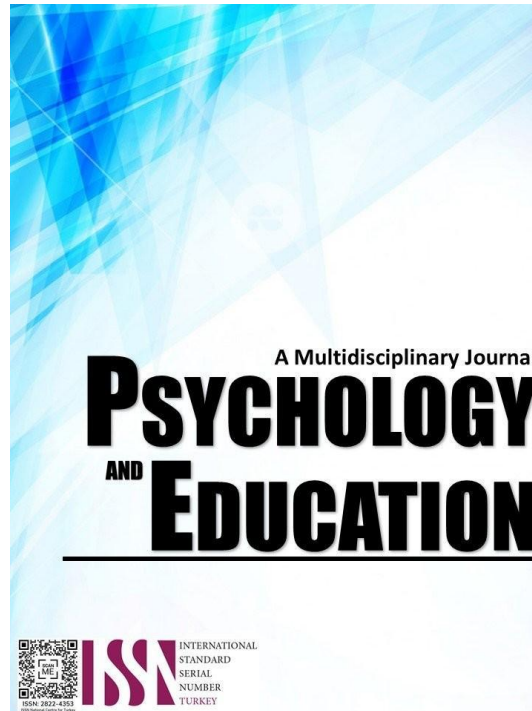


EXPLORING THE SCHOOL HEADS' LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES IN DISTRICT VI QUEZON CITY: A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH



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Exploring the School Heads' Leadership Experiences in District VI Quezon City: A Transcendental Phenomenological Approach

Charisma T. Banag,* Niclie L. Tiratira, Ligaya Z. Del Rosario, Luningning B. De Castro,
Vivian I. Buhain, Dorislyn A. Tabunda

For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

School leadership plays a crucial role in shaping educational success by influencing teacher effectiveness, student performance, and overall school improvement. This study examines the leadership practices of school heads in District VI, Quezon City, focusing on their effectiveness, challenges, and impact on the school community. Using a qualitative research design, data are gathered through interviews and document analysis to explore the leadership strategies employed by the school heads. Findings reveal that effective leadership fosters collaboration, professional growth, and positive student outcomes, while challenges include resource limitations, policy constraints, and stakeholder expectations. The study highlights the importance of adaptive leadership and continuous professional development for school heads. Insights from this research can guide school administrators, policymakers, and educators in enhancing leadership training programs and institutional policies. Future studies may further explore the long-term effects of leadership practices on school performance and stakeholder engagement.

Keywords: *educational leadership, school administration, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, school improvement, teacher development*

Introduction

School leadership contributes to educational success by influencing teacher motivation, student achievement, and overall school improvement (Hallinger, 2011). Effective leadership fosters a collaborative and innovative environment that enhances learning outcomes. According to Duhart-Toppen (2020), urban high school principals who practice relationship-driven and context-aware leadership significantly contribute to improved academic performance among at-risk students.

Similarly, Salas-Rodríguez et al. (2020) highlighted that transformational leadership not only increases students' academic motivation and resilience but also mitigates burnout, thereby supporting overall performance. These findings highlighted how leadership impacts not just institutional processes but also the psychological and academic well-being of both teachers and students.

However, maintaining effective leadership practices continues to pose significant challenges, especially in urban school settings where administrators must navigate diverse academic demands, limited resources, and complex stakeholder expectations. Hallinger (2022) noted that school leaders must exhibit a high degree of adaptability to manage instructional leadership alongside policy implementation in ever-changing educational environments. These demands were particularly pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed gaps in leadership preparedness and flexibility. Without strategic and adaptive leadership, schools may face persistent issues in teacher retention, declining student performance, and weakened institutional effectiveness.

In order to gain a better understanding of the essence of leadership practices, this study examined the effectiveness, challenges, and impacts on the school community of school heads in District VI, Quezon City. This research also aimed to provide valuable insights that can help strengthen school leadership and enhance educational outcomes by identifying key leadership strategies and areas for improvement.

The rationale for this study lied in the need to bridge the gap between leadership theory and leadership practice. By exploring the lived experiences of school heads in District VI, this research contributed to more context-sensitive understandings of educational leadership. Moreover, it offered practical implications for leadership training, policy formulation, and the ongoing support of school leaders in similarly complex urban educational settings.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative approach study was to explore the lived experiences of school heads of District VI Quezon City and how it influences students, teachers, and community. The study aimed to contribute to the enhancement of instructional practices and leadership practices in educational contexts. Specifically, the present study pursued to answer the following questions:

1. What leadership practices have school heads in District 6, Quezon City described as most effective based on their lived experiences in managing and leading their schools?
2. What challenges do school heads face in adopting and maintaining these best practices?
3. How do these leadership practices influence teachers, students, and the wider school community?

Literature Review

Leadership in general and in school context

Leadership is broadly defined as the ability to inspire, encourage, and facilitate others' contributions to an organization's success and efficacy. It entails establishing a vision, choosing a course of action, and assisting people or groups in reaching shared objectives (Northouse, 2021). As stated by Yukl and Gardner (2019), A person's ability to motivate and inspire change is another aspect of leadership that goes beyond positional authority. Generally speaking, innovation, organizational culture, and sustainable advancement in a variety of domains such as business, governance, and education, depend heavily on competent leadership.

One of the primary reasons leadership is important is that it establishes a clear vision and direction (Brauckmann, 2023). A strong leader articulates a compelling vision and mission that aligns with the school's goals and values. This vision serves as a roadmap, guiding the actions and decisions of the entire school community. By setting clear goals and expectations, leaders help ensure that everyone is working towards common objectives, fostering a sense of purpose and unity.

In a school context, leadership takes on a unique form that combines managerial and instructional responsibilities. According to Leithwood et. al. (2020), of the school-related elements that affect student's learning, classroom instruction comes in first, followed by school leadership. Support for teachers, successful curriculum implementation, and fair learning opportunities for students are all guaranteed by competent school leaders. In addition, leaders set the tone for the school environment by modeling positive behavior, promoting respect, and encouraging inclusivity. A positive school culture enhances student well-being, increases motivation, and reduces disciplinary issues. It creates a safe and supportive atmosphere where students feel valued and are more likely to succeed academically and socially.

School Heads' Leadership in Schools

Schools' leaders' leadership practices play an important role in shaping educational outcomes. According to Aquino et. al. (2021), school heads serve as change agents by encouraging cooperation, mentoring, and a supportive school environment, all of which have a direct impact on teacher effectiveness. Setting academic goals and promoting professional growth are two examples of instructional leadership that is especially important for enhancing student learning (Leithwood, et. al., 2020).

School success is also influenced by effective administrative leadership, which includes smart fund management and policy compliance. Sunday et. al. (2024), discovered that institutional performance is positively impacted by competent financial leadership. Teachers that experience transformational leadership are more motivated and experience less burnout, which leads to better academic results (Salas-Rodriguez et. al., 2020). These insights provided support to this study's exploration of school head's lived experiences by providing a basis for understanding successful practices.

Effects of Leadership

The effects of leadership extend far beyond the boundaries of an organization, significantly impacting the surrounding communities. In educational settings, effective school leadership can foster strong community relationships, drive local engagement, and promote social cohesion.

One of the primary effects of strong school leadership on communities is the enhancement of educational outcomes, which in turn can lead to improved socio-economic conditions. When school leaders implement effective educational strategies and create a positive learning environment, students are more likely to succeed academically (Varela, 2020). This success can translate into higher graduation rates, better job prospects, and increased opportunities for higher education.

Effective school leadership also promotes community engagement and participation. School leaders who actively involve parents and community members in the decision-making process foster a sense of ownership and collaboration (Benson, 2020). This inclusive approach can lead to stronger partnerships between the school and local organizations, businesses, and civic groups. These partnerships can provide valuable resources, support educational programs, and create opportunities for students to engage in community service, enhancing their social and civic skills.

Strong school leadership can also contribute to improved public perceptions of the education system. When community members see their local schools thriving and students excelling, their confidence in the educational system increases (Liu, 2021). This positive perception can lead to greater community support for schools, including increased volunteerism, financial donations, and advocacy for educational policies. In turn, this support can help schools to further enhance programs and services, creating a virtuous cycle of improvement and community involvement.

School leaders also play a crucial role in fostering social cohesion and reducing inequality (Meyer, 2022). By promoting inclusive policies and practices, it ensures that all students, regardless of background, have access to high-quality education and opportunities. This commitment to equity can help bridge social divides and create a more inclusive community where diversity is celebrated and everyone has a chance to succeed.

In addition, schools often serve as community hubs, providing a space for various events, meetings, and activities. Effective leadership

can maximize the use of school facilities to benefit the entire community, offering programs such as adult education classes, health and wellness initiatives, and cultural events. These programs can strengthen community ties, provide valuable services, and create a sense of unity and shared purpose.

Challenges in Leadership

Leadership, while essential, comes with a host of challenges that can impede the effectiveness and success of an organization. In educational settings, these challenges are particularly pronounced due to the complex and dynamic nature of schools.

One of the primary challenges in leadership is managing limited resources. Schools often operate within tight budgets, and leaders must make difficult decisions about how to allocate funds effectively (Collie, 2021). This involves prioritizing spending on essential areas such as staffing, facilities, and instructional materials while finding ways to do more with less. Balancing financial constraints with the need to provide high-quality education requires creativity, strategic planning, and often, difficult trade-offs.

Managing staff performance and development is another critical challenge for school leaders (Papadakis, 2021). Ensuring that teachers and staff are motivated, skilled, and aligned with the school's goals is vital for student success. However, addressing issues such as teacher burnout, resistance to change, and varying levels of competency can be difficult. Leaders must provide ongoing professional development, create a supportive work environment, and implement fair evaluation and feedback mechanisms to help staff grow and improve.

Cultural and social challenges also play a significant role in school leadership. Schools serve diverse populations, and leaders must promote inclusivity and equity within their institutions (Kilag, 2023). Addressing issues such as discrimination, bullying, and socio-economic disparities requires a deep understanding of the community and a commitment to fostering a respectful and supportive school climate. Leaders must implement policies and practices that promote equity and inclusion, ensuring that all students have access to the same opportunities for success.

Navigating the regulatory environment is a significant challenge for school leaders. Educational policies and regulations are constantly evolving at the local, state, and national levels (Andiola, 2020). Keeping abreast of these changes and ensuring compliance can be time-consuming and complex. School leaders must understand how new policies impact their schools and find ways to implement them effectively without disrupting the learning process. This requires a thorough understanding of educational law, strong organizational skills, and the ability to advocate for the school's needs within the regulatory framework.

Addressing mental health and well-being is an increasingly important challenge in school leadership. Students and staff alike face a range of mental health issues, from stress and anxiety to more severe conditions. School leaders must create an environment that supports mental health and well-being, which involves implementing programs and services that provide emotional support, promoting a culture of openness and understanding, and ensuring that mental health resources are accessible to all (Mahfouz, 2020). Leaders must also be vigilant about their own mental health, modeling healthy behaviors and seeking support when needed.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically transcendental or psychological phenomenology, as conceptualized by Moustakas (1994). In order to derive information from a complete description of people's lived experiences in connection to the topic being studied, Moustakas's transcendental phenomenology offered a methodical, comprehensive, intentional, detailed set of processes and procedures. Through in-depth interviews and document analysis, the study got to identify the core essence of their experiences while setting aside researcher biases through epoche (bracketing). By applying Moustakas' phenomenological methods, the research aimed to provide a structured yet reflective analysis of how school heads navigated leadership in their specific educational contexts.

The Transcendental Phenomenology was also used to several research studies. For example, Chiappe et al. (2025) used to understand the essence of the experience of teachers and a principal moving toward more inclusive practices for students. It also allowed researchers to describe experiences shared by a group of individuals, in this case teachers and the principal, who experienced the phenomenon of a school's transformation. Similarly, Alonzo (2021) described the real-life experiences of preschool instructors in a Mid-Atlantic State public school system as it embraced obstacles in getting pupils ready for kindergarten.

The study integrated seven steps of descriptive analysis (Colaizzi, 1978) and the concept of General Structure as outlined by Moustakas (1994). Colaizzi's method involved a systematic process of extracting, organizing, and analyzing significant statements from the participants to develop a comprehensive understanding of experiences. This method included reading all participants' descriptions, extracted significant statements, formulated meanings, clustered themes, developed an exhaustive description, produced a fundamental structure, and validated the findings with the participants. By integrating these steps, the study ensured that the analysis remained grounded in the participants' actual experiences, thus enhanced the reliability and depth of the findings. The concept of General Structure provided by Moustakas guides the synthesis of these themes into a cohesive and comprehensive depiction of the phenomenon under investigation, ensured that the essence of the school heads lived experiences was thoroughly and accurately captured.

Moreover, qualitative phenomenology served as a valuable tool for delving into the varied perspectives and themes pertinent to the research inquiry. Through thematic analysis of the gathered data, shared patterns and themes across participants was unearthed, thereby fostered a deeper comprehension of the phenomenon under investigation. By adopted this approach, the research endeavored to capture the nuanced complexity and diversity inherent in educators' experiences, thereby enriched the study's findings and augmented the understanding of pedagogical challenges within this specific context.

Participants

This study utilized purposive sampling to select 7 school heads from public schools in District VI, Quezon City. This method ensured that participants had direct experience in school leadership and can provide relevant insights into leadership practices, challenges, and impact on school communities.

Participants were selected based on a set of predefined criteria designed to identify those who were most likely to offer valuable perspectives on their experiences as a school head. The criteria included: (a) currently school head at a secondary or elementary public school at District VI of Quezon City; (b) Have at least three years of experience as a school head; (c) Willing to participate in in-depth interviews; (d) Able to articulate their leadership experiences, challenges, and insights relevant to their role. (e) Availability during the study period for data collection activities.

By employed purposive sampling, the study ensured that the collected data is rich, meaningful, and contextually relevant to the realities of school leadership within the district. However, the findings were limited to the selected participants and may not fully represent all school heads in different educational settings.

Instrument

For the study explored the leadership experiences of school heads in District VI, Quezon City, a combination of qualitative data collection methods would be appropriate to capture the nuanced and rich insights of the participants.

In-depth Interview. Conducting semi-structured individual interviews with school heads was an essential data collection method in phenomenological research, as it allowed for a deep exploration of their leadership experiences, challenges, and strategies (Creswell & Poth, 2020). A qualitative research method called phenomenological research aims to identify and characterize a phenomenon's fundamental characteristics. The method suspends the researchers' prior notions about the phenomenon in order to examine people's ordinary experiences (H., 2023). To put it another way, phenomenology research examines lived events in order to learn more about how individuals interpret them. Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility, enabled participants to share their lived experiences in own words while allowing the researcher to probe deeper into relevant themes that emerge during the discussion (Moustakas, 1994). These interviews conducted face-to-face or remotely, depending on logistical considerations, and involved open-ended questions designed to elicit rich, descriptive responses that align with the study's phenomenological approach.

The self-developed interview guide consisted of fifteen (15) questions, carefully structured to align with the study's objectives outlined in Chapter 1. The first five (5) questions were designed to address the first research objective, focused on the leadership experiences of school heads. Questions six (6) to ten (10) were formulated to explore the challenges they encounter, while the last five (5) questions aimed to uncover the strategies employed to navigate these challenges. The development of these questions was informed by a trial-and-error validation process, ensuring clarity, coherence, and alignment with the phenomenological research design. Utilized an interview guide ensured consistency across interviews while allowing for flexibility in follow-up questioning, which was critical in capturing the depth and complexity of participants' experiences (Patton, 2015).

Observations. Observing school heads in natural work environment provided valuable contextual insights into leadership practices. Observations can focus on various aspects of leadership, such as decision-making processes, interactions with staff and students, and the implementation of policies and initiatives. The photographs were analyzed alongside the interview and observation data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the school head.

Document Analysis. Reviewing documents such as school policies, strategic plans, meeting minutes, and performance evaluations offered additional perspectives on the leadership practices within District VI. The aim was to examine the document's structure, language use, purpose and communicative effectiveness within its institutional context. The memo, as a genre of professional writing, reflected both organizational priorities and power relations embedded in institutional discourse. This helped the researcher to fully understand the leadership practices held by the school heads.

Data Analysis

This study utilized the seven steps of descriptive analysis by Colaizzi (1978) and the Universal Structure by Moustakas (1994) to systematically analyze the data collected from interviews, observations, and document analysis. This rigorous analytical approach was chosen to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the participants' experiences and provided a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The following steps were used in data analysis following Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive method and Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach:

Familiarization. Each transcript was carefully read multiple times to fully understand the participants' leadership experiences. This process allowed for deep immersion in the data.

Identification of Significant Statements. Key words and phrases relevant to school leadership were extracted from the transcripts. These statements captured critical insights into leadership challenges, strategies, and their impact on the school community.

Forming Meaning from Significant Statements. The extracted statements were analyzed to derive deeper meanings, interpreting implications in the context of school leadership practices.

Arranging the Formed Meanings According to Clustered Themes. The meanings were organized into thematic categories, grouping related concepts such as transformational leadership, administrative challenges, and stakeholder engagement.

Creating a Comprehensive or Exhaustive Description of the Phenomenon. The findings were synthesized into a detailed account of school leadership experiences, focusing on influence on teachers, students, and the overall school environment.

Creating a Fundamental Structure. A concise statement was formulated to encapsulate the core nature of the leadership phenomenon, highlighting both transformational and administrative dimensions.

Requesting Verification of the Fundamental Structure. The developed structure was presented to participants for validation, ensured that the findings accurately reflected lived experiences.

Essence. The final step identified the fundamental aspects of school leadership, considered factors such as challenges, leadership tools, stakeholder relationships, and decision-making processes. This analysis captured the core nature of leadership in the educational setting.

By following these systematic steps, this study produced a robust and authentic portrayal of school heads' leadership experiences in District VI, Quezon City. The findings contributed valuable insights to the field of educational leadership, offering implications for policy development, leadership training, and school management practices.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations hold significant importance in research endeavors, serving as foundational principles to uphold the integrity and credibility of studies. Fleming (2018) highlights some ethical dilemmas commonly encountered as an 'insider researcher', including the power differential and ongoing relationships with participants. In line with the view of Fleming, it showed that in research planning, consideration of welfare and safety of the participants should be prioritized. Informed consent must be obtained from all participants, clearly outlining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and any potential risks or benefits involved. Participants also be assured of their anonymity and confidentiality, with data stored securely and identifiers removed to prevent the disclosure of sensitive information. Additionally, researchers adhered to ethical guidelines regarding the treatment of vulnerable populations, such as ensured appropriate safeguards for minors and obtaining parental consent where necessary. Moreover, maintained integrity and transparency in research practices, including accurately reporting findings and avoiding conflicts of interest, were crucial for upholding the ethical standards of the study. Overall, prioritized ethical considerations not only safeguards the well-being of participants but also enhanced the credibility and validity of the research outcomes, fostering trust and integrity within the research community.

Results and Discussion

The results section presented the findings from the school heads leadership experiences in District VI Quezon city. This section aimed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings were organized thematically to address the research questions and to highlight the key insights gained from the participants' experiences.

Participants' Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the participants explored the school heads' leadership experiences in District VI Quezon City key characteristics and background information about the selected school heads who participated in the research.

Participant 1 - The Diplomat. She had an extensive background in education. She was approachable and willing to extend her time for any concern. She was 53 years old with 13 years of service as a school head. The interview with her took place on October 22, 2024, at New Era Elementary School, started precisely at 1:16 pm and concluded at 2:43 pm, reflected her preferred timing.

Participant 2 - The Express. He was a journalist. He was articulated and answered directly the questions in just a few minutes. He was 40 years old with 3 years of service as a school head. The interview with him took place on October 28, 2024, at Culiati High School, started precisely at 1:05 pm and concluded at 1:45 pm, reflected his preferred timing.

Participant 3 - The Passionate. He was 53 years old with 12 years of service as a school head. The length of service he rendered is the fruit of his huge experience in the position. The interview with him took place on October 30, 2024, at Emilio Jacinto National High School, started precisely at 11:19 am and concluded at 12:26 pm reflected his preferred timing.

Participant 4 - The Tenacious. She was idealistic. She focused on discipline and management both on curricular and extracurricular activities. She was 54 years old with 10 years of service as a school head. The interview with him took place on November 16, 2024, at Culiat Elementary, started precisely at 10: 07 am and concluded at 11:10 am reflected his preferred timing.

Participant 5 - The Mighty. The Juris Doctor school head. She was somewhat autocratic in her leadership, but she was focused on the welfare of the students, teachers and entire community as well. She was 64 years old with 18 years of service as a school head. The interview with her took place on November 15, 2024, at New Era High School, started precisely at 3:00pm and concluded at 4:00 pm reflected her preferred timing.

Participant 6 – The Eloquent. He is full of wisdom and very articulated. The school head was always fragrant. He was 50 years old with 8 years of service as a school head. The interview with him took place on November 8, 2024, at Ismael Mathay Senior HS, started precisely at 11:10 am and concluded at 12:05 pm reflecting his preferred timing.

Participant 7 – The Amiable. She was kind. She was 62 years old with 18 years of service as a school head. The interview with her took place on November 22, 2024, at Tandang Sora National High School, started precisely at 12:10 pm and concluded at 1:00 pm reflected her preferred timing

Leadership Practices Perceived As Most Effective By Seven Successful School Heads

The first research question focused on the experiences of school heads in managing their school. Upon determining the experiences encountered by the school heads, two themes were emerged: Different Type of Leadership and Communication with Others.

Theme 1. Different Leadership Styles

In this theme, Leadership was influenced and guided individuals or groups toward achieved shared objectives. Leadership in educational settings was not one-size-fits-all; rather, effective school heads often drew from a variety of leadership styles depending on the needs of their school, staff, and community. Common leadership types observed in schools included transformational leadership, which inspired innovation and growth; instructional leadership, which focused on teaching and learning; and distributed leadership, where responsibilities are shared among staff members. These styles contributed to effective school management and improved student outcomes when applied appropriately within the school context (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Category 1. Visionary Leadership

A strong and clearly articulated vision served as the foundation for effective school leadership. Establishing and communicating this vision required not only setting long-term goals but also fostered stakeholder engagement to ensure alignment and commitment. School heads who demonstrated visionary leadership integrate transparency, collaboration, and strategic planning to unite their school communities under shared objectives.

The Passionate head emphasized the importance of defining and communicating core values, stating:

"I believe that identifying the core values and long-term goals of my school is crucial for me to effectively manage it. I make sure that my vision for the school is well-communicated to the teachers, students, parents, barangay, and other stakeholders." (P3, L59-62, the Passionate)

The Passionate illustrated the role of a well-defined vision in establishing a shared purpose among all members of the school community. Leaders who actively involved stakeholders in the visioning process create a culture of trust, transparency, and accountability, reinforced their role as transformative agents of change.

The Diplomat underscored the necessity of maintained strong relationships with teachers and provided them with the necessary support:

"As a leader, you must have integrity. You show them your real intention, your real purpose in leading them. Since you handle different kinds of people, you should know how to deal with them. And aside from that, you must provide technical assistance to teachers—they must be proficient and passionate about their teaching." (P1, L 13-21, the Diplomat)

This statement highlighted the dual role of visionary leadership: setting a strategic direction while simultaneously empowering teachers to carry out that vision effectively. Leaders who prioritize capacity-building among staff ensured that their schools function as cohesive, goal-driven institutions.

Furthermore, successful school heads integrated strategic actions that reinforced the vision over time. The Passionate shared their approach:

"I model the vision through the concept of leading by example. I demonstrate behaviors and decisions that align with the vision to reinforce its importance. Additionally, I develop a strategic plan with clear objectives, timelines, and responsibilities to ensure the vision is actionable." (P3, L78-82, the Passionate)

By leading with intentionality, school heads translated abstract visions into tangible actions, ensure that their goals remain relevant and attainable. Moreover, regular communication through meetings, newsletters, and social media helps sustained stakeholder

engagement, made the vision a living document that evolved with the needs of the school community.

Visionary leadership was not simply about crafting a mission statement—it was about embedding a guiding philosophy into every aspect of school management. Leaders who engaged their school communities in vision-building foster a sense of collective ownership, which enhances motivation and participation (Parveen, 2022). By demonstrated integrity, provided professional development opportunities, and consistently reinforced strategic objectives, school heads cultivated an environment where students, teachers, and parents feel invested in the school's success.

Ultimately, established and communicated a clear vision enhances decision-making, promoted collaboration, and strengthened school culture. A well-communicated vision acts as a unifying force, ensured that all stakeholders work cohesively towards the same objectives, lead to improved educational outcomes and overall school effectiveness.

Category 2. Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership was a crucial component of effective school management, as it directly influenced teaching quality and student learning outcomes. Effective school heads set high expectations, supported professional development, and provided necessary resources to ensure that educators are equipped with the tools need to succeed. According to Hallinger and Wang (2015), instructional leadership focused on improving teaching practices through direct involvement in curriculum implementation, teacher capacity-building, and academic oversight. The responses from school heads in this study reflected these principles, emphasized the importance of mentorship, collaborative decision-making, and continuous improvement in instructional practices.

The Mighty head highlighted the fundamental role of instructional leadership:

"Our priority, of course, is quality instruction. The teacher should also be capacitated so that we can deliver quality learning to the students." (P5, L208-212, the Mighty)

This statement underscored the importance of ensuring that teachers received adequate support and training, aligned with research that emphasized the role of instructional leadership in fostering professional growth and improved student outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008).

The Passionate head emphasized the necessity of professional development, noting:

"Supporting professional development is a key component of my leadership approach. I am committed to providing teachers with ongoing opportunities for growth and learning, whether through workshops, mentoring, or collaborative planning sessions." (P3, L152-153, the Passionate)

This aligned with studies by Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), which highlighted how continuous professional development enhanced teacher effectiveness and led to better student engagement. Moreover, instructional leaders recognized the need to balance training with classroom responsibilities to minimize disruptions to learning.

A strong instructional leader also understood the importance of fostering collaboration among teachers and stakeholders. The Passionate head shared:

"Improving academic performance and learning environments is a team effort. I empower teachers and other leaders to take part in decision-making, increasing the chances that ideas will bear fruit." (P3, L 218-221, the Passionate)

This reflects the findings of Leithwood et al. (2020), who stated that distributed leadership, where school heads engaged teachers and staff in shared decision-making, positively impacted school performance. By involving educators in the process, instructional leaders created a culture of shared responsibility and innovation.

Additionally, the role of instructional leaders extended beyond academics to include shaping the school environment and ensuring holistic development. The Mighty head noted:

"As school heads, we are here as instructional leaders, managers, and even guidance counselors. Our role is to mobilize the school, ensuring that all aspects contribute to effective teaching and learning." (P5, L208-214, the Mighty)

This statement resonated with the perspective of Fullan (2014), who asserted that school leaders must be adaptive, took on multiple roles to address the diverse needs of students and teachers while maintaining a clear instructional focus.

Instructional leadership was more than just overseeing academic programs; it involved actively shaping the learning environment through mentorship, capacity-building, and strategic planning. Research consistently showed that schools led by strong instructional leaders achieve higher student performance, improved teacher morale, and greater overall school effectiveness (Marzano et al., 2005).

By fostering a culture of collaboration, instructional leaders ensured that teachers were not working in isolation but were continuously supported in their professional growth. Furthermore, by maintaining high expectations and engaging in data-driven decision-making, created a structured yet adaptable learning environment that meets the evolving needs of students (Hattie, 2009).

Ultimately, instructional leadership was essential for fostering sustained academic success. The insights from this study reinforced the need for school heads to remain actively engaged in the teaching and learning process, providing the necessary resources, support, and professional development opportunities that empowered educators and enhance student outcomes.

Theme 2. Communicating with Others

Within this theme, communication was a key component of successful school leadership. The second theme to emerged from the school leaders' experiences is Communicating with Others, which emphasized the necessity of clear, consistent, and open communication with teachers, students, parents, and the larger school community. Strong communication skills assisted school leaders in establishing trust, encouraged collaboration, resolved issues, and ensured that everyone was on board with the school's goals and vision. By actively listening to and interacting with stakeholders, school leaders fostered an inclusive and supportive atmosphere that improved both staff performance and student outcomes. This theme explored how teachers creatively incorporated communication strategies and designed in their leadership practices.

Category 1. Effective Communication

Effective communication was an essential component of successful school leadership. School heads must maintain open, transparent, and consistent communication with teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders to build trust and foster engagement. Research highlighted that strong communication practices in schools led to improved collaboration, increased teacher motivation, and better student outcomes (Idris, 2021). The school leaders in this study emphasized the importance of clear messaging, participatory decision-making, and fostering a supportive school environment through consistent interactions with their staff and community.

The Passionate head emphasized the significance of establishing trust through transparency:

"Building trust and relationships with staff, students, and parents is fundamental. If a school head is new to a school, this must be prioritized. A supportive school environment where everyone feels valued and heard fosters collaboration." (P3, L129-133, the Passionate)

This insight aligned with the findings of Bryk and Schneider (2003), who asserted that relational trust between school leaders and teachers led to stronger professional commitment and improved school effectiveness. By prioritizing transparency, school heads created an atmosphere of mutual respect, making teachers and students more engaged in the learning process.

The Eloquent head emphasized the role of regular communication in reinforcing school vision:

"You have to communicate the vision that you want for the school. Post it where everyone can see it, talk about it in meetings, and engage stakeholders so that everyone is working towards that goal." (P6, L13-19, The Eloquent)

This supported the perspective of Marzano et al. (2005), who argued that effective school leaders consistently reinforced their vision through structured communication, ensured alignment between policies and practices. By actively involving all stakeholders in discussions about the school's direction, leaders cultivated a shared sense of purpose and motivation.

Additionally, the Diplomat recognized the importance of balancing authority with approachability when addressing concerns:

"When teachers have attendance issues, I remind them first before resorting to formal notices. I always ask for the root cause because no teacher wants to be absent unless necessary." (P1, L125-127, the Diplomat)

This aligned with research by Fullan (2014), which highlighted that leaders who approach disciplinary matters with empathy and dialogue rather than rigid enforcement were more likely to foster cooperation and commitment among staff. Effective communication ensured that policies are implemented with understanding and fairness, ultimately leading to a positive school culture.

Effective communication went beyond merely disseminating information; it involved active listening, fostered collaboration, and created a culture of openness. Research suggested that strong communication within schools results in greater stakeholder involvement, improved teacher retention, and enhanced student engagement (Leithwood et al., 2020).

School heads who prioritize effective communication created an inclusive environment where teachers and students feel heard and valued. This approach built a sense of collective responsibility, ensuring that educational goals were met through shared efforts. Moreover, when school leaders communicated their expectations clearly and reinforce them consistently, it minimized misunderstandings and resistance to change (Robinson et al., 2008).

Ultimately, effective communication strengthened relationships within the school community, enhanced trust and collaboration, and contributed to a more cohesive and dynamic learning environment. The insights from this study underscored the vital role of transparent and participatory communication in fostering a thriving school culture that benefited all stakeholders.

Category 2. Empowering Others

Delegating responsibilities, empowering teachers and staff to take initiative, and providing opportunities for professional growth and leadership.

"Actually, each teacher already knows their role as a teacher. And then when it comes to goal setting, you actually give them the picture of the school performance. You start with the performance, that is the baseline, and that's our target. So, this is the current performance of the school, and this is our target. So, we try to, of course, get into the target. We want to achieve what is our target, and then by doing so, especially right now, our focus is more on literacy and numeracy, and, of course, the inclusion of social-emotional learning, or the SEL." (P1, The Diplomat, L24-29)

"You make the teachers involved; you make the teachers engaged so that they own the project. Assign them a specific task, assign a committee, create a committee so that everybody is moving, everybody is working collaboratively on the project, goals and activities of the school. We also need to recognize. We have yearly teachers' recognition; we call that praise by the division. Aside from making them involved, if they succeed in the activity, you will recognize the achievement of the teachers. (P6- The Eloquent L116-121)

Empowering others through delegating responsibilities, encouraging initiative, and providing opportunities for professional growth and leadership brings numerous benefits to a school environment. It fostered a culture of collaboration and shared ownership, where teachers and staff felt valued and motivated to contribute their best efforts. This empowerment led to increased job satisfaction and retention, as individuals see clear pathways for their personal and professional development (Moss, 2020). Moreover, it enhanced the overall effectiveness of the school by tapping into the diverse skills and perspectives of its team members, promoting innovative solutions to challenges and improving student outcomes. By cultivating leaders at all levels, the school became a more resilient and dynamic organization, better equipped to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing educational landscape.

Category 3. Building Positive Relationships

Creating a supportive and inclusive school culture by building strong relationships with students, staff, parents, and the wider community.

"Actually, it's more on democratic and participatory. You are open to suggestions, and then you decide among your group. You let them participate, and you ask their ideas. And then there should be collaboration. Because nobody monopolizes knowledge.

If you encourage the teachers to contribute, expose their talent, their efforts, and everything, you include them. And then you acknowledge their contribution." (P1, L52-56, The Diplomat,)

The consultative practice.

Kasi you have to consult and to make your team, the staff and people, everyone involved and attached and engaged to what kind of vision, what direction that you would like to do with your school. Everybody must be engaged, everybody must be involved. Hence, you have to consult them, you have to hear them.

The best leaders are those who know how to listen, to hear the side of everybody so that you stay away from being autocratic, from being authoritative, that you are all-knowing, that you can do everything. You have to make active participation of your subordinates for them to own the project, to own the vision." (P6, L30-37, The Eloquent)

Building positive relationships within a school community yields numerous benefits that contribute to its overall success. When students, staff, parents, and the wider community feel connected and supported, a sense of belonging and trust flourished, creating a supportive environment conducive to learning and growth. Strong relationships foster open communication channels, allowing for constructive feedback, collaboration, and problem-solving (Lopez, 2020). Students were more likely to feel motivated and engaged when they have positive relationships with teachers and peers, led to improved academic performance and behavior. Additionally, parents were more likely to be actively involved in their child's education when feel welcomed and valued by the school, leading to stronger partnerships between home and school. Ultimately, building positive relationships fostered a culture of inclusivity, empathy, and resilience, laying the groundwork for a thriving and harmonious school community.

Challenges Faced By School Heads in Adopting and Maintaining these Best Practices

The second research question focused on challenges faced by school heads in adopting and maintaining best practices. Upon determining the challenges they faced, two themes were created: Resistance to Change, High Workload and Time Management and Lack of Resources.

Theme 3. Challenges Faced by School Heads

This theme drew emphasis on the challenges and barriers faced by school leaders in their particular schools. School heads discussed challenges such as resistance to change, high workload, time management and lack of resources. These challenges frequently demand school administrators to make difficult decisions, adjust swiftly to change, and exhibit resilience in the face of limited support networks.

Category 1: Resistance to Change

Resistance to change was a common challenge faced by school heads, as teachers, staff, and parents may struggle to adapt to new policies, leadership styles, and curriculum changes. Effective school leadership required addressing these concerns through transparent communication, stakeholder involvement, and continuous support (Jacobsen, 2022). Research highlighted that resistance often stems

from uncertainty, lack of trust, or fear of added responsibilities, which can hinder the successful implementation of innovative educational strategies (Fullan, 2014).

The Diplomat head emphasized the need for capacity-building to help teachers and staff embrace change:

"It's a matter of providing training... You let them see the picture of what must be achieved. When you capacitate the teachers, you capacitate the non-teaching staff as well." (P1, L83-85, The Diplomat)

This aligned with the findings of Hallinger and Heck (2010), who asserted that professional development played a critical role in reducing resistance to change. By equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge, school leaders can foster greater acceptance of new policies and instructional methods.

The Passionate head highlighted the importance of open communication to address concerns and build trust:

"I build open communication channels so my staff can express their concerns and understand the reasons behind the changes. Involving teachers and staff in the planning and implementation process fosters a sense of being valued, making them more likely to support changes." (P3, L292-299, The Passionate)

This reflected research by Bryk and Schneider (2003), which suggested that relational trust among school leaders, teachers, and stakeholders significantly impacts organizational change. Leaders who prioritize collaboration and transparency created a culture where teachers feel supported rather than imposed upon, leading to smoother transitions and greater buy-in.

Additionally, the Tenacious recognized that resistance may be influenced by past leadership practices and differing expectations:

"If the previous principal was not fond of class observations, and I prioritize that, some teachers resist. But I balance everything. I check attendance, lesson plans, and instructional delivery while ensuring a clean and organized school environment." (P4, L64-68, The Tenacious)

This observation supported research by Hargreaves and O'Connor (2020), who emphasized that school culture plays a crucial role in how change is received. Teachers accustomed to a certain leadership style may struggle to adjust, reinforcing the need for gradual implementation and strong leadership presence.

Resistance to change, if not managed effectively, can hinder school progress, innovation, and overall effectiveness. Studies indicated that without clear communication and stakeholder involvement, school leaders may face disengagement and opposition, preventing the successful execution of new educational initiatives (Leithwood et al., 2020). Moreover, failure to address resistance can result in stagnation, where schools fail to adapt to evolving academic standards and student needs.

However, research also suggested that when leaders create a shared vision, involved teachers in decision-making, and highlighted the benefits of proposed changes, resistance diminished over time (Kotter, 2012). Effective leadership required patience, empathy, and continuous engagement with all members of the school community to ensure that transitions were met with support rather than opposition.

Ultimately, addressing resistance to change was not just about enforcing policies but about fostering a school culture that embraces growth, innovation, and shared responsibility. By building trust, offering professional development, and maintaining clear communication, school heads can navigate resistance effectively, ensuring sustainable improvements in teaching and learning.

Category 2. High Workload and Time Management

School heads must balance administrative responsibilities, strategic planning, and daily school management while ensuring that instructional leadership and staff development remain priorities. The increasing complexity of school administration, coupled with high expectations from stakeholders, often led to significant stress and exhaustion (Greany, 2021). Research suggested that excessive workload negatively impacts school leaders' ability to focus on best practices, limiting their effectiveness in fostering school improvement and student success (Grissom et al., 2021).

The school head emphasized the weight of accountability and responsibility:

"As a school head, you are accountable for whatever happens in the school. Even if there is an OIC, you will still be liable. The biggest challenge is ensuring the well-being of the children." (P1, L6-72, The Diplomat)

This aligned with the findings of Day et al. (2020), who argued that school leaders experience heightened stress due to their responsibility for student welfare, school safety, and overall institutional performance. The emotional burden of managing various crises, from student concerns to parental conflicts, adds another layer of complexity to their workload.

The Tenacious head highlighted the difficulty of managing logistical constraints within the school:

"The school space is very small. If all the students enter at once, it feels like a market. Parents have complained, and they are still adjusting to the changes I have implemented." (P4, L41-45, The Tenacious)

This observation was consistent with research by Leithwood et al. (2020), which emphasized that school leaders in high-density urban settings face added challenges related to infrastructure, overcrowding, and community expectations. Such factors complicate administrative planning and require strong leadership skills to balance conflicting demands effectively.

Additionally, the Diplomat highlighted the demands of teacher supervision and professional development contribute to the overwhelming workload of school heads:

"I really go around and observe teachers, even without formal mandates, just to provide technical assistance. It's not to criticize but to help them improve their teaching and lesson execution." (P1, L152-156, The Diplomat)

This supported research by Robinson et al. (2008), which stated that instructional leadership, particularly classroom observations and teacher coaching, was a key determinant of student achievement. However, when school heads were overloaded with administrative tasks, school heads may struggle to dedicate sufficient time to this essential role.

The overwhelming workload experienced by school heads does not merely affect their time management but also capacity to lead effectively. Studies indicated that when school leaders are consumed by administrative tasks, they have limited opportunities to focus on instructional leadership, teacher development, and student engagement (Carroll, 2021). Moreover, prolonged exposure to high-stress environments can lead to burnout, reducing their ability to inspire and guide their staff (Leithwood et al., 2020).

To mitigate these challenges, school leaders must implement strategies such as delegation, time prioritization, and stakeholder collaboration. Research suggests that streamlining administrative processes and providing additional support staff can significantly reduce the burden on school heads, allowing them to focus on more impactful leadership practices (Grissom et al., 2021). Furthermore, professional development programs tailored for school heads should emphasize effective workload management and stress-reduction techniques to sustain their well-being and leadership effectiveness.

Ultimately, addressing workload concerns was essential for ensuring that school heads can fulfill their responsibilities without compromising their health, decision-making, and vision for the school. By balancing administrative duties with instructional leadership, school leaders can create an environment that fosters continuous improvement, innovation, and educational success.

Category 3. Lack of Resources

The availability of resources was a critical factor in the effective implementation of school leadership practices. School heads must navigate financial constraints, staffing shortages, and limited access to essential materials while ensuring that instructional quality and school operations remain unaffected. Research highlighted that insufficient resources can significantly hinder school effectiveness, limiting opportunities for professional development, technological integration, and student support services (Leithwood et al., 2020).

The Diplomat head highlighted the necessity of resourcefulness in securing financial and material support:

"If you are a school head, you become a great solicitor. You have to network, collaborate with stakeholders, and request support for school activities. Transparency is key to maintaining their trust." (P1, L91-93, The Diplomat)

This statement aligned with findings by Drysdale and Gurr (2020), who emphasized that successful school leaders actively seek partnerships with community stakeholders to supplement school resources. Effective networking ensured that schools can access additional funding, infrastructure improvements, and professional development opportunities.

The Passionate head discussed the limitations imposed by financial constraints:

"When there are financial constraints, I lack the ability to purchase essential materials, technology, or resources needed to implement best practices. Without adequate funding for professional development, teachers may struggle to stay updated on best instructional methods." (P3, L311-316 The Passionate)

This observation reflected the study by Marzano et al. (2005), which highlighted how inadequate funding leads to stagnation in instructional strategies and reduced student outcomes. Schools that lack resources for teacher training may find it challenging to implement innovative teaching approaches, ultimately affecting student learning experiences.

Moreover, the Tenacious pointed out the challenge of budgeting and prioritization in school operations further complicates leadership responsibilities:

"The school operating budget is allocated based on priorities. If there is an extra budget, I decide how to distribute it based on the school's immediate needs. However, many necessary expenses are not covered by MOOE, so I sometimes pay for them personally." (P4, L54-55, The Tenacious)

This statement resonated with research by Grissom et al. (2021), which indicated that financial constraints often force school leaders to make difficult decisions about resource allocation. Principals are expected to balance competing demands, ensuring that the most critical areas receive funding while seeking alternative means to support other essential school functions.

Additionally, the Eloquent emphasized the importance of creativity and external partnerships in overcoming resource shortages:

"When there is limited funding, school leaders must be resourceful. You have to tap other stakeholders to support your plans and ensure that operations continue effectively." (P6, L54-57, The Eloquent)

This perspective was supported by Harris (2020), who argued that school leaders who build strong community ties and leverage external funding sources are better positioned to mitigate the challenges posed by budget constraints. Schools that cultivate partnerships with local businesses, non-profit organizations, and government agencies can enhance educational opportunities for their students.

The lack of resources presented a significant challenge for school heads, requiring them to employ strategic planning, creativity, and stakeholder engagement to bridge funding gaps. Research underscores that when schools experience financial constraints, it can lead to increased teacher workload, reduced access to professional development, and limitations in instructional resources (Carroll, 2021). These barriers ultimately impacted student achievement and overall school performance.

However, effective school leaders do not allow resource limitations to hinder progress. Instead, they adopt proactive approaches such as advocating for increased funding, fostering partnerships with external stakeholders, and optimizing available resources to ensure continuity in educational initiatives (Fullan, 2014). By fostering transparency and community involvement, school leaders can build trust and sustain long-term support from various stakeholders.

Ultimately, addressing resource constraints required systemic efforts, including policy reforms, increased government investment in education, and enhanced financial management training for school leaders. By adopting innovative solutions and maintaining a strong commitment to their vision, school heads can navigate these challenges and create resilient learning environments that prioritize student success.

Leadership Practices that Influence Teachers, Students, and the Wider School Community

The third research question focused on the leadership practices that influence teachers, students, and the wider school community. Upon determining the leadership practices that influence teachers, students, and the wider school community, two themes were created: Integration of technology and Positive School Culture.

Theme 4. Integration of Technology

Within this theme, effective leaders encouraged innovative teaching practices, integrated new technologies, and supported experimental approaches to learning and problem-solving. This theme examined the training and support required by teachers to enhanced their digital skills and competencies.

Category 1. Promoting Innovation

Promoting innovation in education was essential for fostering a dynamic and future-oriented learning environment. School leaders played a crucial role in encouraging creative thinking, experimentation, and the integration of new technologies to enhance learning outcomes. Research suggested that innovative leadership empowered teachers and students to challenge conventional practices, leading to continuous improvement and adaptability in an evolving educational landscape (Fullan, 2014).

The Express head highlighted the role of collaboration in fostering innovation:

"You communicate. You discuss the challenges, the problems that you have on hand. Then you solicit support by gathering their ideas. At the end of the day, as a school head, you will draw the plan and create the game plan for this particular challenge." (P2, L46-49, The Express)

This statement aligned with findings by Leithwood et al. (2020), who emphasized that effective school leaders engage teachers and stakeholders in decision-making to drive educational innovation. By fostering open discussions and collective problem-solving, school heads can ensure that new initiatives are effectively implemented and supported.

The Express emphasized the impact of social media in facilitating school-community engagement and information dissemination:

"We make use of social media platforms to ensure that our stakeholders are aware of what we are doing. Community involvement helps determine the kind of support they can extend to the school." (P2, L63-67, The Express)

This observation was consistent with the study by Harris and Jones (2020), which highlighted that digital platforms enable school leaders to engage with parents, students, and the wider community, increasing transparency and participation. The use of social media fosters a sense of shared responsibility and support for educational initiatives.

Additionally, the Passionate head shared strategies for overcoming resource constraints through innovative solutions:

"We strengthen partnerships with local business owners and barangay officials to secure funding, technology, and resources. We also engage parents in fundraising efforts, reallocate existing funds for high-impact initiatives, and utilize cost-effective solutions such as open educational resources." (P3, L338-343, The Passionate)

This statement reflected research by Schleicher (2020), which suggested that school leaders who actively seek external partnerships

and leverage government programs can maximize available resources to support technological integration and instructional innovations. Effective budgeting and strategic resource allocation enable schools to implement modern teaching tools and methodologies despite financial limitations.

Promoting innovation was not simply about integrating technology but also about fostering a mindset of adaptability, resilience, and continuous learning. Research showed that schools with strong innovative cultures tend to have higher student engagement, improved academic performance, and increased teacher collaboration (Marzano et al., 2005). School heads who created an environment that values experimentation and creative problem-solving equip both educators and learners with the skills necessary to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Furthermore, the strategic use of social media and digital tools allowed school leaders to enhance communication, streamline operations, and engage the community in meaningful ways. As noted by Harris and Jones (2020), embracing digital innovations improves accessibility to educational resources, strengthens stakeholder collaboration, and fosters a culture of transparency and accountability.

Ultimately, promoting innovation required school leaders to embrace risk-taking, provide necessary support for teachers, and advocate for resourcefulness in overcoming challenges. By prioritizing creative solutions, engaging stakeholders, and making technology an integral part of the learning process, school heads can ensure that their institutions remain competitive, relevant, and capable of preparing students for future demands.

Theme 5. Positive School Cultures

In this theme, participants highlighted how fostering an environment of trust, collaboration, and shared values significantly enhances teacher motivation, student engagement, and overall school performance. Despite the challenges they face, school heads emphasized the importance of maintaining a supportive and inclusive atmosphere that promotes mutual respect, professional growth, and a strong sense of community.

Category 1. Positive School Culture

Creating a positive, respectful, and inclusive school culture were fundamental to fostering an environment where students, teachers, and staff feel valued and motivated. Research indicated that schools with strong, positive cultures experience higher student achievement, improved teacher retention, and greater stakeholder engagement (Gillard, 2020). School heads played a crucial role in modeling ethical leadership, promoting inclusivity, and maintaining transparency in governance, ensuring that trust and collaboration thrive within the school community.

The Diplomat head underscored the importance of leading by example:

"The most effective leadership is walking your talk. What you say must be seen in action. If you just tell them to do this or that, but they do not see it in you, it won't be effective. Teachers have different personalities, but if you focus on their role and allow them to grow, they will be inspired to work." (P1, L 32-34, The Diplomat)

This statement aligned with the findings of Fullan (2014), who asserted that transformational leaders inspire their followers through actions rather than words. When school heads demonstrate commitment, integrity, and professionalism, they establish credibility, motivating teachers and students to uphold the same values.

The Diplomat highlighted the importance of transparency and fairness in leadership:

"You must be fair in what you're doing. Establish clear goals, discuss them with teachers, and provide technical assistance. When they feel that you care for them, they are more likely to be engaged." (P1, L40-45, The Diplomat)

This observation resonated with the study of Bryk and Schneider (2003), which emphasized that trust and fairness in leadership lead to greater staff commitment and willingness to adapt to changes. Ensuring that teachers feel supported through clear communication and professional development fosters a sense of belonging and purpose, strengthening school culture.

Additionally, ethical leadership and transparency in decision-making reinforce a culture of accountability and mutual respect by the Diplomat head:

"It's important to be truthful and transparent, especially in financial matters. You have to be honest so that no one can say anything against you." (P1, L47-49, The Diplomat)

This perspective aligned with the research of Sergiovanni (2007), who posited that ethical leadership in schools enhances organizational trust and cohesion. When school leaders uphold integrity in governance, it creates an atmosphere where staff and stakeholders feel confident in the institution's direction and decision-making processes.

Furthermore, the Express emphasized that fostering open communication and collaboration strengthens relationships among all stakeholders:

"I ensure that everybody is aware of the target set, and together, we aim for the same goal. Openness in communication and constant collaboration with stakeholders is key." (P2, L22-26, The Express)

This was consistent with the findings of Harris and Jones (2020), which highlighted that school leaders who maintain open lines of communication and actively engage stakeholders build a culture of shared responsibility. When school members feel included in decision-making, they develop a stronger sense of ownership and dedication to the institution's success.

A positive school culture was not merely about fostering a pleasant environment; it was about cultivating a shared vision, mutual respect, and a commitment to excellence. Research underscored that when students, teachers, and staff feel supported, they demonstrated increased engagement, improved well-being, and stronger academic outcomes (Gillard, 2020). Moreover, ethical leadership, characterized by transparency and fairness, establishes the foundation for trust and collaboration, essential components of a thriving school community (Sergiovanni, 2007).

By prioritizing clear goal-setting, consistent communication, and active stakeholder involvement, school leaders created a culture where individuals feel empowered to contribute meaningfully. This shared commitment led to greater cohesion, reduced conflicts, and enhanced motivation among teachers and students alike (Fullan, 2014).

Ultimately, fostering a positive school culture was a long-term investment in the holistic development of the educational community. Through ethical leadership, inclusivity, and unwavering dedication to transparency, school heads can ensure that their institutions serve as nurturing environments where both students and educators can flourish.

Category 2. Community Engagement

Building strong partnerships with parents, local businesses, and community organizations was essential for enriching the educational experience and ensuring that schools have the resources and support necessary for holistic student development. Research suggested that schools with strong community ties experience higher student engagement, improved academic performance, and increased access to financial and material resources (Egitim, 2021). By fostering collaboration, school heads create a support network that benefits students, teachers, and the broader educational community.

The Diplomat head underscored the importance of securing financial resources and managing school budgets effectively:

"We prepare the School Operating Budget, procurement plans, and financial reports quarterly to ensure that resources are properly allocated to the needs of teachers and students. Maintenance and repairs, instructional materials, and operational expenses must be prioritized to keep the school running efficiently." (P1, L103-113, The Diplomat)

This statement aligned with the findings of Drysdale and Gurr (2020), who asserted that financial planning and resource management are critical leadership responsibilities. Proper budget allocation ensures that essential learning materials, school infrastructure, and professional development initiatives remain sustainable, contributing to a more effective educational environment.

Additionally, the Amiable highlighted the role of networking and collaboration with local government units:

"You have to establish a partnership with the barangay. Some barangay officials are very active in supporting schools, sharing resources, and assisting in projects. Collaboration is essential because no school leader can do everything alone." (P7, L81-83, The Amiable)

This perspective supported research by Epstein (2020), which emphasized that strong school-community partnerships enhance educational opportunities by leveraging external expertise and financial support. When schools work closely with government and community organizations, they gain access to valuable programs, facilities, and mentorship opportunities for students.

The Mighty head stressed the significance of understanding community culture and fostering active participation:

"First, you have to observe the culture of the school and the nature of the work. Then, you must relate to the community to enlist their cooperation. Ask for their contributions—how they can help improve the learning situation in the school." (P5, L46-49, The Mighty)

This aligned with the research of Goodall and Montgomery (2014), which argued that community engagement must be culturally responsive to be effective. When school leaders acknowledge and integrate community values and practices, they build stronger relationships and promote a shared commitment to educational success.

Community engagement was more than just securing financial assistance; it was about fostering a sense of shared responsibility for student success. Schools that actively involve local stakeholders created an environment where students feel supported both academically and socially, leading to higher levels of motivation and achievement (Egitim, 2021).

Furthermore, research indicated that collaborative efforts between schools and the community enhance career readiness by providing students with exposure to real-world experiences and industry professionals (Epstein, 2020). By integrating community-based learning initiatives, school leaders bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, preparing students for future challenges.

Fostering strong partnerships with parents, local businesses, and government entities was a crucial strategy for sustainable school improvement. By actively engaging the community, school leaders not only expand available resources but also strengthen the overall school culture, ensuring that all stakeholders remain invested in the institution's success.

Structural Description

The study examined the overarching framework through key dimensions of a phenomenon, which encompassed the following aspects:

The qualitative data provided by school leaders illuminates the multifaceted nature of their leadership experiences, which can be understood through several phenomenological dimensions: temporal aspects, spatial context, bodily experiences, material elements, causal relationships, and interpersonal dynamics. These dimensions, drawn from the lived experiences of school heads, offer a rich understanding of the challenges and strategies embedded within their daily practice.

Temporal Aspects. School leaders emphasized the dynamic interplay between immediate and long-term responsibilities. For instance, one participant remarked,

"I normally come to school on time and go home on time, and I expect my teachers to do the same." (P7, L20-21, The Amiable)

This reflection underscored the temporal discipline necessary for maintaining consistent leadership practices, echoing Fullan's (2014) argument that leadership involves both daily routines and long-term strategic planning. Another school head noted,

"I make sure that my vision for the school is well-communicated... and I involve them in the visioning process, ensuring transparency and accountability." (P3, L63-68, The Passionate)

This illustrated how temporal continuity in communication and planning contributes to sustained institutional improvement.

Spatial Context. The physical environment of schools significantly shaped leadership practices. One participant observed,

"The school is very small... if all the students enter at once, it feels like a market." (P4, L41-43, The Tenacious)

This spatial limitation compelled school leaders to creatively manage space and optimize resources, aligning with research by Leithwood et al. (2020) that highlighted how environmental constraints impact instructional planning and school organization.

Bodily Experiences. School leadership was an embodied practice characterized by physical exertion and emotional strain. A principal candidly stated,

"Being a school head means you are an instructional leader, a manager, and a guidance counselor all at once. The workload is overwhelming." (P5, L208-211, The Mighty)

This sentiment reflected the physical and psychological demands placed on leaders, a finding supported by Carroll (2021), who documented that high workloads lead to stress and burnout, thereby affecting overall leadership efficacy.

Material Elements. Material constraints such as funding, technological tools, and physical resources emerged as critical determinants of leadership practice. One school head noted,

"For World Teachers' Day, I requested donations and was able to raise P24,000, which was given directly to teachers." (P1, The L 95-97, Diplomat)

This quote highlighted the proactive role of school leaders in leveraging community resources, resonating with Epstein's (2020) framework on school-community partnerships. The emphasis on resourcefulness and strategic budgeting underscored the importance of material elements in sustaining school operations and instructional quality.

Causal Relationships. The analysis revealed that effective leadership decisions have both direct and indirect consequences on school performance. As one leader stated,

"When there is transparency, openness in communication, and constant collaboration with stakeholders, school goals are more easily achieved." (P5, L22-23, The Express)

This causal relationship demonstrated how well-implemented leadership practices can lead to improved teacher morale, student engagement, and overall school success, a relationship also noted by Robinson et al. (2008).

Interpersonal Dynamics. Interpersonal relationships were central to school leadership. One participant observed,

"You cannot expect that all people will be as good to you, but what is important is that they still respect you as a principal." (P1, L62-64, The Diplomat)

Another noted,

"No one is an island. We must collaborate and ensure stakeholders contribute to the school's development." (P5, L44-45, The Mighty)

These reflections highlighted the critical role of trust, empathy, and collaborative engagement in creating a positive school culture—a finding reinforced by Bryk and Schneider (2003), who emphasized that relational trust among educators and leaders underpins school effectiveness.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

Leadership practices perceived as most effective by successful school heads. The school heads practiced leadership practices that were perceived as most effective by successful school heads including visionary leadership, instructional leadership, effective communication, empowering others and building positive relationships. These strategies not only unify the school community around common goals, but they also promote collaboration, motivation, and a culture of continual development. School leaders foster academic performance and personal growth by clearly defining standards and providing necessary assistance to teachers and students.

Leadership practices that influence teachers, students, and the wider school community. There were challenges faced by school heads in adopting and maintaining these best practices such as resistance to change, high workload and time management and lack of resources. Resistance to change among stakeholders and the overwhelming burden of administrative tasks hinder the effective execution of leadership initiatives. These problems have an impact not just on institutional development but also on school leaders' personal and professional well-being, emphasizing the need for additional systemic support, distributed leadership models, and focused professional development to assist alleviate these barriers.

Leadership practices that influence teachers, students, and the wider school community. The leadership practiced by the school heads significantly provided beneficial impacts that influenced teachers, students, and the wider school community in areas of promoting innovation, positive school cultures, and community engagement. School leaders help to improve learning experiences, student preparedness, and school-community ties by promoting creativity, incorporating new technologies, and forming strong community partnerships. These practices not only enhance academic outcomes but also reinforce the school's role as a collaborative and transformative space within society.

Based on the results and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were offered:

Students may experience improved academic performance, behavior, and overall school engagement as a result of the leadership practices implemented by their school heads. Effective leadership fosters a supportive learning environment, enhances student motivation, and promotes holistic development.

Parents may also benefit from this study; a well-led school encourages parental involvement, leading to better support systems for students and an improved educational experience.

Teachers may gain a heightened awareness of the influence of leadership on their work environment. Strong leadership practices can contribute to increased morale, better professional support, and improved collaboration, ultimately enhancing teaching effectiveness and job satisfaction.

School Administrators may acquire valuable insights into the challenges, successes, and best practices of school leadership within District 6, Quezon City. By understanding effective leadership strategies, school administrators can refine their management approaches, improve decision-making, and foster a more conducive environment for both teachers and students.

Educational Policymakers may use the study's findings to inform the development of policies and programs that support school heads in their leadership roles. Insights gained from this research may contribute to leadership development initiatives, training programs, and institutional reforms aimed at improving educational leadership in urban schools.

Community Stakeholders may also benefit from this study, as effective school leadership plays a crucial role in fostering stronger school-community partnerships. Community stakeholders, including local government units (LGUs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civic groups, are encouraged to collaborate more closely with schools by offering support programs, resources, and expertise that address specific school needs.

Future Researchers may find this study a valuable foundation for further exploration of school leadership dynamics. It can serve as a reference for studies on leadership effectiveness, educational management, and the broader landscape of transformational leadership in Philippine schools.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Charisma T. Banag

New Era High School

Department of Education – Philippines

Niclie L. Tiratira

New Era University – Philippines

Ligaya Z. Del Rosario

New Era University – Philippines

Luningning B. De Castro

New Era University – Philippines

Vivian I. Buhain

New Era University – Philippines

Dorislyn A. Tabunda

New Era University – Philippines