International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

Lived Experiences of a School Head Reassigned to an Urban School in Zamboanga City: A Case Study

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Abstract
The study determined the lived experiences of a school head reassigned to an urban area in Zamboanga City during the school year 2024-2025. This is a qualitative-case study employing interview. It involved one school head reassigned in an urban area. The study utilized Purposive Sampling technique. The study found that the educational leadership of reassigned school heads in urban areas is marked by transformation rooted in experience, adaptability, and a strong commitment to inclusive education. The school head, shaped by personal and professional growth, developed the resilience and insight needed to navigate complex systems and respond to shifting educational demands. The school head faced unique challenges, particularly in implementing inclusive reforms within under-resourced settings. This underscores the need for leadership that is not only strategic but also empathetic and deeply engaged with the school community. By practicing holistic and inclusive leadership, principal can foster environments that support both staff development and student success. School heads must lead with empathy while maintaining accountability, using mentorship and collaboration as key tools for driving meaningful change. Reflective, adaptable leaders who are grounded in community values are vital to sustaining long-term school. The study recommends that the Department of Education invest in continuous professional development for reassigned school heads in urban areas. These programs should focus on *Adaptive and Inclusive Leadership*, equipping leaders with the skills to manage diverse educational needs, engage communities, and promote equity-driven practices in schools.

Keywords: Case study; lived experiences; reassigned School Head; Urban School

Introduction

School heads as educational leaders are tasked with managing school operations, fostering professional development among teachers, promoting student achievement, and cultivating positive school culture (Republic of the Philippines, Department of Education 2013,1). Their leadership is central to shaping the quality of education in their schools, making their role pivotal in achieving the educational goals set by the government and improving learning outcomes. However, the reassignment of school heads, particularly in urban areas, presents a complex phenomenon that requires careful consideration of various factors such as leadership adaptation, resource availability, and the socio-cultural dynamics of different school environments.

In Kenya, transfers of school heads are currently carried out on delocalization policy which was instituted by TSC in early 2018 on an involuntary basis with the aims of enhancing the management of educational institutions, fostering social cohesion and integration, reducing incidences of students' indiscipline, curb corruption in schools, bring in new ideas to streamline standards in educational institutions and prevent school heads from getting comfortable in their home counties (Tum 2020,3).

Grissom, Loeb, and Nakashima (2014, 3) state that transfer is done to improve academic performance. Changing school heads may lead to improvement or failure as far as academic performance is concerned, which is in accordance with expected utility decisions that involve uncertain outcome

The practice of reassigning school heads in the Philippines is not a new phenomenon, as it forms part of the Department of Education's (DepEd) effort to maintain effective school management, promote leadership development, and ensure that schools in various regions receive competent leadership (DepEd Order No. 25, 2019). School heads are reassigned as part of efforts to improve administrative efficiency, reduce leadership stagnation, and provide opportunities for professional growth and development (Salazar 2017,120). While these reassignment practices are intended to address administrative needs, they often involve significant transitions for school leaders, requiring them to navigate new organizational cultures, communities, and educational contexts. This is especially true for school heads reassigned to urban schools, which are marked by complex student populations, resource-rich environments, and the need to address diverse educational needs in fast-paced, highly populated areas.

The phenomenon of reassignment of school heads in urban schools in the Philippines warrants focused attention, as it involves both the personal and professional experiences of the school leaders who undergo these transitions. Urban schools differ significantly from rural schools, not only in terms of resources and infrastructure but also in terms of student demographics, community expectations, and the general pace of school operations. These differences can challenge school heads, as they must adjust their leadership approaches to meet the diverse and often rapidly changing needs of urban school communities. For instance, urban schools are typically larger, with higher student enrollment, more diverse socio-economic backgrounds, and increased access to digital resources, which may require school heads to employ more advanced organizational skills and leadership strategies (Bautista 2014, 345).

Given the significant differences between urban and rural settings, reassigning school heads to urban schools can be both an opportunity and a challenge. On the one hand, it offers school leaders the chance to work in more resource-abundant environments where they can implement innovative teaching methods, expand extracurricular programs, and access advanced professional development. On the other hand, the rapid pace of change in urban schools, combined with a more complex and diverse student body, can place pressure on school heads to quickly adjust and develop strategies that address the unique needs of their new school community. This reassignment process requires school heads to adapt to the local school culture, build new relationships with teachers and parents, and tackle complex problems such as overcrowding, equity in education, and the effective use of technology (Cheng 2016, 85).

The lived experiences of school heads who have been reassigned to urban schools, however, remain under-explored in academic research. Existing studies often focus on general educational leadership or leadership in specific school settings, but they rarely provide an in-depth, phenomenological exploration of the subjective experiences of school heads transitioning to urban schools (Ortega 2015,35). A phenomenological approach is particularly appropriate for this study, as it emphasizes the exploration of how individuals experience and interpret the world around them, focusing on their perceptions, feelings, and reflections on their lived realities. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the challenges

and emotional responses school heads encounter during reassignment and offers insights into how they make sense of their new roles in urban school environments.

In Zamboanga City Division, school heads have been reshuffled in their assignment. Some of them are reassigned in schools close to the city proper, while others are in remote areas. School heads who came from small schools and whose new assignment is in a large or very large school encounter challenges. Aside from learning to adjust to the new working environment, teachers, staff and students, they also struggle to deal with other stakeholders as they are new to them. Understanding and adapting to the new school's culture can be a significant challenge. Each school has its own norms, values, and traditions, and as a new school head, building trust with staff, students, and the community while respecting these established practices is crucial. Some teachers and other staff members resist new leadership, particularly if the incoming school head is seen as an outsider. Thus, school heads take time to building rapport and trust with the people around her in his/her new assignment.

The primary aim of this study is to understand the lived experiences of a school head reassigned to an urban school in Zamboanga City. Specifically, this research seeks to explore how a school head perceive and adapt to his new roles, how he navigates the challenges associated with urban school leadership, and how his experiences shape their professional identity and leadership practices. By focusing on the perspectives of a school head, the study will contribute to the understanding of how reassignment impacts leadership effectiveness, personal well-being, and overall school performance in urban settings. It will also provide insights into how the Department of Education can better support school heads during the reassignment process to ensure smooth transitions and sustained school improvement.

Through this research, it is expected that the findings will not only contribute to the field of educational leadership but will also offer practical recommendations for policymakers, educational administrators, and school leaders themselves on how to facilitate successful transitions during reassignments. Understanding the lived experiences of a school head reassigned to an urban school in Zamboanga City Division will provide valuable knowledge that can inform future leadership development programs, improve the support systems available to school leaders, and enhance the overall functioning of schools in urban areas.

Literature Review

Personal and Professional Experiences of School Heads in Their Reassignment within Urban Areas

The reassignment of school heads, particularly within urban areas, has been a topic of increasing interest in educational leadership studies. School heads, or principals, play a pivotal role in shaping the educational experience of students, teachers, and the wider school community. Their personal and professional experiences during reassignment can significantly impact their effectiveness, emotional well-being, and the overall success of the schools they lead.

The personal experiences of school heads during reassignment often involve significant emotional, psychological, and social challenges. Reassignment, especially to an unfamiliar school or district, can evoke feelings of stress, uncertainty, and even loss. According to Garmendia (2018, 213), school leaders frequently experience emotional distress when reassigned, as they must quickly adapt to a new environment, which may involve changes in community expectations, school culture, and personal roles. These emotions can be exacerbated by the high demands of urban school leadership, which often include addressing diverse student populations, managing complex educational systems, and fulfilling high expectations from both the community and the education system.

Reassignment can also lead to feelings of isolation and alienation. School heads who are transferred to urban schools may face challenges integrating into new social and professional networks. A study by McLennan and Guenther (2014, 34) found that reassigned principals often report feeling disconnected from their new school communities, especially if there is a lack of support from fellow administrators or teaching staff. This lack of social support can intensify the stress of reassignment, particularly in urban schools, where leadership roles require navigating a range of social, economic, and cultural complexities. In the context of urban schools in the Philippines, reassigned school heads often face unique pressures stemming from the diversity of the student body and the resource constraints common in urban settings. Bernardo and Andaya (2016,37) highlight how urban school heads in the Philippines must quickly develop an understanding of their new school's demographic makeup and adjust their leadership style accordingly. The emotional burden of adapting to these diverse educational environments can affect school heads' sense of professional identity and personal well-being.

Professionally, the reassignment of school heads requires significant adjustments to leadership style, operational management, and decision-making. School heads are expected to respond to the unique needs of their new schools, often with limited information or preparation. According to DeAngelis and Presley (2011,6), reassigned school heads face the challenge of quickly assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their new institutions. In urban areas, this task is especially demanding due to the scale of the challenges involved, including the need to manage large student populations, ensure equitable resource distribution, and address diverse academic needs.

Moreover, the professional experiences of reassigned school heads are shaped by the need to navigate various administrative and policy frameworks. Sawchuk (2018,14) emphasizes that urban school heads often struggle with budgetary constraints and high-stakes accountability measures that can undermine their ability to implement changes effectively. These challenges can lead to frustration, especially when reassigned principals are tasked with achieving ambitious educational goals despite limited resources.

Additionally, reassigned school heads must develop strong interpersonal and community engagement skills, as their leadership often requires close collaboration with teachers, parents, and local government entities. A study by Tantoco and Esteban (2020,23) found that school heads in the Philippines report both positive and negative experiences related to community involvement during reassignment. Some school leaders reported gaining new insights into community needs, which allowed them to tailor their leadership strategies effectively. Others, however, faced resistance from parents and teachers, who were hesitant to accept leadership changes, particularly in urban areas with diverse populations and complex social dynamics.

Challenges and opportunities faced by school heads during their reassignment in urban schools

Reassignment of school heads, particularly in urban environments, presents both challenges and opportunities that can significantly influence the quality of leadership and the success of schools. Urban schools, often characterized by diversity in student populations, socio-economic disparities, and limited resources, create unique demands on school leaders.

Reassignment to a new school can evoke significant emotional and psychological stress for school heads. Research has highlighted the emotional toll that reassignment can have on school leaders, particularly when they are placed in unfamiliar environments. Garmendia (2018,213) found that reassigned school heads often experience feelings of anxiety, isolation, and frustration, particularly when faced with new responsibilities and unfamiliar school cultures. These emotional challenges can hinder their ability to

establish effective leadership quickly, as they must not only adjust to a new administrative role but also to the demands of the school's staff, students, and community.

Urban schools, by nature, are more complex due to their diverse student populations and often entrenched school cultures. McLennan and Guenther (2014,34) argue that urban school heads face challenges in adjusting to these complex environments, where the needs of the students are diverse and multifaceted. Reassigned school heads may struggle to establish credibility or authority, especially in schools with established leadership traditions or resistance to change. Additionally, they must navigate school cultures that may differ significantly from their previous assignments. This organizational adjustment can lead to difficulties in aligning the school's existing policies with the new leadership style or goals (DeAngelis and Presley 2011,6).

Urban schools often face significant resource constraints, including overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teaching materials, and limited funding. These challenges are intensified for reassigned school heads who must quickly learn how to manage these limitations. According to Sawchuk (2018,14), principals reassigned to urban schools often find themselves confronting the reality of underfunded programs and systemic inequalities that can make it difficult to meet student needs. The inability to quickly address these resource gaps can lead to frustration and burnout, as school heads strive to meet expectations with insufficient resources.

Resistance from teachers, staff, and the broader school community is another common challenge faced by reassigned school heads in urban areas. Teachers may be resistant to new leadership styles, especially if the reassignment is viewed as disruptive or if the new principal lacks familiarity with the school's unique challenges. As McLennan and Guenther (2014, 35) point out, building trust with the staff is crucial but can be difficult when school heads are perceived as outsiders.

Emotional/psychological impact of the reassignment process on school heads

One of the central themes in the literature is the emotional upheaval experienced by school heads during reassignment. Studies have consistently shown that reassignments can lead to feelings of stress, anxiety, and uncertainty (Browne and Keane 2013,1). According to Dempster, Lovett, and Flückiger (2017,447), school heads often experience significant emotional responses such as anger, frustration, and sadness when faced with reassignment. These emotions stem from the loss of familiar work environments, relationships, and professional identity, which is particularly pronounced when the reassignment is perceived as punitive or unplanned.

In a longitudinal study by Brown and Green (2020,112), participants reported a deep sense of loss and a disrupted professional identity after being reassigned to a new school. For many, the transition was likened to a form of bereavement, as they mourned the loss of their established position and connections with the school community. Furthermore, the study found that these emotional responses were often compounded by the lack of agency in the reassignment process, leading to a sense of powerlessness.

The reassignment of school heads is closely linked to increased stress levels and, in some cases, burnout. Several studies have examined the chronic stress that accompanies these transitions, particularly when school heads feel unsupported or inadequately prepared for the change. In a study by Boucher and Asbury (2015,347), school leaders who were reassigned without sufficient preparation or professional development support were more likely to experience higher levels of stress and burnout. These leaders expressed feelings of being overwhelmed, particularly when their new role required them to manage a more challenging or underperforming school.

Furthermore, Dempster et al. (2017,447) found that reassignment could exacerbate pre-existing psychological conditions. School heads experiencing high levels of job-related stress before reassignment were found to be particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of the transition. The added emotional burden of adapting to a new environment often exacerbated the symptoms of burnout, including fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and decreased effectiveness.

The organizational context in which the reassignment occurs plays a crucial role in mitigating or exacerbating the emotional impact on school heads. Researchers have emphasized the importance of supportive organizational cultures and mentoring systems in helping reassigned leaders cope with their emotions. In a study by Brown, Hall and Dunn (2018,722), school leaders who were reassigned to schools with strong professional communities and collaborative leadership teams reported a smoother transition and less emotional distress. These leaders noted that having a supportive network of peers and mentors helped to ease their feelings of isolation and provided emotional validation during the adjustment period. Conversely, reassigned school heads who experienced a lack of support from their new colleagues or from central administration faced more significant emotional challenges. For example, Campbell and McGregor (2019,334) argued that the absence of a welcoming school culture can lead to feelings of alienation and exacerbate stress. Their research suggests that institutional support, in the form of orientation programs and ongoing mentorship, is critical for reducing the negative emotional impact of reassignment.

The reassignment of school heads, often driven by administrative decisions or policy changes, has significant implications for both the leader's ability to manage effectively and how their success is perceived by various stakeholders. Since 2010, research has explored the link between leadership reassignment and perceptions of success in educational settings, highlighting the multifaceted nature of this dynamic. This literature review synthesizes key studies, examining how reassignment impacts the perceived success of leadership from multiple perspectives, including that of teachers, students, parents, and school communities.

Effects of Reassignment on the Perceived Success of Leadership in School.

A critical element in understanding the effects of reassignment on leadership success is the concept of "success" itself. Leadership success is often defined in relation to various factors such as student achievement, staff morale, organizational stability, and the ability to implement educational reforms (Leithwood et al., 2010,6). Several studies have emphasized that the perceived success of a school leader is subjective and influenced by the stability of their tenure (Snyder and Anderson 2013,45). The theory of transformational leadership, as discussed by Bass and Avolio (2010,11), suggests that school leaders who are able to inspire and engage staff members in a shared vision will be more likely to be perceived as successful, even in challenging contexts. However, reassignment can disrupt this process, potentially hindering the leader’s ability to build long-term relationships and trust, which are crucial to effective leadership.

Research examining how reassignment impacts perceptions of leadership success indicates mixed outcomes. Some studies suggest that reassigned leaders face significant challenges in establishing their authority and gaining credibility within a new school environment. For instance, a study by Bell and Hall (2014,295) revealed that school heads who were reassigned to schools with pre-existing leadership structures or strong cultures of resistance struggled to establish themselves as effective leaders. Teachers and staff members at these schools often viewed the reassigned leader with skepticism, questioning their competence and leadership potential, which hindered their ability to successfully implement reforms.

In contrast, other studies have shown that reassigned school heads who are seen as capable of navigating change and engaging with new challenges may be perceived positively. According to research by Day and Sammons (2016,4), leadership success following reassignment is closely tied to the ability of school heads to demonstrate adaptability and to quickly build relationships with new staff members. When reassigned leaders were able to foster an environment of trust and collaboration, they were more likely to be perceived as successful, even in the face of initial resistance or adjustment.

The organizational culture of the school plays a pivotal role in determining how reassigned leadership is perceived. A study by Harris and Jones (2017,267) found that reassigned leaders who entered schools with strong, established cultures were often viewed as outsiders, regardless of their leadership skills. This sense of outsider status can limit their ability to influence staff members or drive change. Teachers and other school staff, particularly those who have been at the school for a longer period, may view a reassigned leader as a transient figure, less invested in the long-term success of the school, which can undermine their perceived success (Dempster et al., 2018,55).

Conversely, when reassigned leaders enter schools with a more fluid or evolving culture, their ability to enact change can be enhanced. Reassigned leaders with a proven track record of success, who are seen as capable of fostering innovation and leading reforms, may be perceived positively, as their leadership is viewed as essential for the school's progress. This dynamic was noted by Leithwood and Sun (2018,777), who highlighted that successful school leaders, regardless of their reassignment, were those who aligned their leadership style with the values and needs of the school community.

One of the most commonly used metrics for evaluating leadership success in schools is student achievement. However, the relationship between leadership reassignment and student outcomes is complex. In their study on leadership transitions, Robinson and Timperley (2016,234) found that school leadership changes, including reassignment, could disrupt momentum in student achievement, especially in schools where the previous leader had already established effective strategies for improvement. This disruption can lead to initial declines in perceived leadership success, as staff and students may struggle with the transition.

However, other studies have suggested that reassigned leaders can ultimately have a positive impact on student outcomes, particularly when they bring new strategies or expertise that align with the needs of the school. For instance, a study by Grissom et al. (2020,3) found that school heads who were reassigned to underperforming schools with a mandate for reform were more likely to be perceived as successful if they demonstrated a clear vision for improvement and were able to engage teachers and staff in achieving measurable academic outcomes. Their success was often framed in terms of their ability to overcome the challenges of reassignment and drive positive change.

The perceptions of school leaders following reassignment are also shaped by the level of support they receive from various stakeholders, including district administrators, parents, and the broader community. Studies have shown that reassigned leaders who have strong backing from central office administrators and school boards tend to experience smoother transitions and higher perceptions of success. For example, in a study by Hallinger (2019,601, leaders who were reassigned with clear administrative support were better able to secure staff buy-in and implement changes, as they were seen as having the authority and backing to make necessary decisions.

Parent and community support also plays a key role in shaping perceptions of leadership success. Research by Tseng (2022,310) indicates that when reassigned leaders take the time to engage with parents and build positive relationships with the community, they are more likely to be seen as successful in their new role.

In contrast, a lack of communication with parents and stakeholders can lead to a perception of failure, even if the leader is effectively managing the school internally.

This study is anchored on the Critical Leadership Theory by Chandler and Kirsch (2018,1) which highlights how power structures, inequalities, and systemic factors shape leadership practices. The study of school heads' reassignment in urban areas may reveal the systemic and contextual challenges they face, particularly issues related to race, class, and urban educational politics. In addition, Mezirow's (1991,1) Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) posits that individuals undergo significant transformations in perspective when they encounter new experiences that challenge their current assumptions or worldviews. Reassignments in urban schools may lead to personal and professional transformation as school heads confront new environments, challenges, and roles, possibly reshaping their leadership identity and understanding of their roles in education. These frameworks would help uncover the broader societal and institutional factors that shape the experiences of school heads, especially in diverse and challenging urban settings. These theoretical frameworks can help guide this study by providing a lens through which to interpret the lived experiences of school heads undergoing reassignment. They offer insights into how individuals process personal transformation, leadership changes, and their evolving professional identities in the context of urban schools. By utilizing these frameworks, this study can offer both a rich phenomenological analysis and a deeper understanding of the challenges and growth opportunities that school heads encounter during reassignment in urban areas.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research was to determine the lived experiences of a school head reassigned to an urban area in Zamboanga City during the school year 2024-2025, through the following specific aims:

1. To explore the personal and professional experiences of a school head regarding the reassignment within urban area
2. To identify the challenges and opportunities faced by a school head during the reassignment in urban school
3. To examine the emotional/psychological impact of the reassignment process on school head
4. To determine how the reassignment affects the perceived success of leadership in school

Scope and Limitation

This study was limited to the lived experiences of a reassigned school head to urban school in Zamboanga City during the school year 2024-2025. The lived experiences focused on the personal and professional experiences of a school head regarding his reassignment within urban area, the challenges and opportunities faced by school head during his reassignment in urban school, the emotional/psychological impact of the reassignment process on school head, and how the reassignment affects the perceived success of leadership in school. The study is a qualitative-case study research using a purposive sampling design. It utilized a semi-structured interview questionnaire to gather data from a school head. The study did not assess the performance of the school head in the new assignment.

Method

Research Design

This paper is a qualitative-case study research. Qualitative research design is concerned with capturing

the richness and depth of human experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Jain 2023,1). An in-depth understanding of a current problem or event in a confined system can be produced using the methodical research methodology known as a case study. To comprehend a real-life occurrence, case study research necessitates a thorough examination of a person, group, or event (Coombs 2021,1). In the context of this study, a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews, documents and autobiographies were used to collect data from the school head. This choice of methodology aims to delve deeply the lived experiences and perceptions of a school head in the reassignment of school.

Research Participant

The participant in this study was a School Head detailed at Baliwasan Senior High School-Stand Alone, Baliwasan District. A non-probability purposive sampling design was used in this study. The researchers chose the participant because of his lived experiences. The researchers' desire to create a detailed and comprehensive account of a school head's experiences in a new assignment is another reason they picked this method. Cases with a wealth of information for in-depth analysis are provided by purposeful design

Research Instrument

Similar to other phenomenological researches, the researchers formulated open-ended questions for the participant. Secondary follow-up questions were also used to probe further information about the participant, his attitudes, beliefs, opinions and experiences regarding their reassignment to an urban school. The interview guide was validated by a panel of three experts in the field of research, preferably a master's degree and doctorate degree holders.

At the participant's convenience, the interview was planned and carried out. Digital voice or video recorders were used to capture the interview. Following the transcription, analysis, and coding of the numerous interviews, the participant was requested to confirm the accuracy of the transcripts and the emerging themes in order to validate and confirm the data.

In compliance to Research Ethics Protocol, the investigation was conducted with careful consideration of a number of ethical issues. Getting the participant's informed consent is one of the most important factors. Participant received thorough information about the study's goals, methods, and advantages prior to his participation in the research. He will be guaranteed the freedom to participate voluntarily and the freedom to leave at any time without facing consequences. To make sure that participant understands the implications of the study and voluntarily consent to participate, a cover letter and a tailored consent form was used. Furthermore, extra effort was taken to guarantee that participant privacy and their responses were protected throughout the research process by maintaining confidentiality and anonymity.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers sought permission to conduct the study from the office of the school's division superintendent of Zamboanga City. Upon approval, the researchers personally interviewed the participant in his most convenient time. The researchers opted for a self-made semi-structured, qualitative interview approach for data collection. While guaranteeing that important subjects and themes are connected to the lived experiences in reassignment of work environment, this method permits flexibility in the questioning process. Because the interviews are qualitative in nature, the participant is allowed to articulate his opinions and experiences in his own words, yielding rich and complex data for analysis. After then, the information gathered from the interviews was examined in preparation for presentation.

Data Analysis

In this study, the researchers aimed to determine the lived experiences of a school head reassigned in an urban area. Through qualitative methods such as interview, the researchers utilized thematic analysis to analyze participant responses to identify key themes and patterns in their perceptions. One qualitative research technique for finding, examining, and summarizing patterns (themes) in data is thematic analysis. Finding recurrent themes, concepts, or patterns that are important to the study objectives entails analyzing and interpreting data. The approach is adaptable and may be used with a variety of qualitative data, such as textual data, focus groups, interviews, and surveys (Brown and Clarke 2006,1).

Results and Discussion

Personal and Professional Experiences of School Head Regarding his Reassignment Within an Urban Area.

1.1 Can you describe your career path prior to this reassignment?

Table 1. Description of Career Path Prior to this reassignment.

Major Theme	Core Ideas
Growth through Experience and Commitment to Leadership in Education	• Career Progression • Foundational Teaching Experience • Leadership Development • Current Role and Responsibilities • Adaptability and Continuity

Theme 1. Growth through Experience and Commitment to Leadership in Education

The major theme revolves around continuous professional development and leadership growth. The principal's journey reflects a deepening commitment to educational leadership, from foundational teaching roles to complex administrative responsibilities. It underscores the value of diverse experiences in shaping an adaptable, experienced leader dedicated to improving educational environments and student outcomes. Participant stated that:

My professional journey in education spans over two decades, marked not only by a steady progression in roles and responsibilities but also by consistent positive feedback, demonstrated instructional leadership, and data-supported school improvements.

I began my teaching career as a **Teacher I,** serving for **seven years,** during which my performance was consistently rated "Very Satisfactory" in **Classroom Observation Reports** and **Performance Commitment and Review Forms (IPCRFs).** Peer and supervisor feedback consistently highlighted my strengths in instructional planning and classroom management. For instance, a 2009 peer observation noted, *he demonstrates clear command of lesson flow, maintains student engagement, and shows adaptability during differentiated instruction."* These foundational years allowed me to develop and refine my teaching competencies.

As a **Teacher II** for the next **three years,** I took on mentoring roles for beginning teachers. This was recognized in a **division memorandum** dated May 2013, which cited my contributions to the *New Teachers' Induction Program*. Colleagues reported in informal feedback and post-training evaluations that my guidance was instrumental in helping them understand classroom routines and assessment strategies. One mentee remarked, *"His support made my transition into teaching smoother and more confident."*

Transitioning to **School Head/Teacher-in-Charge**, a post I held for **five years**, I was entrusted with broader leadership duties including curriculum implementation and school operations. **School performance reports** from this period showed improvements in NAT scores and student attendance. An internal **district monitoring report (2016)** noted a 12% increase in student achievement and a significant decrease in dropout rates. Supervisory visit memos commended my ability to "mobilize community support and foster a learning-conducive environment despite resource limitations."

My next role as a **Master Teacher I** for **six years** further underscored my commitment to instructional leadership. I led **School Learning Action Cell (SLAC)** sessions, initiated **lesson study groups**, and co-developed the **Reading Remediation Program,** which was later adapted by other schools in the district. **Post-SLAC feedback surveys** indicated a 95% satisfaction rate, and annual IPCRF evaluations rated my performance as "Outstanding" in domains related to curriculum enhancement and teacher development.

In my role as a **full-fledged Assistant Principal II** for **three years**, I took on strategic responsibilities such as supervising school improvement planning, leading parent engagement programs, and streamlining administrative procedures. Feedback from teachers via **anonymous satisfaction surveys** conducted in 2021 revealed a marked improvement in staff morale, communication clarity, and support for professional growth. One teacher commented, *"He is an empathetic leader who listens and responds. Our workflows are smoother, and we feel heard."*

From there, I took on the role of **School Head**, while still holding the **Assistant Principal II item,** a unique position I held for **six years**. Under my leadership, the school saw a marked rise in performance metrics. For example, a **SY 2022-2023 Division Report** cited our school as one of the top five in the district for English and Science proficiency. The same report attributed this to "targeted instructional interventions and an empowered teaching force, led by effective school leadership." Observational notes from district supervisors praised my "hands-on approach to school-based management and collaborative leadership style."

Most recently, following a family relocation, I formally assumed the position of **full-time Assistant School Principal II** on **August 1, 2024**, a post I have now held for **eight months**. Despite the transition, I've maintained high standards of leadership. Preliminary feedback from **teachers' focus group discussions** and **Mid-Year Review Reports** shows strong faculty satisfaction, citing improved faculty consultation mechanisms and enhanced school-community engagement. A recent **memo from the Office of the Principal**, dated March 2025, highlighted the success of a school-wide literacy initiative I spearheaded, which resulted in a 15% increase in reading proficiency.

This professional journey is not only characterized by upward mobility and increased responsibilities, but also by sustained engagement in professional development, collaborative practice, and instructional leadership—elements that have significantly shaped the effectiveness as an educational leader. The progression from classroom teacher to full-time Assistant School Principal II reflects a consistent commitment to growth through hands-on experience, reflective practice, and ongoing capacity building. This finding corroborates the work of Tingle et al. (2017, 426), whose research underscores the value of sustained professional development and mentorship in fostering principals' growth and their long-term commitment to educational leadership. Over the years, his participation in structured mentoring programs, district-level training, and school-based learning sessions not only enriched his own practice but also positioned me to serve as a mentor and instructional coach to others.

1.2 Can you describe any major differences between your previous school and the urban school in terms of school culture and environment?

Table 2. Description on the differences between your previous school and the urban school

Major Theme	Core Ideas
Adaptation to Leadership Structures and Role Redefinition in Education	• Shift in Decision-Making Authority • Change in Role Focus • Impact on School Culture • Enhanced Academic Focus

Theme 2. Adaptation to Leadership Structures and Role Redefinition in Education The statement reflects how educational leadership roles can shift within hierarchical structures, influencing both personal professional focus and the broader school culture. It underscores the balance between leadership, collaboration, and academic excellence. Participant stated that:

One of the most significant differences I encountered in my current role as a full-time Assistant School Principal II is the shift in decision-making authority and operational autonomy. Previously, as a School Head, I held primary responsibility for the overall administration of the school—ranging from strategic planning and budget allocation to curriculum oversight and stakeholder engagement. In that capacity, I exercised broad discretionary authority, as documented in School Governance and Operations Manuals and supported by regular district memoranda affirming the School Head's executive decision-making role. In contrast, my present position operates within a defined subordinate framework, under the direct supervision of a School Principal. As outlined in the DepEd Position Description Form for Assistant School Principal II, my role now emphasizes supportive functions—such as assisting in instructional supervision, facilitating communication between departments, and implementing school-based initiatives—as opposed to independently initiating or approving major decisions.

This organizational realignment is also reflected in day-to-day operations. For example, in budget discussions or policy changes, decisions now require consultation with and final approval from the principal, whereas, in my former role, I would have led such discussions and had the authority to make final determinations. This was clearly illustrated during a recent instance involving resource allocation for a remedial reading program: while I provided recommendations and coordinated logistics, the principal retained the final decision-making power—a departure from my previous experience as a School Head.

Moreover, feedback from supervisory conferences and midyear performance reviews has emphasized the importance of aligning with the principal's directives, reinforcing the hierarchical nature of the role. A memo issued by the school principal in October 2024 clearly delineated operational boundaries between administrative and instructional domains, stating, *"Assistant Principals are encouraged to lead initiatives, but all final decisions on policy and resource deployment must be routed through the office of the School Principal."*

This change, while initially challenging, has provided new insights into collaborative leadership and distributed management, emphasizing coordination over unilateral action. It has allowed me to focus more deeply on instructional leadership and faculty development, areas where I can exercise autonomy within delegated authority.

Triangulating this experience with insights from the Tingle et al. (2017) study, it becomes evident that shifts in leadership roles often require adaptive professional learning and reframing of leadership identity.

Their research highlights how assistant principals must navigate complex leadership dynamics, balancing initiative with deference to senior leadership. My current role exemplifies this, requiring thoughtful negotiation of authority and a deeper understanding of shared governance.
The finding supports Ganon-Shiloh and Schechter (2017,279) whose findings highlight the principals' active role as sense-makers, adapting their leadership practices to navigate the complexities of reform implementation.

Challenges and Opportunities Faced by School Head During his Reassignment in Urban School.
2.1 What have been the most significant challenges you have faced since your reassignment to this urban school?

Table 3. Most significant challenges faced in reassignment

Major Theme	Core Ideas
Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education Reforms	• Resistance to a New Program • Focus on Learners with Special Needs • Lack of Teacher Training • Uniform Treatment of Students • Undermining Program Goals

Theme 3. Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education Reforms
The responses highlight the difficulty of enacting policy changes—especially inclusive education initiatives—when educators lack training and awareness. It reveals a tension between leadership-driven reform and classroom-level readiness, emphasizing the need for professional development and empathy in educational practice. The participant stated:
One of the most significant challenges I've encountered since my reassignment as Assistant School Principal II involves managing the initial resistance and sensitivity from some teachers toward the implementation of the School Drop-Out Reduction Program (SDORP). While the program is designed to support at-risk students—particularly those experiencing academic disengagement, absenteeism, or socio-emotional difficulties—its success depends heavily on teacher cooperation and classroom-level execution. During the first few months of implementation, it became clear through both informal conversations and structured feedback mechanisms that some teachers were uncertain and hesitant about their roles in the program. For example, during a focus group discussion held in November 2024, several teachers shared that they felt “overwhelmed” by the additional responsibilities, such as maintaining dropout watch lists or conducting follow-up on learner attendance. One teacher commented, *“We want to help, but we’re not sure how to intervene without disrupting our already packed schedules.”*
This sentiment was echoed in the results of a teacher survey conducted in December 2024, which indicated that only 38% of respondents felt "adequately prepared" to support at-risk learners under the SDORP framework. Many pointed to a lack of orientation or training specific to behavioral interventions, parent coordination, and flexible remediation strategies.
Additionally, classroom observations and walkthroughs revealed that while most teachers showed willingness, there were inconsistencies in the implementation of early warning mechanisms and learner follow-up protocols. For instance, in one observation, a teacher acknowledged the absenteeism of a learner

but had not yet initiated contact with the family, citing uncertainty over the proper steps. These findings were documented in an observation memo submitted to the school principal in January 2025.

The core of the challenge lies in the gap between policy introduction and on-the-ground preparedness. Most teachers have not received comprehensive orientation or capacity-building related to dropout prevention, student profiling, or the socio-emotional dimensions of student retention. This lack of structured support has understandably led to frustration, misinterpretations, and resistance among a few faculty members.

This situation highlights a broader leadership insight: that successful program implementation requires both structural readiness and emotional buy-in from teachers. As Fullan (2007,1) argues, educational change is as much a human endeavor as it is a technical one—emphasizing the need to involve teachers in the process of change and equip them meaningfully. Triangulating teacher feedback, classroom observations, and implementation gaps affirm that professional development, clear communication, and ongoing support are indispensable in addressing initial resistance and building collective ownership of school reforms.

The study holds true to Beltran et al., (2025, 8) whose research emphasizes the need for comprehensive support systems, enhanced professional development for educators, and stronger collaboration with families to effectively implement inclusive education reforms.

2.2. In your view, what opportunities have you encountered in the urban school environment that were not available in your previous role?

Table 4. Opportunities encountered in the urban school

Major Theme	Core Ideas
Leveraging School Environment for Professional Growth and Student Excellence	• Access to Professional Collaboration • Supportive Research Culture • Student Engagement in Competitions • Culture of Excellence • Enhanced Educational Experience

Theme 4. Leveraging School Environment for Professional Growth and Student Excellence

The responses underscore how an urban school setting can offer unique advantages—such as a research-oriented faculty and competitive opportunities—that elevate both teaching practices and student engagement. The principal emphasizes the role of a collaborative and achievement-driven culture in shaping a thriving educational community. Below are the responses of the school head.

In my current assignment in an urban school setting, I have observed a distinct shift in both the opportunities available and the academic culture compared to my previous post. This new environment has exposed me to a school community with high levels of teacher engagement, especially in areas such as basic and action research and co-curricular excellence—elements that were less prominent in my former rural or less-resourced context.

One of the most remarkable opportunities is the presence of numerous teachers actively involved in action research and innovation projects. This engagement is evident in the school's consistent participation in Division and Regional Research Congresses, as documented in the 2024 Division Report on Research Engagement. The school submitted over 15 action research entries within the last academic year alone—several of which were acknowledged with merit awards. For instance, in a memo dated March 2025, the

Schools Division Office commended three of our teachers for producing research that led to improved reading intervention strategies in Grades 4–6.

Further triangulation comes from teacher interviews and SLAC session reflections, where many educators cited the school's supportive research culture—highlighting the availability of peer mentoring, guidance from research coordinators, and recognition for published work. One teacher reflected during a post-SLAC session, *"The culture here encourages us to explore problems in our classrooms and propose solutions through research. It pushes us to grow beyond teaching."* This level of engagement not only fosters professional growth but also contributes to a data-informed culture of decision-making within the school.

In addition to academic scholarship, there is also a robust emphasis on student involvement in academic and sports competitions, which plays a pivotal role in building student motivation and school pride. School records show that during SY 2023–2024, our learners participated in over 30 inter-school competitions, securing top ranks in quiz bees, science fairs, athletics, and cultural events. The School Accomplishment Report (Q1–Q2, 2024) reflects championship titles at the division and regional levels.

Additionally, student focus group discussions conducted in January 2025 revealed that learners felt highly motivated by these competitions, with one Grade 11 student sharing, *"Seeing our school win makes us feel proud and inspires us to do our best academically and in sports."*

This confluence of teacher research engagement and student achievement in co-curricular programs has a synergistic effect: it cultivates a high-performance environment where both staff and students are challenged and celebrated. Supervisory observations and division monitoring reports further validate this, with one report noting that "the school exhibits a vibrant culture of innovation and achievement, driven by proactive leadership and faculty involvement."

In the study of Tan et al., (2020,1), findings indicate the critical role of principals in creating supportive learning environments that foster both professional growth for teachers and academic excellence for students.

2.3 How do you balance the needs of the school, staff, and community in an urban setting compared to a different environment?

Table 5. Balancing the needs of the school, staff, and community

Major Theme	Core Ideas
Holistic and Inclusive Leadership in Urban Education	• Collaboration and Communication in Leadership: • Empowering Teachers through Research • Inclusive and Responsive Program Implementation • Student Engagement through Competitions: • Community-Centered Leadership

Theme 5. Holistic and Inclusive Leadership in Urban Education

The principal's responses center around the theme of inclusive, community-driven leadership that values collaboration, empowers educators, and actively engages students. In an urban context, this approach helps address complex challenges by fostering unity, professional growth, and student motivation, ultimately cultivating a school culture that is both resilient and responsive. Below are some of the responses:

In my current role as Assistant School Principal II, fostering strong, collaborative relationships among all stakeholders has become a central pillar of my leadership approach—particularly important in navigating the complex and often fast-paced dynamics of an urban school environment. Urban schools, by nature,

present unique challenges: higher student diversity, larger enrollments, increased socio-economic disparities, and heightened academic expectations. Addressing these requires not only strong administrative systems but also intentional stakeholder engagement that builds trust, responsiveness, and shared accountability.

One of the key strategies I implement is actively engaging teachers in academic and action research discussions. This strategy is grounded in the understanding that empowered teachers drive school improvement. Through our School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) sessions, we've incorporated regular "Research Rounds," where teachers present their classroom-based inquiries or innovations. Post-SLAC surveys (Q3, SY 2024–2025) revealed that over 85% of participating teachers reported increased confidence in using research to solve instructional challenges. One teacher reflected, *"Being involved in research gives us ownership of the problems we face and the solutions we develop. It's empowering."* Moreover, three teacher-led research projects have recently been accepted for presentation at the Division Research Congress, a testament to their growing capacity and engagement.

Simultaneously, I place a strong emphasis on student engagement through academic and sports competitions as a unifying and motivational force within the school. School accomplishment records show consistent participation in division-level events, with multiple awards earned in science quiz bees, MTAP contests, athletics, and cultural showcases. These competitions do more than bolster the school's public image—they instill discipline, teamwork, and pride among students. In a student focus group discussion (January 2025), one Grade 11 student remarked, *"Joining competitions gave me a purpose beyond the classroom. It made me feel part of something bigger."*

These initiatives are intentionally designed to build a cohesive school culture where both teachers and students feel seen, valued, and supported. However, this cannot be achieved without listening to the wider school community—parents, barangay officials, alumni, and local NGOs. Through regular community consultations, PTA meetings, and quarterly stakeholder dialogues, I ensure that school programs remain inclusive and adaptive to evolving needs.

This inclusive approach is supported by feedback collected through parents. In a discussion with parents during HRPTA meeting, one of respondents agreed that *"school leadership is responsive to the needs of learners and the community."* Similarly, District Office supervisory notes acknowledged our efforts to involve all sectors of the school ecosystem, noting that *"collaborative planning and openness to feedback have strengthened program ownership and accountability across stakeholder groups."*

In the study of DeMatthews et al (2020,3), challenges highlighted include limited resources, systemic inequities, and the need for sustained professional development. The findings underscore the importance of a holistic and inclusive leadership approach in navigating the complexities of urban education settings.

Emotional/Psychological effects of the Reassignment Process on School Head.

3.1 What emotional or psychological challenges have you experienced as a result of your reassignment?

Table 6. Emotional or psychological challenges experienced

Major Theme	Core Ideas
Emotional Resilience and Leadership Amid Change and Resistance	• Mixed Emotional Response to Reassignment • Innovative Initiative – Anecdotal Records • Resistance from Staff • Conflict and Formal Grievance

	• Commitment to Positive Change

Theme 6. Emotional Resilience and Leadership Amid Change and Resistance

The principal's reflections highlight the emotional complexity of leading change in a school environment. The central theme revolves around navigating resistance, maintaining professional resolve, and fostering innovation in student support systems. It underscores the importance of resilience, empathy, and strategic communication in implementing reforms while managing interpersonal and organizational challenges. Below are the responses:

Since my reassignment to a new urban school, my experience has been characterized by a dynamic blend of emotions—primarily excitement and optimism, tempered by moments of stress, apprehension, and emotional strain. This duality is not uncommon in leadership transitions, especially when bringing new ideas into an established school culture with varying levels of readiness for change.

One of the most energizing aspects of my new role was the opportunity to introduce innovative strategies, including the incorporation of anecdotal records into the school guidance program. This initiative aimed to enhance the quality of behavioral and academic interventions by providing a systematic way for class advisers and guidance staff to track student development over time. During the initial rollout, several teachers expressed enthusiasm. In a post-orientation feedback form conducted in October 2024, 72% of respondents agreed that the use of anecdotal records would "help provide a clearer picture of student behavior and support needs." This positive reception reinforced my sense of purpose and validated the initiative's relevance.

While awaiting the district-facilitated dialogue, I experienced a mix of apprehension, vulnerability, and professional resolve. I documented these emotions in a personal reflection journal, where I wrote, *"I feel anxious not because I doubt my intent, but because I'm aware of how fragile professional trust can be during periods of change."* This internal tension was mitigated somewhat by the supportive response from the school principal and some department heads, who recognized the intent behind my proposals and encouraged open dialogue.

When the dialogue eventually occurred, the District Supervisor facilitated a clarificatory discussion that focused on aligning expectations and improving communication strategies. The outcome was constructive; the grievance was amicably resolved, and the situation became a learning point for enhancing my approach to change management and staff inclusion. This was later affirmed in the District Office summary report (January 2025), which stated, *"The assistant principal demonstrated openness to feedback and a willingness to adjust communication strategies to preserve collegiality and trust."*

The broader takeaway from this experience is that leadership transition brings both growth and emotional labor. While the reassignment has opened doors to innovative leadership, such as academic intervention design, research engagement, and stakeholder collaboration, it has also introduced the stress of navigating interpersonal dynamics, resolving resistance, and ensuring alignment with existing school culture.

Despite the challenges, I view this phase as one of transformational learning—a time that has strengthened my capacity for self-awareness, reflective practice, and collaborative leadership. The emotional highs and lows have both shaped and sharpened my ability to lead with empathy, clarity, and courage in a diverse, high-expectation school environment.

The finding supports Wescot 2018,1. His study highlights that principals who perceive themselves as resilient are more likely to exhibit transformational leadership behaviors, which are essential for leading schools through significant changes and overcoming resistance. This research underscores the importance

of fostering resilience in school leaders to effectively navigate the challenges of educational transformation.

3.2 How did you manage any emotional or psychological stress caused by your reassignment?

Table 7. Managing any emotional or psychological stress

Major Theme	Core Ideas
Resilience Through Support Systems in Educational Leadership	• Seeking Support from Colleagues • Family as Emotional Anchor • Utilizing School Resources and Mentorship • Holistic Stress Management • Staying Committed to Inclusive Education

Theme 7. Resilience Through Support Systems in Educational Leadership

This reflection centers on the theme of emotional resilience through community, family, and institutional support. The principal demonstrates how leveraging a network of support enables leaders to cope with stress, overcome resistance, and stay committed to inclusive and student-centered educational goals. Below are some of his responses:

Managing the emotional and psychological stress associated with my reassignment has required a multifaceted and intentional approach, blending personal resilience with social and institutional support. The transition to a new school environment brought both professional excitement and emotional strain—particularly in navigating unfamiliar dynamics, gaining trust, and aligning with established routines and personalities.

One of the primary coping strategies I employed was seeking support from colleagues. Upon arrival, I made a conscious effort to initiate open discussions with fellow teachers—both informally during breaks and more formally during SLAC sessions and faculty meetings. These interactions proved to be crucial in normalizing my experience. In one particular instance, a department head shared a similar transition story that helped reframe my challenges as part of the leadership journey, not personal shortcomings. This approach aligns with findings from Riley (2019,1), who emphasized that "peer affirmation and shared leadership narratives foster a sense of belonging and buffer the emotional toll of professional transition."

Beyond the professional circle, I also leaned on my family for emotional grounding. Conversations with my spouse and children helped me reflect, decompress, and maintain perspective. Their consistent encouragement reminded me of the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance, especially during times of change. Additionally, I leveraged available resources within the school, particularly through mentorship and guidance from the principal and senior staff. Early in my transition, the school principal scheduled regular check-ins with me to discuss challenges and progress. This mentorship not only provided administrative clarity but also helped to affirm my leadership intentions and refine communication strategies. One experienced staff member offered critical advice on understanding the school's informal culture, which helped me adapt more effectively.

Moreover, I also practiced intentional self-care, including structured reflection through journaling, mindfulness routines, and setting boundaries to ensure sustainable work hours. These practices helped manage the psychosocial stressors of the reassignment and kept me centered on my core professional values—equity, inclusivity, and learner-centered leadership.

Collectively, the support I received from colleagues, family, and the broader school community allowed me to manage stress constructively, remain professionally grounded, and focus on the work of fostering

an inclusive and emotionally safe learning environment for all students. These strategies reflect not only personal resilience but also the importance of a systemic support network, as emphasized in school leadership literature, which repeatedly finds that resilient leaders are not solitary—they are connected (Patterson, Goens & Reed, 2009,1).

The study supports Halevi and Schechter (2023,448) whose findings indicate that both formal support (e.g., mentoring, professional development) and informal support (e.g., family, colleagues) are crucial in helping principals navigate the challenges of their roles. The research highlights that resilience is not an inherent trait but can be developed and sustained through robust support networks, enabling principals to lead effectively amidst adversity.

3.3 Were there any specific experiences during your reassignment that had a particularly emotional or psychological effect on you?

Table 8. Experiences during your reassignment

Major Theme	Core Ideas
Balancing Empathy and Professional Boundaries in Educational Leadership	• Emotional Involvement in Student Welfare • Advocacy and Compassionate Leadership • Navigating Bureaucratic Boundaries • Resolution Through Formal Channels • Strengthened Commitment to Inclusion

Theme 8. Balancing Empathy and Professional Boundaries in Educational Leadership

This narrative explores the emotional complexity of school leadership, where personal compassion may conflict with administrative expectations. The theme centers on the importance of empathetic advocacy for students and families, even within rigid bureaucratic systems. It emphasizes the moral and emotional dimensions of leadership, and the need for sensitivity, discretion, and balance when addressing real-life challenges in the school community. Below are some of the responses:

Yes, there was a particularly emotionally impactful experience during my reassignment that deeply influenced my perspective as a school leader. I assisted a teacher whose Grade 11 son required academic remediation after being absent for two months—first due to illness, then to care for his hospitalized mother. The emotional weight of the situation was evident: the teacher, recovering herself, was understandably distressed about her son's academic standing, while also carrying the burden of her professional responsibilities.

Upon investigating, I verified that medical certificates had been submitted, yet the student still had two ungraded subjects, jeopardizing his academic progress. Recognizing both the urgency and sensitivity of the situation, I made the decision to personally accompany the teacher to speak with the class adviser. While I was aware that, as a school head, this might be seen as stepping into a boundary-sensitive area, the ethics of care and my own emotional compass urged me to provide immediate, compassionate support. This response is consistent with the principles of transformational and ethical leadership, where leaders act not only according to policy but also from a place of empathy and responsiveness. As Hargreaves and Fullan (2019,68) argue, "Leadership involves moral purpose—working to ensure that every child learns and thrives, particularly when barriers stand in the way". In this instance, the human need outweighed the protocol, and my actions reflected an attempt to uphold that moral imperative.

However, the situation became unexpectedly complicated when I received a phone call from a Division Administrative Officer from my previous assignment, who—having been informed by a friend at the

current school—reminded me that I was overstepping by engaging directly with the class adviser. The emotional impact of this feedback was significant. It caught me off-guard and made me question the balance between formal role boundaries and compassionate action—a tension often experienced by school leaders during transitional phases (Leithwood et al., 2020,1).

Ultimately, this experience served as a critical reflection point—highlighting both the emotional burden and moral responsibility that come with leadership. It reaffirmed my belief that authentic leadership requires balancing policy compliance with empathy, and maintaining procedural integrity while remaining student-centered.

The finding corroborates the study of Oplatka (2017,94) who found that principals are encouraged to express empathy—cognitive, affective (e.g., compassion), and behavioral (e.g., caring)—under specific circumstances. However, they consciously suppress expressions of anger and fear in public settings. The principals employ various strategies to regulate their empathy, balancing emotional engagement with the need to maintain professional boundaries.

How the Reassignment Affects the Perceived Success of Leadership in School.

4.1 In your view, how has your leadership success been influenced by the reassignment to an urban school?

Table 9. Leadership success influenced by the reassignment

Major Theme	Core Ideas
Transformational Leadership Rooted in Mentorship and Community Empowerment	• Leadership Growth Through Reassignment • Mentorship as a Leadership Foundation • Successful Program Implementation • Inclusive and Supportive Environment • Collaborative Leadership and Community Building • Leadership Measured by Impact

Theme 9. Transformational Leadership Rooted in Mentorship and Community Empowerment

The responses highlight a theme of transformational leadership—where personal growth, mentorship, inclusive practices, and collaboration drive positive change. The principal's journey reflects how past experiences and role models influence a leadership style centered on empathy, empowerment, and shared success within a diverse urban school setting. Below are the responses:

> *"My reassignment to an urban school has profoundly influenced my leadership success in several ways. Firstly, the opportunity to implement programs that I successfully practiced in my previous assignments has been immensely fulfilling. These experiences allow me to draw upon my personal journey, including the valuable mentorship I received from influential figures such as my high school class adviser, school principal, college dean, and guidance director."*
>
> *"In this urban setting, I have witnessed firsthand the impact of these programs on students and staff. Indicators of success for me include improved student engagement, higher participation rates in academic and extracurricular activities, and the positive feedback from teachers and parents."*
>
> *"Additionally, my leadership is assessed through the collaborative relationships I build with colleagues and the community. The ability to foster a culture of trust and open communication has been essential in navigating the complexities of an urban school environment."*
>
> *"Ultimately, my reassignment to an urban school has not only enhanced my leadership skills but has also deepened my commitment to serving as a mentor and advocate for students and staff alike."*

Beauchamp et al. (2016,1) found that mentors who exhibited transformational leadership behaviors—such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation—had a significant positive impact on their mentees. Mentees reported increased motivation, self-confidence, hope, and overall well-being.

4.2 How have the changes in the school environment or community affected your approach to leadership?

Table10. Changes in the school environment

Major Theme	Core Ideas
Evolving Leadership for Equity and Inclusion in Urban Education	• Adaptive Leadership in an Urban Context • Understanding Socioeconomic Challenges • Strengthening Community Partnerships • Inclusive Educational Practices • Empowering Teachers through Professional Development • Commitment to Student-Centered Leadership

Theme 10. Evolving Leadership for Equity and Inclusion in Urban Education

The principal's reflections emphasize a responsive, inclusive, and community-oriented leadership style shaped by the realities of an urban school environment. The major theme centers on the transformative impact of diversity and socioeconomic challenges on educational leadership, highlighting the importance of flexibility, empathy, and empowerment in promoting student success and building a strong school community. Below are some of his responses:

"*The changes in the school environment and community have significantly influenced my leadership approach, particularly in an urban setting. One of the most notable adjustments I've made is to become more responsive and adaptive to the unique needs of the diverse student population and their families.*

"In this urban context, I have placed a greater emphasis on collaboration and partnership. Building strong relationships with teachers, parents, and community organizations has become essential. I have learned that fostering a sense of community is vital for creating a supportive environment where students can thrive. This means encouraging open communication and creating avenues for feedback from all stakeholders."

"Another critical aspect of my leadership that has evolved is my focus on inclusive practices. I've adapted my strategies to ensure that all students, particularly those with special needs or those facing adversity, receive the necessary support and interventions."

"Moreover, my approach to professional development has shifted. I now prioritize providing ongoing training and resources for teachers to address the diverse needs of their students effectively."

"Overall, the changes in the school environment and community have led me to adopt a more flexible, collaborative, and inclusive leadership style, reinforcing my commitment to serving the needs of students and families in this urban setting."

The results corroborate the findings of Peters et al. (2025,1), whose research emphasizes the necessity of sustained funding for programs that advance equity in order to address enduring disparities in education. For minority students in particular, the authors stress the importance of these equity-centered leadership pathways in closing educational and opportunity inequities.

4.3. Looking forward, what strategies or changes do you plan to implement to ensure continued success in your leadership role?

Table 11. Strategies or changes to implement

Major Theme	Core Ideas
Strategic and Inclusive Leadership for Sustainable School Improvement	• Enhancing Communication and Collaboration • Investing in Professional Development • Expanding Community Partnerships • Using Data to Inform Decisions • Promoting a Culture of Recognition. • Commitment to Inclusion and Responsiveness

Theme 11. Strategic and Inclusive Leadership for Sustainable School Improvement

The principal outlines a forward-thinking leadership approach centered on collaboration, continuous improvement, and responsiveness to community needs. The major theme is the pursuit of sustainable school success through strategic planning, inclusive practices, professional growth, and community engagement, all grounded in a data-informed and human-centered philosophy. Below are some of the responses:

> "*As I look ahead in my leadership role, I have identified several key strategies and improvements that I plan to implement to ensure continued success. First and foremost, I aim to enhance collaboration and communication within the school community. By establishing regular forums for dialogue among teachers, parents, and students, I will create a platform for sharing ideas, addressing concerns, and celebrating successes. This open line of communication will foster a sense of belonging and engagement among all stakeholders. I also plan to focus on professional development for staff."*
>
> *"Additionally, I will prioritize the use of data-driven decision-making. By regularly analyzing student performance data and feedback, I can identify areas for improvement and adjust our strategies accordingly."*

The study of DeMatthews et al., (2021,3) underscores that effective inclusive leadership involves not only addressing academic needs but also considering factors such as race, disability, family background, language, and immigration status. Principals who adopt a comprehensive approach, integrating social justice leadership practices, are better equipped to navigate challenges and implement meaningful changes that promote equity and inclusion in education.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The evolving landscape of educational leadership of reassigned school head in urban area is characterized by a profound transformation rooted in experience, adaptability, and a deep-seated commitment to inclusive and equitable education. As school leaders grow through personal and professional experiences, they develop the resilience and insight necessary to navigate complex institutional structures and redefine their roles in response to ever-changing educational demands. The challenges of implementing inclusive reforms—particularly in urban and under-resourced contexts—underscore the need for leadership that is not only strategic but also grounded in empathy and community engagement. By embracing holistic and inclusive leadership practices, principals can foster school environments that nurture both professional growth and student excellence, ensuring that all learners are supported and empowered. Moreover,

effective educational leadership today requires a delicate balance between emotional intelligence and professional boundaries. Leaders must cultivate empathy without compromising their responsibilities, using mentorship and community collaboration as tools to drive transformational change. Ultimately, sustainable school improvement depends on leaders who are adaptable, reflective, and deeply connected to the communities they serve. Through intentional practices, resilience built on strong support systems, and a strategic commitment to equity, educational leaders can inspire meaningful and lasting progress in schools, especially in the diverse and dynamic settings of urban education.

The following are some of the recommendations made by the researchers:

For the Department of Education to invest in continuous professional development of reassigned school head in urban areas, focused on Adaptive and Inclusive Leadership. For the Division Superintendent to promote a leadership culture that balances empathy with professional boundaries and offer emotional intelligence workshops to build skills in self-awareness, regulation, and constructive interpersonal communication. For the PSDS to **create Mentorship Networks and Leadership Coaching Programs**; to work closely with reassigned school head, establish mentorship initiatives that pair emerging leaders with experienced principals who exemplify transformational and empathetic leadership. For School Heads to embed equity and social justice in school leadership frameworks and encourage teachers to engage with families, students, and community organizations to co-create culturally affirming and inclusive school environments; and to engage in regular reflective practice to process experiences and refine their leadership approach. For the Teachers to strengthen partnerships with new school head, local organizations, parents, and civic leaders to align school initiatives with community needs and values. For the Future Researchers to extend the study to include reassignment of teachers in urban areas.

Acknowledgment

The researchers heartily thank and acknowledge the assistance and expertise of the following people who helped made this study a success:

MAJARANI M. JACINTO EdD, CESO V, Schools Division Superintendent, Division of Zamboanga, for her approval and for allowing the researchers to conduct this study;

MS. JANEKIN V. HAMOC, SEPS - Planning and Research, for keenly going over the structure of the paper and for the important inputs and suggestions that led to the improvement of the paper;

MS. JUDY S. HICAP, PIC of Baliwasan District, for the endorsement of this study to the Division Office;

The SCHOOL HEAD-Participant, who is newly reassigned in a senior high school in Zamboanga City Division, for patiently answering the interview questions; and above all,

The ALMIGHTY GOD, for the showers of wisdom, perseverance and manifold blessings which made this research work a great success.

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