

Unveiling the Experiences of School Heads and Teachers on Instructional Leadership Empowerment

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Abstract

This research explored the experiences of school heads engaged in instructional leadership and teachers' perspectives on these practices in Gubat South District, Sorsogon Province. It aimed to identify strategies used by school heads, best practices for empowering leadership, methods to foster trust and collaboration, teachers' views on leadership's impact on their competence, and a framework to enhance instructional leadership.

The findings revealed that school heads employed various strategies to promote instructional leadership, such as providing resources, professional development, and fostering a positive school culture. They also implemented best practices like demonstrating instructional techniques, encouraging teacher ownership, and recognizing achievements. Creating a culture of trust and collaboration is achieved through fairness, transparency, and active listening. Teachers value school heads who are flexible, supportive, and respectful, which enhances their competence and effectiveness.

The study proposed an instructional leadership framework focusing on continuous professional development, reflective practice, and a supportive environment. This framework emphasizes active listening, responsiveness to feedback, and providing resources aligned with educational trends.

The conclusions highlighted that school heads in Gubat South District create a supportive environment that promotes professional development, collaboration, and innovation. They effectively foster empowering leadership and establish trust through fairness and consistency. Teachers appreciate flexible and supportive leadership, which improves their competence.

The study recommended continuous professional development programs, comprehensive leadership training, and school-based activities to foster trust and collaboration. A holistic instructional leadership framework is proposed for sustained improvement and excellence in education.

Keywords: Instructional Leadership, Empowering Leadership, Teachers' Competence and Effectiveness, Culture of Trust and Collaboration, Instructional Leadership Framework, Sustained Improvement

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Introduction

In the dynamic field of education, the role of school leaders is crucial in shaping the quality of teaching and learning experiences within their schools. It has long been recognized that one of the most important

factors in influencing educational outcomes and improving the entire school climate is the quality of instructional leadership, which is defined as the capacity to direct and support teachers in developing effective classroom practices. Instructional leadership encompasses a set of practices and beliefs that emphasize fostering effective teaching and learning environments. To create a supportive and collaborative environment, instructional leaders must work closely with the teachers to set goals, offer professional development opportunities, give helpful technical assistance, and promote a climate of continuous improvement. School heads who engage in instructional leadership prioritize collaboration with teachers, pedagogical innovations, and the alignment of curricular goals with student outcomes. This paradigm shift in school leadership reflects an understanding that a strong educational foundation is built upon the quality of instruction in the classroom.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted in 1989, articulates the rights of children to education in Article 28. This article includes provisions that emphasize the importance of ensuring quality education and effective supervision to maximize children's development and learning potential. Likewise, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), part of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Target 4. c specifically addresses the need to increase the supply of qualified teachers, which can be closely related to instructional supervision as a means to enhance teaching quality. Additionally, the Education for All (EFA) Declaration 2000 and the Incheon Declaration 2015 emphasized the importance of quality education and called for strategies to improve teacher quality and effectiveness. Effective instructional supervision can contribute significantly to achieving the goals outlined in these declarations.

International organizations, such as the Organization for Economic and Cooperation Development (OECD) and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), have noted the change of focus in educational leadership. Noteworthy in that regard is the OECD's report *Leadership Learning*, in which it is argued that life-long learning schemes must be substantively redefined in education systems and be based on a pupil-and-learning centered approach and on learning achievement both within and outside schools., in which principals and teachers are actively involved (OECD, 2013). Moreover, it has been pointed out in a UNESCO report that a major feature in the improvement of learning is the emphasis on school leaders' support for positive pressure on pupils (UNESCO-IIEP-IWGE, 2012).

Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report in 2015, reflected that the leadership exercised by principals is fundamental and has a positive impact on the learning outcomes of children and adolescents. When leadership is poor or non-existent, however, the opposite effect can occur, hindering pupils' learning and affecting the quality of schools. In many countries, it seems that educational policy is a hindrance to effective school leadership. There are well-known shortcomings in the selection, promotion, and professional development of managerial teams. Furthermore, there is an excess of bureaucratic and administrative duties to the detriment of other more important educational activities. In the future, stronger empirical evidence should be gathered to prove the effect that school leadership has on pupils' learning and the professional development of teachers. This has been a primary concern in educational research in the English-speaking world, and it must be put on the education agenda in many other countries. It is necessary to better understand how school principals can positively influence pupil outcomes and to identify which leadership practices foster adequate teacher performance in schools. Studies in this field will not only bridge large gaps in educational research but more importantly, they will also help political decision-makers develop programs to support principals in their educational leadership. School leadership

is built on and refers to the ability to guide, inspire, and motivate pupils and teachers. This ability is not innate but can be promoted and developed through training, collaboration, and exchange between peers. Program for International Students Assessment (PISA) results (OECD 2012) showed that on average across OECD countries, 61% of 15-year-olds are in schools where the practices of mathematics teachers were monitored over the preceding year through school leader or senior staff observations. Student achievement on PISA tended to be higher when teachers were held accountable through the involvement of school leaders and external inspectors in monitoring lessons.

However, in Singapore, little has been known about the principal's role in evaluating and supervising instruction. Nguyen and Ng (2014) revealed that classroom observations are conducted by middle managers (subject heads, level heads), instead of principals. Two possible reasons explain why mainly middle managers, rather than top management fulfill the responsibility of observing and evaluating teachers' lessons. First, a distribution of accountability appears to suit the Singapore school organization. This has much to do with the large size of Singapore schools. A typical primary school, for example, has around 80 teachers and 1000 students. Top school leaders, therefore, require considerable assistance from the middle management in virtually all areas of the school's operation and management, including departmental curriculum development, teacher supervision, giving feedback to teachers, and appraisal assessments. Second, research has indicated that almost all principals are very appreciative of their middle managers' subject knowledge (Ng et. al, 2014). In Singapore, middle-level managers are expected to be experts in their subject area, and as they are given considerable opportunities to acquire skills and knowledge of leadership, they are equally expected to be competent instructional leaders.

In educational policy and research, there is consensus that school principals are decisively responsible for the quality of a school. An increasing number of findings support the impact of school leadership on student achievement (Leithwood, et. al, Liebowitz and Porter, 2019). Several studies have demonstrated the positive effects of instructional leadership on teaching, learning, and student achievements (Urlick, et. al. 2021). Most of the studies conducted to date have supported the belief that principals exercise a measurable, through a small, indirect effect on students' achievements, although quantifying the effect of leadership on student achievements is difficult from the empirical perspective (Grissom, et.al., 2021).

In the Philippines, Republic Act 9155, or the Governance of Basic Education Act 2021 empowers the school head as an instructional leader and administrative manager. It states that consistent with the national policies, plans, and standards, the school heads shall have authority, accountability, and responsibility for setting the vision, mission, and goals of the school, creating an environment within the school that is conducive to teaching and learning, implementing the school curriculum and being accountable for higher learning outcomes and introducing new and innovative modes of instruction to achieve higher learning outcomes. Hence, school heads should possess the necessary managerial and instructional leadership skills and competencies to perform these herculean tasks expected of them.

With the commitment of the Department of Education (DepEd) to support the school heads so they can better perform their mandates and roles in school, including the improvement of teacher quality and learner achievement, issued DepEd Memorandum No. 24, s. 2020, otherwise known as National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). The PPSSH serves as a public statement of professional standards of accountability of the school head. It defines the professional standards that constitute a quality school head. It sets out what school heads are expected to know, be able to do, and value as they progress in their profession. It depicts the synergy between maximizing school effectiveness and ensuring people's effectiveness through a broad sphere of

instructional and administrative practices in five domains, which are: (1) Leading Strategically; (2) Managing School Operations and Resources; (3) Focusing on Teaching and Learning; (4) Developing Self and Others; (5) Building Connections. It provides a common language for high-impact leadership expected of school heads to guide individual professional reflection, as well as professional discussions among educational leaders and other stakeholders, as they aspire for and pursue professional development.

Parallel to this, the Department of Education through the National Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) issued DepEd Memorandum No. 082, s. 2020 which sets the guidelines on the registration of teachers and school leaders for NEAP-Recognized Professional Development Programs and Courses, to ensure that public school teachers and school leaders are provided with appropriate learning and development intervention.

Furthermore, as provided in Republic Act 10533 or Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, the DepEd in collaboration with education partners in government, academe, industry, and non-government organizations shall conduct school leadership training among principals and other instructional leaders to enhance their skills on their role as academic, administrative and community leaders.

In the school setting, school heads are no longer confined to administrative tasks. Modern school leadership requires a multifaceted approach that prioritizes instructional leadership. As educational institutions strive to provide high-quality learning experiences, the pivotal role of school heads in shaping and guiding instruction becomes increasingly apparent.

At present, they are expected to use 70% of their time for instructional supervision and 40% for administrative functions. The researcher, being a school head, and practicing instructional supervision in school under her leadership, was motivated to conduct this research to explore the intricate interplay between instructional leadership and the dynamic role of a school head. By unveiling their perspective, experiences, challenges, and successes, this research aims to contribute valuable insights into the existing instructional leadership practices in the field and their implications.

Statement of the Problem

This research aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of school heads who are actively engaged in instructional leadership as well as the perspective of teachers on the instructional leadership practiced by their school heads within their respective schools.

Specifically, answered the following questions:

1. What are the different strategies that the school heads utilized in promoting instructional leadership?
2. What are the best practices of the school heads in promoting empowering instructional leadership?
3. How do school heads create a culture of trust and collaboration to facilitate instructional leadership?
4. What are the perspectives of teachers regarding instructional leadership practiced by the school heads in improving teachers' competence?
5. What instructional leadership framework for the school head could be designed to improve the practice of instructional leadership?

Assumptions

Based on the stated problems, the researcher formulated the following assumptions:

1. The school heads utilize various strategies in promoting instructional leadership.
2. There are several best practices of the school heads in promoting empowering instructional leadership.

3. The school heads employ varied ways to create a culture of trust and collaboration to facilitate instructional leadership.
4. Teachers have diverse perspectives regarding instructional leadership practices by their school heads in improving teachers' competence.
5. Different instructional leadership frameworks could be designed to improve the practice of instructional leadership.

Scope and Delimitation

This research focused on exploring the actual experiences of the school heads in performing their roles and responsibilities as instructional leaders within their respective schools. It also dealt with the perspective of teachers regarding the instructional leadership practiced by their school heads within their schools in improving their teachers' competence. Additionally, it is determined to uncover the various strategies and practices employed by the school heads in promoting and sustaining empowering instructional leadership.

The participants in this study are the twenty full-fledged school heads and 40 teachers of Gubat South District (two per school) in the Schools Division of Sorsogon. Teachers-In-Charge of school are excluded in this research because they still have limited instructional leadership responsibilities due to a class that they still have to attend to.

This research employed a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to collect rich and detailed narratives from school heads and teachers. By engaging directly with these school leaders and teachers, the study aims to capture the essence of their experiences and perspectives on instructional leadership. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights that emerge from the collected data.

The study's findings may be context-specific and might not be directly generalized to all educational settings. Additionally, the research's reliance on self-reported data from school heads could introduce bias or social desirability effects in responses.

Significance of Study

This in-depth investigation of the real experiences of the school heads and teachers as they embrace their roles and responsibilities as instructional leaders within their schools is deemed significant because this will help uncover the factors that contribute to or hinder the successful implementation of instructional leadership strategies. It is hoped that this study may provide beneficial results in the following:

Education Policy Makers/DepEd Officials. The results of this research can provide valuable insights into the roles, challenges, and experiences of school heads and teachers in instructional leadership. These insights can be used to inform educational policies and reforms to improve the quality of education. By unveiling the experiences of school heads and teachers, the study can also shed light on issues related to accountability and performance evaluation. This can lead to discussions on how school heads and teachers are evaluated and held accountable for their instructional leadership roles.

Education Program Supervisors & Specialists. The outcome of this study can help in designing leadership development programs that cater to the specific needs of school heads and teachers. It can also shed light on the skills, knowledge, and support systems required for effective instructional leadership, which can be integrated into leadership training programs.

Researchers. This study can contribute to the existing body of knowledge on educational leadership and administration. The result can serve as a reference point for future research in this area and help build a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by school heads and teachers.

School Heads. The findings of the study can promote collaboration and communication among school leaders. When school heads share their experiences and strategies for empowering instructional leadership, it can lead to a community of practice where leaders learn from each other and work collectively to improve their practices, strategies, and approaches to promoting and sustaining empowering instructional leaders.

Teachers. They will benefit from this study because school heads play a crucial role in facilitating teacher professional development. Understanding their perspective and narratives can help in designing more effective professional development programs that help improve their teaching competencies.

Students. Effective instructional leadership can positively impact school performance, students' outcomes, and the overall well-being of students. The findings of this study can help both school heads and teachers identify the best practices and strategies for enhancing instructional leadership and can indirectly contribute to creating a conducive learning environment that fosters student engagement, motivation, and success ultimately leading to better educational outcomes.

Definition of Terms

This part discusses the different terminologies used by the researcher in the study. The first definition provides the contextual meaning of the term, and the latter explains how the word is used operationally.

Instructional Leadership. According to Le Fevre (2021), Instructional leadership is leadership that supports the development of teaching and learning. In the context of this study, it refers to the practices of the school heads that foster teacher growth and development, drive students' success, and promote quality school performance.

School Head. Technically, it refers to the person responsible for administrative and instructional supervision of the school. In this research, school heads particularly refer to a full-fledged principal or head teacher performing administrative and instructional functions in school.

Experience. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines experience as the fact or state of having been affected or gained knowledge through direct observation of participation (Webster, 2023). In this study, it refers to something that the school head and teachers encountered, undergone, and participated in as part of instructional leadership activities.

Unveiling. In the Britannica Dictionary, unveiling means to show or reveal something to others for the first time. In the confine of this inquiry, it refers to investigating the experiences, challenges, and successes of the school head in performing their role as instructional leader.

Empowerment Wikipedia defines it as the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities. It is the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights. In this research, it refers to the process of enabling teachers and school heads to take ownership of instructional decisions, practices and policies to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

The Setting of the Study

Gubat was originally a big barrio of Bulusan, inhabited by a few Tagalogs, Visayans, and Albayanons who

traveled on foot to hunt wild animals. These people built their home close to the shore and called their location Buri, which today is a barrio of Buenavista in 1764, Gubat finally became a town with Don Pedro Manook, the first Teniente del Barrio, also becoming the first gobernadorcillo. The town is named after Don Pedro Manook.

The word “gubat” means forest in Tagalog. However, the name applied to the town is derived from the verb “guinobat”, a term used by the natives which mean “raided”. In the early days when Christians and Muslims were constantly at odds, Muslim pirates would come in from the southern seas to raid the town. Because of the frequent raids, the town was referred to as “guinobat” which eventually became “Gubat”. Gubat, officially the municipality of Gubat (Gubatnon: Bungto san Gubat; Tagalog: Bayan ng Gubat), is a 2nd class municipality in the province of Sorsogon, Philippines. It is a coastal municipality in the province of Sorsogon. The municipality has a land area of 134.51 square kilometers or 51.93 square miles which constitutes 6.35% of Sorsogon's total area. Its population as determined by the 2020 Census was 60,294. It is politically subdivided into 42 barangays. Public schools in these forty-two barangays, under the Schools Division of Sorsogon, were divided into two districts, Gubat North District and Gubat South District.

Gubat South District is composed of twenty (20) elementary schools namely: Ariman Elementary School, Bulacao Elem. Schools, Bentuco Elementary School, Bongsaran Elementary School, Benguet Elementary School, Buenavista Elementary School, Cabigaan Elementary School, Casili Elementary School, Gubat North central School, Manapao Elementary School, Naagtan Elementary School, Nazareno Elementary School, Rizal Elementary School, Sangat Elementary School, Sta. Ana Elementary School, Tabi Elementary School, Tigkiw Elementary School, Togawe Elementary School, Union Elementary School, and Villareal Elementary School; and three (3) secondary schools namely Bentuco National High School, Bulacao National High School and Rizal National High School. The 13 elementary schools and 2 secondary schools are the setting of this study.

Legend:

 Participant School/Barangay

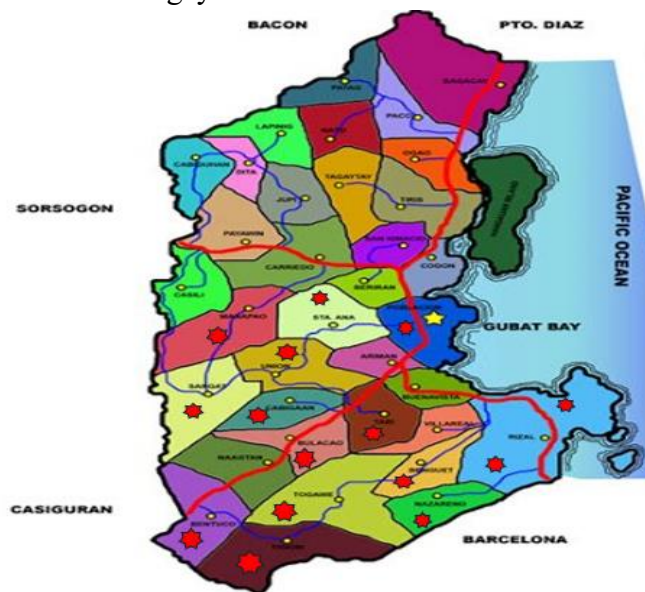


Figure 1. Map of the Municipality of Gubat

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

This chapter provides relevant foreign and local literature and salient findings of studies that have some relation with the present work. It provides the researcher with broader concepts and useful insights which enable her to improve her investigation and to arrive at the proper perspective of this study.

Strategies Utilized by the School Heads in Promoting Instructional Leadership

One of the core competencies of an educational leader is to provide instructional leadership that ensures high-quality teaching and learning outcomes for all students. This means that school heads have to establish and monitor clear and rigorous standards and expectations for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. They also have to support and develop the teachers and staff through feedback, coaching, mentoring, and professional learning opportunities. Additionally, school leaders have to use data and evidence to inform their decisions and actions, as well as to evaluate and improve their practice. An instructional leader can foster a culture of excellence, equity, and continuous improvement in their school or organization by employing varied instructional leadership strategies and approaches.

Moreover, with school improvement as a primary responsibility of principals, identifying and understanding instructional leadership practices that lead to school improvement is paramount. Furthermore, a school leader needs to not only be aware of their impact through instructional leadership practices but also be engaged in self-reflection to better understand their instructional leadership practices. School principals are the leaders who impact the direction of schools through their thinking, practices, and relationships reiterating the idea that leaders thinking in the long term, looking outside as well as inside, to influence constituents is vital (Bolman & Deal, 2013)

Le Fevre (2019) mentioned key strategies and approaches of instructional leadership based on research namely: (1) Establishing and supporting the achievement of goals. Instructional leaders prioritize a few key goals and create focus, resources, and support so that these can be achieved. In addition to creating coherence across goals, instructional leaders buffer their staff from distractions. They also avoid tasks themselves that distract from the main purpose of their work and the achievement of these goals. Instructional leaders have an important role in holding high expectations of students and staff, and in listening to them and responding to their needs to enable the achievement of valued goals; (2) Monitoring and responding to students' progress. Monitoring student progress is central to effective instructional leadership. School heads 'have to create data systems and support teachers in interpreting and using data to make decisions that support the learning and development of students. By creating systems, using data to track student achievement, and supporting teachers to interpret and use the data, instructional leaders support teachers to make informed decisions about how to meet the needs of their students; (3) Supporting teacher and leader learning. Promoting professional learning and development is a central strategy of instructional leadership. Effective instructional leaders participate in the professional learning of their teachers and also in professional learning to support their leadership; (4) Evaluating curriculum and pedagogy. The role of the principal and other key leaders is central to improving teaching through practices such as observing in classrooms and engaging in conversations and feedback with teachers. This assumes that the leader will have in-depth knowledge about curricular content and pedagogy; (5) Ensuring a supportive learning environment. Avoid distracting from the main purpose of their work and the achievement of these goals. Strong instructional leadership creates a supportive learning environment for

students including creating systems so that students feel safe, providing a caring environment, and ensuring high expectations for social behavior.

Likewise, Ahmed (2016) highlighted instructional leadership practices to include, framing school goals, communicating school goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring students' progress, protecting instructional time, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, promoting professional development and providing incentives for students. Instructional leadership practices of principals are directly linked to creating the conditions for optimal teaching and learning. In the context of his study, he referred to instructional leadership practices as administrative activities and roles that are geared towards providing support for teachers and students to ensure quality instructional delivery for school effectiveness.

Common strategies of principals within schools classified as effective and successful include noting examination of assessment results, work driven by clear morals and ethical values, respect and trust of and among staff and parents, varied learning opportunities, and use of data as related strategies of instructional leadership practices (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016).

Furthermore, Ismail et. al (2018) recommended in their study that school leaders should practice an instructional leadership style that is believed to be strong and significant and have a positive relationship with teachers' functional competency. They hoped that their study finding could be a guideline to the stakeholders involved with education leadership in making strategies and quality improvements in education, specifically on leadership aspects in school. School leaders should be exposed to the concept, theory, and instructional leadership practice in completing their tasks and responsibilities because this will help increase teachers' functional competency, and success in classroom instructions can be materialized. The findings of the study by Chiedozie and Victor (2017) also recommended that school principals should regularly monitor teachers' instructional delivery and their level of compliance with school schedules to enhance teachers' commitment to teaching and that the government should organize induction courses for those promoted to the rank of principals, to acquaint them with relevant knowledge in the management of instructional time.

Finally, Jeffri and Hamid (2021) study highlighted the 21st century instructional leadership that leads to any action taken by school leaders using more sophisticated thinking to drive staff development and leverage each data when making results through the teaching leadership style they practice enhancing teaching and learning activities in schools.

Best Practices in Promoting and Sustaining Instructional Leadership

The practices of instructional leadership are the tasks of effective leaders- what effective school leaders do to lead the work.

The heart of the role of the principal is student safety and teaching and learning. In today's era of accountability, principals are held accountable for the academic performance of their respective schools. Principals must ensure processes, procedures, and protocols are in place to ensure efficient management of the school to ensure adequate time is devoted to instructional leadership by the principal and school administration. Prioritizing instructional leadership by the principal is critical to the school's success and increasing student achievements (McLaurin, 2023).

Aziz (2017) cited that the practice of instructional leadership by principals is much needed to influence teachers' behavior in improving the quality of teaching and learning as well as implementing effective academic management so the teachers can teach effectively. However, it is not easy to urge the teachers

to move away from their status quo. Thus, the instructional leader should be good at creating a school environment conducive to learning as well as providing a significant impact in guaranteeing students' excellence. Previous findings found that principals practicing instructional leadership can create a safe and conducive learning environment through the collaboration between teachers, students, and the community.

An effective principal working in tandem with the school community—via an instructional leadership team, data team, or teacher team—can grow and sustain student achievement year after year. Our students need school leaders who can intensively and intentionally focus on all the aspects of learning and teaching, from staffing and professional development to collaborative lesson planning and assessment schedules to coaching teachers and monitoring instruction regularly to ensure students are engaged in deep thinking and high-quality learning opportunities. This kind of educational leadership is robust and impactful.

Instructional leaders can significantly impact the overall success of the school by prioritizing collaboration, professional development, and student achievement. This fosters a sense of collective knowledge within the student community, which is then incorporated into the classroom setting. It creates an educational experience akin to a magical apprenticeship, where students are exposed to a wealth of information and receive positive feedback, rather than being confined to a passive and ineffective learning environment. The instructional leader motivates teachers to create a compelling and irresistible learning experience by establishing a specific pace, style, and approach (Knight, 2021; Werder & Otis, 2023).

Hattie (2023), stressed that an instructional leader creates a climate that puts learning first for students and adults, has contagious enthusiasm and excitement about learning., creates a climate free of distracters, has clear priorities for instruction, and high expectations for students and teachers.

Instructional leadership practices when compared to successful leadership involve setting a direction, developing people, and designing the organization, which provides significant contributions to student learning. Instructional leadership practices focused staff on teaching and learning, inspired teacher belief in the achievement of all students, built teacher capacity and commitment to change, provided practical assistance in developing faculty knowledge and instructional skills, and created school conditions for teacher potential to meet the needs of all students (McBrayer, et. al 2020).

Instructional leaders typically incorporate a variety of important values, skills, approaches, and strategies into their leadership practice to have a significant impact (Cordova et al., 2024). The primary focus is on prioritising teaching and learning to guide decision-making and shape the overall school environment. Their actions aim to facilitate transformation in the intricate domain of mastery. The focus is on making changes in learning that result in the highest levels of academic achievement for all students. The actions taken are intended to have a significant effect on helping all students reach that level of performance (Bellibaş et al., n2021; Kilag & Sasan, 2023; Kwan, 2020; Hallinger et al., 2020; Ma & Marion, 2021). Instructional leadership involves the management of educational institutions with the purpose of modifying the elements that contribute to the desired form of learning. This modification aims to make the learning process more beneficial, intellectually demanding, engaging, and supportive for those who are enthusiastic about witnessing the intellectual development of young individuals.

School leaders should prioritize having a clear and compelling vision. Assessing the curriculum is an integral aspect of formulating and designing the curriculum (Ribble & Park, 2022). The educational leader offers guidance and assistance in the organization's process of reviewing and developing the curriculum. Utilizing student learning data effectively is a crucial aspect of designing opportunities for students to showcase their learning through different means. Instructional leaders employ a shared vision to establish

objectives for students' learning and development that prioritize the desired outcomes of the school (Day et al., 2020).

The study of Yamamoto et. al., (2015) on the current status of leadership development at the local level in Japan, found that informal communication between school leaders and teachers at the school level serves as an excellent opportunity for leadership development as well. In schools in Akita, informal communications are taking place daily, including in classrooms, teachers' rooms, and school corridors. Such educational cultures and environments allow communications across age, gender, subject, and grade. Information accumulated through such communication assists school leaders to better understand the situation in practice and eventually make good decisions for effective school management. Sharing issues and thoughts openly for creating consolidated educational communities is a core principle of Akita's education. It is considered that such an environment has become a premise for producing competent school leaders. This was a well-understood principle by school leaders interviewed., and they appreciate and proactively exercise informal communications with their teachers to enhance their skills as leaders.

Meanwhile, Dias-Lacy and Guirguis (2017) mentioned that administrative support as an instructional leadership practice is necessary. This administrative support is provided through relationship building, shared leadership, provision of instructional resources, promoting a positive learning environment, and promoting transparency in the school. They concluded that administrative support was a crucial aspect of novice teacher retention. In addition to providing support, school principals should provide timely but consistent feedback delivery regarding instructional practices in the classroom.

The results of the study by Sanchez and Watson (2021) on effective instructional leadership practices in high-performing schools unveiled that all high-performing principals visited classrooms to collect instructional data and were intentional about sharing feedback with teachers. Leaders maintained high visibility in classrooms and initiated discussions on instructional issues. Two principals mentioned that when visiting classrooms, they provided feedback to teachers based on school goals. School principal A stated, "I do walkthroughs, gather the data, look at the data, and then I talk to teachers about the data."

Creating a Culture of Trust and Collaboration to Facilitate Instructional Leadership

Building a culture of trust must constantly be regarded as an imperative for school leaders. To build a culture of trust, school leaders must lead with integrity. Noting the intricate link that exists between integrity and trust, leadership expert John C. Maxwell explains that "You don't build trust by talking about it. You build it by achieving results, always with integrity and in a manner that shows real personal regard for the people with whom you work. When a leader's character is strong, people trust him [or her], and they trust in his [or her] ability to release their potential. That not only gives followers hope for the future, but it also promotes a strong belief in themselves and their organization. Educational leaders who personify integrity are intentional in ensuring consistent congruence between their words and actions. They model sound moral and ethical principles regardless of the situation and do not have divided loyalties. For school leaders to have the authority to lead, they need more than a title on their office door. Only when they habitually demonstrate integrity—honesty, trustworthiness, and reliability—are school leaders perceived by those they lead as authentic, credible, and trustworthy (Palmer, 2021).

School leaders establish the culture and organization necessary for schools to provide quality teaching and therefore have an indirect, but important, effect on students' learning. Studies have shown that principals who provide more instructional leadership increase teacher collaboration and sense of purpose (OECD, 2016). Providing effective guidance, training, and working conditions to teachers, school leaders, and

managers creates the best possible environment for learning (Jensen, Downing, and Clark, 2017; UNESCO, 2019a).

The result of the study by Babelan et. al (2019), showed the role of school culture in increasing teachers' psychological empowerment. School culture which is based on open communication and flexibility allows teachers to participate in decision-making express their opinions and support feedback. Finally, increased leadership empowerment behavior will result in higher levels of psychological empowerment, which, in turn, will increase work engagement. When leaders thus increase employees' degree of authority, decision-making, and accountability, share information, and support, and develop and coach employees for innovative performance, employees will experience feelings of control. When individuals feel that their inputs are valued and that they make a meaningful contribution to the business strategy (impact), they will feel more engaged.

Palmer (2021) in his study, concluded that trust is an essential factor in the success or failure of all schools. Building a culture of trust must constantly be regarded as an imperative for school leaders. Trust has to be earned. Institutional cultures of trust are established when educational leaders intentionally lead with integrity, create atmospheres for difficult conversations, celebrate and empower their teams through shared governance, practice consistent and transparent communication, and lead with compassion.

Significantly, in the study of Salazar (2016) a grounded theory that arose regarding the overarching role of trust in effective instructional leadership, was that trust is a catalytic medium, i.e. an activator and enabler, through which: relationships are created respectfully, planning is conducted purposefully, interventions are developed intentionally, and by which student cooperation and engagement are increased significantly, thereby giving evidence of effective instructional leadership.

Schools should be focused on creating a learning community for all involved. All individuals should have a sense of caring and respect for each other. Staff and students need to be positive about their ability to set and achieve ambitious goals. Positive attitudes go a long way in developing and maintaining a positive culture.

Gading (2023) held in her study that trust forms the bedrock of effective collaboration and engagement within an educational institution. When school heads prioritize establishing and nurturing trust among the teaching staff, it fosters an environment where educators feel supported, valued, and more willing to actively participate in instructional initiatives. This approach can contribute to a cohesive and cooperative educational community, enhancing the overall effectiveness of instructional leadership practices. By recognizing the central role of trust-building, school heads can create a positive and collaborative atmosphere that is conducive to addressing various challenges and promoting continuous improvement in instructional leadership. Additionally, she underscored in her study that effective instructional leadership requires school heads to collaborate closely with teachers, fostering a culture of teamwork and shared responsibility for student achievement. By promoting professional development opportunities and facilitating collaboration among educators, school heads can empower their staff to excel in their roles and drive positive educational outcomes.

In essence, as instructional leaders, principals can create a positive and collaborative school culture. By helping teachers collaborate, instilling collective leadership, and communicating a shared vision, principals can contribute to developing a positive and collaborative school culture. Principals may consider providing teachers with frequent common planning and team time, and an atmosphere of lifelong learning and trusting relationships to establish a positive and collaborative school culture. Effective principals know they cannot go it alone. They are not the lonely-at-the-top, hero-principal who has become

a fixture of popular culture. Instead, they make good use of all the skills and knowledge of the faculty and among others, encouraging the many capable adults who make up a school community to step into leadership roles and responsibilities.

The culture of working together, also known as collaborative culture, is considered a critical factor in the success of any educational institution. Miller (2018) pointed out that any improvement in an institution will not be possible if the present culture of the school and its members is not collaborative.

Deal and Peterson (2016) also stressed that with deeply rooted support for a quality culture, change could be achieved. This proves that the dream for school improvement, professional development, and student achievement are all affected by culture. Hence, there is a need for all stakeholders to work as a team to be able to achieve the school's dreams. Working together leads to the creation and strengthening of a collaborative school culture.

Timperly, et.al (2020), added that encouraging teachers to collaborate can create collective responsibility in the school which means teachers and leaders work together and have a shared sense of responsibility for students beyond those in their class. Ensuring a supportive learning environment for students and staff can enable a learning culture where ongoing learning is central for everyone in the school. Moreover, Southworth (2012) elaborated on this point stating that sharing of leadership within professional learning communities enabled teachers and instructional leaders to cultivate innovative teaching strategies.

Furthermore, Vangrieken et. al (2017) pointed to the learning opportunities that are associated with teacher collaboration, located at the level of students (e.g. improved student understanding), teachers (e.g. improved teacher instruction), and the school organization (e.g. adaption and innovation of curriculum). When collaborating, teachers can inspire each other by sharing practices, helping each other with feedback, and collectively developing innovative teaching materials. Vescio (2016) in his survey study, found robust evidence that teachers felt more involved in decisions at school when they engaged in team teaching and learning. He concluded that granting teachers autonomy in decision-making concerning their learning process is key to improving student learning.

Likewise, Goddard, et al. (2015), believed that creating a supportive and collaborative learning environment for teachers and leaders is important as evidence shows that teacher collaboration can have a positive effect on student achievement.

Bajar et. al. (2021) cited in their study that the success of teacher collaboration also depends on access to the administrative support needed to hone their instructional skills (DeMatthews, 2014; Pont et al., 2008). As such, school leaders are imbued with essential responsibility in fostering a culture of collaboration. Administrators are compelled to provide collaborative professional development programs that continue throughout the school year and maintain such practices to be gradually enculturated at their respective school sites (Dutta & Sahney, 2016). One way to ensure that teachers actively participate in these kinds of collaborative professional development programs is for the administration to ask a well-respected colleague considered an expert in the subject to lead the charge. Sutton & Shouse (2016) argue that schools should utilize staff who are experts in different areas, in such collaborative ways, to better run professional development and training. In this sense, teachers are more likely to apply what they learn from their colleagues, rather than a paid outsider, because it feels more meaningful.

Notably, Valer (2023) discussed in the results of her study that a collaborative school culture brings out a rewarding and fruitful environment. In collaborative cultures, employees are empowered. Teachers feel that their purpose is not just to teach, but also, they are valued as planners and decision-makers as affirmed by Deal & Peterson (2016). In like manner, they are provided opportunities for professional development

and are free to observe one another to improve themselves, resulting in improved student achievement (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). In this kind of culture, teachers continuously learn by attending seminars, taking graduate studies, and observing other teachers.

Perspective of Teachers on Instructional Leadership Practiced by School Heads in Improving Teachers' Competence

Teacher competencies have been identified for enhancing teachers' attitudes and behaviors, student learning, and the adoption of educational policies in several school reform initiatives substantially (Babinski, Amendum, Knotek, Sanchez & Malone, 2018; Kim & Lee, 2020). Educational instructional approaches of head teachers play a vital and effective role in enhancing teachers' capabilities at the school level. Teachers' instructional techniques are inspired by competent guidance which is provided by the school head to improve teaching capabilities (Ahmad et. al, 2021; Ahmad et. al., 2020; Kraft, Papay, Johnson, Charner-Laird & Reinhorn, 2015)

Shafinaz (2017) found that the efficacy of teachers can also be increased with the practice of instructional leadership to manage education changes. With high efficacy in education changes, teachers will be more prepared to accept changes. When the teachers' efficacy is successfully influenced by instructional leadership, the commitment of teachers also can be improved. Azni (2015) found that there is a positive relationship between instructional leadership and teachers' commitment to implementing the school-based assessment. As such, the importance of instructional leadership cannot be denied because this practice shows a positive relationship with teachers' attitudes. Principals and teachers as change agents in school should implement education changes that contribute to developing the potential and performance of the student optimally.

The research of Awan and Parveen (2023) on the "Effect of School Heads' Instructional Leadership Practices on Teachers' Functional Competencies, underscores the pivotal role of instructional leadership within schools, highlighting its beneficial impact on both teacher competence and student outcomes. The study recommended that school leadership can put practices in place to improve teachers' abilities and competence. Moreover, educational institutions should prioritize the adoption of instructional leadership strategies to enhance teacher competence and improve their attitude for a better educational experience for students.

Liu and Hallinger (2018) investigated the impact of school heads' instructional leadership on teacher professional learning at middle schools in China using the PIMRS tool. They discovered that offering professional development by school heads had a moderate benefit on the professional learning and effectiveness of teachers. Additionally, teachers' functional competency across the 21st century in Malaysia was examined by (Ismail, Mansor, Iksan & Nor, 2018), who discovered that instructional leaders' practice as an instructional resource provider has a significant and positive relationship with teacher competencies at school level, they proposed that instructional leadership offered by school heads has a substantial impact on teachers' skills in secondary schools, particularly in urban areas.

Ismael et. al. (2018), in their study on school leaders' instructional leadership and teachers' functional competency in high-prestige schools in the Northern part of Peninsula Malaysia, concluded that instructional leaders should make changes by ensuring that teachers teach and students learn, guaranteeing that classrooms are equipped with various facilities for the enhancement of teaching and learning processes, securing that the teaching and learning time is abided by all teachers. School administrators must plan curriculum programs, supervise and evaluate classroom instructions, implement remedial or

corrective actions on problematic aspects, ensure that teaching and learning time is not disturbed and that teachers dare to teach efficiently by organizing staff development programs; and monitor students' behaviors. In line with 21st-century learning, school administrators should make certain that classroom instructions are done by realizing the concept of inculcating High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS).

Ahmad et. al. (2021) investigated the effect of instructional leadership on teachers' professional competencies at the secondary level in Karachi, Pakistan. They discovered that school heads instructional leadership helps them to improve their teaching skills and abilities, and they have a positive and significant effect on teachers' professional competencies.

Ismael et. al. (2018) investigated the influence of instructional leadership on science teaching competencies in Malaysia at the secondary level and discovered that instructional leaders who practice as resource providers have a significant impact on science teachers' teaching competencies.

The link between instructional leadership and teachers' functional abilities was measured in Malaysia using the instructional leadership paradigm at the primary and secondary school levels (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). At the primary and secondary school levels, instructional leadership methods such as feedback on teaching and learning and measuring student achievement demonstrated a significant and beneficial effect on teacher competencies (Ismael et. al, 2018). The research revealed that the head teacher's instructional leadership approach like feedback on teaching and learning has a positive impact on teacher competencies.

Kiral and Sucicegi, (2017), recommended that principals always need to show instructional leadership behaviors, and this should be observed by the teachers. For this reason, administrators and teachers should be trained in this subject. Relatively, younger teachers and teachers who have worked in the same school less generally have lower perceptions of instructional leadership.

Similarly, Whitaker (2016) noted that the school head's visibility is one of the essential components, commonly disregarded in a school's life. As an instructional leader, the school's head maintains a visible presence in the classroom, ensuring that the school's function runs smoothly. A competent head as an instructional leader maintains high visibility across campus and in classrooms to keep frequent interaction with students and teachers. As instructional leaders, they regularly schedule professional assistance and development for teachers (Ali, 2017; Craig, 2017). The instructional leadership approaches of secondary, which maintain a visible presence have a significant and positive impact on teacher competencies (Ismael et. al, 2018).

According to the findings of the study by Ahmad et. al. (2021), head teachers' instructional approaches as an instructional resource provider has a positive impact on teacher competencies. Therefore, all campus heads must focus on providing instructional resources so that teachers' competencies, and student learning, tied to school goals can be improved. The study also discovered that the strategy taken by campus school heads in providing feedback on teaching and learning had a statistically significant impact on teachers' competencies. So that teachers should be rewarded for their efforts by providing feedback on their classroom teaching and learning to improve teacher competencies and students' academic success. Moreover, the study provided reasonable evidence to support the instructional approach's visible presence on the school premises by campus school heads having a significant positive impact on teacher competencies. As a result, the research recommends that campus school heads in Karachi show up in the classrooms and all the school activities regularly, to meet the school's objectives.

The study of Aureada (2021) revealed that from the teachers' perspectives, school heads were considered instructional leaders. The teachers were accountable for student achievement but provided with the necess-

ssary support. However, it was consistent that the school heads' monitoring of the teaching and learning through classroom observations, technical assistance, regular dialogue, conferencing and teaming with other teachers were lacking. The teachers believed that the school heads wanted to visit classrooms, but they felt the day-to-day pressures of running a school prevented them from completing walkthroughs. The teachers also felt recognized as professionals and trusted to do what was expected from them. From this premise, it was clear that the teachers' perception of the school head's responsibility was not focused on teaching and learning.

The findings of Mohd Yusri and Aziz (2014), as reviewed by Aziz (2017) showed that instructional leadership has a positive relationship and contributes significantly to teachers' teaching competence. This is also evidenced by the findings of Mat Ramini and Mohd Yusri (2015) findings that the principal instructional leadership contributes significantly to the teaching competence of teachers. Teachers are the main implementing agencies of teaching and learning in the classroom. The influence of instructional leaders on improving the quality of teaching of teachers can affect the learning of students.

Instructional Leadership Framework to Improve the Practice of Instructional Leadership

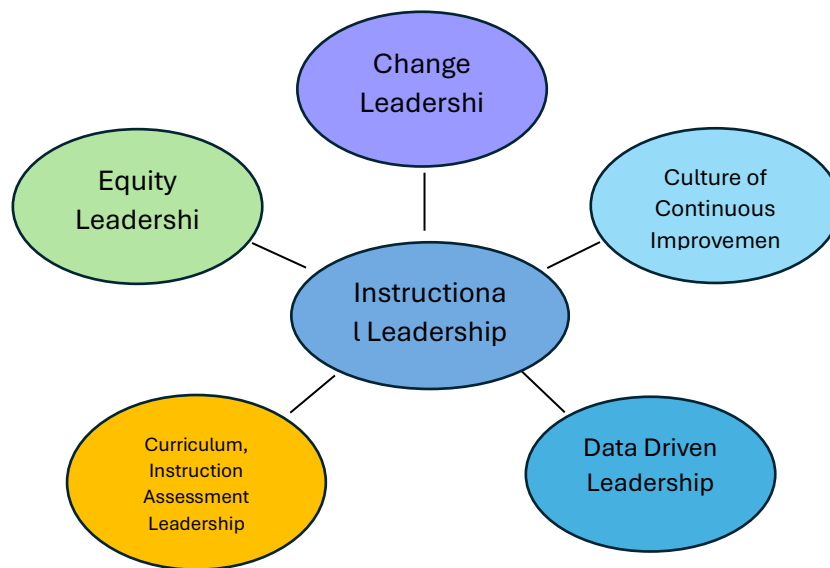
Numerous scholars have developed different instructional leadership models or frameworks to outline the dimensions principals could practice and execute their obligations as instructional leaders. A comprehensive model of instructional leadership was developed by Hallinger and Murphy (Hallinger et. al 2015). This dominant model proposes three broad dimensions of the instructional leadership construct: (1) Defining the school's mission, (2) Managing the Instructional Program, and (3) Promoting a positive school-learning climate. These dimensions are further delineated into ten instructional leadership functions as follows: (1) framing the school's goals; (2) communicating the school's goals; (3) coordinating the curriculum; (4) supervising and evaluating instructions; (5) monitoring students' progress; (6) protecting instructional time; (7) providing incentives for teachers; (8) providing incentives for learners; (9) promoting professional development; and (10) maintaining high visibility.

The first dimension is defining the school's mission which includes two functions- framing the school's goals clearly and communicating the goals effectively. The first dimension concerns the role of a school principal in determining school mission as the principal is responsible for establishing clear and measurable goals in enhancing student academic achievement. It is also the principal's responsibility to effectively communicate the goals that have been made collectively with teachers, parents, and students to receive acknowledgment from the entire school community in supporting and incorporating the goals into daily practices. As such, this dimension serves as the foundation for developing a learner-centered school. The second dimension emphasizes the leadership functions, namely supervising and evaluating instructions, coordinating curricula, and monitoring student progress. The dimension requires not only the principal's involvement in the school's instructional programs but also in encouraging, developing, supervising, and monitoring the teaching and learning activities in schools (Hallinger et. al, 2015). The last dimension is promoting a positive learning climate in schools, which includes the five functions; protecting instructional time, providing incentives for teachers, providing incentives for student learning, promoting the professional development of teachers, and maintaining high visibility. The last dimension is more comprehensive in scope than both aforementioned dimensions as it portrays the role of principals in creating school environments that encourage teachers and students to become productive in their teaching and learning activities respectively (Hallinger & Hosseingholizadeh, 2018). Furthermore, this dimension is consistent with the perspective that effective schools could create adequate academic

pressure and develop high achievement standards for students as well as teachers in their performance (Hallinger et. al. 2015).

Various scholars asserted that the instructional leadership model developed by Hallinger and Murphy is still relevant for the 21st century despite the development of other new leadership models (Puruwita et, al 2022). California Charter School Association (2017), developed an Instructional Leadership Framework (ILF) used as a tool for leaders of new charter schools, outlining strategies to help leaders focus on instructional leadership and support strong student outcomes, even as new school leaders struggle with operational challenges. The ILF is not intended to be a definitive source of effective instructional leadership practices, but rather a compilation of key indicators and leader behavior.

CCSA INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK



The framework is intended to help leaders of new charter schools remain focused on instructional leadership and build the capacity of others within their school community to increase the production of strong academic outcomes. The framework is not intended to be the definitive source of effective instructional leadership practices, but rather a compilation of key indicators and leader behaviors to guide charter leaders of new schools towards greater student outcomes and successful first-term charter renewal. CCSA anticipates continuing to build out this framework with the lessons learned from both mentor and mentee participants in this project in the year ahead.

Meanwhile, Jeffri (2022), has adapted the instructional leadership model with seven main dimensions related to 21st-century instructional leadership namely; defining the school mission, managing instructional programs, shaping a positive school climate, educational leadership, solving complex problems, communicating and developing self and others.

21st Century Instructional Leadership Model

Defining School Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate the school goals • Clarify the school goals
Managing Instructional Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervise and evaluate teaching • Coordinating the curriculum

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor student progress
Shaping a Positive School Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting the teaching time • Promoting professional development • Maintaining high visibility • Enforcing academic standards • Providing incentives for students • Providing incentives for teachers
Educational Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determining teaching instruction • Teamwork • Sensitivity
Solving Complex Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punishing • Decision-based • Organizational ability
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral • Written
Development of Self and Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of others • Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of oneself

Maldonado (2022) introduced a Leadership Development Framework describing four domains which are critical for any effective school leader, all focused on transformational, equity-driven instructional leadership:

1. Unified Vision. Engage in an inclusive process with the entire school community (particularly those systematically marginalized or lacking power in educational processes) to develop a vision of collective responsibility for the educational success of each student, regardless of background.
2. Designing for Equity. Acknowledge that most schools do not serve all students well and design the school to both disrupt that inequity and be responsive to the complex and evolving needs of the community.
3. Teaching and Learning. Steward a strong instructional culture and team rooted in a sense of shared responsibility for realizing the school’s vision for a thriving student experience.
4. Reflective and Empathetic Practice. Model a committed practice to both growing knowledge and fostering personal development and wellbeing in service of leadership for school transformation.

Gap Bridged by the Study

The related literature and studies, foreign and local, have shown similarities in the significance of the instructional leadership practices of school heads and their impact on teaching performance and learning outcomes. There were also several studies on the relationships between the instructional leadership styles of school heads the motivation efficacy of teachers and the performance of students.

The present study, however, is focused on facilitating, promoting, and sustaining empowering instructional leadership of both the school heads and teachers in the elementary schools of Gubat South Districts in the Schools Division of Sorsogon. It dealt with the experiences of school heads and teachers concerning strategies and practices of instructional leadership and would design a proposed instructional leadership

framework that has not yet been done by other researchers in the division. This is the gap bridged by this study.

Theoretical Framework

Leadership plays a crucial role in an educational institution. Instructional leadership, in particular, has always played a distinct role in school to influence effective teaching and learning processes. This theoretical framework sets the stage for our exploration, providing a comprehensive overview of the key concepts, theoretical underpinnings, and foundational principles that will guide our investigation into the empowering aspects of instructional leadership and its profound impact on the educational landscape.

Leithwood (1994) asserted that “instructional leadership is a series of actions to impact classroom instruction unswervingly through staff development, modeling, coaching, supervision and additional means of persuading teachers’ practice and thinking.

According to Hallinger & Murphy (1985), instructional leadership is seen as strong and directive leadership that focuses directly on curriculum and instructional practices. They believed that instructional leaders are the people who bring about the institution’s effectiveness, especially in terms of teaching and learning.

Weber (1989) emphasized that leading the instructional program requires both an understanding of educational techniques and a personal vision of academic excellence that can be translated into effective classroom strategies. Research shows that principals can have a profound indirect effect on students’ learning experiences. This influence is shaped by the community and institutional context and by the principal’s management style and personal temperament. Of the many tasks performed by principals, five most clearly influence a school’s instructional program: (1) defining the school mission; (2) managing the curriculum and instruction; (3) promoting a positive learning climate; (4) observing and giving feedback to teachers; and (5) assessing the instructional program. Principal’s instructional leadership duties should not be overemphasized at the expense of unofficial leadership found in schools. The key to effective instructional leadership may well lie in principals’ flexibility in sharing duties and their ingenuity at matching these duties with the appropriate department heads, assistant principals, or teacher committees. Understanding the critical leadership functions is a good step toward creating an effective learning environment.

Timperly (2011) contended that an instructional leadership mindset includes an intense moral purpose focused on promoting deep student learning, professional inquiry, trusting relationships, and seeking evidence in action. Great leadership requires attention to daily management tasks involved in running an organization, creating a safe and secure learning environment and effective interventions for students in need, catching great teachers doing things right, and supporting them with genuine appreciation and emotional intelligence. She stressed that if principals are going to lead teachers’ learning and development, they must know their class of teachers. They need to know what teachers already know and do well and what teachers need to learn. Principals learn to lead teacher learning and development when they undertake a process of cycles of inquiry for leadership learning.

Guided by these educational and leadership theories, the researcher has conceptualized the theory that the school principal, as an instructional leader must create a supportive, collaborative, and learner-centered environment, placing student learning at the center of the classroom instructional process and fostering the professional growth of teachers as classroom instructors.

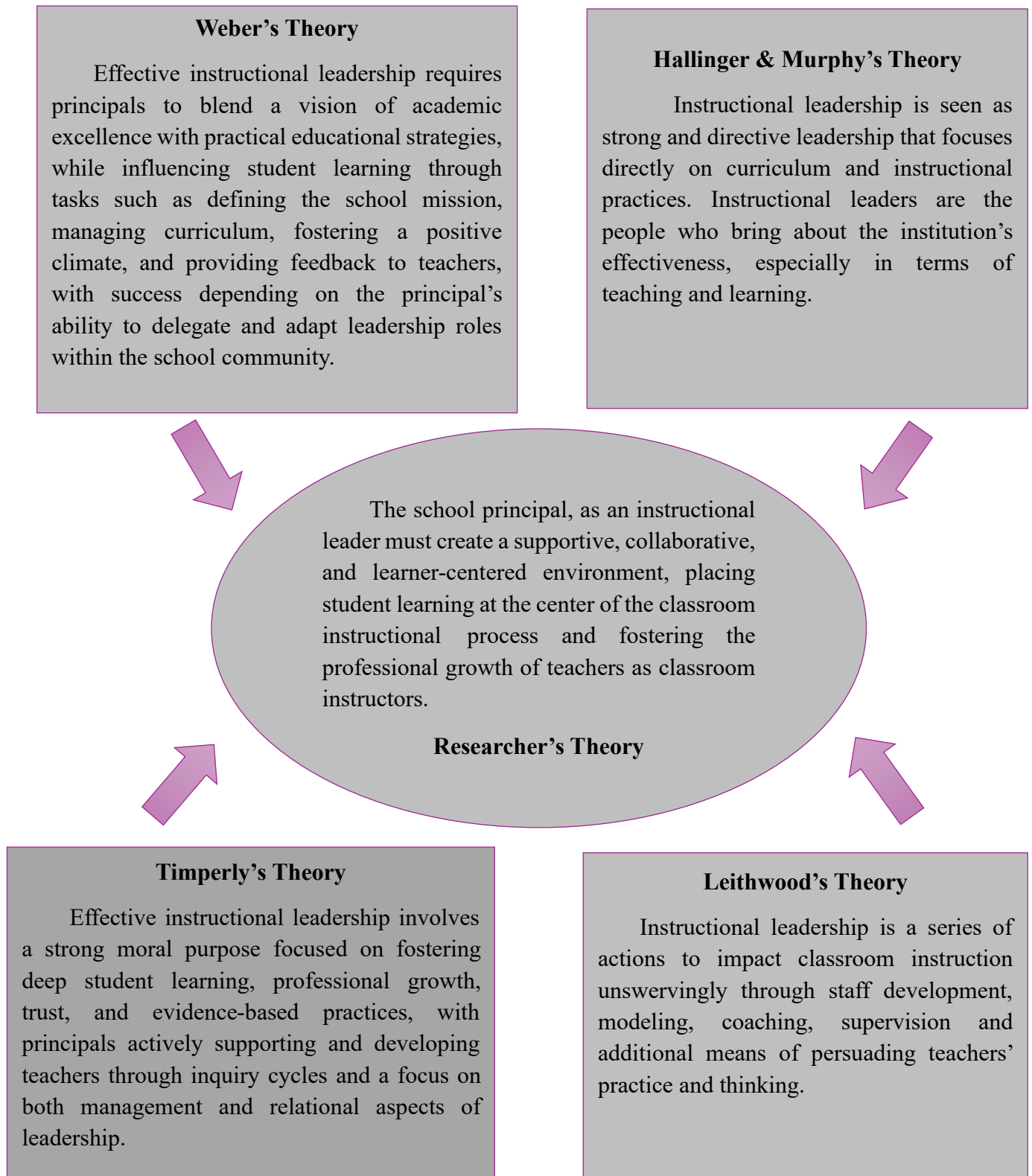


Figure 2. Theoretical Paradigm

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the principle that a relevant and effective instructional framework must be designed that help school heads focus on best strategies and practices in promoting

and sustaining empowering instructional leadership in school. Such framework outlines the different dimensions of practices that a principal should perform focusing on the teaching-learning process and enhancement of teachers’ competence for the attainment of quality learning outcomes.

The inputs of the study are the practices of school heads and teachers in practicing instructional leadership in their respective schools, the strategies and best practices employed by the school heads in promoting and sustaining instructional leadership, as well as creating trust and collaboration among teachers. Likewise, the perspective of teachers regarding the instructional leadership practices of school heads in improving their teaching competence.

The process consists of the appropriate method and procedure undertaken to obtain accurate data and arrive at significant findings. This includes interviews, note-taking, recording, focus group discussion, data analysis, and interpretation.

As an output of this study, a relevant instructional leadership framework shall be designed to be used by the school heads in promoting and sustaining empowering instructional leadership in school. Finally, the researcher expected that the outcomes of this endeavor would be an improvement in the instructional leadership practices of school heads that will result to enhancement of teachers’ competence which will result in quality learning outcomes for pupils.

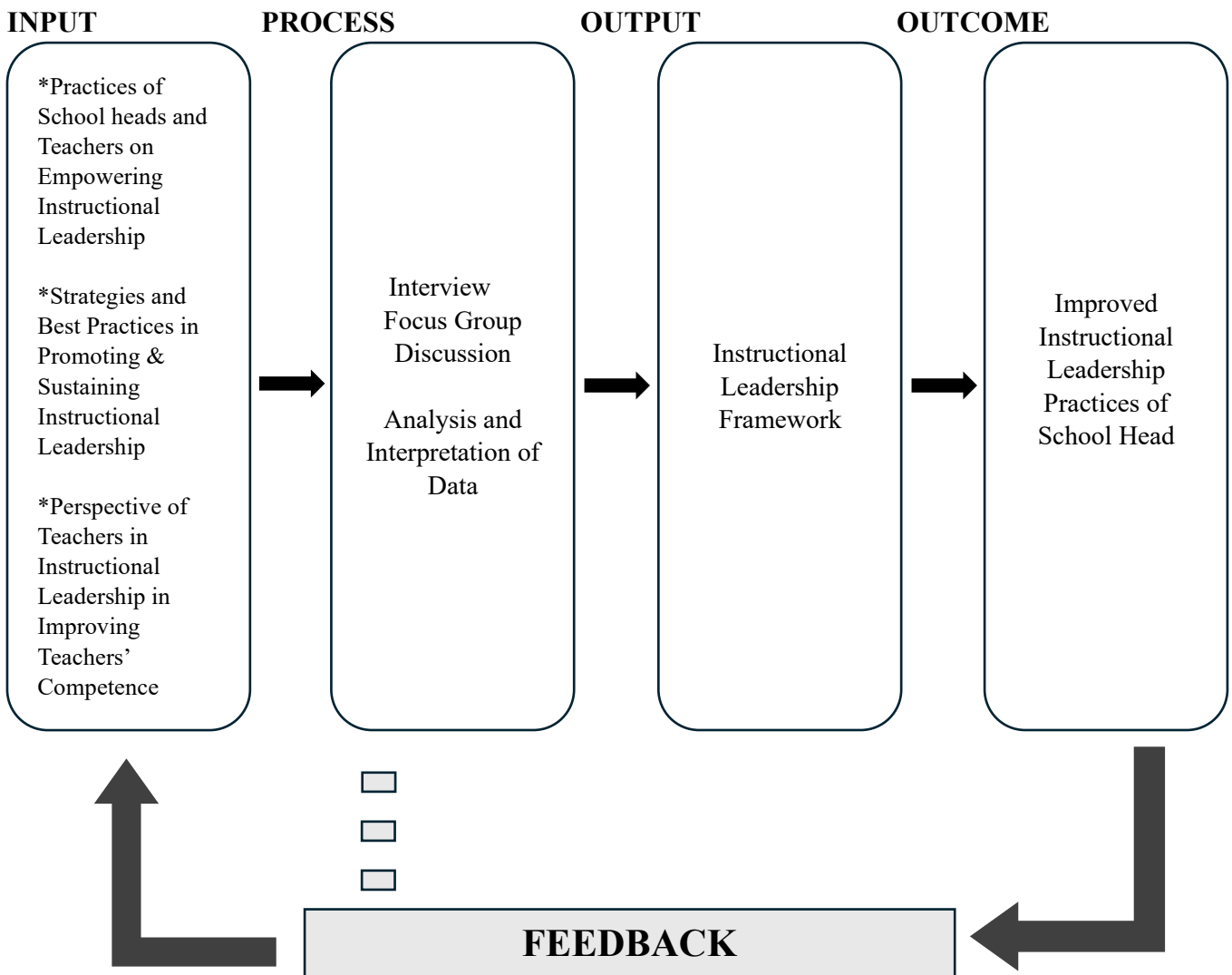


Figure 3. Conceptual Paradigm

CHAPTER III

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

This study employs a phenomenological method of qualitative research to collect rich and detailed narratives about the lived experiences of school heads and teachers on empowering instructional leadership. Interviews and focus group discussions will be conducted with a purposive sample of school heads and teachers from different schools to explore the diverse strategies and best practices employed in promoting and sustaining instructional leadership. By engaging directly with these instructional leaders, the study aims to capture their perspectives on how instructional leadership helps improve teachers' competence. Thematic analysis is employed to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights that emerge from the collected data. A qualitative research approach that helps in describing the lived experiences of an individual.

Appropriateness of Design

Phenomenological research helps us understand what it is like to experience a specific situation or life event. It is a qualitative research approach that helps in describing the lived experiences of an individual. It seeks reality from individuals' narratives of their experiences and feelings, and to produce in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon. By describing the stories of people who lived through a particular experience and their perception of it, the research can cut to the heart of what it was truly like. It may contribute to the development of new theories and changes in policies and responses.

In this study, the researcher investigated the lived experiences of school heads as instructional leaders to gather rich insights into the strategies and best practices they utilized in promoting and sustaining instructional leadership within educational settings as well as the perspective of teachers on how these practices improve their teaching competence. This is parallel to the principle of phenomenology which is to understand and describe a specific phenomenon in-depth and reach the essence of participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon.

Research Questions

Research questions are the fundamental queries that drive a scientific inquiry or study. They provide direction, purpose, and clarity helping to shape the research process, define its scope, and ultimately lead to meaningful discoveries. In qualitative research, research questions guide the investigation in exploring the complexities of human experiences, behaviors, and social phenomena.

The specific questions of this study were:

1. What are the different strategies that the school head utilized in promoting instructional leadership among teachers?
2. What are the best practices of the school heads in promoting and sustaining empowering instructional leadership?
3. How do school heads create a culture of trust and collaboration to facilitate instructional leadership?
4. What are the perspectives of teachers regarding instructional leadership practiced by the school heads in improving teachers' competence?
5. What instructional leadership framework for school heads could be designed to improve the practice of instructional leadership?

Participants of the Study

This study involved a diverse group of participants selected to provide relevant insights into the research topic. They were thirteen (13) elementary school heads, two (2) secondary school heads and fifteen (15) teachers of Gubat South District, Schools Division of Sorsogon. The school heads are all full-fledged, occupying a position of Head Teachers and School Principal having three or more years of experience. The teacher-participants also are all permanent with positions ranging from Teacher I to Master Teacher II.

Participants provided data through focus group discussions and interviews, and all individuals provided informed consent prior to participation. Ethical guidelines were followed to ensure confidentiality and respect for participants' rights throughout the study.

Table A

The Participants

School	School Head	Teacher
1.Bentuco National High School	1	1
2.Bongsaran Elementary School	1	1
3.Bulacao Elementary School	1	1
4.Bulacao National High School	1	1
5.Cabigaan Elementary school	1	1
6.Gubat South Central School	1	1
7.Manapao Elementary School	1	1
8.Nazareno Elementary School	1	1
9.Rizal Elementary School	1	1
10.Sangat Elementary School	1	1
11.Sta. Ana Elementary School	1	1
12.Tabi Elementary School	1	1
13.Tigkiw Elementary School	1	1
14.Togawe Elementary School	1	1
15.Union Elementary School	1	1
Total	15	15

As shown above, there are 15 full-fledged school heads and 15 permanent teachers from the different schools of Gubat South District. They are the sources of the data used in this study.

Population and Samples

A research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that is the focus of a scientific query. All individuals or objects within a certain population usually have common, binding characteristics or traits. A sample is simply a subset of the population. The concept of sample arises from the inability of the researchers to test all the individuals in each population. The sample must be representative of the population from which it was drawn, and it must have a good size to warrant statistical analysis. The main function of the sample is to allow the researchers to conduct the study on individuals from the population so that the results of their study can be used to derive conclusions that will apply to the entire population (<https://explorable.com/research-population>, retrieved September 22, 2023). Thus, population and

samples are the cornerstones of research design, providing researchers with the means to explore and understand complex phenomena efficiently and effectively.

There are several sampling techniques in qualitative research. One of the widely used techniques is purposive or selective sampling. It is used to select participants who can provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation. It is highly subjective and determined by the qualitative researcher generating the qualifying criteria each participant must meet to be considered for the research study.

In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling in determining the participants which is composed of 13 full-fledged school heads and 7 teachers of Gubat South District.

Research Instruments

Research instruments are tools used for data collection and analysis. Instrumentality in qualitative research is an important basis through which researchers gain deeper insights into complex human experiences and social phenomena.

This study utilized interviews to be conducted in-person or by online video call as well as a focus group discussion method. According to Emzir (2010), an interview consists of several pre-set questions that are addressed to people who become the research subjects. Besides, Creswell (2012) stated that an interview is a period when researchers ask one or more participants, asking questions and record their answers. Focus group discussion on the other hand, as mentioned by Nyumba et. al. (2018) is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. The method aims to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals. The researcher facilitates or moderates a group discussion between participants. Moreover, Morgan et. al (1998) and Litosseliti (2004), said that the facilitator must have a set of skills and techniques to ensure that the issues under discussion are addressed comprehensively.

Informed Consent

Informed consent is one of the founding principles of research ethics. It intends that human participants can enter research freely or voluntarily with full information about what it means for them to take part, and that they give consent before they enter the research. Consent should be obtained before the participant enters the research (prospectively), and there must be no undue influence on a participant to consent. The minimum requirements for consent to be informed are that the participant understands what the research is and what they are consenting to (University of Oxford, 2021).

Llego (2023), stated that educational research is critical for examining and improving educational practices, policies, and outcomes. To produce valid and beneficial results, researchers must uphold the ethical principles of informed consent and confidentiality. Informed consent is a fundamental ethical principle that ensures research participants understand the nature, purpose, and possible consequences of their involvement in their study. The main components of informed consent include (1) providing sufficient information about the study; (2) ensuring participant's understanding; (3) voluntary participation and (4) ongoing consent.

Bound by the rules of ethics, the researcher provided the participants with everything they needed to know about the study to make informed decisions about participating in this study. Additionally, the researcher asked permission from the research participants through a signed consent form to protect their rights and ensure voluntary participation in this study.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is about knowing what sort of personal data may be available, to whom, and under which conditions- in essence, it is about considering the whole picture. It also implies the participant's right to being informed about the scope of their participation, to being explicitly asked to take part in the research project, and extends to their right to retain some degree of control over their data.

In research ethics, the crucial principle of confidentiality entails an obligation on the part of the researcher to ensure that any use of information obtained from or shared by a human subject respects the dignity and autonomy of the participant, and does not violate the interests of individuals or communities. The right to confidentiality in research is recognized in international bio-ethical guidelines, such as the Helsinki Declaration (last updated in 2013), and the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, effective 2018).

In practice, safeguarding confidentiality entails that the researcher observes the following restrictions: (1) Research participants remain anonymous by default, (2) Researchers do not obtain private data unless there is good reason to, (3) Participants must be briefed on the goal or purpose of the research, its means of investigation and who has access to the data, (4) Participants must give active consent, are not coerced to participate and retain the right to withdraw their cooperation at any moment (even after the study has been completed) and (5) Participants must be provided with an opportunity to review their data and correct any mistakes they perceive (Bos, 2020).

In most cases, confidentiality can be ensured by using good data collection and storage practices. Access to information about individual participants should be restricted to the researcher, and his or her advisor only. Care should be taken to avoid breaches of confidentiality in which this information is divulged to anyone else. The easiest way to protect confidentiality is to collect (or if the data are already collected then use) anonymous data. Anonymous data are data that are not connected to information that can identify the individual participant (University of Virginia, 2023).

To maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of the participants in this study, the researcher sought permission from the Schools Division Superintendent to conduct the research, provided the Public Schools district Supervisor and the school heads with a copy of the approved permit, and obtained informed consent from the participants before collecting the data. Identifying information such as names, names of schools, and specific locations were removed from the data to maintain the anonymity of the participants. Codes were used instead of names. Only the researcher and her advisor had access to the data used. All data were properly deleted and destroyed after the completion of this study.

Pilot Study

Pilot studies play a crucial role in research. A pilot or preliminary study is a small-scale study or a pretest for a particular research instrument such as an interview guide or questionnaire. A pilot study evaluates the effectiveness of the methods for gathering and analyzing data. It prepares the researcher for the unanticipated issues before entering the field. A pilot study also offers the chance for participants to become familiar with the researcher and the research process. It is believed that carrying out a pilot study improves the validity and methodological rigor of a qualitative investigation. A pilot study assists in identifying and resolving ethical and practical issues that could jeopardize the main study or violate participants' human rights (Shakir & Rahman, 2022).

In addition, a pilot study provides necessary information not only for calculating the sample size but also for the assessment of all other aspects of the main study, minimizing unnecessary effort from the research-

ers and participants, as well as the dissipation of research resources.

Therefore, a qualitative researcher may have an exceptional opportunity to develop their research abilities and practice qualitative inquiry by reflecting on the lessons learned from a pilot study, which will afterward increase the credibility of their work (Janghorban et. al, 2013).

Validity

Ensuring validity in qualitative research is crucial to maintaining the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. Validity in qualitative research refers to the accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings, ensuring that they accurately represent the experiences and perspectives of the participants.

Cypress (2017), defined validity as the state of being well-grounded or justifiable, relevant, meaningful, logical, conforming to accepted principles, or the quality of being sound, just, and well-founded. Validity is rooted in empirical conceptions such as universal laws, evidence, objectivity, truth, actuality, deduction, reason, fact, and mathematical data, to name only a few. Validity in research is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of scientific findings. A valid study should demonstrate what exists and is accurate and a valid instrument or measure should measure what is supposed to measure.

Validity in qualitative research means the appropriateness of the tools, processes, and data. Whether the research question is valid for the desired outcome, the choice of methodology is appropriate for answering the research question, the design is valid for the methodology, the sampling and data analysis are appropriate and finally, the results and conclusions are valid for the sample and context (Leung, 2015).

In this study, the researcher employed strategies to ensure its validity such as sufficient time engagement with the participants, triangulation, consulting the research advisor, peer debriefing, and consistent data analysis. Spending sufficient time in the research setting to build rapport and trust with the participants helped the researcher gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives. Triangulation means that the researcher used multiple data sources to validate the findings. This helped confirm the consistency and accuracy of the results. The researcher also consulted a research advisor who is an expert in the field to review the research process, data, and analysis to provide feedback and insights for improving validity. Finally, the researcher used a systematic and well-documented approach to data analysis, such as thematic analysis to ensure that the findings were derived from the data and not influenced by pre-conceived notions.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data refers to non-numeric information such as interview transcripts, notes, video and audio recordings, images, and text documents. In this study, the researchers adopted the following steps identified by the Business Research Methodologies (2023) in conducting qualitative data analysis: (1) developing and applying codes, (2) Identifying themes, patterns, and relationships (3) Summarizing the data.

Coding can be explained as the categorization of data. A code can be a word or a short phrase that represents a theme or an idea. All codes need to be assigned meaningful titles. When using manual coding, you can use folders, filing cabinets, wallets, etc to gather together materials that are examples of similar themes or analytic ideas. In the second step, there is a set of techniques that you can use to identify common themes, patterns, and relationships within the responses of sample group members about codes that have been specified in the previous stage. These include word and phrase repetitions, primary and secondary data comparisons, search for missing information, and metaphors and analogs. It is important to note that

in qualitative data analysis, there are no universally applicable techniques that can be applied to generate findings. The analytical and critical thinking skills of researchers play a significant role in data analysis in qualitative studies. Therefore, no qualitative study can be repeated to generate the same results. In the last stage, the researcher needs to link research findings to hypotheses or research aims and objectives. When writing a data analysis chapter, the researcher can use noteworthy quotations from the transcript to highlight major themes within findings and possible contradictions.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter presents the findings, analysis, and further discussions of the collected data gathered through interviews and focus group discussions. This provides a detailed narrative that captures the participants' experiences and perceptions. This also sets the stage for understanding the deeper meanings embedded within the data.

I. Strategies for Effective Instructional Leadership: Shaping a Positive Learning Environment

This research study explored the strategies discussed by participants in a forum on effective instructional leadership, focusing on how to create a dynamic and engaging learning environment for both students and teachers. The key themes emerging from the discussion are:

Setting the Stage: The Role of School Leadership

School leaders play a pivotal role in fostering a positive learning environment. They are the driving force behind ensuring quality academic instruction and positive discipline practices. Leaders are responsible for creating and maintaining effective learning environments. They ensure that classrooms are equipped with the necessary resources, teachers are well-supported, and students feel safe and motivated.

Participant 1 expressed, "*The role of school head is crucial and challenging because the performance of our school/learners lies in our hands.*" This expression indicates an understanding that the school head's actions and decisions directly impact the success and academic performance of both students and the school as a whole

Parallel with this idea, Huguet (2017) recognized school leadership as an essential component that influences the development and growth of a positive school environment. Likewise, Aldridge and Fraser (2016) identified the school principal as having the most predominant role in developing a positive school culture, directly and indirectly. As an instructional leader, the school head is the prime mover in employing activities for the continuous improvement of teaching practice. As shared by Participant 6, "*As a SH I conduct activities such as classroom observation and LAC sessions to promote quality academic instruction and positive discipline practices,*"

The participant highlights two specific actions—classroom observations and Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions—that serve as key tools for instructional improvement and teacher development. Classroom observations allow the school head to directly monitor and support teaching practices, offering insights and feedback to enhance instructional quality. LAC sessions, on the other hand, foster a collaborative environment where teachers can discuss, reflect, and develop strategies collectively, promoting continuous professional growth and consistent discipline practices.

Halim et al. (2018) as cited by Munawar et. al (2023), asserted that to better understand the teaching-learning process, it is essential to observe classroom activities to help teachers, improve their classroom performance, this application provides them with constructive and critical feedback on their effective teaching methods. As revealed also in the study of Culajura (2023), the School Learning Action Cell

(SLAC) is cost-effective learning, promoting teaching effectiveness that calls for the needs of assessment to better address the instructional gaps and increase teachers' dedication and commitment to enhancing and promoting their personal growth and professional development.

Furthermore, Porcalla (2021) suggested that with the help of the school principal, an Enhanced Learning Action cell for teachers to envision the future, see what the organization can become, and see those possibilities that promote and contribute more to planning, developing, and delivering teaching strategies that are responsive to the educational needs of the learners.

Communicating Expectations and Inspiring Excellence

Clear communication, modeling effective practices, and setting high standards are crucial for setting the tone and driving improvements in instruction. Below are some of the roles of instructional leaders in shaping a positive learning environment highlighting communicating expectations and inspiring excellence as described by the participants:

Participant 7 expressed, *“Clearly communicating expectations for instructional practices and academic standards to teachers and staff.”* Participant 9 also explained, *“Modeling effective instruction by demonstrating effective instructional practices in your interactions with students and staff to inspire and motivate teachers to adopt innovative teaching strategies.”* Participant 18 answered: *“They lead by example, demonstrating effective teaching practices and encouraging collaboration among teachers to enhance instructional quality.”*

Participant 10 commented, *“Foster a culture of collaboration among teachers, encouraging them to share ideas, collaborate on lesson planning, and reflect on their teaching practices together.”* Participant 16 discussed, *“Our school headsets high standards for school achievement, encourages teachers to improve their teaching practice continuously and gives quality instructions that include educational strategies that support effective learning for teachers and students.”*

Participant 19 elaborated, *“The school head plays a pivotal role in promoting instructional leadership by creating a culture of excellence, supporting professional growth, and fostering collaboration among all members of the school community. By prioritizing instructional quality and student success, the school head can drive positive change and improvement in the educational outcomes of the school.”*

With the generated answers from the participants, it can be noted that school heads need to clearly articulate what instructional practices and academic standards are expected from teachers and staff. This includes curriculum requirements, teaching methodologies, assessment practices, and professional conduct. In addition, the school head plays a pivotal role in demonstrating effective instructional practices themselves. By modeling these practices, they set a standard of excellence and provide a tangible example for teachers to observe and learn from.

Providing Support and Resources for Professional Growth

Providing teachers with the necessary tools and guidance empowers them to enhance their skills and implement effective teaching practices. Participant 4 acts as a facilitator, providing technical assistance and guidance to teachers. Participants 5 and 8 stressed the importance of offering resources and support to improve teachers' instructional skills and knowledge through continuous professional learning.

Participant 4 mentioned that the school head *“serves as a facilitator to the teachers by giving technical assistance provide guidance and support to teachers in curriculum development, instructional strategies, and assessment methods.”* Participant 8 stressed the role of the school head as to *“Magbigay ng support*

at pangangailangan ng teachers, to enhance their instructional skills and knowledge. Sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay ng pagkakataon for professional development opportunities, instructional coaches, and mentoring programs.” Participant 5 enumerated, “Iba-ibang professional development opportunities ang binibigay ng school namin para maenhance ang instructional leadership skills namin. May mga workshops and seminars led by educational experts on topics such as differentiated instruction, assessment for learning, and classroom management techniques.

These experiences shared by the participants revealed the primary responsibilities of the school head as a provider of support and resources for the professional growth of teachers and staff. Instructional leaders organize and facilitate opportunities for professional development that are aligned with the needs of teachers and the goals of the school. This includes workshops, seminars, conferences, and in-service training sessions on topics such as curriculum updates, instructional strategies, assessment techniques, and educational technology.

The results of research by Shah et al. (2011) proved that in-service education and training programs had a significant effect on teacher performance in managing the class using various teaching methods, producing teaching aids, and teacher evaluation techniques. Similarly, the study by Bechter et al. (2019) also indicated that students who were taught by teachers who took training programs on student-centered learning strategies achieved better learning outcomes. In-service education and training programs are examples of professional development activities in support of the professional growth of teachers.

These researches indicated that administrators should provide teachers with necessary learning resources for students (Naidoo & Petersen, 2015), develop and implement programs responsive to the individual students to assist growth (Lynch, 2016), and offer teachers positive instructional support in the classroom by providing necessary instructional material to carry out their duty successfully (Özdemir, 2019) and collect data to help address individual needs of the teachers to support teaching and learning in the classroom.

Monitoring Progress and Facilitating Professional Growth

Regular monitoring, constructive feedback, and opportunities for professional development are essential for continuous improvement and alignment with educational goals. Participant 13 leads the implementation of DepEd programs and guidelines, conducts instructional supervision, and provides mentoring and coaching. Participant 12 focused on creating a supportive environment, promoting professional growth, and aligning teaching practices with educational goals.

Participant 13 clearly stated *“As an instructional leader, first and foremost I lead the staff in the proper implementation of DepEd programs, guidelines, and policies. Sinisiguro ko din na aware ang teachers sa mga roles and responsibilities nila as facilitators of learning. Para malaman ko ang nangyayari sa loob ng klasrum, ng-oobserve ako ng klase kasama ang master teachers.”* Participant 12 expressed, *“As a school head, dapat we create a supportive and empowering environment for teachers, promote professional growth, and make sure that teaching practices are aligned with the school's educational goals and standards.”*

The strategies discussed by the participants collectively provided a comprehensive framework for effective instructional leadership. By focusing on clear expectations, collaborative efforts, ongoing support, and professional growth, school leaders can create a vibrant and supportive learning environment that empowers both teachers and students to achieve their full potential.

School leaders along with other educational professionals such as the vice-principal, coaches, mentors, le-

ad teachers, and teachers together work in collaboration to ensure student progress (Ansley et al., 2019). School leaders and administrators can work collaboratively and assess student data to monitor students' growth. Monitoring and assessing student learning are the mechanisms that help determine if the objectives of a high level of student achievement are met by all students. School leaders have been under constant pressure to improve schools and achieve better learning outcomes for their students (Lingam et al., 2021).

Hence, the role of an instructional leader is to analyze and utilize student performance data to monitor student progress and improve their academic performance.

Due to time constraints and leaders being involved in other managerial activities, it is often seen that leaders do not focus enough attention on analyzing data to monitor student progress (Vooren, 2018; Wiezorek & Manard, 2018). Hence to improve learner performance the instructional leader also needs to analyze and discuss the different methods of assessment with the lead teachers and staff members. Some such assessments include formal and informal assessments, teacher-made tests, and computer adaptive assessments.

Promoting Instructional Leadership: Strategies and Initiatives from Educators

Instructional leadership is a crucial aspect of educational excellence, as it empowers teachers to drive positive change in the classroom and beyond. To explore effective strategies for cultivating instructional leadership, we sought insights from educators through a survey. The participants shared a wealth of ideas and initiatives, which were classified into the following themes:

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Collaboration

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and collaboration are integral aspects of instructional leadership in education.

Participant 9 remarked *“Teacher-led Professional Learning Communities or LAC Session where they collaborate to identify student needs, share effective instructional strategies, and analyze data to inform their teaching practices. These groups provide a platform for teachers to lead discussions and share expertise.”* Participant 10 shared, *“Isa sa mga initiatives na ipinapatupad ko sa school naming ay hayaan ang mga guro na mgpatupad ng programs para solusyunan ang mga problema namin like yong non-readers. Bilang school head, ini-encourage ko sila na gumawa ng innovations, I support them, provide guidance, and supervision, and update them with various trends in classroom instructional practices and strategies.* In addition, Participant 11 narrated, *“Learning Action Cell (LAC) session, In-Service training (IN-SET) and Communities of Teachers (COT).*

Participants highlighted establishing teacher-led PLCs where educators collaborate to identify student needs, share effective instructional strategies, and analyze data. They believe that Professional Learning Communities encourage teachers to create their own programs to address specific problems, fostering creativity and innovation. Also, implementing Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, in-service training (IN-SET), and Communities of Teachers (COT) as collaborative platforms.

Studies indicated that PLCs facilitate the sharing of best practices and instructional strategies among educators. This collaborative environment allows teachers to refine their teaching methods based on evidence and peer feedback, leading to improved instructional quality. Creating professional learning communities (PLC) helps to increase instructional leadership capacity and provide teachers with unpacking standards and aligning curricula (Antinluoma et al., 2021; Rigby et al., 2019) The study

indicated that PLC could train teachers with classroom skills that can be directly applied in teaching and learning.

Findings also from Rigby et al. (2019), informed that meetings conducted by PLCs can help focus on analyzing instructional strategies and discuss learning approaches to assist teachers and students in achieving better results. Furthermore, with the help of a PLC collaboration, teachers are allowed to engage in shared leadership activities to become future leaders.

Mentoring and Coaching:

Mentoring and coaching are crucial for instructional leadership because they provide personalized support and professional growth opportunities for educators. They help teachers improve their teaching methods, tackle challenges, and adopt new approaches to engage students effectively.

In this study, Participants 9, 13, 14, and 15 implemented peer coaching and mentoring programs to support professional growth. Participant 12 conducted regular LAC sessions for instructional strategies and classroom management.

Participant 9 explained, “*I implement a peer coaching and mentoring program where experienced teachers mentor newer colleagues. This program can include opportunities for peer observation, feedback sessions, and collaborative lesson planning to support professional growth and development.*” Participant 13 commented: “*Providing mentoring and coaching teachers along classroom instructions, classroom management, records management, etc. which enhance their capabilities as facilitators of learning.*” Participant 14 said, “*By mentoring and coaching and giving feedback. And let us attend to training helpful to us.*” Participant 15 responded, “*Mentoring, Coaching, and Giving positive feedback*”. Participant 12 expressed “*Professional development for teachers through conducting regular LAC sessions on instructional strategies and classroom management.* Participant 16 stated, “*Conducting School LAC Sessions attending training courses, In-Service Training, Seminars, and Staff meetings.*”

Data gathered from the participants showed that these practices create a positive school environment where teachers feel supported and motivated to enhance their skills. By studying the evidence and feedback from the field, they can better understand how coaching and mentoring contribute to better teaching and learning outcomes in schools.

Instructional leadership is a pathway to setting and communicating a clear vision and goal for teachers and students by supporting and guiding the teacher through coaching, mentoring, and professional development (Brolund, 2016). Coaches and mentors can be the instructional resources that help teachers improve their teaching practices. As a mentor and coach, the instructional leader needs to support teachers by establishing and communicating goals, working collaboratively, and spending quality time with the teachers (Brolund, 2016).

There are different ways the coach or mentor can assist the teachers. First, as a coach and mentor, one must establish and communicate goals and work collaboratively to assist the teachers (Brolund, 2016; Lewis, 2019). A coach needs to provide an atmosphere of support and facilitate teachers’ growth, which can help to improve student learning and behavior and also help increase student engagement (Lewis, 2019; Thessin, 2019). Secondly, the coach can also work with the teacher to develop an understanding of the instructional content and help align the standards to the lesson plan (Lewis, 2019). Third, a coach can assist in direct instruction by identifying needs and helping to develop instructional practices that can be implemented in the classroom to assist students in mastering content knowledge (Lewis, 2019; Lewis &

Jones, 2019; Thessin, 2019). Lastly, a coach can assist in developing formative assessments to identify learning targets and monitor student progress (Lewis, 2019).

Action Research and Innovation

Action research and innovation stand at the forefront of empowering instructional leadership in education, offering a dynamic framework for continuous improvement and meaningful change. Action research involves teachers studying their teaching methods to improve how students learn. It encourages teachers to try new ideas, reflect on what works best, and collaborate with others. Innovation means using new approaches and technologies to make teaching and learning better.

Data show that action research and innovation help leaders adapt to challenges in education, foster a culture of learning, and improve teaching quality. Researchers can understand better how these practices empower leaders to create better educational experiences based on the following feedback from the participants:

As mentioned by Participant 9, *“I encourage teachers to conduct action research projects focused on addressing specific instructional challenges or exploring innovative teaching approaches. Provide support for teachers to design and implement their research studies, analyze data, and share findings with colleagues.* Participant 10 also answered, *“Action research Project”*. Participant 11 added, *“Allowing them to create their learning interventions and programs with proper guidance and supervision. I give them trust and full support for their classroom innovations.”*

Likewise, Participant 2 declared, *“Innovations must be implemented to achieve the high performance of the learners i.e. Literacy must be strengthened. We can tap volunteers and the support of the parents. A pull-out system can be applied giving special time and activity to slow readers and non-literate.* Participant 15 claimed, *“Put up the Techno Class Home to cater the needs of the struggling Readers, Provide reading interventions like Brigada Pagbasa, Mara na Mabarasa Kita, Makaukod ka Na, Mabubusog Ka Pa.”*

Participant 16 explained, *“One of our innovations focuses on the Literacy and Numeracy. The District Supervisor and our school head are teaching in Math and English to address the needs of our students who struggling readers and students’ poor in numbers.”* Participant 17 mentioned, *“Supported their innovations by providing materials and providing constructive feedback.*

Participants 9, 10, and 11 encouraged teachers to conduct action research projects to explore innovative teaching approaches. Participants 2, 15, and 17 propose literacy strengthening initiatives, tapping volunteers, implementing pull-out systems, putting up techno class-home, and other interventions for struggling learners.

Correspondingly, Kurt Lewin firmly believed that research conducted specifically within the context in which the problem existed was the key to arriving at the solution, or to institute some degree of change. Kurt Lewin viewed action research as a spiraling process of reflection, inquiry, and action taken by stakeholders for the ultimate purpose of improving work environments and addressing social problems (Hendricks, 2017 as cited by Mertler, C. A. 2024).

Moreover, another important aspect of action research is that it advances the notion of teacher empowerment. Our educational climate is becoming more data-driven all the time. When teachers collect their data to assist in making decisions about their students and classrooms- which is essentially an action research model of teaching- they become empowered. Teacher empowerment allows the teacher to bring into their classrooms their unique expertise, talents, and creativity so that they can implement instructional programs to best meet the needs of their students (Johnson, 2012 as cited by Mertler, C. A., 2024).

In addition to action research, innovation in education is also a concept that has gained significant attention in recent years. It refers to new and unique ideas and practices that expand students' imaginations and push the frontiers of their knowledge and understanding. It is the ability to be flexible and willing to find ways to adjust what we teach and how we teach to keep our students engaged and excited to learn (Maspul, 2024).

Innovation in education involves a shift from traditional teaching methods to more student-centered and interactive approaches (Hargreaves, 2014). It means moving beyond the traditional lecture-based approach to teaching, to one that is more focused on engaging students in the learning process.

To support innovation in education, educational leaders must be willing to embrace change and take risks (Fullan, 2015). This requires a shift from the traditional top-down approach to a more collaborative and participatory approach, where teachers and students are involved in the decision-making process (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004).

Educational leaders must be willing to listen to the ideas and perspectives of teachers and students and to work together with them to identify and implement innovative instructional strategies. Educational leaders must also be willing to provide teachers with the necessary training, resources, and support to implement innovative instructional strategies effectively (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). This involves providing ongoing professional development opportunities, as well as access to technology and other resources that can support innovative teaching practices.

Leadership by Example and Support

Instructional leadership, characterized by leading through exemplary actions and providing robust support, is integral to improving educational outcomes. This approach involves leaders demonstrating best practices in pedagogy, curriculum development, and classroom management, serving as role models for teachers. Additionally, effective instructional leaders provide essential resources, professional development opportunities, and emotional support to help teachers succeed. Here's what the participants expressed about this theme.

Participant 13 stated, "Be a role model- lead by example." Participant 10 claimed, "*I encourage them to be more creative and innovative in their ways by providing them with strong support, guidance, and supervision and helping them to be updated with various trends in classroom instructional practices and strategies.*" Participant 18 responded, "*By providing support, resources, and recognition for teachers who demonstrate initiative and innovation in their instructional practices,* Participant 19 confirmed, "*She provides constructive feedback, mentorship, and support to teachers to help them improve their instructional practices.*

Participant 13 emphasized being a role model and providing positive feedback to teachers and school personnel as one of the strategies for promoting instructional leadership. Participants 10, 18, and 19 focused on providing strong support, guidance, and supervision as school heads to encourage creativity and keep teachers updated on instructional practices.

Findings of the case study conducted by Versland et. Al. (2017) noted that teachers reported that the principal led by example, thereby creating vicarious learning opportunities for them. Teachers acknowledged that the principal participated in professional development and learned side-by-side with teachers to demonstrate the importance of everyone's role in an instructional initiative. The principal also pursued an advanced degree and used research-based practices to improve the school. Teachers recounted that the principal worked hard to develop relationships with staff, students, and parents, chaperoned and

coached various activities, provided financial support for students, and championed the school in public venues. Teachers, in turn, emulated many of these examples to further support the mission of the school.

Observation and Feedback:

Classroom observation and feedback are important strategies in instructional leadership, designed to elevate the standards of teaching and learning within educational institutions. These strategies involve a systematic approach where instructional leaders, such as principals, observe teachers in their classrooms to gain a detailed understanding of their teaching methods, student engagement levels, classroom management techniques, and overall instructional effectiveness.

Following the observation, the feedback process is crucial for translating observations into actionable insights. Constructive feedback should be timely, specific, and focused on both strengths and areas for improvement. The goal is to support teachers in their professional development and enhance their instructional practices. The following statements of the participants describe how school leaders conduct observation and provide feedback to teachers:

Participant 1 confirmed, “By building a culture of innovation among teachers and conducting regular Classroom Observation as well as monitoring and evaluation of their teaching performance.” Participant 5 also answered, “Classroom demo during Inset and LAC sessions.” Participant 7 claimed, “Regular monitoring of classes and providing them technical assistance.” Participant 8 responded, “Regular monitoring of classroom activities to promote quality instruction and values formation.

Participant 9 remarked, “*I do Classroom Observation and FGD.*” Participant 6 also noted, “*Clinical supervision.*” Participant 8 mentioned “*Demonstration Teaching and Classes Observation*” Participant 10 mentioned, “*Instructional Supervision /Classroom supervision.*” Participant 12 asserted, “Having friendly observation with them...” Participant 13 revealed, “During the post-conference, we guide the teachers to identify their strengths and areas for improvement and empower them to set meaningful goals for their professional growth. Participant 16 declared, “By observing and evaluating teachers, providing feedback, support and promoting a positive environment focused on continuous improvement of school performance.”

These strategies and initiatives, implemented by a total of 10 participants, emphasize the importance of collaboration, professional development, innovation, and strong leadership in fostering instructional leadership within schools. By embracing these approaches, educators can continuously improve their teaching practices, create engaging learning environments, and empower students to achieve their full potential.

Classroom observation has a longstanding tradition in the assessment and development of teaching and teachers in education systems across the world (O’Leary, 2020). As part of teacher evaluation, classroom observations are widely used around the world to improve the quality of teaching and learning. As a process of classroom observations, teachers and administrators can arrange informal and formal meetings before and after the observation to discuss the expectations and outcomes of the observation (Shah et al., 2018). Data collected through classroom observation can also help schools and districts in many alternate ways.

As an administrator, it is important to monitor and observe day-to-day activities and provide positive and timely feedback to ensure student progress and the professional growth of teachers (Akram et al., 2017). Research also indicated that it is equally essential to provide teachers with appropriate and detailed feedback for their personal growth (Grissom et al., 2013). Findings from Grissom et al. (2013) indicated

that feedback helps teachers to identify good practices and also at times helps to reflect on areas of improvement.

II. Best Practices of the School Heads in Promoting Empowering Instructional Leadership:

These themes highlight the multifaceted approaches school heads use to empower teachers and promote effective instructional leadership.

The key themes and corresponding narratives of various school leaders provide insights into their multifaceted approach to empowering teachers and promoting effective instructional leadership. The core themes identified are fostering a culture of innovation, empowering teachers to take ownership, promoting shared leadership in decision-making, and recognizing teacher achievements and contributions.

Fostering a Culture of Innovation

The narrative of fostering a culture of innovation is evident in practices like conducting regular classroom observations (CO) and monitoring, providing assistance and feedback, encouraging volunteerism, and supporting teacher innovations through material and constructive feedback. This theme also encompasses the demonstration of instructional practices during INSET and LAC sessions, regular class monitoring with technical assistance, and adapting to classroom technology. Participants of this study identified some leadership practices on how they cultivate a culture of innovation in their respective schools.

Participant 1 declared “*Builds a culture of innovation among teachers and conducts regular classroom observations (CO) and monitoring.*” Participant 3 stressed “The spirit of volunteerism and shared responsibility.” Participant 5 responded “Nagkakaroon ng demo-teaching kapag may INSET or LAC session” (Demonstrates instructional practices during INSET and LAC sessions).” Participant 6 added, “Regularly monitors classes and provides technical assistance.”

Participant 8 stated “Meron kaming school innovation na “Adapt to Classroom Technology.” (Our school has an innovation called Adapt a School Technology)” Participant 10 said, “Monitors teachers daily, provides assistance, and conducts faculty meetings for evaluation and feedback” Participant 13 affirmed “Supports teacher innovations by providing materials and constructive feedback.” Participant 15 mentioned “Mentoring, Coaching, and Giving positive feedback.” Participant 17 said “Monitors classroom activities to promote quality instruction and values formation.”

Creating an innovative culture in school is a proactive strategy that encourages, empowers teachers, and promotes instructional leadership. Schools may foster an atmosphere where teachers feel appreciated and supported in their endeavors to improve teaching and learning by promoting innovation, experimentation, and teamwork. Teachers are encouraged to embrace and apply new teaching approaches by this innovative culture, which also establishes them as leaders who promote ongoing development. Empowering teachers in this way leads to a more engaged and inspired workforce, ultimately benefiting student outcomes and fostering a more adaptive and forward-thinking educational system.

Innovation in education involves a shift from traditional teaching methods to more student-centered and interactive approaches (Hargreaves, 2014). It means moving beyond the traditional lecture-based approach to teaching, to one that is more focused on engaging students in the learning process. This approach is characterized by an emphasis on hands-on, experiential learning activities that promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills (McLeod & Graber, 2018).

Empowering Teachers to Take Ownership

Empowering teachers to take ownership is highlighted by encouraging the exploration of new strategies, peer observation, action research, teacher leadership roles, technology integration, instructional supervision, and creating their learning interventions with guidance and trust. This theme also involves guiding teachers in creating proposals implementing instructional practices and encouraging them to lead their projects. The following narratives given by the participants underscored the different approaches to how teachers are empowered to take ownership:

Participant 1 declared “Tinuturuan ang teachers gumawa ng proposal and mg-implement ng bagong instructional practices.” (Guides teachers in creating proposals and implementing new instructional practices.) Participant 8 emphasized, “*Act as a proponent of a certain project proposal and let them lead their project.*” Participant 10 enumerated, “*Encourages exploration of new strategies, peer observation, action research, teacher leadership roles, technology integration, and instructional supervision.*”

Participant 11, answered “*Hinahayaan kaming gumawa ng sariling intervention*” (Allows teachers to create their learning interventions with guidance and trust.” Participant 12 explained, “*Create opportunities for teachers to collaborate on projects, share best practices, and learn from their colleagues.*” Participant 15 expressed, “*Binibigyan kami ng equal chances/opportunities para mglead ng program/project/activity.*” (Giving us chances/ equal opportunities to all teachers to lead certain programs, projects, or activities.)

Participant 17 stated, “*A teacher makes an innovation that leads to a positive outcome to improve the performance of the school.*” Participant 18 elaborated, “*Our school head empowers us to take ownership in teaching, such as freedom to choose teaching strategies, assessment methods, and classroom management techniques.*”

Encouraging teachers to take charge by using an instructional leadership strategy changes the educational environment by giving teachers a sense of agency and responsibility. This approach encourages teachers to create, work together, and participate in decision-making processes by acknowledging them as essential leaders within their schools. Involving teachers in curriculum development, instructional practices, and school regulations fosters a more engaged and motivated teaching staff in addition to advancing their professional development. Ultimately, giving teachers this kind of empowerment creates a more vibrant and productive learning environment where teachers and students may flourish.

Atrizka et al., (2020), stated that teacher empowerment operates at multiple levels, from school leadership encouraging teacher involvement in decision-making to providing opportunities for training and skills development. Additionally, the study of Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) elucidates that teacher empowerment constitutes a pivotal linchpin in the cultivation of a thriving school culture, which, in turn, catalyzes improvements in teacher effectiveness. Moreover, Nazir et. al (2023) cited that teacher empowerment is inexorably tied to augmented teacher autonomy—a prerogative that empowers educators to shape their teaching practices and actively engage in decision-making processes within the school (Goddard et al., 2000). This heightened autonomy is synonymous with amplified teacher engagement, accentuating overall effectiveness

Promoting Shared Leadership in Decision-Making

Shared leadership in decision-making within schools is a transformative approach that involves teachers, administrators, and staff working together to develop instructional policies and practices. By distributing leadership responsibilities, this model leverages the diverse expertise and perspectives of all school

members, fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility. When decision-making is inclusive, people who are directly involved in the educational process provide insightful opinions that improve the quality and relevance of school programs. Ultimately, shared leadership cultivates a more dynamic, cohesive, and motivated school community, leading to more effective and innovative educational outcomes. The following remarks from the school heads and teachers encapsulate how shared leadership is practiced in school based on their experiences.

Participant 1 remarked, Conducting Focal Group Discussion to collect ideas and create feasible decisions. Participant 2 expressed, *“Consultation...Tinatanong kami ng aming mga opinion sa isang isyu at suggestions tungkol sa gagawing aktibidad. (Consultation... we are being asked about our opinion on certain issues and suggestions about activities to be conducted.)”* Participant 3, explained, *“By collecting one’s opinion and coming up with one decision and or by collaboration from among the teachers that would be beneficial to everyone.”* Participant 4 also added, *“Encourages collaboration through LAC, FGDs, and teachers’ meetings. Involves teachers in planning and decision-making.* Participant 5, elaborated, *“By involving school personnel in the decision making, especially on instruction. Consulting them on how to improve learners’ performance.”*

Participant 6 stated, *“FGD is always done. Everyone is being asked about their ideas and suggestions to improve instructions.* Participant 7 declared, *“Encourage them to do the planning through collaborative efforts of course through the guidance of the SH.”* Participant 8, discussed, *“Promoting a culture of shared leadership in instructional decision-making involves creating an environment where teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders collaborate and contribute to the decision-making process.* Participant 14 uttered, *“During staff meetings, everyone is allowed to speak and share knowledge and settle disputes.”* Participant 15 declared, *“I always include them in the planning and decision-making processes. They were assured that they were in a safe space where their voices would be heard and listened to, their suggestions and opinions matter. They are free to air their sentiments, and they can freely ask questions”* Participant 16 emphasized, *“Involving the community and stakeholders in all the projects and activities of the school.”* Participant 17 revealed, *“Our SH allows us to contribute to the decision-making. He always asks our opinions before concluding a situation or problem.* Participant 18 also said, *“Our school head promotes a culture of shared leadership in instructional decision-making by fostering open communication, collaboration, and mutual respect among all stakeholders”.* Participant 20, claimed, *“Meron kaming regular meeting kung saan pinag-uusapan ang mga pagbabago o isyu sa aming paaralan. (Our school head would usually schedule a meeting to consult, talk, and agree if there were changes or concerns to be addressed.)”*

Considering the answers of 14 of the 20 participants in this study, it can be inferred that shared leadership in decision-making is widely practiced in most schools. Promoting shared leadership is exemplified by encouraging collaboration through LAC sessions, Focal Group Discussions, and teachers' meetings, and involving teachers in planning and decision-making. Likewise, they are assured of a safe place where their opinions, suggestions, and voices are heard and they are allowed to ask questions during consultations or meetings. Involvement of the stakeholders also is being practiced.

Similarly, Kohler-Evans, Webster-Smith, and Albritton (2013) expressed the value of shared processing in each educational setting: With a spirit of partnership, meaningful conversations are the safe spaces that are set aside for purposeful, intentional, focused, and authentic discourse that includes: committed listening; rallying around the vision; sharing of perspectives; sharing of passion; planning and working through agreements for action; nurturing and celebrating the value of others; and resolving and managing

conflict. The focus on a partnership to create shared processing and reflective practice is critical to the school's culture. "This can be done when schools begin unwrapping the gift of meaningful conversations that are geared toward personal and professional development and accountability, and a focus on each person "being better today than yesterday" (Kohler-Evans et al., 2013)

Moreover, Morel (2014) stressed the value of shared power and a positive environment in collaboration: ... greater teacher satisfaction exists when teachers are free to reflect, collaborate, and create their professional growth. In a time when attracting and retaining excellent teachers is becoming more and more difficult, providing collaborative professional learning can go far to increase teacher satisfaction.

Recognizing Teacher Achievements and Contributions

Recognizing and celebrating innovative practices and successes boosts morale and reinforces the value of innovation. Whether through formal recognition programs or informal acknowledgment, celebrating these achievements helps to build a positive and proactive school culture. Participants in this study shared the following experiences on how teachers, achievements, and contributions are recognized and celebrated both privately and publicly.

Participant 1 stated, "*Through the PRAISE program.*" Participant 2 mentioned, *they "Appreciate teachers with certificates and gifts."* Participant 3 said, "*By simply recognition and appreciation for their best efforts*". Participant 4 narrated, "*Recognizes teachers based on assessment results.*" Participant 5 also answered, "*Recognize teachers and stakeholders by giving certificates and awards*" Participant 6 expressed, "*Rewards teachers for their achievements.*" Participant 7 declared, "*Gives awards and compliments when appropriate.*"

Participant 8 responded, "*Expresses gratitude and celebrates achievements.*" Participant 9 remarked, "*Private and public acknowledgement especially during assemblies.*" Participant 14 pointed out, "*By giving compliments and then encourage other teachers to do the same.*" Participant 16 explained, "*Presenting and sharing their achievements/contribution to the school, community and cluster schools for they can also adopt the new technique that we are using in our school.*" Participant 19 discussed, "*The SH publicly acknowledges the achievements of teachers during teachers' meetings, GPTA Meetings and other School Activities.* Participant 20 emphasized, "*Announcements are made to recognize the teacher-achiever during SPTA assembly and HRPTA meeting and other school gatherings.*"

Several participants highlighted the practice of formally recognizing teachers' achievements through awards, certificates, and public acknowledgment. Participants 9, 14, 19, and 20 mentioned the use of assemblies, meetings, and other school events to publicly recognize teachers. This public acknowledgment can serve not only to validate the individual teacher's efforts but also to inspire other teachers to excel. Three participants stressed the value of personalized forms of recognition, such as offering compliments or acknowledging teachers' specific contributions to the school and the community.

In his study, Haile (2017) shed light on the fact that through recognition, employees gain a sense of leadership and help carry along the community as a whole. While the "promotion" described by Haile may not be traditional, the change in leadership responsibility produces an informal promotion as the employee's role in the organization changes. Overall, promotions, be it a formal title change or informal responsibilities, act as a form of recognition because they reward and recognize individuals for a job well done.

As claimed also by Stewart Banks, Kuofie, Hakim, and Branch, (2015), the commitment of all employees is directly connected to rewards and recognition. As these two research studies described, it is essential to

create recognition systems for teachers. Motivation includes the drive to continue doing one's work or the drive to make changes to produce a positive impact.

Furthermore, Hodges (2017) also asserted that teachers who feel appreciated become more productive, have higher levels of engagement, and are more likely to stay at their school. In addition, these individuals are more likely to receive high satisfaction scores on end-of-the-year surveys from students and parents. The community becomes aware of their recognition and appreciates their commitment to students and the school community.

III. Creating a Culture of Trust and Collaboration

Building trust and collaboration between school heads and teachers is essential for effective instructional leadership. Establishing trust between school heads and teachers is crucial for enhancing collaboration. Let's explore the key actions and behaviors that contribute to fostering trust and collaboration as shared by the participants:

Fair Judgement and Neutral Mediation

In any organization, fair judgment builds trust and credibility. People are more likely to respect and follow leaders perceived as fair and just. School heads who demonstrate fair judgment treat all teachers equitably, ensuring decisions are unbiased. Participants stressed that school heads should avoid taking sides and instead act as neutral mediators. Facilitating close-door discussions between conflicting parties allows for open communication and resolution.

Participant 1 remarked, *"By being just and fair at all times."* Participant 11 added, *"by being fair in dealing with them."* Participant 14 also stated, *"Her fair judgment to all and willingness to mentor teachers."* Participant 6 mentioned, *"Result of conversation should remain between the persons who talked."* Likewise, Participant 13 asserted, *"They are assured that whatever is shared will not be spread out to others."* Participant 13: *By being fair, objective, and impartial in my judgment.*

The responses from the participants reveal a strong emphasis on fairness and confidentiality as essential qualities of effective leadership. Participants repeatedly highlighted the importance of being just, fair, and impartial in decision-making, with several noting that leaders should treat all individuals equitably and consistently. The participants indicate that teachers appreciate leaders who not only demonstrate fairness and impartiality but also create a safe, supportive environment where confidentiality is respected, and professional growth is nurtured.

Openness, Honesty, and Transparency

Openness, honesty, and transparency are crucial in building trust among school leaders and teachers. The participants claimed that when school leaders are open, honest, and transparent, it creates a culture where everyone feels valued and respected, leading to a more collaborative and positive working environment. The following behaviors of the school head as observed by the participants based on their experiences build trust and collaboration in their school.

Participant 1 expressed, *"By being transparent in all aspects and having human consideration."* Participant 8 also said, *"Communicate to them effectively, be honest, admit if I'm wrong, and say sorry for it."* Participant 9 stated, *"By being truthful to my feedback and comments during post conferences and through a friendly way."* Participant 11 added, *"By being transparent with them."* Participant 13 shared, *"Foster transparency and honesty."* Participant 15 professed, *"The principal demonstrates openness, honesty,*

transparency, reliability, and competence. Participant 18 declared, “*School heads should maintain open and transparent communication with teachers*”.

The responses of the participants pointed out that when school leaders are honest about challenges, successes, and failures, teachers are more likely to respect their integrity. This mutual respect strengthens relationships and promotes a supportive school community. As Palmer (2021) pointed out in his article, only when they habitually demonstrate integrity—honesty, trustworthiness, and reliability—are school leaders perceived by those they lead as authentic, credible, and trustworthy.

In addition to honesty, school heads also must exercise openness. When leaders are open about their decisions and actions, it ensures that they are held to high standards, which builds trust. The answers of the participants implied that teachers are more likely to trust leaders who are accountable and take responsibility for their actions. Transparent communication ensures that teachers are well-informed about decisions, policies, and changes. When leaders openly share information, teachers feel included and are more likely to understand and support the decisions being made. Transparent leaders who openly share information and involve teachers in decision-making processes foster a sense of ownership and teamwork, leading to more effective collaboration and better outcomes for students.

Consistency and Positive Attitudes

The consistency and positive attitude of the school leader can significantly foster trust and collaboration among staff, students, and the wider school community. Consistent behavior and decision-making create a stable environment. Consistent application of policies and rules ensures fairness. When everyone is held to the same standards, it reduces perceptions of favoritism and bias, fostering an environment of trust.

A school head with a positive attitude towards work fosters a positive school culture where collaboration is valued and celebrated. By maintaining a positive attitude, the school head empowers teachers to take initiative and contribute their ideas. The answers of the participants describe the actions exemplifying consistency and positive attitudes of the principals.

Participant 3 remarked, “*School heads should model positive attitudes.*” Participant 9 affirmed, “*There is consistency in providing reliable and consistent responses and assistance over time helps build trust. Teachers can rely on me to consistently provide accurate information and support.*” Participant 16 answered, “*Being transparent, consistent, and having a positive attitude towards works.*” Participant 18 disclosed “*Demonstrating consistency and fairness in decision-making processes fosters trust by ensuring that teachers feel their concerns and opinions are considered.*”

Parallel to this, Joseph (2020) articulated in his article, that when administrators maintain a sense of optimism, their teams act with more confidence and collaborate more effectively. Positive leadership makes a difference in productivity, satisfaction, and happiness at work. Leading with positivity also helps to build trust among colleagues, and it becomes safer to open to change. Positive leadership supports the idea that focusing on staff’s growth potential and shifting from the distractions of constraints and toxic culture empowers people to do and be their best.

Being Accessible and Approachable

When a school head is accessible, it encourages open lines of communication. Teachers feel comfortable discussing concerns and seeking guidance and feedback. Being approachable and accessible allows the school head to demonstrate reliability. Consistently being available and responsive builds trust over time. Following through on commitments and being present in the school community reinforces trust. The

following expressions of the participants affirm the importance of accessibility and approachability of the principal in promoting trust and collaboration.

Participant 4 asserted, *“Dapat available lagi ang school head kapag may mga activities.”*

Participant 5 answered, *“By being always present in school and teachers are always happy in providing TA. Participant 18 revealed, “Being approachable and accessible allows teachers to feel comfortable discussing issues and seeking guidance from the school head.”*

Several studies provided insights into the importance of the visibility of school leaders in building trust in them. In 2018, Graham reported that to build a culture of trust, which is linked to effective schools, a school leader should be visible, always circulating to observe learning and teaching, relate to and support staff, and support teacher self-efficacy and accountability. Likewise, a study by Jackson (2018) suggested that school management by visibility was an effective strategy for building trust in staff and students, as well as parents, and was perceived by staff as a strategy effective school leaders utilize to manage. Lasater (2016) also emphasized the need for explicit training in building rapport, trust, and communication as a school leader, and points to increasing visibility and accessibility as a critical facet of fostering rapport and trust through structuring both formal and informal methods of leader visibility.

Active Listening and Valuing Teachers’ Input and Contribution

Actively listening to teachers’ perspectives fosters collaboration and valuing their expertise builds trust. Active listening validates the experiences and feelings of the school community, reinforcing that their perspectives matter and are important in the decision-making process. When school leaders actively listen to teachers, students, and parents, it shows that their opinions and concerns are valued. It encourages teacher participation and provides opportunities for self-involvement. The experiences shared by the participants in this study show the importance of active listening and valuing teachers’ ideas in facilitating instructional leadership.

Participant 5 responded, *“Be a good listener and do not add to the problem.”* Participant 6 said, *“Kailangan, pinakikinggan natin ang kanilang mga ideya.”* (Their ideas should be heard and considered.)

Participant 10 also answered, *“Listening to the teachers and including them in making decisions in various plans. Likewise, permit them to contribute their perspectives to the school’s programs and projects by considering their thoughts and ideas.”* Participant 12 added, *“Hinihikayat ang mga teachers na sabihin kung may problema, sabihin ang opinyon nila at pananaw ng walang alinlangan at may paggalang.”* (Encourage teachers to express their concerns, opinions, and perspectives openly and respectfully).

Participant 18 remarked, *“Actively listening to teachers’ perspectives and valuing their input demonstrates respect for their expertise and fosters a sense of collaboration.”* Participant 19 declared, *“Providing opportunities for open dialogue, active listening, and feedback fosters a culture of trust where teachers feel valued, heard, and empowered to contribute to decision-making processes.”*

Active listening helps build stronger connections between the school leader and the community members. It creates a sense of closeness and mutual understanding, which is essential for trust. By genuinely listening, school leaders can empathize with the experiences and emotions of others, creating a more compassionate and supportive school environment. Salamondra (2021) concluded in her study that effective communication creates positive school cultures wherein staff can adapt and embrace change.

Increased skill in all components of effective communication decreases the fear associated with challenging conversations. Trust is essential to build strong relationships among stakeholders. Clarity of intent increases transparency, and active listening supports people to process feedback and implement

changes for growth. These essential characteristics build the strong stakeholder relationships necessary for productive schools focused on improvement.

Communication and Follow-Through

Effective communication and follow-through are vital aspects of instructional leadership. Effective communication is the foundation upon which the school head establishes a clear vision and set of goals for the school. By conveying these aspirations clearly and consistently, the school head ensures that teachers, students, parents, and the broader community understand and are committed to a unified direction. It involves taking concrete steps to ensure that the vision is not just aspirational but achievable. This includes setting targets, providing resources, and regularly reviewing progress to keep everyone aligned and motivated. The experiences shared by participants 8, 9, 13, and 17 revealed the importance of effective communication while participants 4, 5, 12, 17, and 18 emphasized the follow-through of the school head in sustaining trust and collaboration in school.

Participant 8 replied, *“Communicate to them effectively.”* Participant 9 added, *“Encouraging two-way communication and actively listening to teachers' feedback and concern is essential.”* Participant 13 also answered, *“Merong open communication sa mga guro.”* (Have an open communication with the teachers.) Participant 17 stressed, *“The lines are open for communication between SH and teachers is one of the actions that our SH contributed in creating trust to improve instructional leadership.”*

Participant 4 responded, *“Using the data of the learners, through focal group discussions the teacher could suggest ideas and if it is appropriate could be implemented through innovations.”* Participant 5 also answered, *“Nagkakaroon ng miting para pag-usapan kung anuman ang mga latest updates sa DepEd, mga plano, problema and accomplishments.”* (Conduct meetings to discuss DepEd updates, plans, issues, and accomplishments.) Participant 12 stated *“By conducting regular meetings for teachers to discuss instructional practices, share best practices, and collaborate on solutions to common challenges.”* Participant 18 commented, *“Following through on commitments and effectively communicating decisions and rationale builds transparency and credibility, further strengthening trust between the school head and teachers.”* Participant 17 remarked, *“Providing positive feedback and giving support to the innovation of the teachers can make teachers innovate of more innovative instructional ideas.”*

From the responses of the participants, it is good to note that the school head encourages open dialogue, creates opportunities for team meetings and actively listens to feedback from teachers. Following-through is also practiced by using the actual data gathered by the teachers and discussing issues, accomplishments, and plans during focus group discussions and meetings. Regular constructive feedback is also done and provision of support to the needs of the teachers is evident.

Accountability and Ethical Standards

Demonstrating accountability and upholding ethical standards reinforces trust and fosters collaboration in school. School heads should be true to their words, making decisions firmly and demonstrating knowledge. Teachers rely on leaders who act with integrity and consistently meet their responsibilities and commitments. Taking responsibility for their actions and decisions, especially when mistakes are made, shows that the school head is committed to ethical leadership. By adhering to ethical standards, school leaders set a good example for teachers, students, and parents. The following comments from the respondents describe the importance of accountability and adherence to ethical standards in facilitating instructional leadership.

Participant 9 responded, *“Taking responsibility for any mistakes or errors and working to rectify them promptly. Teachers are more likely to trust someone who owns up to their actions and seeks to make things right.”* Participant 8 also answered, *“I always conduct orientation on DepEd orders, memos, especially to new teachers, instill them some professional standards and ethics during meetings or school-based seminars, legacy that a professional teachers must have, always remind them that we belong to DepEd Family and as a family, tinitingala kami ng community kaya dapat kung may di pgkakaintindihan, daapat pag-usapan ng maayos na hindi nag-aaway sa harap ng estudyante o ng mga magulang.”* Participant 14 remarked, *“Being true to his words, firm with decisions, and knowledgeable.* Participant 19 stated, *“School heads should demonstrate accountability for actions, be honest, and uphold high ethical standards.”* Participant 20 declared *“By setting his example. With or without the school head, he/she is confident enough that the teachers are performing their task religiously.”*

Hadhrami et al. (2022), ethical leaders uphold high moral standards, exhibit honesty and integrity, and serve as role models, fostering trust and accountability. They recognize the importance of fairness, empathy, and social responsibility, and their decisions reflect these values. As a result, organizations led by ethical leaders tend to experience greater levels of employee satisfaction, as they feel valued and respected, and, in turn, are more motivated to contribute their best effort. Also, Vikaraman et. al (2021) concluded in their study that current school leaders, especially the principals, need to practice leadership styles that develop trust, sustain the trust, and create a belief system that can also morally motivate teachers to produce quality work, respect their organizational decisions, and work toward a common goal. Thus, integrating ethical leadership practices is believed to help principals play these multiple roles in their daily work endeavors in a balanced manner which in return benefits teachers too. The ethical leadership style of school leaders is likely to create an ethical and trusting work climate conducive enough to promote positive work behavioral patterns of teachers.

Honor Commitments and Advocate for Teachers

School heads should honor commitments, maintain confidentiality, and advocate for teachers' needs. When school leaders honor their commitments, they demonstrate reliability. This consistency builds a foundation of trust, as everyone knows they can depend on one another to follow through on promises and responsibilities. Teachers trust their school heads who do what they say. By honoring commitments, individuals show respect for each other's time, efforts, and contributions. This mutual respect is key to effective collaboration, as it fosters a positive and supportive environment.

Participant 18 stressed, *“School heads should honor commitments, maintain confidentiality when necessary, and advocate for teachers' needs and concerns, demonstrating reliability and accountability.”* Additionally, advocating for teachers is another factor that fosters collaboration and growth. It directly impacts teacher morale. Based on the experiences of the participants, the school heads advocate for teachers in varied ways, listening to their concerns and suggestions and letting them feel safe sharing their true thoughts, providing access for their professional development, supporting teachers for their special projects or innovation, recognizing their achievements, organizing team-building activities to strengthen the relationship and creating an environment where teachers feel supported in addressing and resolving conflicts.

Participant 6 expressed, *“Their ideas should be heard and considered. The result of conversation should remain between the persons who talked.”* Participant 16 claimed, *“Nakikinig ang school head ng ideya ng bawat isa, shows appreciation and creates a positive work environment.”* Participant 7 also stated,

“Allowing them to be heard and solicit ideas instead of giving orders or tasks without asking their thoughts about something that is to be carried out.” Participant 10 commented, “Listening to the teachers and including them in making decisions in various plans. Likewise, permit them to contribute their perspectives to the school’s programs and projects by considering their thoughts and ideas to discuss various initiatives and issues in the school during their implementation.” Participant 9 said, “Provide Professional Development” Similarly, Participant 13 responded, “Encourage personal and professional growth of teachers.” Participant 19 revealed, “Usually, nagkakaroon ng team-building activities. These activities help create a supportive and collaborative environment where teachers feel valued and connected.” Participant 8 remarked, “Conduct recognition and appreciation programs.” Participant 12 declared, “Show appreciation for a job well done. Recognize outstanding performance of teachers and give rewards/recognition.”

Trust, Love and Understanding

School heads should cultivate an environment of trust, love, and understanding within the school community. When teachers and staff trust their instructional leader, they are more open to feedback and new ideas. On the other hand, when instructional leaders trust their teachers, it empowers them to take risks and innovate in their teaching practices.

School head who demonstrates genuine care for the well-being of students, teachers, and staff fosters an environment where love and empathy are central. Showing love and understanding involves recognizing the individual strengths and needs of teachers like supporting teachers in maintaining a healthy work-life balance to show concern for their overall well-being. Showing love and understanding involves creating an inclusive and supportive environment. Ensuring that all voices are heard and valued in collaborative efforts promotes a sense of belonging. When people feel valued and understood, they are more likely to trust and collaborate.

Participant 14 remarked, *“I think the school head must develop a culture where trust, love, and understanding are present in the school community. Then, possibly the school will become the bridge if there are misunderstandings between teachers. By having this kind of environment collaboration will occur and anything within the school will be possible.”* Participant 6 stated, *“By trusting them also. Teacher's trust and confidence in themselves are built when they feel that they are being trusted and empowered.”* Participant 13 declared, *“I am not just a leader but a friend. At times I was just a listener and a shoulder to cry on. I just offered my presence to several teachers. They are assured that whatever is shared will not be spread out to others.”*

These themes that emerged from the respondents are related to the study of Salazar (2016), who formulated the grounded theory that arose regarding the overarching role of trust in effective instructional leadership which states that, trust is a catalytic medium, i.e. an activator and enabler, through which: relationships are created respectfully, planning is conducted purposefully, interventions are developed intentionally, and by which student cooperation and engagement are increased significantly, thereby giving evidence of effective instructional leadership.

Furthermore, the case study conducted by Edwards et. al. (2020) concluded that rather than perpetuate the iron cage of technical rationality, schools should be places that foster human connections and relationships where leaders demonstrate an ethic of care and social justice efforts through professional love for their employees, students, and external community members. People have the potential to authentically care for each other. As educators and educational leaders, we need to embrace the need to practice professional

love (justice and the ethic of care) as a strategy/process to achieve school improvement and discover how to meet the varied needs of our diverse school demographics.

Encouragement and Appreciation

School heads should actively encourage and appreciate teachers' contributions, respect their ideas, and foster psychological safety. Encouragement from a leader fosters a supportive work environment, enhancing collaboration and trust. Encouragement from leadership can make teachers feel safe to try new teaching methods without fear of criticism. Schools can implement recognition programs for staff to formally acknowledge their contributions and achievements. Providing regular, positive feedback and maintaining open lines of communication fosters a culture of appreciation and trust. A principal who acknowledges a teacher's innovative teaching method at a staff meeting builds morale and a culture of respect. Encouraging and appreciating teachers' participation in professional development opportunities fosters a growth-oriented and collaborative environment.

Participant 6 shared, *"By recognizing their work and giving them roles and assignments during school activities."* Participant 9 answered, *"Recognize and celebrate contributions. Give praise and recognition for the teachers' contributions and achievements in the teaching-learning process."* Participant 16 responded, *"For giving support, importance, and appreciation in every innovation of teachers."* Participant 17 stated, *"Providing positive feedback and giving support to the innovation of the teachers can make teachers innovate of more innovative instructional ideas."* Participant 19 remarked, *"Showing appreciation for teachers' contributions and fostering a sense of psychological safety are key components of creating a supportive culture."* Participant 20 said, *"Announcements are made to recognize the teacher-achiever during SPTA assembly and HRPTA meeting and other school gatherings."*

The result showed that acknowledging their efforts motivates teachers to explore more innovative instructional ideas. Appreciation for collaborative efforts strengthens team dynamics and encourages further collaboration. By integrating encouragement and appreciation into the daily interactions and culture of a school, trust and collaboration can be significantly enhanced, creating a more supportive, effective, and joyful educational environment.

Positive Feedback and Support

Positive feedback and support from school heads are pivotal in shaping successful instructional leadership. The findings of the study of Zrein and David (2023) proved that school leaders' feedback improves the quality of teaching instructions, fosters a loyal culture among staff members, develops teachers as leaders in their positions, and enhances school performance through better students' academic achievements. This result matched the outcomes of Benton's (2019) research regarding the effectiveness of school leaders' feedback. He concluded that effective feedback is a clear plan that guides teachers with examples and suggested pedagogies that augment teachers' performance.

Participant 10 said, *"I give motivation and support to my teachers in everything they do, as long as it benefits the learning achievements of the pupils and the school."* Participant 13 also stated, *"Providing feedback and guidance in dealing with diverse learners ensuring that each learner was treated equally in and outside the classroom."* Participant 16 added, *"For giving support, importance and appreciation in every innovation of teachers."* Participant 17 answered, *"Providing positive feedback and giving support to the innovation of the teachers can make teachers innovate more innovative instructional ideas."*

Participant 19 revealed, *“She provides constructive feedback, mentorship, and support to teachers to help them improve their instructional practices.”*

Indeed, the experiences of the participants revealed that positive feedback reinforces teachers’ confidence in their instructional strategies, motivating them to continue improving their teaching practices. Providing positive feedback and support for teachers’ innovations encourages further creativity. Positive feedback helps teachers reflect on their practices and identify areas of strength and improvement. School heads who provide positive feedback and support model effective leadership behaviors for teachers. Likewise, when school heads offer consistent support, it builds strong professional relationships based on mutual respect and trust.

Safe and Supportive Environment

Creating a safe and supportive environment is essential for fostering trust and collaboration in instructional leadership. A safe and supportive environment encourages teachers and staff to work together more effectively, sharing resources, ideas, and strategies. School heads can create a safe space for sharing ideas by organizing regular brainstorming sessions. Offering professional development opportunities in design thinking, inquiry-based learning, and educational technology empowers teachers. A positive work environment boosts staff morale, leading to higher job satisfaction and retention rates. Further, when team members feel safe to take risks, they are more likely to experiment with new instructional methods and technologies.

Participant 18 responded, *“A school head can encourage a culture where teachers feel comfortable sharing innovative instructional leadership ideas by creating a safe and supportive environment that values creativity, experimentation, and risk-taking.”* Also, participant 19 declared, *“School heads should establish a supportive and inclusive environment where teachers feel valued, respected, and encouraged to express their ideas.”* Participant 16 said, *“Kapag ang school head ay nakikinig sa mga ideya ng namin at ina-appreciate ang mga ginagawa naming, nagiging positive ang work environment”* Participant 9 answered, *“Fostering a supportive environment where knowledge and expertise are shared.”* Participant 6 remarked, *“Team building activities help create a supportive and collaborative environment where teachers feel valued and connected.”*

The study of Addimando (2019), showed that to increase the adoption of innovative practices, it is first necessary to work on the perception of “psychological working conditions,” especially in terms of general satisfaction and perception of social support and autonomy. This means that intervention programs aimed at improving the adoption of large and flexible repertoires of teaching practices should include work on teachers’ satisfaction, autonomy, and social support. In organizational terms, this would imply a shift from a microsystemic level (e.g., a teacher in interaction with his/her student in a classroom setting) to a macrosystem level (e.g., a teacher in interaction with the organizational system that interacts with students in a classroom setting), emphasizing the need for the individual to be supported, satisfied, and more independent and self-directed.

Sharing Expertise

Another critical element in establishing trust and collaboration in school is sharing expertise. School heads should share their knowledge and expertise on instructional supervision. When leaders consistently share their expertise and knowledge, it builds trust among team members. They feel confident that their leaders are knowledgeable and supportive.

School leaders should schedule regular team meetings or Learning Action cells where staff can discuss challenges, successes, and new strategies. This creates opportunities for teachers to share their expertise and for others to learn from. This too, promotes professional growth among staff, as they are constantly learning new strategies and techniques from their peers. School heads should also encourage a culture where giving and receiving constructive feedback is normal. This helps in identifying areas where expertise can be shared and applied effectively. Furthermore, instructional leaders should recognize and celebrate the successes and contributions of team members. This not only boosts morale but also highlights the value of shared expertise. Here's what the participants in this study said about this theme:

Participant 4 expressed, *"By designating everyone the job or responsibilities so that all are enjoying the tasks."* Participant 7 answered, *"Allowing them to be heard and solicit ideas instead of giving orders or tasks without asking their thoughts about something that is to be carried out."* Participant 9 asserted, *"Conduct meetings to discuss various updates, plans, issues, and accomplishments. Also, give praise and recognition for the teachers' contributions and achievements in the teaching-learning process."*

Participant 10 said, *"Listening to the teachers and including them in making decisions in various plans."*

Participant 12 declared *"By conducting regular meetings for teachers to discuss instructional practices, share best practices, and collaborate on solutions to common challenges."* Participant 17 expressed *"Providing positive feedback and giving support to the innovation of the teachers can make teachers innovate of more innovative instructional ideas."*

Participant 16 shared *"Belief in the inherent ability of teachers to serve in leadership capacities, provide, encourage and expect participation opportunities for self-involvement."* Participant 20 mentioned, *"The school must share/ inform the teachers about his knowledge and expertise on instructional supervision."*

This is supported by the case study of Rismark and Solvberg (2011) which concluded that by participating in knowledge-sharing activities, teachers actually shared knowledge, expanded their insights, and developed their teaching practices accordingly. The two categories creation moments and bumpy moments, derived from the analysis, conceptualize distinct features of the knowledge-creation process that teachers were engaged in to develop their teaching practices. Knowledge-sharing activities at the individual and team levels at the school allowed for creation moments to occur. However, knowledge did not always flow easily and straightforwardly during activities that were meant to enhance knowledge creation across all teaching teams.

Conflict Resolution Skills

Effective conflict resolution strengthens relationships among staff members, leading to a more cohesive team. School heads can resolve conflicts constructively by managing them skillfully and fostering cooperative relationships. When school leaders can handle conflicts effectively, they gain credibility and respect from their school staff, enhancing their overall leadership effectiveness. Teachers who feel their concerns are addressed fairly and effectively are more satisfied with their jobs and more committed to their work. When conflicts are handled effectively within the school, it creates a positive and collaborative work environment which indirectly benefits learners through improved teaching practice and a more stable learning environment. Let's explore how conflicts in schools are addressed by school heads as disclosed by the participants based on their individual experiences.

Participant 5 disclosed, *"Conducted counseling to several teachers and kept confidential issues confidential."* Participant 7 as well shared, *"Habang maliit pa lng ang problema, ayusin na agad."* (Fix

the problem while it's still small.) Participant 2 declared, “*Create a Conflict Resolution Policy*” Participant 13 mentioned, “By being fair, objective and impartial in my judgment.” Participant 14 said, “*Walang pinapanigan ang school head. Pinakikinggan ang sinasabi ng mga involved parties thru close door discussion.*” (*The school head doesn't take sides. The involved parties are heard through a closed-door discussion.*)

Participant 15 answered, “*By recognizing the diversity of school conflict, resolve it with the skills to manage it properly and constructively.*” Participant 18 mentioned, “*Creating clear channels for communication and providing opportunities for open dialogue to address concerns and grievances promptly.*” Participant 19 responded, “*Si school head ang mediator. He can facilitate a conversation between the conflicting parties, helping them to express their viewpoints and walk towards a resolution.*” (*The school head is the mediator.*)

Corollary with this concept, Thuo (2017) in his study mentioned that conflict management strategies used in schools include: building on leadership skills and having a mechanism in place to deal with conflicts. They also work on being knowledgeable about sources of conflicts, expanding resources, giving staff opportunities for growth, and trying to embrace change. Further, leaders strive to build on leadership skills like knowing when to switch leadership styles based on the situation, being accountable and responsible, trying to involve teachers in decision-making, and creating ways to recognize and reward staff, they try to understand individual uniqueness and ensure the school environment is safe for learning. Finally, he concluded in his study, that school leaders need to develop leadership competencies and have a mechanism in place to manage conflicts besides knowing when to intervene (resolving conflicts). They should look for ways to acquire additional resources (seek funds), create a conducive learning environment, provide opportunities for teachers' growth, and develop a culture where teachers work collaboratively with school stakeholders. Besides, they should have a mechanism to recognize performers and encourage innovativeness to motivate teachers.

Shared Responsibility

Shared responsibility is fundamental in instructional leadership. It helps in developing a pool of capable leaders who can step into leadership roles as needed. With multiple leaders contributing ideas and strategies, schools are more likely to implement innovative practices that improve teaching and learning. By empowering staff, promoting collaboration, and leveraging diverse perspectives, schools can enhance their instructional practices and better meet the needs of their students.

Participant 1 responded, “*By empowering them every time we have an activity.*” Participant 4 answered, “*By designating everyone the job or responsibilities so that all are enjoying the tasks.*”

Participant 8 voiced out, “*Provide shared leadership opportunity for teachers.*” Participant 9 added, “*Establish clear roles and responsibilities.*” Participant 12 remarked, “*Delegate teachers whenever possible, allowing them to make decisions that directly impact their classrooms and pupils.*”

The data articulated that promoting equal shared responsibility among teachers contributes to a positive school environment. When teachers are involved in decision-making, they are more likely to be committed to and enthusiastic about implementing changes and initiatives.

Tuominen (2022) discussed the following benefits of shared leadership: (1) Increased organizational performance: A meta-analysis found that shared leadership is 34% more effective than traditional leadership. The reason is that shared leadership structures itself around change and innovation, which is found to have a higher impact on team performance compared to traditional leadership styles. (2) Improved

collaboration, transferring of knowledge, and innovative thinking: Shared leadership encourages trust and knowledge sharing between employees. One research discovered that shared leadership was particularly helpful in building knowledge sharing in a virtual working environment, i.e., decentralized and digital teams. Moreover, knowledge sharing increases collaboration within the organization, improving innovation, and employee development, commitment, and involvement. (3) Increased job satisfaction and employee motivation: The Journal of Social Psychology published that shared leadership leads to team cohesion, consensus, and overall satisfaction, based on the collaborative effects. Essentially, shared leadership encourages a link between the individual employee and the collective identity of the organization and team. And the research shows when sufficient linkage is established, stronger motivation follows. (4) Natural leaders emerge, not hired: When an organization adopts a shared leadership approach, natural leaders emerge within teams. Logically, this follows that innately more capable leaders are formed because they are not selected but arise. The relationship dynamics between the leader and worker also is empowered. The reason is that when leaders aren't hired but formed dynamically, it improves team cohesion, interplay, and performance. Oppositely, this can also pose a risk if a natural leader doesn't become clear.

Legal Basis

The legal basis is integral in practicing instructional leadership for the effective and ethical operation of the schools. It ensures that leaders are accountable, resources are managed properly, and the rights of students and teachers are protected. Legal frameworks provide a basis for ethical decision-making. School heads can refer to these guidelines when faced with difficult decisions, ensuring that their actions are both legally and ethically sound. Legal standards also help instructional leaders identify and mitigate risks, ensuring a safe and secure learning environment. Participants in this research stressed that school heads should be equipped with appropriate policies and memoranda that provide a legal foundation for addressing conflicts.

Participant 8 explained, *"I always conduct orientation, DepEd orders, memos, especially to new teachers, instill them some professional standards and ethics during meetings or school-based seminars. Always remind them that we belong to the DepEd Family and as a family, we are models to the community and conflicts should be solved in the school first before forwarding it to higher offices."* Participant 10 emphasized, *"As a school head, I have to be knowledgeable enough about the laws, policies, and guidelines to address possible conflicts in the school."* Participant underscored, *"The school head must be equipped with the DepEd orders/memos to be used as legal basis in addressing possible conflicts."*

The positive or negative effects of conflicts in schools are directly related to how the school administrator manages the conflict. Well-managed conflicts allow the school to thrive and minimize the downsides of non-functional conflicts (Yiğit, 2015).

In addition, Erturk (2022) recommended in his study that school administrators and teachers should participate in seminars and courses on communication, interpersonal relations, conflict management, and resolution. Administrators and teachers need to be more sensitive about work ethics and get training in these subjects.

Team Building Activities

Team-building activities are important in instructional leadership for fostering a collaborative and cohesive environment among school personnel. These activities enhance communication, trust, and mor-

ale, which are essential for effective instructional leadership.

Participants 1, 12, and 16 underscored the importance of open communication, group discussions, and sharing of ideas. Participant 1 answered, *“Relaxation activities after every wherein we can gather feedback and evaluate things.”* Participant 12 added, *“Open communication during team building activities.”* Participant 16 remarked, *“Sharing ideas, discussing and identifying solutions to the common problems encountered, communicate clearly and frequently.”*

Participants 8, 14, and 19 emphasized the importance of team-building activities in building trust and collaboration among school staff. Participant 8 responded, *“One initiative being implemented to foster trust and collaboration is team building.”* Participant 14 said *“Team building, group discussion and projects, and open communication.”* Participant 19 expressed *“Team building activities help create a supportive and collaborative environment where teachers feel valued and connected.”*

From the experiences of the participants, team-building events promote open communication channels among staff members, making it easier to share ideas, concerns, and feedback. Trust is built when team members engage in activities that require them to rely on each other, fostering a sense of reliability and support. More so, participating in team-building activities boosts morale by creating a positive and enjoyable work environment.

IV. PERSPECTIVES OF TEACHERS REGARDING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICED BY THE SCHOOL HEADS IN IMPROVING TEACHERS’ COMPETENCE

Flexibility and Listening

Education is an ever-evolving field, and only flexible leaders can adapt to these changes, ensuring that their strategies and practices remain relevant and effective. Combining flexibility with active listening enables leaders to respond effectively to feedback and adjust their strategies accordingly.

As stated by Participant 1, *“By adjusting our technical assistance depending on the needs of each teacher.”* Participant 4 affirmed, *“Acknowledging that teachers are individually different from each other hence should be given different style in giving instructional leadership.”* Participant 7 added, *“Dapat may open communication and ina-adjust and strategies according to school context.”* Participant 9 remarked, *“Flexibility to adapt strategies, approaches, and timelines based on feedback, changing needs, and evolving circumstances.”* Participant 14 expressed, *“Iba-iba syempre. Ang isang strategy ay hindi applicable sa lahat. That is why, school heads should be flexible also. Not the one who just dictates what to do to teachers. Dapat nakikinig din sa sinasabi ng teachers on how they can improve their professional competence without fear and hesitation.”* Participant 18 declared, *“Instructional leadership can be tailored to address the diverse needs and strengths of different teachers in school by adopting a personalized approach.”*

Both the teachers and school heads emphasized the importance of flexibility in instructional leadership. They believe that school heads should not merely dictate what teachers should do but should also listen to their needs and concerns. This approach allows teachers to improve their professional competence without fear or hesitation.

“Flexible and adaptive leadership involves changing behavior in appropriate ways as the situation changes.” Adaptive leaders look at the leader-follower relationship and consider external factors in the environment within which leaders and followers operate. (Khan, 2017).

Likewise, Bawit, (2023) held that school heads should be visible to change and keen to adapt to new circumstances. They can do this by being proactive in addressing challenges and opportunities, seeking

out new ideas and perceptions, and being willing to make difficult decisions.

Furthermore, listening helps leaders build trust with teachers, staff, and students. When individuals feel heard and valued, they are more likely to engage openly and collaborate effectively. Listening broadens your perspective helps you accumulate important information and reduces misunderstandings. Suppose your work colleagues are comfortable bringing their ideas, concerns, and issues to you. In that case, they will generally be more satisfied and more productive, and you will be aware of potential problems before they can grow. Listening is fundamental to innovation and problem-solving. When the leader is a good listener, everyone becomes more capable of providing value in their work (Wraight et. Al., 2019).

Ongoing Support and Coaching:

Ongoing support and coaching provide professional development that addresses the specific needs and strengths of individual teachers. These also promote a growth mindset by emphasizing that teaching is a continually evolving profession.

Teacher-participants in this study, recognized the effectiveness of instructional leaders' ongoing support, feedback, and coaching. These practices contribute significantly to enhancing teachers' professional competence.

Participant 5 mentioned , *“TA, financial support utilizing MOOE, boosting the morale of teachers.”* Participant 7 specified, *“Mentoring and coaching are best utilized to enhance their instructional skills.”* Participant 11 also said, *“Proper guidance and supervision of the school head, moral support and spiritual guidance.”* Participant 12 remarked *“Giving constructive feedback, guidance, and support to teachers during post-conference.”* Participant 15 explained, *“With the provision of ongoing support, feedback, and coaching to teachers that help them improve in their professional competence, I can say it is very effective.”* Participant 16 expressed *“Providing support, feedback, and coaching to teachers to help them improve their instructional practice.”* Participant 18 articulated *“Regular feedback, coaching, and mentorship from the school head contribute to the ongoing development of teachers' skills and competencies.”* Participant 19 stated, *“Constructive feedback can guide teachers in refining their teaching strategies and improving their professional competence.”*

In the study of Dolorica (2023), respondents viewed technical assistance as a support mechanism that capacitated teachers to make the right decisions to manage tasks effectively. Through the adoption of varied forms of technical assistance, teachers' creativity was enhanced, resulting in their competency development.

She further concluded that the technical assistance provided by the secondary school principals to the teacher is effective. Technical assistance provides valuable support to the teacher in the development of their competencies essential in discharging their functions. The promotion of healthy and open communication and the relationship between the mentor and the mentee is the best solution for achieving effective technical assistance, as well as the adoption of a teacher-friendly monitoring scheme.

Profound Impact of Proactive Leadership:

According to this perspective, proactive and supportive school heads play a crucial role in improving teachers' competence. By providing direction, resources, and opportunities for professional development, they empower teachers to refine their instructional practices and stay updated with educational trends. Regular feedback and mentorship further contribute to teachers' ongoing growth.

Participant 1 revealed, *“Teacher's competence is a reflection of an effective instructional leadership in*

school.” Participant 4 added, *“Empowering the teachers to conduct initiatives and innovations that could enhance their instructional leadership.”* Participant 17 shared, *“The current instructional leadership practice in our school is such a motivating one. It motivates us to enhance our instructional skills.”* Participant 18 also stated, *“A proactive and supportive school head provides direction, resources, and opportunities for professional development that align with the needs and goals of teachers.”* Participant 15 discussed, *“By being engaged and hands-on principal. By being a collaborative partner in their teaching journey. By not confining in her/. his office but actively participating in the educational process.”* Participant 17 claimed, *“There are varied of TA extended to each of us. It is not a “ One size Fits All” strategy. TA was given according to the needs of the teachers.”* Participant 20 remarked, *“Trust and confidence of school head to teachers, democratic way of the leadership of school head, the open-mindedness of school head.”*

Parallel with the narratives presented, Onyekwere et. al., (2019) believed that proactive leadership begins with a correct mindset. That mindset is founded upon an individual’s mindset to lead and serve others. A proactive leader desires the opportunity to step up to be involved in directing and controlling not only his or her actions but the actions of those being led for the maximum achievement of personal and organizational goals. This leadership attitude stems from a reasoned choice with a conscious choice to take on a role with all its rights and responsibilities. In the line of natural chaos and interpersonal relationships, proactive leaders can demonstrate a particular purpose.

Supportive Environment and Respect

A supportive and respectful school environment is crucial in enhancing teachers’ competence. Teachers appreciate constructive comments and respect from their school heads. A positive and respectful approach fosters a conducive environment for professional growth. It creates a nurturing atmosphere that empowers teachers to develop their skills, innovate in their teaching practices, and ultimately improve their effectiveness in the classroom.

Participant 8 commented, *“Foster a culture that values and celebrates diversity in teaching styles, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.”* Participant 14 emphasized, *“The constructive comments and respect for teachers.”* Participant 17 pointed out, *“Nagsisimula sa pagkakaroon ng good professional relationship by the SH among teachers, by creating a positive learning environment and by letting teachers explore their abilities to make innovations.* Participant 18 expressed, *“Pagkakaroon ng tintawag na “collaborative school culture” kung saan ang mga guro ay ngsi-share ng resources, ideas, and successes, creates a supportive environment that encourages innovation and continuous improvement.”*

Concerning these concepts, schools can implement the following strategies to create a supportive learning environment that prioritizes the well-being of educators and promotes a positive school climate: (1) **Foster a Supportive and Inclusive Learning Environment:** Create an environment that fosters inclusivity and supports the diverse needs of both students and teachers. This includes implementing anti-bullying policies, providing resources for students and teachers from diverse backgrounds, and promoting a culture of respect and kindness. (2) **Provide Opportunities for Professional Development:** Offer opportunities for teachers to further develop their skills and knowledge. This includes providing access to professional development workshops, conferences, and online courses. By investing in teacher growth, schools can create a culture of continuous learning and improvement. (3) **Encourage Open Communication and Collaboration:** Promote open communication and collaboration among teachers, students, and parents. This can be achieved through regular meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and other forms of

engagement. Encouraging input from all stakeholders can help to foster a sense of community and support. **(4) Create School Staff Wellness Programs.** Implement wellness programs that address the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of teachers and staff. This includes providing access to mental health resources, promoting healthy eating habits, and offering exercise programs or gym memberships. By prioritizing the well-being of teachers, schools can create a culture of self-care and resilience. **(5) Empower Teachers to Promote Positive School Climate:** Provide teachers with the resources and support needed to promote a positive school climate within their classrooms. This includes encouraging the use of positive disciplinary practices, providing resources for conflict resolution, and recognizing and rewarding positive behavior. Empowering teachers can help to create a culture of positivity and support throughout the school. (<https://blog.teamsatchel.com/pulse/teacher-well-being-and-the-effects-of-poor-school-climate>)

Equitable Educational Strategies and Opportunities

Ensuring that educational strategies are in place to support effective learning for all learners. Fairness and equal opportunities play a crucial role in enhancing instructional skills. These were highlighted from the following responses of the participants.

Participant 9 mentioned, *“Professional Development Opportunity. We are encouraged to attend and participate in workshops, trainings, and conferences to enhance our instructional skills and keep us updated on best practices in education.”* Participant 11 answered, *“Implementation of various DepEd programs, including reading program, and assessment.”* Participant 13 declared, *“Involve everyone in the process. Ensure that all concerned are informed of the program or activity and encourage participation and engagement of everyone.”* Participant 15 commented, *“Ensuring that educational strategies are in place, that support effective learning for all learners. Fairness. Giving equal opportunities.”* Participant 18 elaborated, *“One such practice is the provision of ongoing professional development opportunities tailored to teachers' specific needs and interests. This includes workshops, seminars, and training sessions led by experts in various areas of pedagogy, and curriculum development.”*

Equal opportunities for professional development are necessary for teachers to achieve high performance and engagement. The following are suggested steps to ensure that every team member has access to the resources, feedback, and support they need to grow and thrive.

(1) Assess your team's needs: Understand your team's current skills, goals, and challenges. You can use various tools, such as surveys, interviews, or self-assessments, to gather feedback from your team members and identify their strengths, weaknesses, and interests. You can also review their performance data, such as projects, tasks, or metrics, to evaluate their progress and potential. Based on this information, you can create a personalized learning plan for each team member that aligns with their career aspirations and the team's objectives. **(2) Provide diverse and accessible learning options:** Offer a variety of learning options that cater to your team's diverse preferences, needs, and schedules. You can use different formats, such as online courses, webinars, podcasts, books, or articles, to deliver relevant and engaging content. You can also leverage different methods, such as coaching, mentoring, peer learning, or shadowing, to facilitate interactive and experiential learning. Moreover, you can ensure that your learning options are accessible and inclusive by using clear and simple language, providing captions and transcripts, and accommodating different learning styles and abilities. **(3) Encourage a culture of learning and feedback:** Foster a culture of learning and feedback within your team. You can do this by setting clear and measurable learning goals, celebrating achievements and milestones, and providing

constructive and timely feedback. You can also encourage your team members to share their insights, questions, and challenges, and to seek feedback from multiple sources, such as peers, managers, or customers. Additionally, you can promote a growth mindset and a positive attitude toward learning by emphasizing the value of curiosity, experimentation, and resilience. (4) **Support your team's autonomy and accountability:** Ensure equal opportunities for professional development to support your team's autonomy and accountability in their learning journey. You can do this by giving them the freedom and flexibility to choose their learning paths, pace, and resources, based on their interests and needs. You can also empower them to take ownership and responsibility for their learning outcomes, by helping them track their progress, reflect on their results, and adjust their actions accordingly. Furthermore, you can motivate them to pursue their learning goals, by providing recognition, rewards, and growth opportunities. (5) **Address any barriers or biases:** Address any barriers or biases that might hinder your team's learning potential. You can do this by identifying and removing any obstacles, such as lack of time, resources, or support, that might prevent your team members from accessing or engaging in learning opportunities. You can also challenge and eliminate any biases, such as stereotypes, assumptions, or expectations, that might influence your team's learning perception, performance, or evaluation. Moreover, you can ensure that your team's learning environment is safe, respectful, and equitable, by fostering trust, communication, and collaboration. (6) **Evaluate and improve your learning strategy:** The final step to ensure equal opportunities for professional development is to evaluate and improve your learning strategy regularly. You can do this by collecting and analyzing data, such as feedback, ratings, or testimonials, to measure the effectiveness and impact of your learning initiatives. You can also solicit and incorporate suggestions, ideas, or best practices from your team members, to enhance the quality and relevance of your learning offerings. Additionally, you can monitor and adapt to any changes, such as new trends, technologies, or challenges, that might affect your team's learning needs and goals. (<https://www.linkedin.com/advice/0/what-effective-ways-ensure-equal-opportunities> Retrieved September 3, 2023)

Professional Development and Innovation:

Professional development and innovation are necessary for enhancing teachers' competence, as they provide opportunities for them to acquire new skills, refine their teaching practices, and stay updated with the latest pedagogical advancements.

Participant 3 responded, “*Sending them to different professional workshops and trainings.*” Participant 4 stated, “*Empowering the teachers to conduct initiatives and innovations that could enhance their instructional leadership.*” Participant 10 commented, “*Commitment to continuous learning, reflection, and improvement to enhance the effectiveness of instructional leadership initiatives over time.*” Participant 18 enumerated, “*One such practice is the provision of ongoing professional development opportunities tailored to teachers' specific needs and interests. This includes workshops, seminars, and training sessions led by experts in various areas of pedagogy, curriculum development, and instructional technology.*” Participant 19 explained, “*Hinihikayat kami na sumali sa mga trainings, workshops at meetings para madagdagan ang kaalaman sa makabagong paraan ng pagtuturo.*” (We are encouraged to participate in trainings, workshops and meetings to enhance our knowledge on modern strategies of teaching).

The responses from participants highlight a strong emphasis on continuous professional development as a key strategy for enhancing instructional leadership. Several participants mentioned the importance of

tailored workshops, training sessions, and seminars, designed to address teachers' specific needs and interests, thereby fostering ongoing growth and innovation in teaching practices.

Ilgan, (2013) emphasized that teachers need the support of school administrators to try out the new generation of teaching styles they have learned and to perform various activities with the students.

Similarly, Fatih, (2020) also asserted that the openness of school principals to innovations provided an opportunity for teachers to try new methods they have learned during their professional development process. The value attributed to professional development by school administrators can play a motivating role for teachers to pay more attention to the subject.

Technology Integration:

The use of technology and social media platforms positively impacts instructional skills. Technology offers a variety of instructional tools that can make teaching more engaging and effective.

Participant 7 stressed, “Malaking factor ang social media sa pananaw ng mga estudyante tungkol sa edukasyon. Ang pagiging exposed nila sa social media ay may malaking epekto sa pagkatuto nila.”

Participant 18 commented, “This includes workshops, seminars, and training sessions led by experts in various areas of pedagogy, curriculum development, and instructional technology.” Participant 20 answered, “The use of technology and social media platforms.”

According to the US Department of Education (2017), the utilization of ICT in education for enhancing instructional practices' effectiveness has been considered crucial for the last few decades worldwide.

However, the findings of the study of Akram et. al. (2022), revealed several barriers that hinder effective technology integration in teaching-learning practices, including lack of resources, leadership support, accessibility of ICT infrastructure, inadequate time, unclear policies, professional development, technical support, and lack of appropriate pedagogical models. Thus, recommend to concerned authorities to work on the needs and gaps that hinder educational practices from effective technology integration to acquire maximum benefits from technology-integrated teaching and learning.

Open-Mindedness:

Open-mindedness is a vital attribute for both teachers and school heads in enhancing instructional competence. It is essential for embracing new ideas and approaches. An open-minded approach encourages teachers and leaders to stay informed about the latest research and best practices.

Participant 12 explained, “*Open-mindedness to the suggestions of MTs is needed.*” Participant 20 added, “*Hindi lang ng teachers, open-mindedness also of the school head.*” (Not only of the school heads, open-mindedness also of school heads).

Both participants emphasized that for effective teaching and leadership, not only teachers but also school heads must be receptive to new ideas and suggestions. This openness can create a culture of mutual respect and continuous improvement, essential for driving positive change in the educational setting.

Resource Constraints and Budget Challenges:

The financial resources are the most influential tools to improve both the school's physical and human resources. Adequate funding enables teachers to have access to professional development opportunities, instructional materials, and innovative teaching technologies that can continually upgrade their skills and adopt effective teaching practices.

Participant 6 revealed, “It was the insufficient materials to be used in instructions. It hinders us from achieving competent instructional leadership in school.” Participant 13 declared, “I think our school head knew our needs already. It was the insufficient materials to be used in instructions. It hinders us from achieving competent instructional leadership in school. Participant 14 mentioned, “*Laging walang budget para sa mga gagawing programs or activities. Sometimes, I have some plans but do not put them into action because I know that there will be no funds for the project.*” Participant 19 confirmed, “*Limited resources such as time, funding, or materials can pose challenges for implementing innovative instructional support for teachers.*”

The concern about limited budget and insufficient funds for implementing programs or activities can hinder the execution of planned projects were raised by the participants in this study. Highlighting limited resources (such as time, funding, or materials) as a challenge for implementing innovative instructional support for teachers.

Concerning this, Rico (2021) recommended in her research that enough appropriations of SEF should be allotted for funding educational research that investigates prevailing factors on how to enhance instructional practices and achieve accessible and quality learning outcomes.

Further, Petrick (2015 as cited by Rico, 2021) asserted that high integrity coupled with the right skills and training in handling school funds is one of the best qualities of school administrators to effect positive change in the school environment.

Time Management and Communication Difficulties:

Time management and communication difficulties affects teachers' ability to deliver high-quality instruction and collaborate with colleagues. Teachers often face competing demands on managing their time and communication barrier sometimes with students, parents, or administrators.

Participant 2 complained, “*Concerns with my task as a leader are these seasoned teachers living in their comfort zone and change is not possible for them.*” Participant 13 also raised concern about “*Bida-bidahan ang ibang teachers. They feel "superior" or "know better" than others and are very vocal about their negative comments/judgment. Laging nghahanap ng mali ng iba.*” Participant 3 stated, “*The challenge of improving student achievement and managing student behavior.*” Participant 6 also added, “*When during the scheduled classroom observation, have to attend to other concerns.*” Participant 9 declared, “*Inadequate time for collaboration.*”

Not having enough time due to overlapping tasks and activities. Also, discomfort in having difficult conversations and promoting change among teachers. The challenge of improving student achievement and managing student behavior as well, were mentioned by four participants as factors that impede the successful instructional practices in school.

Time management is a critical factor that affects teachers' work efficiency and attainment of daily school goals. Adejo (2012), affirmed that time management starts with the commitment to change, and it is an essential resource every teacher needs to achieve the goals and objectives of the teaching-learning process. The results of the study of Merete & Acuavera, (2022) indicated that the length of service of teachers affects them in managing the planning of activities; wherein the longer the teachers in their job, the more they can manage their time in planning the school activities and learning.

Furthermore, education is continually changing, and effective communication builds the positive school culture required to implement change (Hollingworth et al., 2017). Staff need to feel heard and valued to welcome change and change without consultation alienates veteran teachers. Effective communication

promotes motivation and builds staff culture, while poor communication creates dissatisfaction (Tyler, 2016).

Customizing Professional Development and Engagement

Customizing professional development and engagement are effective strategies for enhancing teachers' competence. It involves, acknowledging motivating instructional leadership practices that enhance teachers' skills without negative emotional or professional effects. Communicating evidence of learning progress and providing insights to teachers, school leaders, parents, and most importantly the learners themselves also strengthen engagement. Expressing the need for better alignment between professional development offerings and teachers' individual needs. Sustained engagement in collaborative forums (such as professional learning communities) is highlighted by the participants as an area for improvement. Participant 4 responded, "Acknowledging that teachers are individually different from each other hence should be given different style in giving instructional leadership." Participant 6 said, "*Nagkakaroon muna ng dialogue bago gawin ang classroom observation para pag-usapan kung anong aspeto ng pagtuturo ang kailangang bigyan ng focus.*" Participant 9 answered, "*Be available and approachable to guide students learning.*" Participant 15 narrated, "*By being engaged and hands-on principal. By being a collaborative partner in their teaching journey. By not confining in his office but actively participating in the educational process. The principal must get out of her/ his office and get into the classrooms.*" Participant 16 claimed, "*They allow teachers to make the learning experience more fun, and practical and encourage the students to take more active in class discussion.*" Participant 18 declared, "*Customized professional development plans can be designed, offering a variety of options such as workshops, seminars, coaching sessions, or self-paced to accommodate different learning styles and schedules.*" Participant 19 remarked, "*Enhancing the customization and relevance of professional development offerings and addressing barriers to participation are key areas for improvement in our instructional leadership practices.*"

Corollary to these views, Diaz (2021) identified factors to consider when choosing effective, customized professional development for your educators: (1) **Identify learning goals and outcomes.** It's important to ask yourself what the instructional goals for your district are. Know why your educators need professional development. This is essential for the trainers to create a customized, engaging professional development session that participants will enjoy. (2) **Align it with instructional priorities.** What do you want your educators to be able to do? Does the professional development you are providing help them do that? Customized professional development should provide strategies and information that align with what teachers are doing in their daily classroom work. It should be flexible enough that feedback from the classroom can be used to improve the professional development and the program being implemented. (3) **Make sure it meets the needs of teachers and administrators.** Can professional development help learning professionals throughout the system? Don't make the mistake of investing in professional development for classroom teachers without doing the same for campus administrators. (4) **Look for a current best practice base.** It's best to look into providing professional development for your district based on the latest research on learning. Make sure the training can be adapted to suit the multiple learning styles of your educators and administrators. (5) **Find a long-term partner.** With a long-term partner, professional development includes ongoing instruction and mentoring from the program developers. A "one and done" professional development session will not create lasting change, but working side-by-side

with educators and supporting them through frequent instructional sessions will change classrooms in your district.

Personalized Professional Development and Support:

Personalized professional development and support are increasingly recognized as effective mechanisms that improve teachers' instructional competence and leadership. Participants acknowledged that the traditional "one size fits all" strategy is ineffective. They recommended providing varied teacher assistance (TA) based on individual needs.

Participant 1 stressed, "By adjusting our technical assistance depending on the needs of each teacher." Participant 3 mentioned, "*Sending them to different professional workshops and trainings.*" Participant 5 held, "*Proposing a personalized approach to instructional leadership. Conducting needs assessments, designing customized professional development plans, and fostering peer collaboration to accommodate diverse learning styles.*" Participant 12 claimed, "*One such practice is the provision of ongoing professional development opportunities tailored to teachers' specific needs and interests.*" Participant 19 insisted, "*Identify the individual needs and strengths of each teacher through observations, feedback, and discussions. Provide personalized support and resources based on their specific areas for growth and expertise.*" Participant 20 declared, "*Profiling of teachers, observation, field of specialization, educational background of teachers.*"

Correspondingly, Schifter (2016) believed Personalized Professional Development (PPD) takes the notion of individualized instruction for students and applies it to teachers. An assistant principal from a California school stated, "We all have different strengths and areas of potential growth" (Ullman, 2015). Personalized professional development for teachers includes many facets, such as developing their skills to use multiple methods of teaching for each child's strengths and challenges, but also developing teachers' professional knowledge and skills based on their strengths and weaknesses.

Alignment and Communication

Participants emphasized the importance of communicating evidence of learning progress and providing insights to various stakeholders, including teachers, school leaders, policymakers, parents, and learners themselves. Highlighted in their responses, is the need for clear communication of expectations and alignment of goals with school priorities by strong leadership from the school head.

Participant 3 emphasized, "*Any program or project is geared towards a positive impact on the learners' performance, teachers' performance, and the school performance in general.*" Participant 13 expressed, "*Explain the positive impact of each program/initiative to our learners and the whole learning organization. Present the pros and cons of any initiative for decision-making of the staff.*" Participant 15 answered, "*Communicating evidence of learning progress and providing insights to teachers, school leaders, parents, and most importantly the learners themselves.*" Participant 18 stressed, "*Strong leadership from the school head, including clear communication of expectations, alignment of goals with school priorities.*" Participant 20 remarked, "*One concern regarding the current instructional leadership practices in our school is the need for greater alignment between professional development initiatives and teachers' individual needs and interests.*"

Salamondra, (2021) affirmed that effective communication creates positive school cultures wherein staff can adapt and embrace change. Increased skill in all components of effective communication decreases the fear associated with challenging conversations. Trust is essential to build strong relationships among

stakeholders. Clarity of intent increases transparency, and active listening supports people to process feedback and implement changes for growth. These essential characteristics build the strong stakeholder relationships necessary for productive schools focused on improvement. Communication will enable the maintenance of relationships while delivering honest assessments, challenging colleagues, engaging in difficult conversations, and creating partnerships with families.

Resource Support

Several crucial support mechanisms, including adequate resources such as time, funding, and access to professional development opportunities emerged from the answers of the participants. Specifically mentioned, allocating resources (funding, time, and personnel) to effectively implement instructional leadership initiatives.

Participant 5 responded *“TA, financial support utilizing MOOE, boosting the morale of teachers.”* Participant 18 stated, *“Several support mechanisms are crucial for the successful implementation of instructional leadership initiatives in school. Firstly, adequate resources, including time, funding, and access to professional development opportunities.”* Participant 19 mentioned, *“Allocating resources such as funding, time, and personnel to support the implementation of instructional leadership initiatives effectively.”*

Ilgan, (2013) ascertained that teachers need the support of school administrators to try out the new generation of teaching styles they have learned and to perform various activities with the students. Likewise, (Fatih, 2020) asserted that school administrators are also able to support teachers in finding and researching resources. Certainly, activities such as subscribing to academic journals, supporting teachers to participate in articles and similar competitions among teachers, and pointing out where they can reach new research may enable them to learn more about their profession. Additionally, providing teachers with resources to develop their knowledge is considered an important means of professional learning (Gündüz & Balyer, 2013 as cited by Fatih, 2020).

Positive School Culture and Leadership:

Positive school culture and effective leadership are integral in enhancing the instructional competence of teachers. School heads should focus on creating a positive learning environment and encouraging teachers to explore their abilities for innovation. A positive school culture supports a climate where teachers feel safe to experiment with new teaching strategies without fear of failure or criticism. Building a good professional relationship contributes to a supportive learning environment.

Participant 3 shared, *“Foster a culture that values and celebrates diversity in teaching styles, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.”* Participant 7 declared, *“It starts with building a good professional relationship by the SH among teachers, by creating a positive learning environment and by letting teachers explore their abilities to make innovations.”* Participant 9 expressed the *“Engagement of parents, families, and the wider community in supporting and reinforcing instructional leadership efforts.”* Participant 12 mentioned, *“Fostering a collaborative school culture where teachers can share resources, ideas, and successes creates a supportive environment that encourages innovation and continuous improvement.”* Participant 15 revealed, *“Strong leadership from the school head, including clear communication of expectations, alignment of goals with school priorities, and recognition of teachers' efforts and achievements, is vital for sustaining momentum and commitment to instructional leadership initiatives.”* Participant 17 stated, *“The current instructional leadership practice in our school is such motivating, it*

motivates us to enhance our instructional skills without negative effects on the emotional and professional aspects of the teachers.” Participant 18 declared, “Our school head fosters a culture of innovation and experimentation, supporting teachers in trying new instructional approaches and providing a safe space for reflection and growth.” Participant 20 answered, “Trust and confidence of school head to teachers. The democratic way of leadership of school head.”

According to Akram et al., (2018), the school learning environment is an imperative characteristic that plays an essential function in the school’s performance. It covers the physical, social, academic, and affective aspects where the school head and teachers work together. An excellent harmonious relationship working together may be a pleasure to the school leader, teachers, and staff. Trust is a crucial factor for a positive learning environment.

When there is a healthy school climate, school personnel know what the tasks are and can achieve them without mixed messages. All stakeholders are engaged in the decision-making process and become agents of change. Parents can follow established systems in place, students know routines, and teachers are well-informed and can be confident and assertive in their duties. (<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/academic-leadership/becoming-a-mindful-leader-and-influencing-the-educational-experience/>)

V. INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL HEADS USING THE IPOO MODEL

Rationale:

The role of the school head has evolved significantly, extending beyond traditional administrative responsibilities to include essential instructional leadership functions. This shift is critical, as effective instructional leadership directly impacts teaching quality and, consequently, student outcomes. School heads now play a pivotal role in shaping educational practices, fostering teacher development, and driving improvements that enhance student learning experiences.

To strengthen the instructional leadership capabilities of school heads and improve overall school performance, this framework adopts the Input–Process–Output–Outcome (IPOO) Model. This model offers a systematic, results-oriented approach that focuses on transforming available resources into meaningful educational outcomes. By emphasizing continuous improvement and strategic action, the framework equips school heads with the necessary tools to effectively lead instruction, engage teachers, and achieve long-term school improvement.

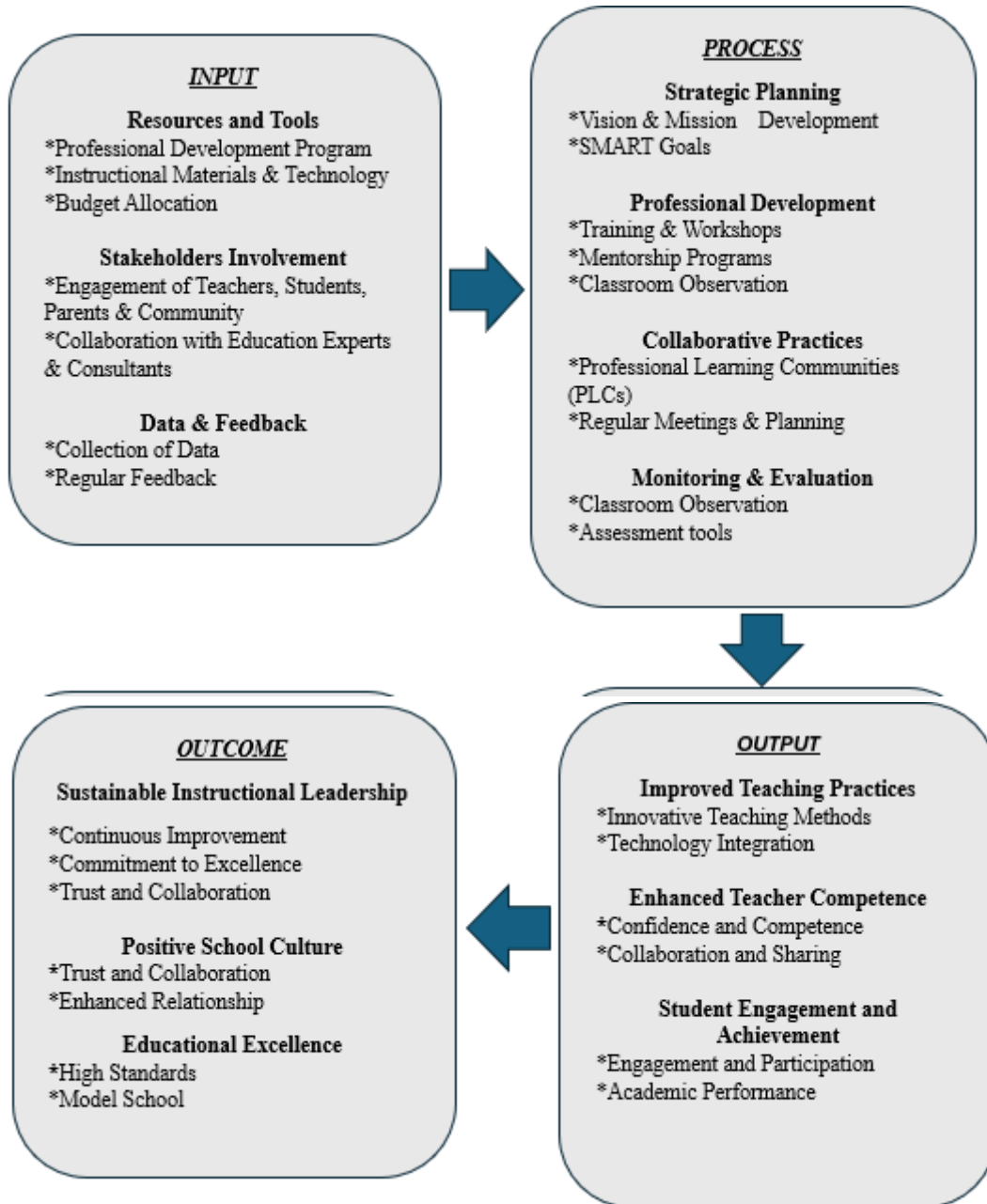
This framework takes a holistic approach to instructional leadership by focusing on the inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes necessary for the sustained development of teaching and learning practices. By aligning resources and strategies with clearly defined objectives, the framework promotes a cycle of continuous improvement, ultimately fostering a culture of excellence within the school. Below, are the objectives and a comprehensive discussion of each component of the framework:

Objectives:

1. Empower the school head to support teachers with targeted professional development to enhance teaching quality and student engagement.
2. Equip the school head with the skills and tools to collect, analyze, and use data effectively for school improvement and to address learning gaps.

- Support the school head to establish and uphold high standards for achievement, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL HEADS USING THE IPOO MODEL



INPUT:

The success of educational initiatives relies on several key resources, tools, and strategies. First, professional development programs are essential for the continuous training of school heads and teachers, helping to enhance their instructional skills and leadership capabilities. Additionally, schools must have access to up-to-date instructional materials and technology to support innovative teaching methods. Adequate budget allocation is crucial, ensuring that there is enough funding for

professional development, instructional resources, and technology. Stakeholder involvement plays a vital role in the educational process, with active engagement from teachers, parents, and the community to foster a supportive learning environment. Furthermore, collaboration with educational experts and consultants also helps improve instructional practices and leadership strategies. Data collection and feedback mechanisms further support instructional improvement. Systematic gathering of data on student performance and teacher effectiveness provides valuable insights, while regular feedback from teachers and students helps identify areas for improvement and refine instructional approaches.

PROCESS:

Effective instructional leadership is driven by strategic planning, professional development, collaborative practices, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. A clear vision and mission, aligned with the school's goals, provide the foundation for guiding leadership efforts. Setting SMART goals—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound—further directs and focuses these efforts. Ongoing professional development is critical for teachers, with trainings and workshops offering opportunities to learn effective instructional strategies, while mentorship programs pair new and experienced teachers to foster growth and knowledge sharing. Collaborative practices, such as the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), promote teamwork among teachers and the sharing of best practices, supported by regular meetings and planning sessions that facilitate collaborative problem-solving. To ensure continuous improvement, monitoring and evaluation are key. Regular classroom observations allow for the assessment of instructional practices and the provision of constructive feedback, while various assessment tools are used to measure the effectiveness of instructional strategies, guiding data-driven decisions for future improvements.

OUTPUT:

The instructional leadership framework emphasizes key areas that drive improvement in teaching, teacher competence, and student achievement. In terms of improved teaching practices, the adoption of innovative teaching methods is central to enhancing student learning, while the integration of technology further enriches the learning experience. This combination of new approaches and tools supports a dynamic and engaging classroom environment. In parallel, enhancing teacher competence is a priority, ensuring that teachers have high levels of confidence and competence in implementing effective instructional practices. Moreover, fostering collaboration among teachers and encouraging the sharing of best practices contribute to their professional growth and success. The framework also prioritizes student engagement and achievement. By increasing student engagement and participation in learning activities, schools can foster a more active and invested learning environment. Ultimately, these efforts lead to improved academic performance and better student outcomes, as teachers and students alike work together toward achieving higher standards of excellence.

OUTCOME:

The outcome of this instructional leadership framework reflects a focus on sustainability, positive school culture, and educational excellence. A key component is the development of a sustainable

model for continuous instructional improvement, ensuring that progress is ongoing and adapts to changing needs. This is paired with a long-term commitment to maintaining high standards of instructional excellence, which serves as the foundation for all efforts. In terms of school culture, the framework emphasizes the creation of a culture of trust, collaboration, and continuous improvement among all stakeholders, fostering a positive and supportive environment. Strengthened relationships between school heads, teachers, students, and the broader community further contribute to this positive culture, enhancing engagement and shared responsibility. Finally, the framework aims for educational excellence by setting high standards that drive student achievement and overall school performance. As a result, schools are recognized as models of effective instructional leadership, exemplifying the positive impact of these leadership practices.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the salient findings of the study conducted, encapsulating the key findings, drawing conclusions based on the data, and proposing actionable recommendations based on the insights gained and relevant outcomes of the present work. This comprehensive summary also highlights the contributions of this research to the field and identifies areas for further research and potential practical applications of the results.

Summary

This research gained a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of school heads in performing their instructional leadership as well as teachers' perspectives regarding the instructional leadership practiced by their school heads in the 20 elementary schools in Gubat South District, Schools Division of Sorsogon.

Specifically, the study answered the following questions:

1. What strategies did the school head utilize to promote instructional leadership among teachers?
2. What are the best practices of the school heads in promoting empowering instructional leadership?
3. How do school heads create a culture of trust and collaboration to facilitate instructional leadership?
4. What are the teachers' perspectives regarding instructional leadership practiced by the school heads in improving teachers' competence?
5. What instructional leadership framework for school heads could be designed to improve the practice of instructional leadership?

This study investigated the various strategies employed by school heads to promote empowering instructional leadership among teachers, highlighting the best practices and techniques that school heads can adopt. It also delved into how school heads build a supportive culture of trust and collaboration, which is essential for facilitating effective instructional leadership. Additionally, the research gathered teachers' perspectives on the impact of school heads' instructional leadership practices on improving their competence, offering valuable insights into the perceived effectiveness of these strategies. Finally, the study sought to design a comprehensive instructional leadership framework specifically for school heads to enhance their leadership practices and ultimately improve educational outcomes.

Findings

This part presents the key findings derived from this study, providing insights into the various dimensions of instructional leadership as observed in the study. Through a careful analysis of the data, it revealed the specific strategies and practices employed by school heads, the effectiveness of these approaches, and their impact on teaching and learning outcomes. The following results provided a comprehensive view of the current state of instructional leadership and its implications for both practice and future research:

1. School heads utilized various strategies to promote instructional leadership among teachers. They created a dynamic and engaging learning environment for both learners and teachers and communicate clear expectations and set high standards. They also provided support and resources for professional growth, regularly monitor their progress and give constructive feedback. They established Teacher-led Professional Learning Communities to facilitate collaboration, offer personalized support through mentoring and coaching, and encourage teachers to do action research and innovation. Moreover, school leaders implement leadership by example approach, conduct classroom observation and provide technical assistance.
2. School heads implemented multifaceted best practices to promote empowering instructional leadership. They fostered a culture of innovation, empowered teachers to take ownership of the school programs and projects. promote shared leadership in decision-making and recognize teachers' achievements and contribution to the school.
3. School heads created a culture of trust and collaboration through several key actions and behaviors such as: Fair judgment and neutral mediation, openness, honesty, and transparency, consistency in actions and decisions, positive attitudes, being accessible and approachable, active listening and valuing teachers' input and contribution, effective communication and follow-through, demonstrating accountability and upholding ethical standards, honor commitments and advocated for teachers, demonstrated trust, love and understanding within the school community, encourage teachers to try new things and appreciated their contributions, provided positive feedback and support, created a safe and supportive environment, encourage sharing of expertise, possess conflict resolution skills, established shared responsibility, use legal basis in decision-making and in addressing conflicts and conduct team-building activities.
4. Teachers had diverse perspectives regarding the instructional leadership practiced by their school heads in improving their competence. They valued flexibility and active listening as well as ongoing support and coaching provided by the school head. Proactive school heads, supportive and respectful school environment have a profound impact in enhancing their competence. Equitable educational strategies and opportunities, customized professional development and engagement, technology integration and innovation also play a crucial role in enhancing their instructional skills. They also considered financial and other school resources as influential tools in upgrading their skills and adopting effective teaching practices. Budget constraints, time management and communication difficulties affect teachers' ability to deliver high quality instructions. Alignment of educational goals, strategies and expectations, communication, resource support, positive school culture and support are considered integral in instructional competence of teachers.
5. An effective instructional leadership framework for school heads be fostered a collaborative environment focused on continuous professional development and reflective practice. Active

listening be prioritized, responsiveness to feedback, and adaptability to meet teachers' needs. Key elements include ongoing support, coaching, and access to resources aligned with current trends. Creating a respectful, nurturing atmosphere where teachers receive constructive feedback and recognition is vital for encouraging innovation and improving instructional practices. This approach helps teachers grow and enhances their classroom effectiveness.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn from this research:

1. The school heads in Gubat South District create a supportive and resource-rich environment that promotes continuous professional development, collaboration, and innovation among teachers, thereby enhancing their instructional practices and student outcomes.
2. The school heads in Gubat South District effectively promote empowering instructional leadership by fostering innovation, encouraging teacher ownership and collaboration, and recognizing achievements, hence, building a positive and proactive school culture.
3. The school heads of Gubat South District establish trust and collaboration through fairness, openness, and consistency, creating a positive and supportive environment that motivates teachers to innovate and collaborate.
4. Teachers in Gubat South District value school heads who are flexible, actively listen, provide ongoing support and coaching, and foster a supportive and respectful environment, as these practices enhance their competence and effectiveness in the classroom.
5. A comprehensive instructional leadership framework is proposed in this study to improve the instructional leadership practice of school heads.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing findings and conclusions, the following are the recommendations:

1. A continuous professional development program for teachers be designed and implemented with an emphasis on offering personalized professional development opportunities that encourage innovation, risk-free experimentation with new teaching methods, effective time and resource management, and empower them as instructional leaders.
2. Comprehensive leadership training for school heads be conducted regularly to enhance their instructional leadership practices, particularly in providing technical assistance to teachers along with classroom instructions, conflict resolution, decision-making, and promoting shared leadership.
3. School-based activities that foster a culture of trust and collaboration among teachers and school heads and boost the morale of teachers be done regularly such as but not limited to: Professional Learning Communities, Peer Observation, Team-Building Workshops and Retreats, Teacher Appreciation Programs, Instructional Coaching and Mentoring, Open Feedback Forums, Teacher-Led In-Service Trainings, Conflict Resolution Workshops and Social Events and Gatherings.
4. A monitoring scheme be employed to gather feedback and improve the strategies and practices utilized by the school heads in promoting instructional leadership.
5. An instructional leadership framework utilizing a holistic approach focusing on the inputs, processes, and outcomes be adopted for sustained improvement and excellence in education.

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