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Navigating the Leadership Divide: Experiences of School Heads on Administrative Tasks and Instructional Supervision

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Abstract:
This study explores how school heads navigate the competing demands of their administrative and instructional roles. It seeks to understand how they manage these dual responsibilities, the challenges they encounter, and the strategies they employ to maintain balance while ensuring both effective school management and instructional supervision.
Findings reveal that school heads face persistent role tension as administrative workloads often overshadow instructional supervision. Time constraints, compliance with bureaucratic requirements, and limited resources emerge as key barriers. Despite these challenges, school heads adopt adaptive practices such as prioritization, delegation of tasks, situational leadership, and collaborative engagement with stakeholders. They stress that while administrative efficiency is required, instructional supervision remains central to improving teaching quality and student learning outcomes.
Conclusions affirm that bridging the leadership divide requires urgent and sustained action. School heads must develop strong competencies in both administrative and instructional domains, supported by institutional structures that recognize and prioritize instructional leadership. The effectiveness of leadership is measured not only by compliance but by the capacity to inspire teachers, enhance instructional quality, and foster meaningful student learning outcomes.
Recommendations emphasize that education systems must prioritize comprehensive professional development program that will strengthens integrated leadership skills, ensure ongoing institutional support including clerical and technical assistance to alleviate administrative burdens, and implement policy reforms that guarantee a fair distribution of responsibilities. These measures are critical for enabling school heads to lead decisively, respond effectively to school needs, and drive sustainable educational improvement. With these insights, future studies can guide the development of innovative leadership frameworks that enhance school heads' effectiveness and contribute to transformative change in education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Leading a school today demands flexibility, focus, and the ability to balance multiple priorities. School heads are expected to manage resources, implement policies, and ensure accountability while also inspiring teachers and promoting effective instruction. These overlapping roles often create tension between management and supervision. School leadership requires mastering the balance between

administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision, a challenge that defines the effectiveness of every school head.

School heads occupy a central position in the operation and success of schools. Their role extends beyond supervision, they serve as planners, decision-makers, mentors, and catalysts of change. They are responsible for maintaining school discipline, implementing programs, preparing reports, and managing resources, while ensuring that teaching practices are effective, curriculum standards are met, and teachers receive proper guidance and feedback. These overlapping tasks often demand time, focus, and commitment, making leadership constant balancing act.

Administrative responsibilities include budgeting, record-keeping, report preparation, program implementation, and the coordination of school operations. These are crucial for maintaining order, compliance, and efficiency within the institution. However, they can also be time-consuming, leaving limited opportunities for instructional supervision, the core of educational improvement. Instructional supervision, on the other hand, focuses on observing classroom practices, mentoring teachers, and guiding instructional strategies to improve learner outcomes. Both areas are vital, yet competing demands often make it difficult for school heads to give equal attention to each.

When administrative responsibilities overshadow instructional supervision, the quality of teaching and learning may suffer. Teachers may receive less feedback and professional guidance, and the learners may not benefit fully from continuous instructional improvement. Conversely, neglecting administrative responsibilities can disrupt school operations and affect accountability. The ability of school heads to strike a balance between these roles not only reflects their leadership competence but also determines the overall success of the school.

Research Background

The success of a school depends largely on the ability of its leader to harmonize these two crucial domains. School heads who are able to manage administrative efficiency while sustaining instructional supervision contribute to a positive learning environment, motivated teachers, and improved student outcomes. Their ability to navigate this leadership divide reflects not only their managerial competence but also their commitment to educational excellence.

The growing complexity of school operations has made the role of school heads more demanding than ever. They are expected to respond to policy requirements, address community concerns, and maintain accountability, all while sustaining instructional responsibilities. This constant pressure can create role strain, forcing leaders to prioritize urgent administrative tasks over meaningful instructional engagements. Yet, despite these challenges, effective school heads strive to keep instructional supervision at the heart of their leadership.

The experiences of these leaders offer valuable insights into the realities of educational leadership. How they manage their time, make decisions, and balance responsibilities reflects their leadership strategies and values. Understanding their lived experiences can help identify practices that strengthen leadership capacity, reduce role conflict, and support more effective school governance.

This chapter establishes the foundation by discussing how school heads manage the balance between administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision in the performance of their leadership roles. It highlights their lived experiences, strategies, and challenges in handling these dual demands that shape the overall effectiveness of school leadership. This aims to uncover practices that promote equilibrium, strengthen leadership capacity, and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

This study sought to fill the gap by exploring the lived experiences of school heads as they navigate the challenges of balancing administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision. It aims to shed light on how they allocate time, prioritize responsibilities, and maintain instructional focus amidst administrative pressures.

Through this study, the writer, hoped that stakeholders including policymakers, district supervisors, teacher-leaders, and school heads themselves will gain deeper insights into the realities of school leadership. These insights can guide the design of more supportive structures, effective delegation system, and professional development programs that honor the complexity and humanity of school leadership.

Problem Statement

Primarily this dissertation explored the experiences of School Heads on Administrative Tasks and Instructional Supervision, particularly answered to the following questions:

1. How do school heads describe their lived experiences in managing administrative responsibilities alongside instructional supervision?
2. What challenges do school heads commonly face in balancing administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision roles?
3. What strategies do school heads employ to effectively manage their dual responsibilities?
4. How contextual factors such as school resources, teaching staff capacity, and stakeholder expectations affect school heads' ability to balance their roles?
5. What professional development program could be designed to foster administrative function with instructional and supervisory activities?

Research Assumptions

The following are the assumptions of this research:

1. School heads possess firsthand, in-depth knowledge of the dual roles they perform.
2. School heads face significant challenges in balancing administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision due to heavy workload, increasing compliance demands and time constraints, which often limit their ability to effectively perform their role as instructional leaders.
3. School heads employ strategic approaches such as effective time management, delegation, and collaborative planning to successfully balance their administrative and instructional responsibilities.
4. Contextual factors significantly influence leadership practices.
5. A professional development program with instructional and supervisory activities will enhance school heads' capacity to manage both administrative and instructional responsibilities effectively.

II. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research Design

This study explored the lived experiences of school heads as they navigate the leadership divide, focusing on the challenges they face, strategies they adopt, and the effects on school performance and instructional quality. This research adopted a qualitative phenomenological design, aimed to capture the essence of the school heads' experiences as they balance administrative and instructional roles.

The study gained insights not only into individual reflections but also into how school heads collectively interpreted and responded to the challenges of dual leadership. By focusing on school heads within specific local context, this study provided grounded actionable insights that can inform local educational leadership practices and policies. The findings contributed to a deeper understanding of how school leaders in rural

areas coped with complex leadership demands ultimately enhancing support systems for principals navigating the leadership divide.

Through qualitative research, the study did not seek to generalize findings, but to construct a rich, in-depth narrative of leadership practices in a specific context. This were highly valuable in developing local insights informing leadership training, improving support mechanisms, and contributing to the broader discourse on school leadership, especially in rural or underserved educational settings.

The Participants

The research was conducted using the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Given the social and interactive nature of leadership practice the researcher used it as primary method for data collection. It is well-suited for exploring shared experiences, uncovering group norms, and generating rich, dialogical data. Through this approach, the study gained insights not only into individual reflections but also on how school heads collectively interpreted and responded to the challenges of dual leadership.

The discussion was audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Individual were fully informed about the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and measures taken to ensure confidentiality. To ensure relevance and depth of data, the study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research.

This method allowed the researcher to select participants who possessed specific characteristics relevant to the study, in this case, school heads who have firsthand experience in managing dual roles, their contributions provided valuable for the study. Their reflections and shared experiences informed future leadership practices, professional development programs, and policy initiatives aimed at supporting school heads in the effective management of their complex roles.

As shown in Table 1, presented were the seventeen (17) participants of public elementary schools in Barcelona District. The study aimed to provide insights into daily experiences of school heads, including the challenges they face, the strategies they employ, and the factors that influence their administrative and instructional leadership roles.

Table 1. ***The Participants***

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Alegria Elementary School	1
Tagdon Elementary School	1
San Antonio Elementary School	1
Sta. Lourdes Elementary School	1
Sta. Cruz Elementary School	1
Bangate Elementary School	1
Cagang Elementary School	1
Putiao Elementary School	1
Macabari Elementary School	1
Olandia Elementary School	1
Badang Elementary School	1
San Isidro Elementary School	1
San Ramon Elementary School	1

Fabrica Elementary School	1
Paghaluban Elementary School	1
Mapapac Elementary School	1
Barcelona Central School	1
TOTAL	**17**

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process of this study was prioritized both ethical principles and ensured a comprehensive and respectful approach to gathering information. Before initiating any contact with the participants, the researcher first secured formal authorization from the appropriate authorities, specifically the school division superintendent and the district supervisor. This preliminary step underscored the researcher's strong commitment to upholding institutional policies and maintaining transparency throughout the research process. By doing so, the researcher ensured that the study was conducted within the boundaries of professional and ethical standards expected in the educational setting.

In the request of permission, the researcher clearly presented the full details of the study, including the objectives, research questions, methodology, and the rationale. The researcher's transparency in sharing this information was intended to foster trust and cooperation among stakeholders and to demonstrate the academic and practical value of the research endeavor. Upon receiving the necessary approvals, the researcher began the data collection phase by organizing and conducting in-depth Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with selected school heads from public elementary schools within the district. These discussions served as the primary method for eliciting rich, detailed narratives from participants.

To ensure minimal disruption and promote honest sharing, the FGD was scheduled at times that are most convenient for the participants. Additionally, they were conducted in quiet, private locations where participants can freely express their thoughts and reflections without fear of judgment or exposure. Each focus group discussion was guided by a carefully prepared set of questions designed to elicit meaningful insights aligned with the research objectives. With full informed consent from all participants, the sessions were audio-recorded to capture the depth and nuances of their responses. These recordings were later be transcribed verbatim to facilitate accurate analysis and interpretation of the data.

Throughout this process, confidentiality and data privacy was strictly observed to protect the identities and personal experiences of all involved. Overall, the approach to data collection in this study was methodically structured to uphold ethical standards while yielding valuable, context-rich data that contributed meaningfully to the field of educational leadership.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study was designed to systematically interpret the lived experiences of school heads as they navigated the complex balance between administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision. Once the focus group discussions (FGD) were completed and transcribed, the researcher employed thematic analysis as the primary method for examining data. Thematic analysis is particularly suitable for this type of inquiry, as it allows for the identification, organization, and interpretation of recurring patterns ad themes within participants' narratives. This approach ensures that the voices of the school heads are faithfully represented and that their shared experiences are meaningfully interpreted within the context of the study.

To begin the analysis, the researcher first engaged in a process of familiarization by repeatedly reading the transcripts to gain a deep understanding of the content. During this initial phase, key phrases, expressions, and insights were highlighted, and preliminary notes were taken to capture emerging ideas. The next step involved coding the data, wherein segments of text that relate to specific aspects of the research questions such as challenges faced, coping strategies employed, or contextual factors influencing leadership were labeled with relevant codes. This open coding process allowed for an unbiased, data-driven categorization of information.

Once the initial coding was complete, the researcher began to group similar codes together to form broader categories and themes. These themes were carefully reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately reflected the participants' experiences and provided meaningful answers to the research questions. The themes were then analyzed in relation to one another, with attention given to both the commonalities and differences in the participants' responses. This cross-case analysis helped uncovered the underlying patterns and deeper meanings embedded in the data.

Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher maintained reflexivity by being aware of personal biases and ensuring that interpretations remain grounded in the participants' actual words and perspectives. Member checking may also be employed; wherein selected participants were asked to review and validate the accuracy of the transcriptions and the emerging themes. By using transparent approach to thematic analysis, the study aimed to produce insightful findings that can inform educational leadership practices and support school heads in effectively managing their dual roles.

FRAMEWORK

This study on Navigating the Leadership Divide: Lived Experiences of School Heads on Administrative Tasks and Instructional Supervision using IPOO model.

Input: The input for understanding the administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision of school heads consists of four key areas.

First, we need to explore the lived experiences of school heads in managing both administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision that includes budgeting, record keeping, personnel management, compliance with policies, classroom observations, mentoring teachers, and overseeing curriculum implementation. Second, we must identify the common challenges for balancing administrative demands and instructional leadership roles. Third, we will consider the strategies of school heads to effectively manage their dual responsibilities. Finally, examine the contextual factors that affects school heads' ability to balance their roles. These areas form a comprehensive foundation for exploring and analyzing the complexities of balancing administrative and instructional tasks that affects the overall school performance.

Process. This study employs interview, focus group discussion (FGD), and thematic analysis to gain in-depth understanding of the experiences of school heads in performing their administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision. Interviews are conducted to elicit detailed and personal insights into their leadership practices, challenges, and strategies while focus group discussion (FGD) provide venue for participants to collectively share and reflect on common challenges and best practices. The collected data are then subjected to thematic analysis, which identifies recurring themes and patterns that reveal the core experiences, perceptions, and competencies of the school heads in relation to leadership enhancement.

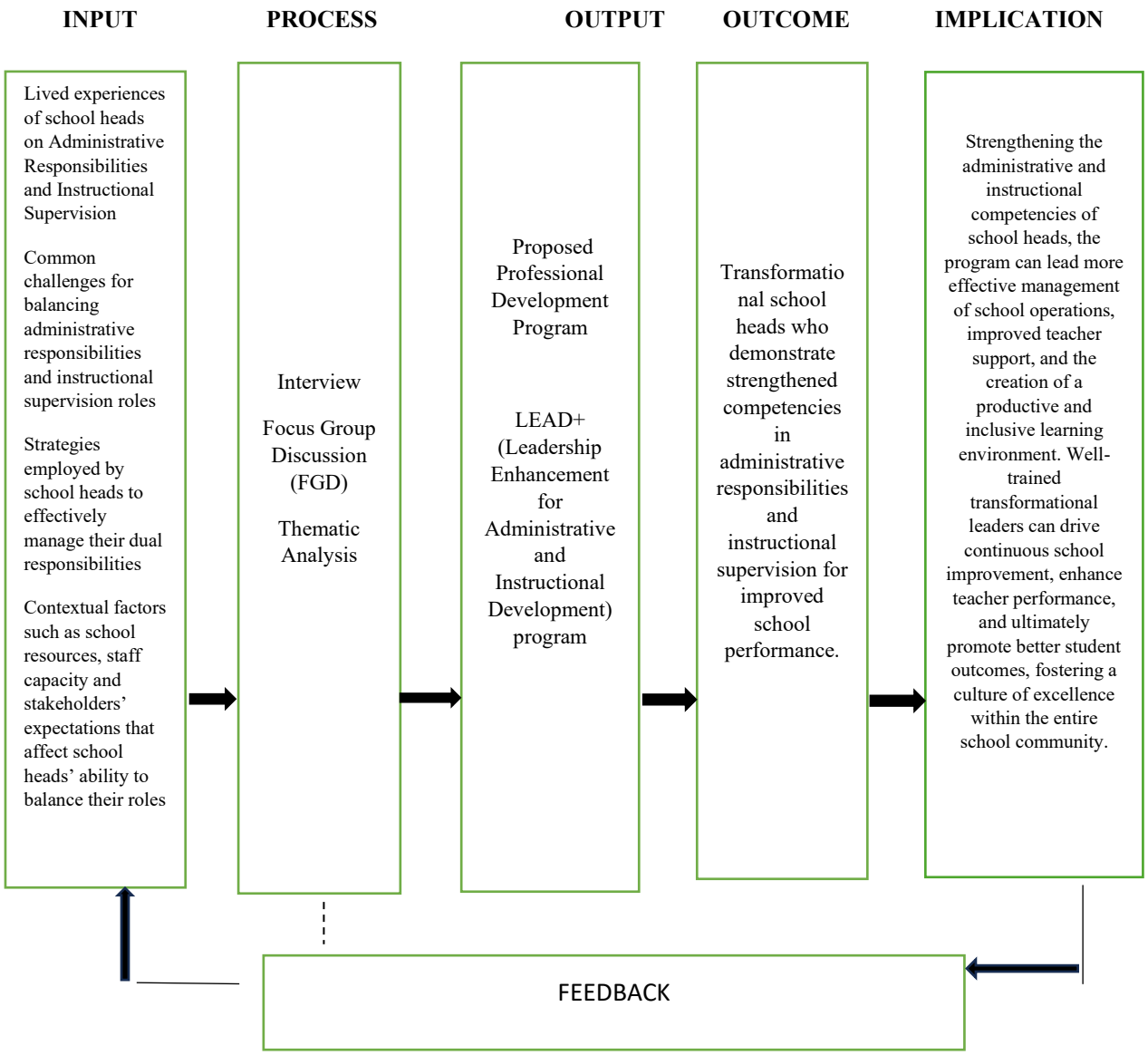
Output. The professional development program entitled, LEAD+ (Leadership Enhancement for Administrative and Instructional Development) is the enhancement of school heads' leadership

competencies in both administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision. Through targeted training sessions, mentoring, and coaching, participants develop improved management practices, effective decision-making skills, and the ability to guide teachers toward instructional quality. The program also produces school heads who are more collaborative, reflective, and responsive to school needs, leading to the establishment of a supportive and high-performance learning environment.

Outcome. When the LEAD+ (Leadership Enhancement for Administrative and Instructional Development) program is implemented, it will develop transformational school heads who effectively enhanced competence in both administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision. They are equipped to manage school operations efficiently, implement effective policies, and make sound decisions that support organizational goals. They also provide meaningful guidance and supervision to teachers, ensuring the delivery of quality instruction and the continuous improvement of teaching practices.

Through strengthened leadership skills, they foster collaboration, accountability, and innovation within the school community. Ultimately, the program nurtures school heads who lead with integrity, vision, and a strong commitment to achieving educational quality and improved learner outcomes.

Figure 1. Conceptual Paradigm



III. RESULTS

1. School heads describe their lived experiences as a continuous balancing act between administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision, often requiring constant prioritization and time management. They highlight the challenges of meeting bureaucratic demands while ensuring quality teaching and learning, emphasizing adaptability and strategic decision-making in navigating competing responsibilities.
2. School heads commonly face challenges in balancing administrative duties alongside instructional leadership, due to heavy workloads, limited time, and competing priorities. These pressures often require them to constantly navigate between managerial tasks and supporting teaching and learning, highlighting the complexity of their dual responsibilities.
3. School heads employ strategies such as effective time management, delegation of tasks, and prioritization to balance administrative responsibilities with instructional supervision. They also rely on collaboration and adaptive leadership to address the demands of their dual responsibilities.
4. Contextual factors such as limited resources, varying staff capacity, and high stakeholder expectations significantly shape school heads' ability to balance administrative and instructional roles. These conditions often create added pressure, requiring school to adapt their strategies to maintain both operational efficiency and instructional quality.
5. A professional development program that integrates leadership training, instructional supervision, and administrative management with clear implementation strategies aims to strengthen school heads' capacity to balance their dual roles. It is designed to emphasize practical skills, collaborative learning, and adaptive approaches to ensure effective application in school contexts.

IV. DISCUSSION

I. Lived Experiences of School Heads in Managing Administrative Responsibilities Alongside Instructional Supervision

Structured Time Allocation Between Administrative and Instructional Tasks

School heads constantly negotiate their time and priorities between instructional supervision and administrative responsibilities. Their experiences reflect not only personal strategies but also systematic challenges that shape their leadership practices. Participants consistently shared that while they wanted to prioritize classrooms visits, instructional supervision, and teacher mentoring, administrative demands such as reporting, budgeting, and compliance often consumed their time. This challenge is widely documented. Gumus (2024)[1] identified distinct global patterns of principals' tine use, with those who structured time deliberately around instructional work having stronger impact on teaching and learning.

Similarly, Jackson (2021)[2] found that principals' leadership self-efficacy diminishes when administrative work dominates their schedules. Day et al. (2020)[3] also emphasized that effective school leaders create deliberate structures to safeguard time for instructional priorities. The participants narratives echo this studies that structured allocation of time is possible but requires institutional reinforcement to prevent protected time from being overridden by administrative urgencies.

Challenges in Balancing Roles and Responsibilities

Participants described themselves as "wearing many hats"- administrator, instructional leader, disciplinarian, community liaison. Several admitted that while they aspired to balance roles, competing priorities left some functions neglected, usually instructional leadership. Role overload is a recurring issue

in leadership research. Tesfaye (2025)[4] highlighted that, principals often struggle to balance instructional leadership with administrative tasks, leading to reduced effectiveness in classroom supervision. Instruction Partners (2024)[5] recommended role-sharing models, such as delegating instructional responsibilities, to alleviate this burden. Similarly, Ndao (2024)[6] showed that without strong prioritization and time management, principals' instructional leadership is easily compromised. These findings support the need for clearer role delineation and supportive structures, as principals cannot sustain multiple demanding roles effectively without systematic adjustments.

Commitment to Instructional Supervision and Teacher Support

Despite time pressure, most participants expressed strong commitment to teacher supervision and support. They narrated experiences of conducting walkthroughs, giving feedback, and mentoring. Others admitted that while they valued supervision, actual follow-up was inconsistent. Li, Cai, and Tang (2023)[7] confirmed that principals' instructional leadership strongly contributes to teacher expertise when combined with structured professional development. Mangadlao (2025)[8] further noted that effective instructional supervision directly improves teaching quality when leaders are consistent in their approaches.

Tesfaye (2025)[9] also observed that although principals value instructional supervision, their ability to sustain it is often undermined by competing demands. The participants' commitment mirrors global evidence that supervision is central to effective leadership. Yet, commitment alone is insufficient, systematic follow-through and institutional support are crucial to make instructional supervision sustainable.

Administrative Responsibilities as a Core Function

Participants acknowledged administrative duties such as budgeting, compliance, stakeholder coordination as unavoidable. While some felt these tasks were burdensome, others accepted them as central to their leadership role. Gumus (2024)[10] described "administrative leaders" as a distinct category of principals whose time is dominated by managerial tasks.

Instruction Partner (2024)[11] argued that while administrative work cannot be eliminated, delegation of instructional tasks may help balance responsibilities. Jackson (2021)[12] warned that excessive administrative workload reduces leaders' confidence in performing instructional leadership. Participants' acknowledgement aligns with the studies that administrative responsibilities are a core leadership function. However, the challenge lies in reducing the extent to which they crowd out instructional priorities, which requires streamlining processes and strengthening support staff.

Leadership Development and Adaptability

Several participants highlighted their growth as leaders, learning to adapt during policy changes, crises like the pandemic or unexpected teacher shortages. They credited professional development, mentoring, and reflective practice as factors in improving adaptability. Daly et al (2025)[12] emphasized that effective school leaders demonstrate adaptability and continuous learning, which are essential for student success in changing environments. Li, Cai, and Tang (2023)[14] similarly found that leadership adaptability enables principals to better support teachers through diverse challenges. NSW Education (2025)[15] underscored that leadership development programs should focus not only on technical skills but also on adaptability, resilience, and collaborative leadership. Participants experiences confirm that leadership adaptability is

not innate but cultivated through professional learning development is therefore critical for equipping school heads with the capacity to thrive amid evolving challenges.

Strategic Prioritization and Delegation

Some participants reported success in prioritizing urgent versus important tasks and delegating responsibilities to assistant principals or teacher leaders. Others struggled, citing lack of trust, absence of trained personnel, or institutional norms against delegation. Instruction Partners (2024)[16] proposed the "Designate Model," which showed that effective principals delegate instructional or administrative responsibilities to build stronger leadership teams. Tesfaye (2025)[17] also found delegation as one of the most effective practices to balance workload and sustain instructional leadership. Jackson (2021)[18] noted that principals who successfully delegate build trust and increase their sense of efficacy.

These findings aligned with studies, prioritization and delegation are critical leadership strategies. However, they depend on trust, training, and accountability systems to ensure delegated roles are executed effectively.

Balancing Administrative Demands with Instructional Commitments

Participants revealed ongoing struggles to balance administrative requirements such as reports, budgeting, and compliance with their instructional commitments, particularly in supervising student learning. Some leaders described feeling "trapped" in paperwork while aspiring to spend more time in classroom. This tension is consistent with global findings. Gumus (2024)[19] emphasized that principals' time use shapes their effectiveness, and excessive administrative workload reduces opportunities for instructional leadership.

Jackson (2021)[20] similarly found that when administrative tasks dominate, principals' leadership efficacy declines. Li, Cai, and Tang (2023)[21] further demonstrated that principals' instructional support strongly influences teacher expertise, underscoring the importance of maintaining a balance. Participants' experiences mirror the studies, confirming that leadership effectiveness depends on finding structural and personal strategies to protect instructional priorities from being overshadowed by administrative demands.

Crisis Management and Resource Limitations

Participants reported that crises whether natural disasters, pandemics, or financial constraints, significantly affected their schools. Resource limitations forced them to make difficult decisions, such as reallocating funds, improvising with limited materials, or seeking community support. Crisis leadership is increasingly central to educational research. Daly et al. (2025)[22] emphasized that school leaders balance immediate crisis response with long-term school improvement goals. Ndao (2024)[23] highlighted resource constraints as one of the most persistent challenges, requiring leaders to innovate and mobilize local resources to sustain learning continuity. Participants accounts underscore that resource management and crisis response are inseparable aspects of leadership. Effective leaders are those who innovate under pressure and collaborate with stakeholders to sustain teaching and learning.

Teachers and Learners

The narratives emphasized the centrality of teachers and learners in leadership work. School heads described their efforts to mentor teachers, provide instructional feedback, and ensure student welfare. They also acknowledged the emotional and professional support teachers need to remain motivated. Research

affirms this focus. Mangadlao (2025)[24] found that consistent instructional supervision enhances teaching quality and teacher morale. Li, Cai, and Tang (2023)[25] highlighted how principals' instructional leadership fosters teacher expertise and, in turn, student learning outcomes. NSW Education (2025)[26] also stressed that effective leadership is ultimately measured by its impact on teaching and learning, not just compliance or management. The findings confirm that despite administrative pressures, school leadership is most impactful when it directly benefits teachers and learners. Leaders' ability to center their efforts on classrooms quality and student outcomes defines their effectiveness.

Leadership in Conflict Resolution and Decision-Making

Participants recounted experiences of mediating disputes among teachers, addressing parent concerns, and resolving organizational conflicts. Decision-making was often described as challenging, requiring fairness, tact, and clarity under pressure. Conflict resolution is a critical dimension of leadership. Tesfaye (2025)[27] observed that principals' success depends partly on their capacity to manage disputes constructively. Day et al. (2020)[28] highlighted that decision-making grounded in transparency and inclusivity builds trust among stakeholders. Instruction Partners (2024)[29] also recommended collaborative decision-making frameworks that allow distributed leadership and reduce conflict. Participants' experiences align with the studies in showing that conflict is inevitable but manageable. The quality of leaders' decision-making determines whether conflicts become destructive or opportunities for institutional growth.

Emotional Fulfillment and Personal Growth

Participants reflected on the personal side of leadership, noting that while their roles were stressful, they also found meaning, emotional fulfillment, and growth in helping teachers and learners succeed. Some described leadership as a journey of self-discovery, resilience, and commitment. Recent research has shifted toward the personal dimensions of leadership.

NSW Education (2025)[30] emphasized reflective practice as a tool for leaders' professional and personal development. Jackson (2021)[31] also noted that principals who find meaning and growth in their work are more resilient and effective in managing challenges. Participants' accounts affirm that leadership is not solely about institutional outcomes but also about personal fulfillment and growth. Emotional well-being fuels leaders' ability to sustain their demanding roles.

Achieving School Goals and Policy Implementation

School heads consistently work toward aligning school goals with mandated educational policies, despite constraints in resources and workload. This indicates their pivotal role in translating broad policy into localized actions that benefit learners. Studies affirm this finding. Abdullahi et al. (2023)[32] emphasized that effective policy implementation relies on school heads' ability to manage constraints, motivate teachers, and adapt strategies to context.

Similarly, the systematic review by Luteru et al. (2023)[33] on Kahui Ako in New Zealand highlighted that networked leadership enables principals to coordinate policies across schools, ensuring that reforms directly influence teaching and learning. These perspectives confirm that leadership effectiveness in policy execution is not limited to compliance but extends to innovative adaptation for goal achievement.

Supporting Teachers and Learners

Participants expressed that their leadership is deeply rooted in providing both instructional and emotional support to teachers and learners. This involves mentoring, allocating resources, and fostering an environment that values professional growth and learner well-being. Pangantucan District research (2025)[34] underscored that strong leadership, visible instructional support, and continuous professional development improve teacher productivity.

Similarly, Pagat (2025)[35] found that a supportive school culture has a significant impact on academic performance, with leadership acting as the catalyst. Beyond academics, leadership now includes supporting mental health, as noted by Tarrasch et al. (2025)[36], who stressed that effective school leadership also addresses the social-emotional needs of learners. The finding affirm that teacher and learner support is central to leadership impact, requiring intentional structures for supervision, feedback, and well-being initiatives.

Creating a Collaborative and Harmonious School Environment

Participants showed that building a harmonious and collaborative culture was essential in reducing conflicts, improving teacher morale, and fostering a sense of belonging. Baroroh, Bunyamin, and Sudana (2025)[37] highlighted that collaborative school cultures driven by peer coaching, shared vision, and safe environments significantly improve teaching effectiveness.

Locally, Almeda and Chua (2023)[38] confirmed that participative work culture strengthens organizational effectiveness and directly impacts teacher performance. These studies collectively affirm that school head's ability to create harmony and collaboration is vital to sustained school improvement.

Fulfillment of Leadership Duties and Responsibilities

School heads' testimonies reflected their deep sense of duty in fulfilling leadership responsibilities, often at the expense of personal time. This dedication underscores leadership as both a functional and moral obligation. Ancho and Villadiego (2022)[39] found that outstanding Filipino school heads embody ethical practices in carrying out responsibilities, demonstrating accountability and care for stakeholders.

This aligns with findings by Aloitaibi (2021)[40], who argued that effective school leadership requires balancing administrative tasks with ethical responsibilities to both staff and learners. Thus, leadership duties are not merely bureaucratic functions but moral commitments to stakeholders.

Improvement in Learning Outcomes and Teacher Performance

Participants noted that their leadership initiatives aimed to directly enhance both teaching quality and student achievement. Instructional supervision, mentoring, and systematic monitoring were the most common strategies. Pangatucan District study (2025)[41] demonstrated that teacher productivity significantly increases when school heads provide instructional support and build a strong culture of collaboration.

Pagat (2025)[42] further emphasized the relationship between leadership-driven school culture and higher academic performance. These align with participants' accounts that leadership interventions have tangible effects on learning outcomes.

Values-Driven Leadership and Personal Integrity

School heads highlighted that values and integrity guide their leadership practices, especially in decision-

making and conflict resolution. They emphasized fairness, transparency, and ethical accountability as cornerstones of their leadership.

Ancho and Villadiego (2022)[43] underscored the importance of values-driven leadership, revealing that integrity strengthens trust and credibility among school stakeholders. Complementing this, Ng and Tan ((2023)[44]. Argued that values-based leadership in Singaporean schools creates inclusive, ethical, and sustainable practices. Similarly, Whang (2021)[45] noted that the virtue of school leadership lies in its moral and ethical compass, ensuring that leaders inspire and model positive behavior. These works reinforce that leadership anchored in values cultivates not only academic success but also a strong ethical culture within schools.

Emotional and Physical Exhaustion

Participants shared experiences of fatigue and weariness caused by the simultaneous demands of managing school operations and addressing the instructional needs of teachers and learners. Emotional and physical exhaustion often stemmed from the long working hours, limited resources, and the need to respond to urgent crises.

This finding resonates with Maslach and Leiter (2016)[46], who identified exhaustion as a primary dimension of burnout in educational leaders, often resulting from unrelenting demands. More recent work by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2021)[47] underscored that school leaders experience higher exhaustion levels when administrative overload overshadows instructional leadership.

Similarly, Madigan and Kim (2021)[48] emphasized that fatigue among educational leaders can reduce effectiveness and impact their relational leadership capacities. Thus, the accounts of exhaustion reflect broader patterns in the studies, highlighting the need for systems that support leaders' well-being.

Pressure from Responsibility and Expectations

School heads expressed a sense of constant pressure due to high expectations placed upon them by the Department of Education, teachers, parents, and the community. Their role as central figures in school success creates a feeling of being under constant scrutiny. This aligns with Leithwood et al. (2020)[49], who stated that the modern principalship is shaped by mounting accountability measures, resulting in heightened pressure to deliver measurable outcomes.

Likewise, Wang, Pollock, and Hausman (2018)[50] argued that external expectations can create "role overload" as principals must respond to competing demands. In the Philippine context, Javier and Deligero (2022)[51] noted that the burden of expectations often leads to emotional strain, particularly in resource-constrained schools. These studies affirm that pressure is intrinsic to leadership. But without proper support, becomes a risk factor for long-term stress.

Stress and Burnout

Participants revealed that stress is an inevitable part of leadership, with some experiencing signs of burnout due to workload, role conflict, and emotional strain. Burnout was particularly pronounced when leaders felt undervalued despite their sacrifices. Schaufeli (2017)[52] explained that burnout is a prolonged response to chronic stress characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced efficacy.

A study by Arnold (2020)[53] further demonstrated that school leaders' well-being significantly impacts teacher morale and organizational climate, meaning that burnout at the top cascades throughout the school. More recently, Garcia-Carmona et al. (2019)[54] found that educators' exposure to continuous stressors

without adequate coping mechanisms accelerates burnout symptoms. These insights confirm that the participants' experiences are not isolated but reflective of broader global concerns regarding leader well-being.

Motivation and Fulfillment

Despite the challenges, participants found motivation and fulfillment in their roles, particularly when they witnessed positive impacts on teacher performance and student learning. Fulfillment came from making a difference in learners' lives and sustaining meaningful relationships with teachers and stakeholders. Ryan and Deci's (2017)[55] self-determination theory suggested that intrinsic motivation derived from autonomy, competence, and relatedness sustains leaders' commitment to their roles. Similarly, Day and Gu (2018)[56] argued that leaders find fulfillment when their moral purpose aligns with professional responsibilities. A study by DeMatthews et al. (2021)[57] confirmed that the sense of contributing to equity and learner achievement provides leaders with deep professional satisfaction. Participants illustrate that leadership is not only about responsibilities but also about sustaining hope and purpose.

Internal Drive and Leadership Growth

Participants also emphasized their inner drive to grow as leaders despite struggles with stress, pressure, and exhaustion. They viewed challenges as opportunities for professional and personal development. According to Hitt and Tucker (2016)[58], successful leaders demonstrated a growth mindset, using adversity as a stepping stone toward skills development.

Similarly, Liu, Hallinger, and Feng (2022)[59] highlighted that leadership growth stems from reflective practices and resilience in navigating challenges. In a more recent context, Tran and Vo (2023)[60] argued that school leaders' internal drive is fueled by adaptive capacity, allowing them to transform challenges into leadership opportunities. These findings suggest that the participants' commitment to growth represents resilience and adaptability in the face of adversity.

Direction and Guidance

Participants highlighted the importance of providing clear direction and guidance to both teachers and learners. Their leadership role often required aligning school goals with instructional practices, offering vision, and motivating staff. This aligns with Leithwood et al. (2020)[61], who emphasized that direction-setting is a critical dimension of successful school leadership.

Similarly, Hallinger (2021)[62] stressed that guiding schools requires articulating goals, monitoring progress, and inspiring collective action. Ng and Tan (2023)[63] further argue that leaders must serve as "moral compasses," ensuring that guidance is value-driven and contextually responsive. These findings reflect the participants' experiences of anchoring their schools on both vision and ethical direction.

Balance and Coordination

The narratives revealed that school heads often faced the challenge of balancing administrative tasks with instructional responsibilities, while also coordinating various stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and community partners. Grissom, Egalite, and Lindsay (2021)[64] argued that effective leadership depends on balancing competing demands while ensuring coordinated efforts among school actors.

Similarly, Gurr and Drysdale (2020)[65] noted that balance in leadership roles contributes to organizational harmony and sustained improvement. A Philippine-based study by Almeda and Chua (2023)[66] also

emphasized the necessity of coordination among stakeholders to implement reforms effectively. This supports the participants' view that leadership requires harmonizing responsibilities to avoid role overload and fragmentation.

Cultivation and Growth

Participants expressed their commitment to cultivating teacher capacity and fostering learner growth. They emphasized mentoring, professional development, and building a culture of continuous learning.

Day and Gu (2018)[67], said that cultivating growth is central to leadership that sustains school improvement over time. Hitt and Tucker (2016)[68] highlighted that effective leaders prioritize professional development and learning opportunities to build teacher capacity. Recent work by Liu, Hallinger, and Feng (2022)[69] also confirmed that leadership growth is linked to reflective practices and developmental strategies. These findings reinforce that leadership is not only about administration but also about nurturing people.

Structure and Design

Participants shared experiences of creating school structures and designing systems that support teaching, learning, and governance. This included task delegation, workflow organization, and strategic planning. Sebastian et al. (2019)[70] found that structural design in schools enhances efficiency and ensures instructional focus. Similarly, Supovitz et al. (2021)[71] highlighted that deliberate organizational design allows leaders to maximize instructional time and streamline administrative processes.

In the Philippine context, Baroroh et al. (2025)[72] underscored that well-designed school structures contribute to smoother implementation of programs and accountability mechanisms. This validates the participants' accounts that leadership requires not only vision but also systematic organization.

Resilience and Adaptability

Participants described how resilience and adaptability were crucial in facing crises, resource limitations, and shifting policies. They emphasized flexibility and problem-solving as defining aspects of their leadership journey. Harris and Jones (2020)[73] argue that adaptive leadership has become essential in responding to crises.

Likewise, Netolicky (2020)[74] highlighted that resilience is not about mere endurance but about learning and evolving in the face of challenges. Tran and Vo (2023)[75] further asserted that resilience and adaptability allow leaders to transform challenges into opportunities for innovation. These perspectives confirm the participants' view that resilience is at the heart of sustainable school leadership.

II. Challenges Faced by the School Heads in Balancing Administrative Demands and Instructional Leadership Roles

Time Constraints and Scheduling Conflicts

Participants described difficulties in managing limited time while balancing instructional supervision, administrative tasks, and community engagements. Conflicting schedules often forced them to make difficult trade-offs, reducing opportunities for focused instructional leadership.

This aligns with Grissom, Egalite, and Lindsay (2021)[76], who emphasized that principals spend significant time on managerial tasks at the expense of instructional priorities. Similarly, Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2020)[77] noted that scheduling dilemmas undermine leaders' ability to dedicate sufficient time for teaching and learning improvement.

In the Philippine context, Almeda and Chua (2023)[78] highlighted that overlapping deadlines and reporting obligations leave a little room for meaningful engagement with teachers. These findings suggest that time allocation remains a central leadership challenge.

Resource Limitations and Prioritization

School heads frequently encountered resource scarcity, requiring them to prioritize needs and innovate with what was available. Narratives revealed that prioritization often meant delaying or scaling down initiatives. Day and Sammons (2016)[79] argued that leadership effectiveness is party defined by the ability to optimize scarce resources while sustaining and Luteru et al. (2023)[80] highlighted that resource limitations require school leaders to develop resilience and creative problem-solving.

Similarly, Abdullahi et al. (2023)[81] found that prioritization in resource-poor environments often drives leaders to rely on partnerships and community involvement. Participants' experiences reinforce these studies, showing how resourcefulness and prioritization are indispensable leadership traits.

Role Overlap and Ambiguity

Participants narrated how blurred boundaries between instructional and administrative responsibilities led to confusion and work overload. They were often expected to be managers, supervisors, and community liaisons simultaneously.

This finding is echoed by Wang, Pollock, and Hausman (2018)[82], who described role ambiguity as a major stressor for school leaders, particularly when accountability systems lack clarity. Sebastian et al. (2019)[83] argued that the multi-faceted nature of leadership often results in role overlaps that reduce efficiency.

More recently, Liu, Hallinger, and Feng (2022)[84] highlighted that principal development programs must address ambiguity in leadership functions to prevent burnout. These perspectives align with participants' experiences of juggling multiple roles without adequate support.

Teacher Resistance and Implementation Gaps

Some participants revealed that new programs and policies were met with hesitation or resistance from teachers, making implementation slower and less effective. They identified gaps in acceptance, alignment, and practice. Fullan (2016)[85], resistance to change is natural, particularly when stakeholders perceive reforms as externally imposed.

In their study, Supovitz, Sirinides, and May (2021)[86] found that teacher buy-in is a critical factor in the success of school reforms. In Southeast Asia, Baroroh et al. (2025)[87] noted that insufficient consultation with teachers often creates implementation gaps. These insights affirm that leadership requires not only directive capacity but also the ability to foster shared ownership of initiatives.

External Pressures and Community Expectations

Participants experienced pressure from parents, local officials, and the wider community to address diverse concerns, often beyond academic matters. This created tension between responding to external demands and focusing on instructional leadership.

Leithwood et al. (2020)[88] recognized that school leaders operate in increasingly complex environments shaped by heightened community expectations. Harris and Jones (2020)[89] emphasize that crises, such as pandemic, intensified external pressures on school s to serve both educational and social functions.

Javier and Deligero (2022)[90] argued that Filipino principals often find themselves at the intersection of government mandates and community needs, which can strain leadership capacity. These findings validate the participants' accounts of external accountability pressures.

Emotional and Leadership Tensions

Participants admitted to emotional burdens associated with stress, fatigue, and the pressure to perform amid constraints. Despite this, they expressed resilience and a desire to continue growing as leaders. Maslach and Leiter (2016)[91] identified emotional exhaustion as a core component of burnout, particularly in roles with high demands and limited resources.

Madigan and Kim (2021)[92] added that chronic stress undermines leaders' decision-making abilities. Yet, Tran and Vo (2023)[93] argued that resilience and adaptability are critical traits that allow school leaders to transform strain into growth opportunities. Participants' experiences illustrate the duality of emotional strain and resilience, highlighting the complexity of educational leadership.

Urgency and Deadlines Drive Administrative Priority

Participants shared that institutional timelines, compliance requirements, and government mandates often dictated their leadership agenda. Leaders described how non-negotiable deadlines frequently forced them to prioritize paperwork and reporting over other equally important functions

.Similar observations were made by Hallinger and Hosseingholizadeh (2023)[94], who noted that principals' daily schedules are heavily influenced by bureaucratic urgency, leaving little space for instructional engagement. Wang et al. (2018)[95] also reported that school administrators experience heightened stress due to recurring deadlines and monitoring systems. This suggests that urgency does not simply compete with instructional leadership, it redefines the temporal structure of leadership work (Suyatno et al., 2019)[96].

Instructional Leadership Prioritized for Learning Outcomes

Despite the constraints of administrative routines, the narratives of participants reflected a clear determination to safeguard instructional supervision. School leaders emphasized activities such as classroom visits, professional coaching, and supporting teacher growth. This aligns with Bush (2020)[97], who identified instructional leadership as the "engine" of school improvement. Grissom et al. (2021)[98] provided empirical evidence that leadership practices focused on classroom quality directly improve student outcomes.

Similarly, Robinson (2017)[99] argued that leadership that centers on teaching and learning is the most impactful for student achievement. These findings affirm that, even amid heavy workloads, instructional oversight remains a non-negotiable dimension of school leadership.

Contextual and Situational Prioritization

Participants' accounts were the recognition that leadership decisions are not made in isolation but are shaped by situational factors such as available resources, local culture, and unexpected challenges. This resonate with Day et al. (2021)[100], who stressed that leadership effectiveness is contingent on the social and cultural environment of the school.

Harris and Jones (2019)[101] also pointed out that adaptive decision-making is essential in periods of disruption and unpredictability. Netolicky (2020)[102] further illustrated that successful leaders are those

who recalibrate their priorities according to contextual demands. The findings suggest that flexibility and situational awareness are vital for sustaining effective school leadership.

Balancing Through Delegation and Focus

Participants emphasized that sharing responsibilities with teacher-leaders, subject coordinators, and administrative staff enabled them to navigate multiple priorities more effectively. Delegation was not seen merely as a survival tactic but as a means of empowering colleagues and promoting collective ownership. Spillane and Shirell (2017)[103] argued that leadership is most sustainable when enacted across different individuals rather than concentrated in a single person. Bolden (2021)[104] described this a part of the distributed leadership paradigm, where shared accountability strengthens institutional capacity. Tian et al. (2016)[105] also found that collaborative decision-making fosters professional trust and cohesion. These insights highlight that purposeful delegation and collaboration can help leaders preserve focus on core learning objectives while meeting organizational requirements.

Hindrance to Program Implementation and Instructional Support

Participants reported that administrative load, resource constraints, and overlapping responsibilities often hindered the implementation of school programs and reduced their capacity to provide direct instructional support. This mirrors the findings of Leithwood et al. (2020)[106], who observed that bureaucratic demands can obstruct leaders' instructional functions.

Similarly, Suyatno et al. (2019)[107] emphasized that reporting requirements limit principals' availability for academic monitoring. Schleicher (2018)[108] argued that systematic inefficiencies are among the strongest barriers to program fidelity in schools. These insights suggest that structural hindrances remain significant obstacles to effective school leadership.

Impact on Teacher Capacity and Learning Environment

The reduced capacity of leaders to provide consistent instructional oversight was seen to impact teacher performance and, by extension, the learning environment. Participants shared that limited supervision and mentoring weakened teacher growth, particularly in areas of pedagogy and classroom management. Grissom et al. (2021)[109] confirmed that principal engagement in instructional leadership strongly correlates with teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. Without sustained support, teachers may struggle to maintain instructional quality, leading to diminished student learning experience (Day et al., 2021)[110].

Leadership Strain and Role Dilution

Participants described experiencing leadership fatigue as they navigated multiple overlapping expectations. Their narratives reflected how assuming too many functions simultaneously diluted their focus and effectiveness. This echoes Harris and Jones (2019)[111], who argued that increasing complexity in educational leadership often results in role overload. Wang et al. (2018)[112] similarly documented the toll of excessive administrative duties on school leaders' well-being. According to Hallinger and Hosseingholizadeh (2023)[113], when leaders are overstretched, their capacity to deliver strategic direction diminishes, weakening both leadership presence and impact.

Compromised Motivation and Team Performance

Another finding pointed to compromised morale and weakened collaboration among staff when leaders

struggled to balance responsibilities. Participants noted that the lack of visible support sometimes lowered teacher motivation and diminished collective performance.

Leithwood et al. (2020)[114] also emphasized that school climate is strongly shaped by the motivational strategies of principals. Conversely, when leaders are unable to provide adequate encouragement, team cohesion and shared goals are undermined (Day et l., 2021)[115].

Innovation, Creativity, and Strategic Adaptation

Despite the challenges, participants demonstrated resilience by developing innovative approaches, creative problem-solving, and adaptive strategies to address pressing issues. Leaders described how they restructured tasks, encouraged collaborative solutions, and re-prioritized resources to sustain progress. Netolicky (2020)[116] highlighted that adaptive leadership thrives in uncertainty, requiring creativity and situational sensitivity. Bolden (2021)[117] likewise argued that distributed and innovative practices strengthen organizational resilience. These findings illustrate that innovation and creativity are not peripheral but essential practices for sustaining leadership in complex environments.

Misconceptions about School Fund Management

Participants frequently described school funds as rigid, predetermined, and non-negotiable. Such misconceptions foster a sense of helplessness and discourage leaders from exploring innovative budgeting strategies.

Similar concerns are noted in Picus and Odden (2018)[118], who emphasized that many school leaders misunderstand funding streams and adequacy models, leading to resource underutilization. National adequacy studies have shown that misconceptions often result in compliance-oriented budgeting rather than strategic allocation (Odden, 2018)[119]. Integrating financial literacy into leadership preparation is essential, as Madeo (2022)[120] argued that financial literacy competency is not innate but can be developed through structured professional development. These findings confirm participants' narratives and highlight the need to strengthen capacity.

Mislabeling Fundraising and Partnership Efforts

Participants equated fundraising solely with small-scale events and overlooked long-term donor cultivation. Madeo (2022)[121] highlighted that fundraising is a strategic, relationship-driven process, while Mu (2023)[122] emphasized that partnerships vary in form and purpose, from service provision to collaborative program design. This supports the observation that schools often undervalue the broader potential of external resource development.

Misjudgment of Leadership Style and Decision-Making

Participants often misinterpreted leadership style based on surface behavior rather than contextual decision-making. Sarwar et al. (2022)[123] found that leadership styles are frequently misjudged, with participative leaders perceived as weak and directive leaders as authoritarian. Hardianto (2021)[124] further argued that decision-making requires balancing rapid operational choices with deliberative, inclusive approaches. These findings echo participants' accounts that misjudgment erodes trust and fosters misaligned expectations among staff.

Increased Administrative Pressure and Compliance Demands

Participants revealed that school heads are increasingly burdened by administrative tasks and compliance requirements that consume much of their time. Reports, documentation, and accountability protocols, while intended to ensure efficiency, often limit the time available for instructional supervision. This aligns with the findings of Boyce and Bowers (2018)[125], who observed that principals dedicate a substantial proportion of their work hours to administrative responsibilities, leaving little room for instructional leadership.

Similarly, Arlestig and Tornsen (2021)[126] emphasized that bureaucratic pressures have become more pronounced with reforms and policies demanding continuous compliance. This convergence of tasks suggests that administrative pressures are not merely contextual but systematic, requiring leaders to constantly negotiate between managerial and instructional priorities.

Role Conflict and Leadership Tension

Participants also expressed the tension of fulfilling dual roles, as the administrative managers and instructional leaders. This dual expectation often leads to role conflict, where focusing on one responsibility can undermine performance in the other. Grissom, Egalite, and Lindsay (2021)[127] highlighted that principals often struggle to balance these responsibilities, creating tension in leadership identity.

Misalignment Between Policy and Ground Realities

Participants described how top-down mandates often fail to consider contextual limitations such as staffing shortages, resource gaps, and community dynamics. Hallinger (2020)[128] asserted that while educational policies aim to standardize practices, they often neglect the complexity of local school contexts. Similarly, Day et al. (2021)[129] noted that the effectiveness of leadership reforms is constrained when they do not align with practical realities in schools. The finding suggests that school heads often serve as mediators, translating policy into feasible actions, yet at the cost of their time and emotional energy.

Emotional and Psychological Impact

The experiences of participants revealed that the weight of administrative and instructional demands affects not only their time management but also their well-being. Feelings of stress, exhaustion, and frustration were recurrent in the narratives. This finding is consistent with Beausaert et al. (2016)[130], who reported that increased workload and accountability pressures contribute to burnout among school leaders. Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020)[131] further highlighted that the emotional dimension of leadership is often overlooked, despite being central to sustaining effective practice. The psychological toll of leadership tension underscores the need for systematic support mechanisms that acknowledge the human side of educational leadership.

Adaptation and Growth Under Pressure

Despite challenges, participants also described instances of adaptation, resilience, and professional growth. Many learned to innovate, restructure their schedules, and develop strategies to ensure that instructional supervision remained a priority. This adaptability reflects what Liu, Bellibas, and Printy (2018)[132] described as leadership resilience, the ability to withstand challenges while sustaining core functions.

Similarly, Day and Gu (2018)[133] emphasized that sustained school leadership is marked by growth in response to adversity, where leaders find creative ways to balance managerial and instructional demands. The findings show that while administrative pressures persist, they also push school heads to become more resourceful and reflective leaders.

III. Strategies Employed by the School Head to Effectively Manage Their Dual Responsibilities

Prioritization Based on Urgency and Importance

Structured Scheduling and Daily Planning

Participants often attempted to address the overload of urgent tasks through structured scheduling and daily planning. Some recounted how they blocked off time for classroom visits, while others admitted that interruptions easily derailed their plans.

This reflects the conclusions of Rechsteiner et al. (2022)[134], who highlighted that effective time management in schools requires balancing administrative obligations with sustained engagement in improvement-oriented practices. Structured daily planning thus emerges as a safeguard against task fragmentation, but only when consistently reinforced by school-level norms that protect time for instructional work.

Delegation and Team Collaboration

Several participants shared how they lightened their workload by delegating administrative tasks to teachers, coordinators and non-teaching staff. Those who effectively distributed responsibilities reported reduced personal stress and more opportunities to engage in teacher supervision.

Hallinger (2018)[135] further observed that principals who balance direct instructional leadership with the empowerment of teacher-leaders create more sustainable school improvement. This reflects the narratives of participants who found that effective delegation required not only trust but also capacity-building among staff. Without such support, delegation risked becoming mere task-shifting rather than a genuine strategy for collaboration. The participants mixed experiences confirm the studies' caution that delegation is effective only in contexts where teachers are equipped and willing to assume additional leadership responsibilities.

Mindset, Discipline, and Self-Management

Participants highlighted personal discipline and a resilient mindset as crucial in coping with competing demands. Some expressed pride in their ability to maintain routines despite pressure, while others admitted to becoming reactive when overwhelmed. These experiences are consistent with studies on growth mindset and professional resilience. Yeager et al. (2019)[136] found that a growth mindset fosters perseverance and adaptability, particularly in challenging contexts.

This reflects the conclusions of Yeager et al. (2019)[137], who emphasized that growth mindset interventions yield stronger effects when combined with structural supports and opportunities for application. Thus, while discipline and self-management are critical, they must be reinforced by supportive organizational systems that reduce unnecessary burdens and enable leaders to act on their priorities.

Clear Communication, Monitoring, and Feedback

Participants emphasized that successful delegation required a cycle of clear communication, ongoing monitoring, and constructive feedback. they noted that when instructions were vague or expectations were

not clarified, teachers experienced confusion or delays. To address this, school heads ensured that responsibilities were communicated explicitly, with clear timelines and connections to school goals. This aligns with Harris and Jones (2019)[138], who highlighted that clarity of communication not only streamlines task completion but also builds stronger alignment between teacher actions and school priorities. Delegation, however, could not end with initial communication. School heads explained that they needed to maintain visibility by following up and providing support throughout the process.

Rechsteiner, Stuber, and Stalder (2022)[139] further supported this by showing that clear guidance coupled with consistent feedback, is a necessary condition for teachers' active participation in school improvement initiatives. Together, these findings confirm that communication, monitoring, and feedback are interconnected practices that transform delegation into an empowering, rather than burdensome, process.

Collaborative and Supportive Delegation

Participants emphasized that delegation was most effective when it was framed as collaborative and supportive. Teachers were more willing to assume additional responsibilities whey they were assured of guidance, resources, and recognition from school head. This reflected Fullan and Quinn's (2016)[140] argument that collaboration and relational trust transform delegation into a driver of coherence in schools. Spillane and Shirrell (2017)[141] likewise argued that distributed leadership thrives in contexts where leaders build reciprocal trust and ensure that teachers feel valued. Participants' experiences reinforce these findings, confirming that delegation must be relational and collaborative rather than transactional.

Practical Guidance and Professional Growth

Teachers valued specific, actionable guidance more than abstract directives. They highlighted the importance of co-planning, modeling lessons, and receiving timely, concrete feedback. This aligns with the meta-analysis by Balta, Amendum, and Fukkink (2023)[142], which concluded that job-embedded professional development (JEPD) yields stronger teacher learning and student outcomes than traditional workshops, particularly when professional growth includes coaching and classroom-based cycles.

Participants also recounted how mentorship relationships become reciprocal, with both mentors and mentees learning through the process. This echoes Arnsby (2023)[143], who showed that mentor education promotes professional growth not only for mentees but also for mentors themselves. Similarly, Weiland (2024)[144] highlighted that coaching programs improve teacher confidence and student achievement most effectively when structured, with clear goals, prepared mentors and systematic feedback cycles.

By contrast, unstructured or informal mentoring often left teachers unsupported, which supported Arnsby's (2023)[145] observation that clarity and mentor preparation are key determinants of successful teacher professional development. Taken together, these studies reinforce the participants' narratives, that professional growth is maximized when guidance is practical, reciprocal, and embedded in daily teaching rather than delivered as generic advice.

Emotional Support from Family, Friends, and Colleagues

Participants highlighted the encouragement they received from family, friends, and colleagues, which reduced feelings of isolation and provided emotional balance. Research strongly supports this. Beausaert et al. (2016)[146] demonstrated that social support within schools significantly reduces job strain and burnout among teachers.

Renshaw et al. (2016)[147] also emphasized that colleagues' emotional support fosters teacher well-being and engagement, while Wang et al (2020)[148] found that family support improves work-life balance and enhances overall job satisfaction. By integrating these findings with the narratives, it becomes clear that emotional support systems form the relational backbone of teacher and leader resilience.

Professional Development and Learning

Participants expressed that engaging in formal training, peer learning, and mentoring opportunities improved their instructional supervision skills and confidence. This aligns with Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017)[149], who demonstrated that sustained, collaborative professional learning has a measurable impact on teacher practice and student achievement.

Participants also emphasized learning from networks of colleagues, which reflects Avalos-Bevan (2021)[150], who argued that professional learning communities foster not only technical skills but also reflective dialogue that empowers teachers and leaders alike. Poekert, Alexandrou, and Shannon (2016)[151] similarly noted that coaching and mentoring practices expand professional expertise while reinforcing distributed leadership.

More recently, Zhang and Henderson (2023)[152] found that digital professional learning platforms provide flexibility and accessibility, allowing school leaders to engage in continuous development events amidst demanding workloads. These studies confirm that professional growth is sustained not through one-time workshops but through ongoing, collaborative, and context-responsive learning, a perspective echoed strongly in participants' accounts.

IV. Contextual Factors that Affect School Heads' Ability to Balance their Dual Roles

Smaller Schools Allows for Hands-On Leadership but Still Demand Strategic Planning

Balancing Administrative and Instructional Leadership

Leaders consistently stressed the tension between administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision. Grissom, Egalite, and Lindsay (2021)[153] found that principals who balance both roles achieve higher teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. Sebastian, Allensworth, and Huang (2016)[154] highlighted that leaders must strategically allocate time to instructional tasks despite growing administrative pressure. Similarly, Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2017)[155] showed that prioritizing classroom visits and teacher mentoring strengthens overall school performance. Therefore, balancing administrative and instructional leadership remains a defining marker of effective school heads.

Instructional Leadership and Teacher Development

Instructional leadership emerged as a cornerstone of teacher support and professional development. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2017)[156] argued that direct involvement in teaching and learning improves teacher capacity. Nguyen et al. (2020)[157] further highlighted that teacher mentoring fosters professional growth and builds collective efficacy. Harris and Jones (2019)[158] affirmed that instructional leadership is not only a task but a cultural influence that sustains professional learning. Thus, supporting teachers through sustained instructional leadership is integral to improving both teacher capacity and learner outcomes.

Learner-Centered Leadership

Findings underscored the importance of anchoring decisions on student learning. Murphy, Elliott, Gold-

ring, and Porter (2017)[159] emphasized that learner-centered leadership correlates strongly with school improvement. Day et al. (2016)[160] also noted that leaders who prioritize student well-being create conditions for equitable learning. In summary, learner-centered leadership ensures that decision-making remains grounded in the core purpose of education, advancing student growth and achievement.

Organizational and Strategic Competence

Strategic planning and organizational competence allowed school heads to manage short-term pressures while preparing for long-term goals. Bush (2020)[161] affirmed that strategic competence is a defining trait of effective leaders. Leithwood et al. (2020)[162] similarly argued that leaders who integrate vision with strategy sustain change overtime. Therefore, organizational and strategic competence is indispensable for leaders navigating today's educational demands.

Community Engagement and Stakeholder Relationships

Community partnerships and stakeholder engagement were found to be essential in legitimizing leadership and sustaining school programs. Epstein and Sheldon (2016)[163] stressed that strong home-school partnerships improve student outcomes, while Sanders (2018)[164] emphasizes that stakeholder collaboration fosters accountability. Oracion (2021)[165] found that local community involvement strengthens schools' social capital. Taken together, these findings suggest that community engagement provides leaders with the legitimacy, resources, and partnerships necessary to sustain reforms.

Empowerment and Innovation

Leaders who empower teachers to take initiative foster a culture of innovation and adaptability. Harris and Jones (2019)[166] showed that empowerment enhances teacher motivation and creativity. Fullan (2021)[167] highlighted that innovation thrives when leaders allow space for risk-taking and experimentation. Mok and Cheng (2016)[168] noted that fostering innovation is key to responding to global educational shifts. In summary, empowerment and innovation drive schools toward adaptability and resilience in a changing educational landscape.

Distinct Challenges in Urban vs Rural School Settings

Urban school leaders face challenges in navigating bureaucratic structures, large student populations, and diverse learners' needs, while rural leaders struggle with limited staffing, fewer resources, and role overload. These findings are consistent with Johnson (2021)[169], who emphasized that urban schools often deal with complexity in scale and diversity, whereas rural schools contend with scarcity in human and material resources.

Similarly, Cailen (2022)[170] demonstrated that rural principals frequently adopt pragmatic, generalist leadership styles to balance instructional and administrative duties, unlike their urban counterparts who can distribute tasks to specialized personnel. Therefore, context fundamentally shapes leadership approaches, confirming that one-size-fits-all leadership policies remain inadequate.

Resource Limitations in Rural Schools

The scarcity of teaching materials, funding, and professional development in rural school was recurring theme. Carrete-Marin (2024)[171] noted that multigrade and resource-constrained contexts often rely on improvised or community-developed learning materials, which, while creative, limit innovation. Mustafa

(2024)[172] further found that weak technological infrastructure undermines rural schools' capacity to integrate digital learning.

hese studies affirm that participants' accounts of "making do" with limited resources. Furthermore, Gutierrez and Terrones (2023)[173] highlighted that funding formulas often disadvantage small rural districts, exacerbating inequity. Thus, addressing rural resource limitations requires structural reforms in funding and targeted investment in technology and training.

Instructional Management and Learning Needs

Rural school heads rely on informal supervision and coaching due to smaller staff sizes, while urban school leads employ data-driven and structured observation practices. This aligned with Li's (2023)[174] meta-analysis showing that student learning improves most when instructional leaders combine relational supports such as coaching and mentoring with structured feedback. Cailen (2022)[175] likewise reported that rural principals depend heavily on personal interactions to sustain instructional quality. Therefore, leadership strategies in instructional management must be sensitive to school size, staff capacity, and available resources.

Socioeconomic and Cultural Differences

Socioeconomic disparities and cultural values also influenced leadership. This study highlighted that in many rural communities, schools serve as central cultural hubs. Johnson (2021)[176] confirmed that rural families often rely on schools not only for education but also for civic and social functions. Furthermore, studies on cultural responsiveness stress that leaders who leverage community traditions and values foster stronger school-community trust says Li (2023)[177]. These results affirmed that socioeconomic and cultural dimensions cannot be ignored in leadership planning and policy.

Geographical and Logistical Constraints

Participants noted difficulties with transportation, supervising multi-schools, and internet connectivity. TICAS (2023)[178] found similar evidence of rural "education desserts," where distance and lack of broadband access hinder both schooling and postsecondary opportunities. Miller (2024)[179] also documented that weak digital capacity constrains professional learning for rural teachers. Therefore, leadership in geographically isolated schools demands adaptive solutions, such as clustered service delivery or networked professional learning.

V. The Professional Development Program

The professional development LEAD+ (Leadership Enhancement for Administrative and Instructional Development) program was designed as comprehensive initiative to strengthen the dual role of school heads in managing administrative functions while fulfilling instructional and supervisory responsibilities. It sought to cultivate leadership capacities that not only maintain organizational efficiency but also drive meaningful teaching and learning improvements. As Agirdag and Muijs (2023)[180] noted, leadership preparation that simultaneously develops management and instructional skills ensures that school leaders are better equipped to handle complex school realities.

The LEAD+ program, by integrating these domains into a single professional development framework, supported the holistic growth of school heads and aligned leadership practice with teacher and student needs. One of the central features of the program was strategic school leadership. The module helped

school heads learn how to balance short-term demands with long-term goals, prioritize essential tasks, and set realistic targets within their school improvement plans. By doing so, leaders were able to create environments where teaching and learning became the focal points of organizational planning. Mifsud (2024)[181] emphasized that strategic and distributed leadership cultivates sustainability in school systems, as it distributes ownership of goals across the institution rather than concentrating them solely on the principal.

The LEAD+ program shifted school heads' mindset from policing instruction to mentoring teachers, which encouraged collaboration and build trust. Mora-Ruano (2021)[182] emphasized such a transition reflects current research suggesting that supervision framed as developmental fosters stronger teacher performance, greater collaboration, and higher levels of instructional consistency across classrooms. Thus, LEAD+ program promoted a culture of continuous growth rather than one of mere compliance.

Equally vital, the program incorporated an emphasis on stakeholder engagement. School heads noted that their work with parents, teachers, and community members became more structured and purposeful. This resonates with Sadovska (2024)[183], who found that strong stakeholder collaboration builds trust, accountability, and shared responsibility for learning. LEAD+ program encouraged school heads to position parents and communities as co-educators and partners rather than as passive supporters, thereby strengthening the social fabric of schools. This approach aligns with the wider study of Sadovska (2024)[184] that viewed school-community partnerships as essential for boosting student achievement, reducing administrative burdens on principals, and fostering a collaborative culture that benefits both teachers and learners. By cultivating inclusive engagement strategies, LEAD+ program created stronger linkages between schools and their surrounding communities.

Finally, the program integrated adaptive leadership as a core competency for school heads. This module guided leaders in developing resilience, creativity, and flexibility to respond to evolving educational challenges such as policy shifts, resource limitations, or unexpected crises. Chughtai (2023)[185] emphasized that adaptive leadership promotes innovation and equips organizations to navigate uncertainty effectively. Similarly, Kurniady (2024)[186] found that when principals adopt adaptive practices in tandem with collaborative school culture, teacher performance improves significantly. LEAD+ program's scenario-based learning activities provided participants with opportunities to practice adaptive responses to complex problems, thereby enhancing their ability to lead in unpredictable environments. By fostering adaptability, the program prepared leaders not just to manage change but to transform it into opportunities for school growth and innovation.

Taken together, it demonstrates that the LEAD+ program offered a multidimensional and coherent approach to leadership development. Each module addressed critical aspects of modern school leadership, strategic planning to align vision with practice, supervision to promoted instructional quality, data use to guide informed decisions, stakeholder collaboration to strengthen partnerships, and adaptive leadership to navigate uncertainty.

V. CONCLUSION

1. School heads' experiences reveal that balancing administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision demands adaptability, strategic decision-making, and effective time management to sustain both school operations and teaching quality.

2. School heads' challenges in balancing administrative demands and instructional leadership underscore the complexity of their dual roles, which require constant prioritization and effective management to sustain both operations and learning.
3. School heads utilize time management, delegation, collaboration, and adaptive leadership as key strategies to effectively balance their administrative responsibilities and instructional supervision.
4. Contextual factors like limited resources, staff capacity, and stakeholder expectations greatly influence school heads' ability to balance their dual roles, compelling them to continuously adapt their strategies to sustain both efficiency and instructional quality.
5. A well-designed professional development program that integrates leadership training, instructional supervision, and administrative management with structured implementation approaches can enhance school heads' capacity to balance their dual roles effectively.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. School heads be supported through targeted professional development, mentoring, and institutional support mechanisms that equip them with the adaptability, strategic decision-making skills, and time management strategies necessary to effectively balance administrative responsibilities with instructional supervision while sustaining both school operations and teaching quality.
2. School heads be provided with comprehensive training, adequate resources, and supportive policies that enable them to effectively manage the complexity of their dual roles by prioritizing tasks, balancing administrative demands with instructional leadership, and sustaining both school operations and quality learning.
3. School heads be encouraged and supported through continuous professional development programs, peer collaboration platforms, and institutional policies to be able to strengthen their skills in time management, delegation, collaboration, and adaptive leadership to effectively balance administrative responsibilities with instructional supervision.
4. School heads be provided with sufficient resources, capacity-building initiatives, and stakeholder support systems that address contextual challenges and enable them to effectively adapt their strategies in balancing administrative responsibilities with instructional leadership to sustain both efficiency and instructional quality.
5. Educational authorities develop and implement comprehensive professional development programs that integrate leadership training, instructional supervision, and administrative management with well-defined implementation plans, ensuring that school heads are equipped with practical skills, collaborative approaches, and adaptive techniques to effectively balance their dual roles.
6. Future research may explore how technological innovations and data-driven tools can support school heads in balancing administrative and instructional roles, as well as compare urban and rural contexts to highlight differences in leadership practices. Studies on the well-being and stress management of school heads, along with gender perspectives in leadership, could also provide deeper insights into the personal dimensions of their work. In addition, research on collaborative and distributed leadership models, as well as community and parental involvement, may offer alternative approaches to reducing administrative burden and enhancing instructional supervision. Cross-cultural and cross-level investigations could broaden understanding of how leadership practices affect school operations and student outcomes, while post-pandemic studies may shed light on the evolving dynamics of educational leadership. Several titles can be derived from the original dissertation highlighting the

experience of school heads in managing administrative tasks and instructional supervision. Examples include "Bridging Leadership Roles: Experiences of School Heads in Managing Administrative and Instructional Duties, "Leadership in Practice: How School Heads Manage Administrative and Instructional Challenges,". Other titles emphasize daily practices and strategies, such as "Challenges and Strategies of School Heads in Balancing Administrative and Instructional Duties" and "Leadership Practices that Bridge Administration and Instruction in Public Schools." These examples illustrate various ways the study can be framed, all focusing on the dual responsibilities of school heads and their role in enhancing school performance.

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