and professional reflection. The challenge has intensified with the increasing demands of 21st-century teaching, including technology integration and the need to address diverse student needs. Studies have consistently shown that insufficient work environments contribute to higher levels of stress and reduced occupational fulfillment (Aloe et al., 2017; Collie et al., 2016).

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Within the Philippine public education system, teachers' working conditions are regulated under the Department of Education, Order No. 005, s. 2024, which mandates an eight-hour workday (six hours for classroom teaching, two for ancillary tasks) (Department of Education, 2024). These ancillary duties—such as lesson planning, assessment, and administrative responsibilities—are intended to support instruction, but in practice, many teachers exceed these hours. According to a recent policy brief, teachers work an average of 52 hours per week, with 55% of that time spent on non-teaching tasks (Commission on Education, 2025). This workload burden is further compounded by institutional strain: the public school system manages over 20 million learners for SY 2024–2025 (Hernando-Malipot, 2024), and the organizational structure of schools varies widely according to size and typology. Physical workspace challenges in public schools are pervasive. Common issues include cramped or shared offices, lack of privacy, poor ventilation, excessive noise, and unstable internet connectivity—all of which undermine teachers' concentration and comfort during lesson preparation or student consultations. Despite policy attention toward creating supportive teaching environments, the prevailing reality remains that many public schools operate within spatial and infrastructural constraints that hinder, rather than enhance, teachers' professional productivity.

School size classification is a critical factor in understanding spatial and workload challenges. According to Department of Education guidelines, schools fall into four categories based on projected enrollment: small (fewer than 440 students), medium (441–840), large (841–1,240), and very large (1,241 and above) (Department of Education, 2016). Very large integrated high schools—by virtue of their scale—are likely to face disproportionate resource and infrastructural pressures, including overcrowded faculty rooms, limited dedicated workspace, and constrained mobility for staff. To address these gaps, the present research employs Photovoice, a participatory action research method that empowers educators to document and reflect on their work environments through photography and narrative accounts. By combining visual data with interviews and focus group discussions, this study explores how teachers perceive and navigate their workspaces in a very large public high school. The goal is to illuminate the spatial factors that affect their well-being and job satisfaction and to provide evidence-based insights that can inform school design and policy initiatives aimed at fostering more responsive, efficient, and human-centered educational environments.

Literature Review

Teachers' Workspaces and Their Significance

Teachers' workspaces extend beyond mere physical locations; they function as psychosocial environments that influence instructional quality, collaboration, and professional identity. Research has shown that well-designed workspaces positively affect teachers' productivity, motivation, and overall job satisfaction (Ahrentzen & Evans, 1989; Barrett et al., 2015). Conversely, poor spatial conditions—such as noise, clutter, or overcrowding—can impair concentration, contribute to fatigue, and diminish the sense of professional autonomy. In educational institutions, the workspace serves as a tangible reflection of how teachers are valued and supported within the school system (Woolner et al., 2012).

For teachers, workspace conditions are particularly crucial given the cognitive and emotional labor inherent in their profession. A conducive workspace enables lesson planning, assessment, research, and reflection—activities that underpin effective pedagogy. However,

in many developing contexts, teachers must perform these duties in makeshift or shared areas, such as crowded faculty rooms or borrowed classrooms, which can disrupt workflow and limit privacy (Dayagbil et al., 2021). The absence of dedicated spaces may also affect collegial relationships and collaboration, as teachers have fewer opportunities for focused interaction and professional exchange.

Teachers' Workload and Institutional Realities

Teaching in public schools involves a multifaceted workload that extends far beyond classroom instruction. Teachers are expected to perform administrative, supervisory, and community-related functions alongside their primary teaching duties. The Department of Education mandates a six-hour teaching load within an eight-hour workday, allocating two hours for ancillary tasks such as lesson preparation, checking outputs, and record-keeping. However, numerous studies have shown that these responsibilities often spill over into personal time due to limited resources and workspace constraints (Cladue et al., 2019; Panti, 2020).

In large and very large schools—defined by the Department of Education as institutions with more than 840 and 1,240 students, respectively—spatial and organizational pressures are more pronounced. Teachers often share limited office space, and the lack of adequate facilities leads to reduced efficiency and increased stress. The size and complexity of such institutions necessitate more structured coordination, yet physical constraints hinder communication and collaboration. This imbalance between workload and workspace availability highlights a systemic issue that directly affects teacher well-being and instructional quality.

Physical and Environmental Factors in Teaching

The physical environment of a school—its design, lighting, ventilation, and spatial layout—has been found to correlate strongly with teacher morale and effectiveness (Earthman, 2004; Lippman, 2010). Teachers who operate in cluttered, noisy, or poorly maintained areas often experience reduced focus and increased burnout. In contrast, ergonomic furniture, adequate lighting, and access to quiet preparation rooms foster greater efficiency and satisfaction (Barrett & Zhang, 2009).

In the Philippine setting, many schools face persistent infrastructural deficiencies. Teachers frequently adapt by personalizing their limited spaces or extending their work to other areas, including home environments. While such adaptability demonstrates resilience, it also underscores the institutional neglect of teachers' spatial needs. Creating spaces that balance functionality and comfort is therefore integral to supporting effective teaching and sustainable well-being.

Psychosocial Dimensions of Teachers' Workspaces

Beyond physical attributes, workspaces carry emotional and social meaning. A teacher's workspace can provide a sense of belonging, stability, and professional identity (Higgins et al., 2005). Spaces that foster collegiality and mutual support contribute to a positive school climate and collective efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Conversely, spatial exclusion or lack of privacy can lead to feelings of alienation, diminished morale, and emotional exhaustion.

Teachers' narratives often reveal that their workspaces serve not only as places of preparation but also as sanctuaries where they decompress, share stories, and form professional communities. Understanding these psychosocial dimensions is crucial in developing policies and designs that reflect teachers' lived experiences rather than purely administrative efficiency.

Photovoice as a Methodological Framework

Photovoice, a participatory research method developed by Wang and Burris (1997), enables participants to document and analyze their lived experiences through photography. Rooted in critical pedagogy and empowerment theory, this approach democratizes knowledge production by positioning participants as co-researchers rather than subjects. In education research, Photovoice has been used to explore teachers' well-being, school environments, and professional challenges (Bickel & Truscott, 2016; Delacruz, 2020).

Through photographs and accompanying narratives, teachers articulate how their workspaces shape their daily routines, emotions, and interactions. This visual and narrative integration provides richer, more contextualized insights than conventional surveys or interviews alone. For this study, Photovoice is particularly appropriate as it captures both the physical and emotional dimensions of teachers' workspaces—elements often underrepresented in quantitative analyses. Existing literature affirms that workspace conditions play a vital role in teachers' effectiveness, motivation, and mental well-being. However, most studies focus on general school environments or student-centered outcomes, with limited attention to the everyday spatial realities of teachers, particularly within the Philippine public school system. Few studies have investigated how teachers in very large public high schools experience and adapt to spatial constraints while managing increasing administrative and instructional demands.

This study addresses this gap by employing Photovoice to examine how public secondary school teachers interpret, utilize, and emotionally engage with their workspaces. By centering teachers' visual and narrative perspectives, it seeks to contribute a nuanced understanding of how space, pedagogy, and well-being intersect in the Philippine educational landscape.

Research Questions

General Question:

1. How do teachers in a very large integrated public high school conceptualize and experience their physical workspaces?

Specific Questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the physical workspaces commonly used by teachers in a very large integrated public high school?
2. What are the primary physical or environmental challenges that teachers encounter within their workspaces in a Very Large Integrated Public High School, and what strategies do they employ or suggest to overcome these challenges?

3. How have previous experiences or significant events influenced teachers' current perceptions and utilization of their workspaces in a Very Large Integrated Public High School?
4. What do teachers suggest as characteristics of an ideal teacher workspace in a Very Large Integrated Public High School, including its physical appearance and the dynamics or guidelines within it?

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) provides the conceptual lens for this study, emphasizing that an individual's experiences are shaped by the complex interplay between them and their environment across multiple nested systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.

The microsystem refers to the teacher's immediate environment. This system is the locus of daily tasks, interactions, and work-related experiences, directly influencing productivity, comfort, and well-being. Research question 1, which investigate the characteristics of teachers' workspaces, supportive aspects, and essential elements, maps directly onto the microsystem, as they explore the physical and functional features of teachers' immediate work environments.

The mesosystem encompasses interactions between immediate environments, Research question 2 is explicitly connected to the mesosystem: the question on challenges and coping strategies considers how collegial dynamics, scheduling, and school policies influence teachers' ability to work effectively.

The exosystem involves broader institutional and community factors that indirectly shape teachers' workspaces. These influences are particularly relevant to research questions 3 which explores how past experiences, significant events, and external institutional contexts have informed current workspace perceptions and suggested improvements.

Finally, the macrosystem encompasses societal and cultural norms. These larger societal forces are also reflected in research question 4 it shapes the broader context in which teachers' workspace needs, preferences, and recommendations emerge. By explicitly mapping the research questions to each level of Bronfenbrenner's framework, this study ensures a holistic examination of teachers' workspaces, capturing both the immediate, tangible conditions of their microsystem and the broader institutional and societal forces that shape these environments. This alignment informs the choice of methods—including Photovoice, interviews, and focus group discussions—by enabling data collection that reflects both personal experiences and the interconnected environmental influences affecting teacher workspaces.

Methodology

Design

This research utilized a qualitative approach, specifically a case study, to examine the intricate phenomenon of teacher workspaces within the bounded context of a very large integrated public high school (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A case study was chosen because it provided an opportunity to capture and richly describe the teachers' lived experiences and perceptions related to their work environments. The decision to employ photovoice as a primary method lay at the heart of this design because it is consistent with the principles of participatory action research that enable and encourage participants to depict and reflect on

their realities critically (Wang & Burris, 1997). This prepared framework made it possible to appreciate the complex relationships between teachers and their workspaces.

The research design unfolded in three sequential stages accomplished in two months: (1) Photovoice documentation conducted in weeks 1 to 5, (2) semi-structured interviews in weeks 6 and 7, and (3) focus group discussion (FGD) in week 8. Each phase informed the next, creating an iterative process of data collection and reflection. During the initial meeting, all the participants were briefed about the photovoice method, and the ethics involved in the project. They were instructed to photograph various features of their workspaces, which they regarded as important, using personal mobile phones. These snapshots, which pertained to their everyday work experiences, were then shared in an online folder that the researcher had created for them. The folders were organized and sub-labeled as documents, systems of support, difficulties, and basics, which served as guiding questions. The researcher supervised this collection work and ensured receiving all the photographs were received in an ordered way.

After the conclusion of the photovoice stage, all participants took part in individual interviews on a later date, which were guided by a flexible set framework. The researcher employed the images taken by the participants during the work as an initial discussion for each interview. With them the researcher trained participants to explain the images and the memories and stories that were associated with them. This approach enhanced understanding of perception of the photographs as well as offered qualitative data regarding the people and spaces which the participants considered their workplaces. The semi-structured approach made it possible to explore examine participants' unanticipated ideas. As the interviews progressed, participants brought up interesting comments, and the semi-structured approach made it possible to pursue those lines.

To find common views or perceptions, focus group discussions were held. The researcher facilitated the discussions, setting up sessions for different groups of participants to talk about their work engagements and their reflections on them. An important aspect of the interactions was analyzing as a group the ideal teacher workspace—aunt in physical form, its expectations, and how it should function as a workspace. These group discussions were helpful in knowledge construction as well as in verification of the earlier phases. The researcher acknowledges a peripheral insider stance in this investigation. Although currently a faculty member in the research site, the researcher was in the first year of service in this very large integrated school after transferring from a medium-sized stand-alone senior high school within the same division. This position provided partial familiarity with the broader division culture and policies, while still requiring adjustment to the unique organizational structures, routines, and workspace dynamics of the new school. The presence of several teachers who were previously acquainted with the researcher facilitated rapport-building and open communication, while the researcher's newcomer perspective allowed greater sensitivity to workplace nuances that long-time insiders may overlook.

This blended positionality—familiar yet still orienting—enabled the researcher to access authentic narratives while maintaining an appropriate degree of analytical distance. Reflexivity was consistently practiced during data collection and analysis to acknowledge and manage potential biases, uphold transparency, and ensure that the teachers' voices remained central to the interpretation of findings. The ethical aspects throughout the processes of research were maintained at a high level to ensure respect for all participants' rights and interests. There was also a documented consent agreement, and the participants'

privacy in terms of identity and how the information is revealed was preserved. The collected materials from the photovoice, interviews, and focus groups were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher went through all the data in a particular order—preparing distinct preliminary code ideas, looking for bigger ideas within those codes, and defining and naming those ideas, and then ultimately reporting them. Sessions for collaborative participant validation were also held to ensure the themes provided were true representations of the participants' actual experiences.

Data Source and Collection

The concrete data for this qualitative case study came from multiple sources, particularly photovoice, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. These participants were teachers from a very large integrated public high school. These methods helped to obtain complete understanding of the teachers' perceptions and experiences related to their workplaces, including both personal visual stories and group perspectives. The table below presented the profile of the six (6) participants.

Table 1. Participants' Profile

Participant Code	Total Years Teaching	Public School Experience (Years & Subjects)	Private School Experience (Years & Subjects)	Status
P1	14	2 years: Practical Research 2, Inquiries, Investigations, Immersion, Grade 7 English, Journalism, Speech (electives)	12 years: Oral Communication, Reading and Writing, almost all English subjects, Work Immersion, pure secondary	Married
P2	10	7 years: Filipino (6 years), English department (2 years), PR (Senior High), Oral, PR2, PR1	3 years: English	Married
P3	10	7 years: 2 years (Junior High School), 5 years (Senior High School): English subjects, Filipino (first year), Creative Nonfiction, Creative Writing (currently), Grade 10 English (second year), all English subjects in senior high	3 years	Single

P4	15	7 years: English	8 years: Pre-school (toddler/ages 2-3), Math, simple math, Reading and Writing, all subjects in preschool	Married
P5	6	2 years (present): Reading and Writing (RWS)	4 years: Elementary (Grades 1, 2, 3 - all subjects focusing on English), University (Senior High - Contemporary Arts, Empowerment Technologies)	Married
P6	10	10 years: Secondary (3 years), Elementary (7 years), English (10 years), Science and English (Elementary), English, Korean (presently)	No private school experience	Has a son

This component allowed participants to be researchers of their own context as they took an average of 4 to 9 photographs per day in two weeks, considered in a more professional capacity, such as an educator's workspace. Guidelines and ethical considerations were given to the teachers with regard to photographing, capturing depicting their workspaces and work-related activities. Using personal mobile phones, participants captured features of their working environments that they felt either supported or obstructed, esp. in the context of work. The data were stored in a safe online folder structured by themes, which were predetermined, such as workspace, preferred features, challenges, essentials, and influencing factors. The collection platform, along with the organization of the visual data, was under the researcher's control.

After the visual documentation, participants were individually interviewed using a semi-structured format that lasted not more than 20 minutes. The teacher's photographs were used as session guides to provoke discussion and to enable deeper analysis of the topics discussed. The researcher facilitated these discussions to obtain detailed stories, ideas, and feelings of the participants as they worked in relation to their workplaces. That way, it was possible to capture the whole spectrum of different meanings people attributed to the features of their environments and to strengthen the visual data by detailed qualitative information. Participants were provided with copies of their interview transcripts and asked to review them to confirm accuracy, refine or clarify statements, and ensure that the recorded accounts faithfully represented their perspectives.

The Focus Group Discussion (FGD), conducted face-to-face and lasting 36 minutes, explored the participants' collective interpretations of the emerging themes. The conversation particularly centered on their shared perspectives regarding the essential features of an ideal

teacher workspace. The discussions enabled participants to present their opinions, participate in a dialogue, and coalesce into a single voice to describe what they wish for in terms of the ideal workspaces - both the physical form and the behavioral expectations, relations, and interactions that should take place within these shared professional environments. The FGDs further complemented and refined the individual perspectives obtained through photovoice and interviews regarding appreciative workspaces. All individual interviews and the FGD were audio-recorded through the researcher's smartphone sound recorder application. The recordings were subsequently transcribed using the online transcription platform Turboscribe to ensure accurate and organized data preparation.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical standards to protect the rights and well-being of participants throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that they were fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential implications. This process included providing detailed information about their roles, the use of their photographs and narratives, and their rights as participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained by ensuring that any identifying information was removed or anonymized in the presentation of findings. This was particularly important given the personal and sensitive nature of the data collected. Furthermore, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without repercussions. This ensured that their involvement was entirely voluntary and underscored the commitment to respecting their autonomy. Ethical approval was sought from the relevant institutional review board, reinforcing the study's adherence to established research ethics protocols. By prioritizing these ethical considerations, the study ensured that the research process was conducted responsibly and that the participants' dignity and privacy were upheld.

Trustworthiness and Authenticity

In qualitative research, ensuring the rigor, quality, and integrity of the findings is also considered an ethical imperative, contributing to the responsible conduct of research. Frameworks such as that proposed by Lincoln and Guba offer criteria for establishing the trustworthiness and authenticity of qualitative inquiry. Trustworthiness was addressed through several key criteria. To achieve credibility, reflecting the accuracy of the findings from the participants' perspective, the researcher employed member checking, sharing interpretations and findings with participants for validation and feedback. Transferability, the extent to which findings can be applied to other contexts, was facilitated by providing thick description of the research setting, participants, and methods, allowing readers to judge the applicability of the findings to their own situations. Dependability, the consistency of the findings over time and across researchers, was supported through peer debriefing, where the researcher discussed the research process, methods, and findings with a peer to identify potential biases or inconsistencies. Confirmability, ensuring the findings are based on participants' responses rather than researcher bias, was addressed through maintaining an audit trail and potentially seeking an external audit of the research process and data.

Furthermore, the study aimed for authenticity, focusing on representing the multiple realities and experiences of participants fairly and comprehensively. Fairness was sought through balanced reporting, ensuring that diverse perspectives and voices were included and represented equitably. Ontological authenticity, fostering participants' improved understanding of their own experiences, was encouraged through feedback sessions where

participants could reflect on their photographs and narratives. Educative authenticity, promoting a better understanding among participants of the experiences of others, could be facilitated through comparative analysis discussions or sharing anonymized collective findings. Catalytic authenticity, the extent to which the research process empowers participants towards action, was inherent in the study's visual methodology and could potentially align with an action research approach. Finally, tactical authenticity, empowering participants to take action, was considered by designing the research to be advocacy-oriented, aiming for findings that could inform improvements in teacher workspaces and potentially empower teachers to advocate for their needs. Through these strategies for both ethical conduct and establishing trustworthiness and authenticity, the study sought to produce findings that were not only ethically sound but also robust, credible, and meaningful representations of participants' experiences.

Data Analysis

The information acquired through the photovoice method, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions was analyzed using thematic analysis, which is a recognized qualitative technique for finding, analyzing, and reporting identifying features (themes) in data. Using the systematic method of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), the researcher chose this method because it offered a systematic balanced with flexible scaffolding approach to understand the multifaceted nature of the teachers' experiences and perceptions of their workspaces. The identified dataset began with the researcher participating in the data through engaging in multiple readings of interview and focus group transcripts, analyzing photographs and narratives, and consulting field notes to grasp insights into every piece within the dataset.

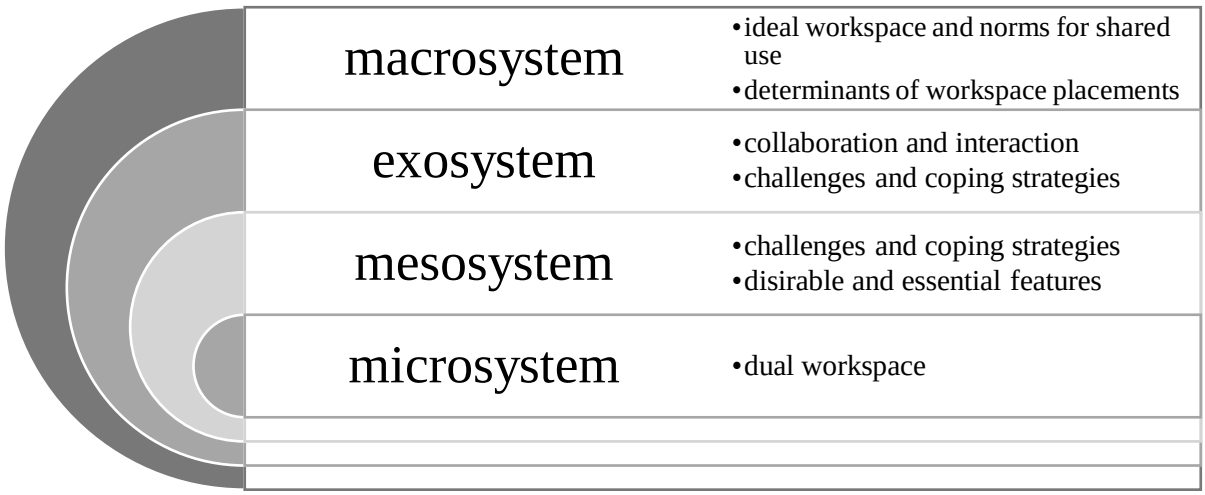
Following familiarization, the analysis proceeded with the generation of initial codes. This analysis began with "building theory" through working with the whole dataset—partitioning the data into distinct pieces—defining units that were revelatory to the teachers' comments, insights, and photographs captured in their working environments. To achieve these aims, the data themselves, so that the codes captured the intended meaning. Through the coding process, similarities between the codes allowed for the formulation of themes. The last steps were to describe, label, and review the accepted themes formed during the analyses. Reviewed themes were arranged in such a way that they captured the underlying visualized patterns within the data set. Important to this stage was the analysis meetings with the participants. The teachers were provided with some interpretations of the themes for them to confirm or provide adjustments. There was a need for this to ensure that the outcomes were credible and authentic, providing participants an opportunity to confirm or dispute the researcher's assertions, which analyzed through interpretation, enriching the findings. The themes were exhaustively defined and provided titles that described the essence of the teachers' experiences about workspaces, formulating the representative outcome of the findings of the study.

Results

Following the key principles of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), an interrelated set of dimensions that formed an emerging framework for understanding teachers in a very large integrated public school's concepts and experiences of workspaces surfaced in this study. Duality of a workspace, its desirable and essential qualities, the participants' challenges and coping strategies, the importance of collaboration and

interaction, factors that influenced their placement and assignment in their current workspace, and their desired workspace and suggested norms for sharing are yielded through photovoice prompted interviews and focus group discussions.

Figure 1. Integration of Emergent Themes within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory showing how teacher workspaces and experiences relate across microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem levels



The Dual Nature of Workspaces (Home vs. School)

Teachers navigate between their school and home environments for work, each offering distinct conditions. The school workspace, particularly the faculty room, is often perceived as a place conducive to focused work due to a conditioned mindset and the availability of colleagues for support.

Table 2. The Dual Nature of Teacher Workspaces: School and Home Environments

Theme	School Faculty	Home / Dormitory	Key Insights
Concentration & Focus	P4: "I'm more able to concentrate… mindset is conditioned." P6: "Difficult to concentrate… many people around."	P4: "Sometimes I'm not in a condition to work… mindset is already in housework." P6: "Bed is nearby… I get to rest."	School can enhance focus for some due to structured environment; home may offer comfort but household tasks and distractions can reduce concentration.
Privacy	P1: "You don't have privacy." P3: "Divider or taguan"	N/A	Lack of privacy is common in shared faculty spaces; some make-shift solutions (dividers) are used.
Comfort & Well-being	P5: "Like a haven… comfort zone." P4: Enjoys school environment	P4: "Comfortable… near everything." P6: Dormitory bed nearby for rest	Comfort is reported in both school and home; home offers flexibility, rest, and convenience, but also household distractions.

Theme	School Faculty	Home / Dormitory	Key Insights
Workspace Resources / Organization	P1: "By the window." P2: "Mini table, bags, mini bookshelf."	P2: "Tables, printers, cabinets… easy to reach." P4: Near bed P6: Own table in dormitory	Both school and home workspaces have tables and storage; home workspaces are often personalized, school workspaces shared.

The thematic analysis of participants' responses, summarized in Table 2, highlights the dual nature of teachers' workspaces across school and home settings. At the school faculty, teachers generally reported enhanced focus and structured environments that supported productivity, though challenges such as noise, crowding, and limited privacy were recurrent. Conversely, home and dormitory workspaces offered comfort, flexibility, and proximity to personal resources, allowing for rest and personalized organization, yet were often accompanied by household distractions and competing responsibilities. These findings suggest that teachers' experiences of their work environments are nuanced, shaped by both the supportive and constraining aspects of each setting. Interpreted through Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, these insights reflect the microsystem level, wherein teachers interact directly with the physical and social features of their immediate environments. The duality observed—the simultaneous affordances and limitations of school and home workspaces—illustrates how the microsystem can both facilitate and hinder professional engagement, well-being, and productivity, underscoring the importance of designing workspaces that respond to the complex, everyday needs of educators.

This dual experience resonated with the literature on teacher working conditions, which acknowledged that teachers' work extends beyond the classroom walls (Learning Policy Institute, 2021). While some research highlighted the challenges of working from home (Walden University Research on Online Faculty Workspaces, n.d.), the participants' comments revealed that school environments, particularly shared ones, also had significant drawbacks that pushed work into the home space. The need for privacy, often found more readily at home, was a recurring theme in studies on workspace satisfaction (Kolber, 2019).

The Desirable and Essential Features of Workspaces

Teachers consistently highlighted specific features as crucial for their workspaces.

Table 3. Essential and Desirable Features of Teachers' Workspaces

Feature Category	School Faculty	Home / Dormitory	Key Insights
Workspace Surface	P1: "Lengthy table… spacious enough for working… multitasking." P5: "Comfortable… spacious table… easy to work."	P4: Table near printer	A spacious and comfortable table is critical for productivity and multitasking in both school and home settings.

Feature Category	School Faculty	Home / Dormitory	Key Insights
Printing Facilities	P2: "These are the printers… easy to print." P4: "Printer is next to my table… nearby."	P2: "Wi-Fi enabled printers at home… easy to use."	Access to printers, preferably nearby or Wi-Fi enabled, is necessary for handling documents and student outputs efficiently.
Internet Connectivity	P2: Home Wi-Fi in classroom for internet access	P6: "Easier to do work with Internet connection."	Reliable internet is crucial for online tasks, research, and accessing resources, both at school and home.
Seating Comfort	Comfortable chairs in faculty	N/A	Comfortable seating supports prolonged work and reduces physical strain.
Storage	Cabinets for storage	Cabinets at home	Adequate storage is necessary for organizing teaching materials and personal resources.
Ventilation & Environmental Comfort	Electric fans, air conditioning	Adequate ventilation at home	Proper ventilation and temperature control are important for maintaining focus and comfort.
Stationery & Tools	Ball pens, essential stationery	Old cellphones, clips, pens	Basic tools and stationery support lesson preparation, grading, and online teaching tasks.
Colleague Proximity / Social Support	Nearby colleagues for collaboration	N/A	Physical proximity to colleagues fosters collaboration, peer support, and knowledge sharing.

The analysis of participants' responses, as summarized in Table 3, highlights the essential and desirable features of teachers' workspaces, including spacious tables, printing facilities, reliable internet, comfortable seating, storage, proper ventilation, stationery, and social support from colleagues. Interpreted through Bronfenbrenner's mesosystem level, these findings underscore the interconnectedness of multiple microsystems—such as the school faculty, home workspace, and digital environment—and how their interactions collectively influence teachers' professional experiences. For instance, reliable internet and Wi-Fi-enabled printers facilitate workflow across both school and home settings, linking the home and school microsystems in a way that supports continuity in task completion. Similarly, proximity to colleagues at school complements individual workspace features, fostering collaboration and social support that enhances productivity and well-being. This mesosystem perspective illustrates that teacher workspaces are not isolated environments; rather, they are part of a network of interacting spaces and relationships that jointly shape the quality of teaching, professional satisfaction, and overall effectiveness.

These aspirations aligned closely with literature on school building design and teacher needs, which advocated for creating supportive physical environments.

The desire for privacy, organization, and reliable technology directly addressed common challenges and was supported by research linking these factors to teacher effectiveness and well-being (Kolber, 2019; Thach et al., 2022). The distinction between a purpose-built faculty room and a converted classroom highlighted the importance of spaces designed specifically to support the multifaceted nature of teachers' work beyond instruction.

Challenges and Coping Strategies in Current Workspace

Teachers face various challenges in their workspaces. Clutter and limited space were common issues.

Table 3. Challenges and Coping Strategies in Teachers' Workspace

Participant	Workspace	Challenges	Coping Strategies
P1	School & Home	Cluttered space ("cluttered mind"), lack of privacy, insufficient outlets	Brought extension cord, tried to stay organized, brought work home
P2	Home (Living room)	Small space making movement difficult when others present	Adjusted to spatial constraints, brought work home
P3	School	Cramped table space ("Nagiging cramped na talaga yung area")	Organized materials within limited space
P4	School & Home	Noisy environment with students; difficulty concentrating; eye fatigue at home	Rested eyes when tired at home, brought work home
P6	School & Home (Dormitory)	Noise from students, inadequate lighting ("light is a bit dark"), uncomfortable chair causing back pain	Adjusted posture, managed tasks around physical discomfort, relied on home workspace when needed

The data reveal that teachers' workspaces present both structural and environmental challenges that directly affect concentration, productivity, and well-being. At the mesosystem level, these findings illustrate the dynamic interactions between multiple microsystems and how these spaces influence one another. For example, challenges experienced in the faculty due to noise or insufficient resources often necessitate adaptations at home, such as completing work in a quieter or more comfortable environment. Teachers' coping strategies, including bringing work home and resting when fatigued, demonstrate the linkages between these mesosystems, highlighting how experiences in one setting shape responses in another.

Extending to the exosystem level, broader organizational and policy factors, such as school infrastructure, provision of adequate outlets, ergonomic furniture, and classroom management policies, indirectly influence the quality of teachers' work experiences. The lack of sufficient outlets, poorly designed chairs, and shared faculty space reflect decisions and resources that teachers cannot control directly but must navigate, emphasizing the role of

exosystemic structures in shaping day-to-day microsystem interactions. Overall, the dual nature of teachers' workspaces—sources of both support and stress—underscores the importance of considering interconnected systems to understand teachers' professional well-being and coping mechanisms comprehensively.

These reported challenges were consistent with broader issues discussed in literature regarding teacher working conditions and the impact of the physical environment on stress and job satisfaction (Ang'alika, Aloka, & Raburu, 2016; Travers, 2017). Lack of adequate space, privacy, and resources were frequently cited impediments in public school settings.

The specific mention of noise and poor environmental quality directly related to research on how these factors negatively impacted concentration and well-being (Salman & Abbas, 2023; Luo et al., 2024).

The Role of Collaboration and Interactions

The presence of colleagues in the school faculty room fostered collaboration and provided support.

Table 4. Role of Collaboration and Interaction in Teachers' Workspaces

Participant	Role of Colleagues	Positive Effects	Negative Effects
P4	Access to nearby colleagues for questions	Facilitates problem-solving and quick support	None reported
P5	Easy access to colleagues; supportive faculty environment	Enhances job satisfaction; fosters peace of mind; reduces workplace stress	None reported
P6	Colleagues as a source of assistance	Enables guidance and support when needed	Can be distracting due to loud voices or music

The data illustrate that interactions and collaboration among colleagues are vital components of teachers' work experiences, providing both functional support and emotional reinforcement. At the exosystem level, these interactions are influenced by broader organizational and administrative factors, such as faculty layout, workplace culture, and institutional norms regarding teacher collaboration. For instance, the accessibility of colleagues and a generally supportive faculty climate enhance teachers' ability to problem-solve and foster job satisfaction, whereas poor acoustics or permissive norms around noise can generate distractions. These findings suggest that the exosystem—including school policies, organizational culture, and faculty infrastructure—shapes the quality and nature of social interactions, indirectly affecting teacher performance, well-being, and professional relationships. Consequently, designing and managing faculty spaces to optimize collaboration while minimizing distractions is critical to supporting educators in large public-school settings.

The importance of collegial interaction and collaboration was a well-established theme in educational research, linked to teacher professional development, job satisfaction, and school culture (Taylor & Francis Online, 2022; Edutopia, n.d.).

The FGD findings underscored how the physical workspace, particularly shared areas, served as a hub for this interaction, even while presenting challenges to other functions like

focused work or private consultation. Managing student access and consultation within shared teacher spaces was a practical challenge that arose from the design and norms of these environments.

Determinants of Teachers' Workspace Placement

Factors influencing workspace assignment and placement varied.

Table 5. Determinants of Teachers' Workspace Placement

Participant	Workspace	Factors Influencing Placement	Commentary on Collaboration/Interaction
P1	Faculty / Home	Personal preference for privacy and view ("by the window"); availability of outlets at home	Highlights how individual needs interact with the broader organizational context; autonomy in workspace selection reflects personal priorities within institutional structures.
P3	Classroom	Chose spot near the door for privacy	Self-determined placement indicates the influence of teacher agency; proximity to entry points can facilitate interaction management with students and colleagues.
P4	Faculty	Vacant classroom suggested by a colleague	Social recommendation demonstrates collegial influence; underscores relational factors shaping workspace allocation.
P5	Faculty	Early occupancy of space; ease of access to colleagues	Placement promotes interaction and informal collaboration; reflects the impact of institutional history and social networks on workspace assignment.
P6	Faculty	Chose faculty over classroom due to small classroom size and lack of privacy	Decision influenced by structural constraints and anticipated student interactions; preference for collaborative faculty environment indicates importance of collegial support.

The data reveal that teachers' workspace placement is shaped by a combination of personal preferences, social influences, and institutional structures. Individual considerations, such as privacy, comfort, and proximity to resources, intersect with colleague recommendations and administrative factors, highlighting the multi-layered determinants of workspace assignment. These findings can be situated within the macrosystem level of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, as broader cultural and organizational norms, policies, and historical practices of the school shape how teachers select or are assigned to spaces. For instance, early occupancy of faculty space or administrative guidelines reflect institutional routines that govern teacher behavior, while collegial suggestions demonstrate culturally embedded practices of peer support and collaboration. Thus, teachers' placement is not solely an individual decision but a product of interactions between personal needs and larger systemic forces, illustrating the complex interplay between the microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem in the organization of educational workspaces.

Suggested Ideal Workspaces and Dynamics

The participants in the focus group discussion described their ideal workspaces, both at home and in school, and discussed the desired dynamics within these spaces.

Table 6. Ideal Teachers' Workspace Characteristics

Setting	Desired Features / Essentials	Additional Suggestions / Desirable Elements	Participant References
Home	Dedicated room for work, formal table, proper organizers, ventilation/air-conditioning, reliable internet	Couch for reading, bookshelves, multiple computer screens, printer, light ambiance, color and lighting for mood and mind-setting	P1, P6
School (Faculty Room)	Dedicated faculty room, individual tables, cubicles for privacy, organizers, ventilation/air-conditioning, reliable internet, spacious tables	Tiled floors for ease of cleaning, study lamps/track lights per table	P1, P4, P6

The table illustrates that teachers envision an ideal workspace that supports both productivity and well-being, whether at home or in the school faculty room. At home, the emphasis is on a dedicated room with a formal table, proper organization, ventilation or air-conditioning, and reliable internet, alongside features that support comfort and focus, such as a reading couch, bookshelves, and multiple computer screens. Teachers highlighted the psychological impact of lighting, color, and ambiance on mindset, suggesting that spatial design extends beyond functionality to cognitive and emotional support. In the school setting, participants desired a dedicated faculty room with private cubicles or divisions to reduce distractions, complemented by organized, spacious tables, proper ventilation, and stable internet. Additional suggestions such as tiled floors for maintenance and individual study lamps reflect attention to both efficiency and personal comfort.

Table 7. Dynamics Inside Ideal Teachers' Workspaces

Dimension	Ideal Dynamics / Features	Participant References
Privacy and Concentration	Minimized distractions, partitions or cubicles for individual work, tiled floors for neatness, private areas to focus without interruptions	P1, P3
Handling Student Consultations	Designated mini-room or separate area for consultations, "aquarium"-style transparent yet soundproof spaces, waiting area or lounge for students, guidelines for polite entry (knocking, permission), scheduled consultations	P1, P5, P6

The table highlights that the participants envision an ideal workspace not only in terms of physical features but also in terms of functional dynamics that facilitate privacy, concentration, and orderly student interactions. Teachers emphasized the need for partitions or cubicles and clear separation of spaces to minimize distractions and protect their focus.

Similarly, handling student consultations requires thoughtful spatial planning, such as separate mini-rooms or transparent yet soundproof areas, combined with behavioral protocols like scheduled consultations and greeting norms. These dynamics demonstrate the interconnectedness of multiple environments where teachers operate: the classroom, faculty room, and student presence in shared spaces.

Table 8. Collaboration, Organization, and Well-being in Ideal Teachers' Workspaces

Dimension	Ideal Dynamics / Features	Participant References
Collaboration and Interaction	Easy access to colleagues for communication and support; maintaining reasonable noise levels; asking colleagues to speak softly when needed	P2, P6
Organization and Cleanliness	Shared responsibility for tidiness; use of organizers; assigned cleaning tasks or dedicated cleaners; personal responsibility for maintaining order	P3, P5
Comfort and Well-being	Physically comfortable space with good ventilation and lighting; positive and supportive environment; overall promotion of teacher morale and satisfaction	FGD general discussion

The table illustrates that participants value not only physical features of their workspaces but also the social and organizational dynamics that influence collaboration, orderliness, and overall teacher welfare. While privacy and concentration remain important, teachers recognize the necessity of collegial support and communication to facilitate problem-solving, sharing of resources, and professional guidance. Similarly, organization and cleanliness, achieved through both personal responsibility and shared systems such as assigned cleaners, were deemed essential for creating a functional and stress-free workspace. Comfort and well-being—supported by appropriate ventilation, lighting, and a positive atmosphere among colleagues—were seen as integral to sustaining motivation and professional satisfaction.

Table 9. Comprehensive Framework of Teachers' Workspaces Across Ecological Systems

Ecological Level	Theme / Focus	Features / Dynamics	Participant References
Microsystem	Dual Nature of Teachers' Workspace (School vs Home)	- School faculty room: shared space, limited privacy, sometimes noisy, near colleagues - Home workspace: private areas (bedroom, dormitory), comfort, proximity to personal resources, but possible distractions from household	P1, P2, P4, P6
Mesosystem	Essential and Desirable Workspace Features	- Spacious, comfortable tables for multitasking- Access to printer, stationery, and storage cabinets - Reliable internet and Wi-Fi	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6

Ecological Level	Theme / Focus	Features / Dynamics	Participant References
		- Comfortable chairs and good ventilation- Proximity to colleagues for collaboration	
Mesosystem – Extended	Workspace Challenges and Coping Strategies	- Challenges: cluttered, limited, or cramped spaces; lack of privacy; noise; insufficient outlets; poor lighting; uncomfortable chairs - Coping: bringing work home, staying organized, resting when tired, creating makeshift setups	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6
Exosystem	Collaboration and Interaction Dynamics	- Easy communication with colleagues while maintaining privacy - Reasonable noise levels; norms for soft speaking- Shared responsibility for organization and cleanliness - Dedicated cleaning staff or personal responsibility	P2, P3, P5, P6
Macrosystem	Factors Influencing Placement and Organizational Context	- Placement influenced by personal preference, resource availability, administrative guidance, and colleague recommendations - Choice of faculty or classroom based on privacy, size, and proximity to resources - Placement norms shaped by school culture and policies	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6
Macrosystem – Ideal Environment	Ideal Workspace Vision	**At Home:** dedicated room for work, proper table, couch, organizers, ventilation/air-conditioning, lighting/color consideration, bookshelf, computer with multiple screens, printer **At School:** dedicated faculty room, cubicles/partitions for privacy, spacious tables, organizers, proper ventilation, strong internet, tiled floors, study lamps	P1, P4, P6

This comprehensive framework highlights how teachers' workspaces function as multi-layered environments influenced by personal, social, and organizational factors. At the microsystem level, teachers navigate the dual nature of their workspace, balancing school and home environments with different advantages and constraints. The mesosystem shows the interplay between essential workspace features and coping strategies shapes daily professional practices. Teachers manage physical limitations, noise, and privacy concerns while developing strategies to maintain focus and productivity.

The exosystem captures the broader social and organizational influences on teachers' experiences. Collaboration norms, shared responsibilities for organization, and the availability of supportive colleagues mediate the indirect influence of school policies and structural arrangements on teachers' efficiency and well-being. At the macrosystem level, cultural expectations, institutional policies, and administrative practices shape workspace placement, access to resources, and the overall vision of an ideal work environment. Collectively, this layered analysis demonstrates that teacher productivity, satisfaction, and professional effectiveness emerge not only from the physical space itself but also from the interactions, policies, and societal structures surrounding it.

From these insights, several policy and design implications emerge:

1. Infrastructure Investment: Schools should allocate funds for ergonomic furniture, reliable internet, printers, and adequate electrical outlets to support modern teaching demands.
2. Workspace Zoning: Faculty rooms should include private cubicles or partitions for focused work and designated collaborative areas for teamwork and peer support.
3. Administrative Guidelines: Clear norms for noise, organization, and cleanliness should be institutionalized to balance privacy and collaboration.
4. Placement Policies: Teacher workspace assignments should consider privacy, proximity to resources, and workflow efficiency while maintaining transparency and fairness.
5. Well-being Focus: Design strategies should integrate lighting, ventilation, and aesthetic considerations to positively influence teacher mood, productivity, and overall professional satisfaction.

Discussion

This study presented the analysis of the Photovoice prompted semi-structured interview and focus group discussion (FGD) findings regarding teacher workspaces in a very large public high school, structured into two key sections: a comparison of the results with previous studies and the new knowledge generated by this research.

Comparison to Previous Studies

The results from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion corroborated with existing literature regarding teacher workspaces and working conditions. The concerns most teachers reported in their current workspaces, such as lack of space, privacy, noise, heat, and poor access to essential resources (i.e., internet) were largely consistent with the available literature on teacher working conditions and the impact of the physical environment (Ang'alika, Aloka, & Raburu, 2016; Travers, 2017). More specifically, expressions of dissatisfaction regarding noise and annoying external disturbances parallel research on poor concentration and attention (Salman & Abbas, 2023; Luo et al., 2024). The participants' experiences confirmed literature that documents lack of adequate space, privacy, and resources as frequent obstacles in public school settings.

In addition, the teachers' ideal workspaces expectations, which featured private areas, efficient workspaces, and adequate support, strongly complemented considerations in the literature on school architectural design and teacher requirements. The priority given to privacy and cubicles or separate consultation rooms emphasized research that linked spatial

designs along with privacy to the functional layout of the school and the productivity and well-being of the teachers (Kolber, 2019). Focus on practical features, such as having robust internet and organizers, within 'the ideal space' confirmed literature that stressed the need of resources for modern teaching jobs (Thach et al., 2022). Moreover, the positive perception of collaboration and collegial interaction, which participants identified as part of the school space, was strongly derived from educational research relating to teacher professional development, job satisfaction, and school culture (Toikka & Tarnanen, 2024; Ralph, 2024) The FGD findings emphasized the role of shared offices as activity centers for these interactions, thereby supporting literature on collaborative workspaces.

New Knowledge Generated

In relation to teachers' experiences and within existing literature, this study also provided a targeted understanding of the context of teachers in a very large integrated public high school. Findings pointed out the pronounced 'dual nature' of workspaces as split between home and school. "Active" deficiencies within the school workspace, such as a lack of privacy and reliable internet, actively undermined the school, pushing teachers to undertake focus-intensive tasks in home spaces.

This illustrated the school's context as a motivator for utilizing home as a workspace for certain functions, which adds nuance to the literature rather than simply framing work from home as a dichotomous phenomenon. The study captured very specific, teacher-articulated notions of what an "ideal" workspace is. This goes beyond design criteria in the literature to capture the lived aspirations shaped by their difficult current circumstances to enable targeted improvements, which is a significant contribution. Participants documented some of the contested issues of daily life systematically within a very large integrated public high school setting, which supplemented the thick qualitative data about how these challenges occurred on a day-to-day basis.

Furthermore, alongside the focus on collaborative work, the literature did address teacher collaboration as facilitated with shared peer spaces used for consultations, but the study brought forward the stronger supervision issue which the other teachers also faced concurrently with consultations. This underscores the intricate dynamics often overlooked by literature that does not focus on these aspects of teacher-teacher collaboration. Policy discourse on guidelines and norms pertains to shared spaces, which brought forth the teacher-level management of such issues. It proved how educators within their immediate and relational ecologies tried to establish norms for enhancing their physical workspace, which was policy or design level, beyond systems thinking.

Conclusion

This research sought to examine the complex aspects of teacher workspaces, uncovering the widespread "dual nature" phenomenon in which educators oscillate between the school and home for their professional responsibilities. The ancillary hours allocated for the periphery engagements of teaching are frequently split between the two settings, each offering distinct advantages and drawbacks. The home setting affords a measure of privacy and comforts that allow teachers to work at their preferred pace, while the school one, especially the faculty room, offers vital collaborative work towards furthering professional community. This resonates with the literature on teachers' working conditions extending beyond the physical classroom.

Regardless of understanding the school as a primary workplace, the findings pointed out a lack of a central workplace. Teachers reported enduring problems like limited space, an overabundance of distractions, a lack of adequate privacy, and harsh environmental conditions, such as noise, heat, among other factors. Compounding these issues were insufficient resources, most notably unreliable internet access. These reported problems aligned with more overarching themes in the literature about the teacher's working environment and the influence of the physical setting on teacher's stress levels and job satisfaction (Ang'alika, Aloka, & Raburu, 2016; Travers, 2017). Specific complaints concerning excessive noise and poor environmental quality were, in fact, directly related to research on how these factors adversely impacted concentration and well-being (Salman & Abbas, 2023; Luo et al., 2024). The constraints of the school workspace, in this case, actually force teachers to dedicate portions of their homes to compensate for their lack of workspaces adequate for concentration, thereby illustrating the problem previous scholars have emphasized and the urgent need to address workspace improvements in the school setting.

In response to the questions about their ideals as teachers, educators showed profound relief when imagining spaces that starkly differ from the reality they inhabit. Solitary spaces, be it a particular room in a teacher's house or a cubicle in the staff common room, were suggested as imperative by all participants. The ideal spaces would contain appropriate furnishings, attendant organizers, dependable climate control systems, as well as controllable light and heating sources. These expectations were fundamentally in agreement with the existing body of research on the design of educational facilities, as well as the teachers' articulated needs that called for the provision of supportive physical environments.

Privacy, order, and dependable technology focus on common issues and were supported by research connecting these elements to teacher effectiveness and well-being (Kolber, 2019; Thach et al., 2022). The designs offered by the teachers highlight the need to exceed basic space provision by employing attention toward comfort, utility, and supporting the complex array of tasks associated with the teaching profession. The dynamics of shared school workspaces emerged as a major theme illustrating the advantages and complexities of the professional 'ecology' of the school. As much as the ease of collaboration and support provided for engagement with colleagues was appreciated, the shared aspect also came with some limitations, especially concerning the management of student interactions. This added a dimension of complexity that is not, to my knowledge, explicitly captured in literature that focuses on collaboration with teachers, showcasing the pragmatic problems that stemmed from needing to fulfill multiple, sometimes competing, interaction demands within one space. The discussion of the rules and principles employed about shared spaces gave an account of 'school' the problem that puzzles many teachers who have tried to devise social means to regulate their physical space.

Based on the findings from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, it can be concluded that the physical workspaces of the teachers in a very large integrated public high school profoundly affect their work lives. The challenges that have been identified within the school context, together with the described desires for spherettps://uniquenesscomps.com/onren-2020-classroom-design-and-elements-influencing-student-engagements/es and the intricacies of shared relationships, suggest an alarming need for tactical design and policy changes. It is not enough to simply provide adequate teacher workspaces; it is essential to attend to the well-being and effectiveness of the teachers and, consequently, the educational standards that are achieved. Remediating the spatial and

environmental inadequacies of school workspaces is the first step toward an educational ecosystem that supports its educators.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

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