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Performance of School Heads and Teachers in Public Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT: Republic Act No. 9155, otherwise known as the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, mandates that all schools shall be headed by school heads who are trained, monitored, and held accountable for leading the school improvement process. On the contrary, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) defines the standards and expectations of teachers' increasing levels of knowledge, practice, and professional engagement. Anent to these legal bases, this study sought to determine the levels and relationship between the leadership performance of school heads and the teaching performance of elementary school teachers in the Division of Bacolod City in the School Year 2020-2021. The study respondents were 45 elementary school heads and 321 randomly selected public elementary school teachers. This study employed the sequential explanatory mixed method design involving the phases of conducting surveys to the respondents and interviewing school heads and elementary school teachers as it delved into probing the performances of the respondents. Mean, standard deviation, Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wall H tests, and simple linear regression analysis were utilized for the treatment analyses of data. The explication process followed the six-step thematic analysis introduced by Braun and Clarke. The findings revealed that the leadership performance of school heads and teachers' teaching performance, when taken as a whole and grouped according to variables, were outstanding. A significant difference in the leadership performance of school heads was noted when they were grouped according to educational attainment. Conversely, a discernible difference was not found when grouped according to age and years of experience as school heads. The teaching performance of the school teachers showed a variation when grouped according to age and educational attainment. Meanwhile, no significant difference existed when they were grouped according to years of teaching experience. Leadership performance cannot predict teaching performance. The school heads considered preserving school buildings, engaging teachers in development activities, properly using operational expenditures, and interacting with stakeholders as best practices. The instructors regarded differentiated activities, essential learning competencies, interacting with community partners, and time management as their best practices.

KEYWORDS: leadership performance, school heads, competencies, time management

INTRODUCTION

The future principal must be a committed educational leader capable of handling new tasks and leading the march for accountability (Tirozzi, 2016). According to Usman (2016), education administrators are responsible for all the stakeholders and for achieving the goal of education through the resources at hand. Research shows that a leader's performance can determine whether an organization succeeds or fails (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Denison et al., 1995). As a result, institutions must find people who can successfully guide individuals and teams (Yukl, 2008). Hence, the capacity of school heads to carry out their tasks as leaders play a pivotal role in the success of the people under their care and their schools.

While school heads' leadership performance is instrumental in the school's success, it is equally important to recognize the contribution of teaching performance. A teacher's performance at the school level brings about school effectiveness (Özgenel & Özkan, 2019), which, according to Istikomah (2020), results from the institution's use of all available resources to accomplish goals and fulfill collective objectives. In this study, the teachers' teaching performance was ascertained, and it was found that the teachers would exhaust the resources in their schools.

One of the essential components of quality teaching on a micro level is a teacher's performance in the classroom. Moreover, the two principal elements determining teacher performance are efficiency and effectiveness (Asl & Osam, 2021). Since instructors' performance can only be affected by their level of satisfaction and inspiration, leadership practice is the leader's behavior that the leader adopts in this regard (Sebastian et al., 2017).

Studies have shown that the leadership performance of a school head has an impact on the teaching performance of a teacher. Sarwar et al. (2022), Parveen et al. (2022), Kirana et al. (2021), and Dabash (2018) revealed that leadership performance influenced teaching performance. In the Philippines, Daing (2020), De Castro and Jimenez (2022), and Aquino et al. (2021)

discovered that school heads' performance as leaders influenced teacher performance. A few studies have been conducted on the relationship between leadership performance and teacher performance. Furthermore, it was necessary to find out how the school heads and teachers who were the respondents of this study achieved their outstanding performance.

In light of this fact, the researcher wanted to determine whether the performance of the school heads in their division affected teachers' teaching performance and to describe the status of the school heads' leadership performance and the teachers' teaching performance.

Thus, this study aimed to determine the level of leadership performance of school heads and the quality of teaching and efficiency of teachers in forty-five public elementary schools in a medium-sized school division in a highly urbanized city in the Central Philippines. Further, this study purposed to ascertain whether the leadership performance of school heads affected teachers' teaching performance.

Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the level of leadership performance of school heads when taken as a whole and grouped according to: age, highest educational attainment, and number of years as school head?
2. What is the level of teaching performance of teachers in terms of quality and efficiency when taken as a whole and when grouped according to: age, highest educational attainment, and number of years in teaching?
3. Is there a significant difference in the leadership performance of school heads when grouped according to: age, highest educational attainment, and number of years as school head?
4. Is there a significant difference in the teaching performance of teachers in terms of quality and efficiency when grouped according to: age, highest educational attainment, and the number of years in teaching?
5. Is the leadership performance of school heads a predictor of teaching performance?
6. What is the status of the leadership performance of the school heads in terms of best practices, current conditions, and experienced challenges?
7. What is the status of the teaching performance of the teachers in terms of best practices, current conditions, and experienced challenges?
8. What enhancement program may be proposed to improve the leadership performance of school heads and the teaching performance of teachers?

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the explanatory sequential mixed methods design. This research design, which is both quantitative and qualitative, was used since this study intended to gather data and descriptive information to measure and qualify the school heads' leadership performance and, its impact on teaching performance in terms of quality and efficiency, adopting mixed methods can help researchers have rich and full findings that somewhat include various aspects of a subject (Awiti et al., 2016). Finally, the mixed methods approaches are strongly known for enhancing the overall strength of a study by making it more trustworthy and vital (Creswell, 2013). Clarke and Braun's (2015) six-step process guide were used for the thematic analysis of the qualitative part of this study. For corroboration and validation, the triangulation method was employed by acquiring and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data and comparing the statistical and descriptive findings that those data disclosed. In essence, the qualitative research findings were intended to present and explain the qualitative research findings in detail.

In particular, the research commenced with quantitative analyses of the levels of and differences in the leadership performance of school heads and teachers' teaching performance and whether leadership performance could predict teaching performance. Next, qualitative analyses were done to explore the leadership performance of school heads and teachers' teaching performance. 321 out of 1926 school teachers in the seven districts in one of the medium-sized school divisions in a highly urbanized city and 45 school heads in 45 public elementary schools (43 elementary schools and two integrated schools) in the central Philippines, who were identified through the data provided by the School Governance and Operations Division (SGOD) as of March 2021, took part in the quantitative part of this study.

The sample was calculated using the Raosoft calculator, and the set margin of error was 5% at a 95% confidence level. Stratified proportionate sampling was used to determine the sample size per school. The teacher-respondents from the elementary schools from the seven districts were determined using stratified proportionate sampling. Since all 45 school heads were taken as respondents, total population sampling was employed. In addition, systematic random sampling was used in the final selection of the respondents.

In the qualitative part of this study, purposeful sampling was utilized. According to Shaheen et al. (2016), purposeful sampling resides on the proposition that information-rich samples are to be selected to have an in-depth view of the phenomena. Purposeful sampling was employed to identify the ten school heads and ten teachers interviewed. Accordingly, inclusion criteria were used to qualify the respondents/participants for this study's quantitative and qualitative phases.

Moreover, the quantitative part of this study required getting ratings from the Office Performance Commitment and Review Form (OPCRF) and Results-based Performance Management System-Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (RPMS-

PPST). The OPCRF and RPMS-PPST of the respondents that disclosed personal data, such as age, highest educational attainment, length of service, and performance ratings of both school heads and teachers, respectively, were utilized. The leadership Performance of school heads and teaching performance of teachers were determined through their OPCRF and IPCR ratings in the School Year 2020-2021 with the following verbal interpretations: outstanding (O), very satisfactory (VS), Satisfactory (S), Unsatisfactory (US), and Poor (P).

The qualitative part of this study utilized a semi-structured interview guide, one for the school heads and another for the teachers. The interview consisted of questions about best practices, current conditions, and experienced challenges of the school heads and teachers as regards their leadership performance and teaching performance, respectively.

The data collection process utilized the explanatory sequential mixed method design in two phases. Phase one involved conducting surveys to determine the levels of leadership performance and teaching performance, respectively, and whether leadership performance was a predictor of teaching performance. Phase two involved interviewing ten school heads and ten teachers to gather qualitative data. In selecting the school heads as participants, the Public School District Supervisor (PSDS) was the authority who recommended the school heads to be interviewed. The school heads were the ones who identified the teacher participants. The interview with each participant, conducted face-to-face in their particular schools, lasted approximately thirty minutes to one hour. When the transcription of all interviews was done after three days, the researcher called the participants and asked them if they could be interviewed for the second time. However, they held that their responses to the first interview were already good.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Phase 1: Quantitative Results

For the quantitative phase, findings revealed numerical ratings for the levels of leadership performance of 45 school heads and teaching performance of 321 teachers, respectively, and for significant differences in those levels when the respondents were grouped according to age, highest educational attainment, and years of experience.

Level of Leadership Performance of School Heads When Taken as a Whole and Grouped According to Variables

The study's primary objective was to determine the level of leadership performance of the public elementary school heads when taken as a whole and grouped according to age, educational attainment, and years as a school head. The descriptive analysis was done using mean and standard deviation. The overall leadership performance of the school heads was outstanding (*M*=4.80, *SD*=0.24). According to the variables, school leaders in the 40 to 51 (*M*=4.87, *SD*=0.19) and 52 to 64-year-old groups (*M*=4.75, *SD*=0.26) had an outstanding level of leadership performance. Based on educational attainment, school leaders with completed master's (*M*=4.84, *SD*=0.18) and doctorate degrees (*M*=4.75, *SD*=0.29) also showed outstanding performance. Similarly, the school leaders with one to nine years of experience (*M*=4.78, *SD*=0.27) and those with ten to thirty years of experience (*M*=4.82, *SD*=0.21), respectively, performed outstandingly. The standard deviation results ranging from 0.19 (the lowest) to 0.29 (the highest) indicated that the scores representing the school heads' performance were, more or less, clustered around the mean and not widespread.

The outstanding performance of school heads denotes that they rendered a very high level of achievement and commitment in terms of quantity and time, technical expertise and knowledge, inventiveness, originality, and initiative. School heads at this performance level are exceptionally skilled in all significant responsibilities. Their accomplishments and contributions to the school are remarkable (Llego, 2014). In light of the current results, it could be gleaned that the public schools under study were led by highly qualified and competent school leaders possessing the expected attributes. These attributes include the knowledge, skills, and values that make an excellent school head as defined in the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). The PPSSH offers a common language for the high-impact leadership that is expected of school leaders to direct personal and professional reflections, as well as professional discussions among educational leaders and other stakeholders, and to inform the delivery of professional learning and development for school leaders (Department of Education, 2020).

Meanwhile, the overall leadership performance of the school heads was outstanding (M=4.80, SD=0.24). According to the variables, school leaders in the 40 to 51 (M=4.87, SD=0.19) and 52 to 64-year-old groups (M=4.75, SD=0.26) had an outstanding level of leadership performance. Based on educational attainment, school leaders with completed master's (M=4.84, SD=0.18) and doctorate degrees (M=4.75, SD=0.29) also showed outstanding performance. Similarly, the school leaders with one to nine years of experience (M=4.78, SD=0.27) and those with ten to thirty years of experience (M=4.82, SD=0.21), respectively, performed outstandingly. The standard deviation results ranging from 0.19 (the lowest) to 0.29 (the highest) indicated that the scores representing the school heads' performance were, more or less, clustered around the mean and not widespread.

Level of Teaching Performance of Teachers in Terms of Quality and Efficiency when taken as a Whole and Grouped according to Variables

The second major objective of the study was to determine the level of teaching performance of public school teachers in terms of quality and efficiency when taken as a whole and grouped according to age, educational attainment, and years of teaching. The descriptive analysis was likewise performed using mean and standard deviation.

Teachers' teaching performance level was generally outstanding (*M*=4.53, *SD*=0.26). More specifically, they registered outstanding performance in terms of quality (*M*=4.60, *SD*=0.24) and efficiency (*M*=4.45, *SD*=0.35). The obtained mean ratings for quality were higher than those for efficiency for all compared groups. According to variables, teachers in the 24 to 40-year-old group (*M*=4.56, *SD*=0.27), with units or completed doctorates (*M*=4.78, *SD*=0.19), and with one to eleven years of teaching experience (*M*=4.55, *SD*=0.27) were overhead than the contrasted groups.

An outstanding level of teaching performance stands for a very high level of achievement and commitment in terms of technical expertise and knowledge, inventiveness, originality, and initiative. The teachers displayed great work expertise in all areas of responsibility that require quality and efficiency, thereby making noteworthy accomplishments and organizational contributions (Teach Pinas, 2022).

Teachers are essential to the institution because they transmit knowledge meaningfully, teach students a particular subject, support their growth to the utmost, cultivate a good attitude, and reveal their personality. The current results validate Ereje and Ambag's (2019) findings that teachers in Cavite Province performed admirably in subject-matter expertise and pedagogical strategies assessed by head teachers and students. Parallel to this, the research by Go et al. (2020) divulged that Filipino teachers exhibit an optimistic outlook, reflecting their effective classroom management even when dealing with personal issues. They have a high level of talent and emotional intelligence, contributing to this performance. Such a result is acceptable, given that those teachers as professionals are frequently required to demonstrate competence and positive emotional states in the workplace (Fried, 2011).

Test of Difference in the Level of Leadership Performance of School Heads when Grouped According to Variables

The third major objective of the study was to ascertain if significant differences existed in the level of leadership performance of public elementary school heads when grouped and compared according to the identified variables. The dependent variable (leadership performance) was measured at the continuous level. The independent variables (age, educational attainment, and years as a school head) consisted of two independent groups. The two variables were also not normally distributed. Given these assumptions, the Mann-Whitney U test was adopted.

Data show that no significant difference existed in the level of leadership performance of school heads when they were grouped and compared according to educational attainment (u=-201.00, z=-1.12, p=0.26) and years as a school head (u=-227.50, z=-0.52, p=0.60). The generated p-value for grouping based on educational attainment (p=0.26) and years as a school head (p=0.60) exceeded the set level of significance (α=0.05). Given these results, the null hypothesis stating the absence of a significant difference in the level of leadership performance was accepted.

Contrariwise, the difference can be noted between school heads with units or completed masters and with doctorate degrees (u=-152.00, z=-2.29, p=0.02). The p-value (p=0.02) for categorizing the school heads based on age was lower than the set 0.05 alpha. The compared mean ranks showed that school heads belonging to the younger group (40 to 51 years old) had a higher leadership performance than those in the 52 to 64-year-old group.

The study of Peregrino et al. (2020) underscored that school heads' profiles, particularly the levels of educational attainment and training experience, bear no influence on their leadership performance. Concerning age as a variable of leadership performance, Folkman (2015) identified a few crucial areas where younger managers excelled in the Forbes article. In addition to having a lot of ideas and being more positive about change than older managers, young leaders tend to embrace change.

Moreover, younger leaders are more prone to question established practices and work for improvement. They are focused on the need to accomplish their objectives and are results-driven. Being newer to a career can make one more prone to the complacency that a long-tenured manager may exhibit. Finally, younger leaders are less scared to take on challenges than their more experienced counterparts and more likely to set ambitious targets.

Test of Difference in the Level of Teaching Performance of Teachers in Terms of Quality and Efficiency when Grouped according to Variables

The fourth main goal of this paper was to see if there were any differences in teachers' teaching performance in terms of quality and efficiency when divided by age, educational attainment, and the number of years of experience. The dependent variable (teaching performance) was also measured on a continuous scale and following a non-normal distribution. Since the categorization of respondents by age and years in teaching included two groups, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied. On the contrary, the Kruskal Wallis H test was used when the respondents were classified into three groups based on educational attainment.

The overall result indicates a significant difference in teachers' level of teaching performance when grouped and compared according to age (*u*=10446.50, *z*=-2.83, *p*=0.01). The younger teachers (24 to 40 years old) achieved a higher mean rank (*MR*=174.46) than the compared group (41 to 63 years old) (*MR*=145.06). Similarly, the younger teachers attained a higher quality (*MR*=174.77 versus *MR*=144.70) and efficiency (*MR*=170.94 versus *MR*=149.23) than the older teachers. The calculated p-values for quality (*p*=0.00) and efficiency (0.03) fell lower than the 0.05 level of significance.

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(*MR*=174.46) than the compared group (41 to 63 years old) (*MR*=145.06). Similarly, the younger teachers attained a higher quality (*MR*=174.77 versus *MR*=144.70) and efficiency (*MR*=170.94 versus *MR*=149.23) than the older teachers. The calculated p-values for quality (p=0.00) and efficiency (0.03) fell lower than the 0.05 level of significance.

Furthermore, the research community's relationship between age and faculty performance has received considerable attention. It is particularly salient in the current study identifying it as a factor in teacher performance variation. Unfortunately, the job performance of older and younger workers, frequently modeled as task and contextual performance, has received little attention (Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). This finding is significant since it has been discovered that the contextual performance variables between older and younger workers vary (Ng & Feldman, 2008).

Public school teachers in the country are routinely overburdened by responsibilities (Esguerra, 2018). The number of work teachers at public schools has to do is restricted to teaching and other non-teaching tasks.

Meanwhile, there was no significant difference in the teachers' level of teaching performance when grouped and compared according to years in teaching (u=11575.00, z=-1.12, p=0.26). The teachers' quality (u=11674, z=-1.00, p=0.32) and efficiency (u=11495.00, z=-1.25, p=0.21) produced similar results. The tabulated p-values of 0.32 for quality, 0.21 for efficiency, and 0.26 for the overall teaching performance exceeded the 0.05 alpha level. The results indicate that the number of years of teaching did not create a variation in the manifested teaching performance of teachers. Consequently, the null hypothesis stating the significant difference in teachers' teaching performance was accepted when grouped and compared according to years of teaching.

In contrast to the above findings, Ismail, Arshad, and Abas's study (2018) divulged that experience substantially impacted teacher effectiveness. The Scheffe *post hoc* test detailed that teachers between 21 and 25 years and 26 to 30 years of age or classified in the older group were considerably more effective than the teachers with 11 to 15 years of experience and less than five years of experience.

In addition, the result reflects the notable difference in the level of teaching performance of teachers when grouped and compared according to educational attainment (x^2=23.03, df=2, p=0.00). The results are revealed when the overall performance is broken down into its sub-components – quality (x2=17.15, df=2, p=0.00) and efficiency (x2=20.64, df=2, p=0.00). The computed p-value (p=0.00) is less than the set level of significance (α=0.05). The achieved mean ranks of teachers with units or completed doctorates were higher for both measures of quality (MR=234.27) and efficiency (MR=250.50), ending up with a higher overall mean rank (MR=254.43) for teaching performance.

The results suggest that teachers with units or completed doctorate degrees displayed better work performance than those in the baccalaureate and with units or completed master's degree groups. Batuigas et al. (2022) conducted a study to provide a thorough account of the elements influencing teachers' teaching performance in schools. The findings showed that the quantity and quality of training were essential determinants of teaching performance. The study concludes that a teacher should have more relevant training under their belt and a higher level of education and are likely to perform better in the classroom. Additionally, pursuing higher education and training enhances teaching performance and quality. This finding supports the assertions made by Cebreros (2011) and Abarro (2018) that the level of education of instructors is one of the key variables influencing variation in teaching performance. Highly educated teachers who receive more suitable in-service training can demonstrate superior performance and productivity in the teaching practice.

Furthermore, the *posterori* test affirmed that a significant difference in the level of teaching performance occurred between groups (p=0.00). The results showed consistent differences between the first (baccalaureate) and second groups (with units/completed masters), first (baccalaureate) and third groups (with units/completed doctorate), and second (with units/completed masters) and third groups (with units/completed doctorate).

Suggestively, obtaining a bachelor's degree is a significant accomplishment for many teachers and unquestionably a step on the right way as they pursue higher academic goals. A bachelor's degree is a commendable accomplishment, but it frequently falls short of making the most significant impact on the teachers' ability to perform and become productive. As Horn and Jang (2017) put it, teachers who pursue higher education degrees gain priceless experiences that they may share with their students. Given this, the promotion of graduate studies by states and school systems is a common strategy for enhancing teacher effectiveness.

Regression Analysis of Level of Leadership Performance of School Heads as a Predictor of Teaching Quality

The last major objective of the study was to test if the level of leadership performance of public elementary school heads can predict the level of teaching performance of public elementary school teachers. The value of a variable can be predicted using linear regression analysis based on the value of another variable. The dependent variable is the one that must be predicted (teaching performance). The independent variable is the one that is used to forecast the outcome of the other variable (leadership performance).

The overall regression shows that leadership performance cannot predict teaching quality [F (1, 43) = 190, p < 0.18, R = 0.21, R^2 = 0.04] at 0.05 level. The value for R (R=0.21) indicates a negligible positive linear relationship between the two measured variables. The R^2 value of 0.04 indicates how much of the total variation in teaching quality can be explained by the school heads' leadership performance.

From the data, only 4% of the variation in the level of teaching quality can be explained by leadership performance. The fitted regression model is: teaching quality = 3.89 + 0.14 (leadership performance). The result denotes that the two measured variables are independent of each other. The increase in the level of leadership performance of school heads cannot anticipate a corresponding notable increase in the level of teaching quality of teachers. The obtained p-value (0.18) is greater than the set significance level (α= 0.05), resulting in the null hypothesis's acceptance.

The current results, however, showed that leadership performance bears no influence on teaching quality. According to Go, Golbin, Velos, and Bate (2020), although teachers sometimes deal with personal issues outside the classroom, they are still expected to perform positively when interacting with pupils. Teachers must disengage from their personal lives to exhibit desirable behavior in the classroom.

The entire model indicates that, at the 0.05 level, teaching efficiency cannot be predicted by leadership performance [$F(1, 43) = 0.98$, $p= 0.60$, $R = 0.08$, $R^2 = 0.01$]. An insignificant positive linear relationship between the two measured variables is indicated by the value of R (R=0.01). The R^2 value of 0.01 shows how much of the overall variation in teaching effectiveness can be attributed to the leadership performance of school heads.

Moreover, only one percent of the difference in the level of teaching efficiency in this situation can be attributed to leadership performance. The regression model fit is as follows: teaching efficiency = 4.05 + 0.08 (leadership performance). The outcome indicates that the two measured variables are not correlated. The degree of teaching efficiency of teachers cannot be expected to rise noticeably in tandem with the level of leadership performance of the school. The null hypothesis is accepted since the obtained p-value (0.60) is above the predetermined significance level (α= 0.05).

Meanwhile, the regression analysis shows that leadership performance cannot predict teaching performance at the 0.05 level [$F(1, 43) = 0.60$, p=0.12, $R = 0.08$, $R^2 = 0.01$]. The value of R (R=0.12) shows a negligible positive linear relationship between the two measured variables. The R^2 value of 0.01 demonstrates how much of the overall difference in teaching performance can be attributable to school administrators' leadership skills. In this case, leadership performance only accounts for one percent of the variation in teaching performance. Following is the regression model fit: teaching efficiency = 4.08 + 0.09 (leadership performance).

The current paper revealed that leadership performance did not influence teaching performance. It could be gleaned from the results that teachers performed their expected tasks with quality and efficiency, mindless of the leadership atmosphere at school. The conflicting results call for further research that will consider other predictors of teaching performance.

Phase 2: Qualitative Results

An exhaustive analysis of the leadership performance of 10 school heads and the teaching performance of 10 teachers was undertaken to ascertain their best practices, current conditions, and experienced challenges.

Status of Leadership Performance and Teaching Performance

Principal leadership is critical in light of accountability (Wallace Foundation, 2013). Its effectiveness depends upon how the principals allocate their time across their daily responsibilities, including prioritizing and focusing on the system that promotes growth and development for both the students and teachers (Zepeda et al., 2016) and overall efforts to improve the school (Hallinger & Heck, 2010) for their work remains complex and multidimensional.

All public schools in the Philippines implement the mandate of the Department of Education in evaluating the leadership performance of school heads and teachers' teaching using the standardized tools OPCRF and RPMS-PPST. These tools capture the leadership performance of school heads and teachers' performance in terms of quality and efficiency along the five key result areas. Drawing from the responses of school heads and teachers, the paper described the status of leadership performance and teachers' performance in terms of best practices, current situations, and lived challenges experienced.

In coding and interpreting the data, deductive thematic analysis was used. The main themes gleaned from the participants' accounts were about school heads' and teachers' best practices, current situations, and experienced challenges in their leadership performance and teaching performance that were determined through their OPCRF and RPMS-PPST ratings, respectively.

STATUS OF LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE

School leaders play an important role in the success of each institution. Mejica et al. (2019) held that instructional leadership includes setting clear goals, managing curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, allocating resources, and evaluating teachers regularly to promote student learning and growth. Quality of instruction is the top priority of every school leader, and he/she tries to maintain proficiency in his/her role as an instructional leader. The following themes were gleaned from the school heads' responses regarding their best practices.

BEST PRACTICES

Best practices in educational organizations can include evidence-based and value-based strategies that remarkably enhance the teaching and learning environment (Osburn et al., 2011). School administrators used techniques to guarantee classroom teaching and learning effectiveness and quality. Its actual use depends on each student's unique teaching and learning circumstances.

Instructional Supervision. The participants held that their best practice is instructional supervision, which involved checking teachers' Daily Lesson Logs and assessments (after Master Teachers checked those), monitoring teachers' attendance every day, and surveying classroom situations.

Instructional supervision provides teachers guidance, support, and empowerment for their professional development in teaching-learning (Tyagi, 2010). The school heads deemed it very important to ensure that the educational mission of their school was implemented by guiding teachers in improving the teaching-learning process. They would check the teachers' daily lesson logs after the master teachers had looked into such. Furthermore, the school heads would track the teachers' attendance every day. This finding implies that the school heads were bent on monitoring the teachers' performance to ensure that the goals of their school would be attained. School heads' focus on instructional supervision is essential in achieving goals and asserted teachers tend to focus on activities that would help them reach their goals in the teaching and learning process and away from activities that would distract them.

Conduct of Regular Meetings and Feedbacking. The school heads ensured that issues and concerns regarding teachers and learners were identified and addressed through meetings and feedback. Regular meetings and feedback were conducted in every cycle to keep track of the performance and update the mode of verification (MOVs) of teachers as per mandate in their RPMS-PPST.

According to Isaiah and Isaiah (2014), school heads may significantly impact student achievement by performing classroom observations, assessing the effectiveness of their instruction, holding frequent staff meetings, and working with teachers to modify and assess their curricula.

Conducting regular meetings as a course of action to inform teachers of their teaching performance and to ask them about their concerns is commendable. The finding indicates that the school heads were serious about knowing whether the teaching-learning process was properly implemented and whether teachers were experiencing difficulties attaining the expected learning outcomes such as knowledge and information, attitudes and values, and skills.

Transparency in Utilization of Funds. School budget/fund is one of the most powerful tools in promoting and strengthening school-based management and accountability (DepEd Order No. 008 S. 2019). One value that school heads need to exhibit is honesty. Most of the school heads practiced transparency in the use of money provided for their schools. They believed funds allotted for their school had to be spent on the right things. The result demonstrates that the school heads were honest in utilizing school funds.

Implementation of a transparency board in public schools is a must. The transparency board requires schools to fully disclose particular financial documents to keep their stakeholders informed of how a budget is managed, disbursed, and used (Talikan, 2021). Transparency in school administration should not be taken lightly. If a school is transparent, people can be held accountable for their actions.

Effective Use and Observation of the Process of Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE). The principals averred that they utilized the budget allotted for their school operations well and observed the required documentary processes.

In the DepEd, School heads and budget officers work as a team to properly plan and implement the use of budgets based on the Annual Improvement Plan (AIP) (Abellon et al., 2020), specifically the MOOE. The DepEd Order 12 s. 2016, otherwise known as Implementing Guidelines on the Direct Release and Use of MOOE allocations of the schools, including other funds managed by schools, aims to provide guidance to all public schools on the derivation, release, and utilization of school MOOE, ensure timely and optimal use of school resources and institute mechanisms for transparency and accountability.

Providing Technical Assistance to Master Teachers and Teachers.

Most school heads believed that helping teachers with their duties and responsibilities would lead to excellent teaching performance and higher learning outcomes. The school heads provided technical assistance made possible through the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) and In-Service Education and Training (INSET).

Since the school heads often engaged their teachers in School Learning Action Cell sessions, they were determined to reinforce the teaching-learning process. Through the SLAC sessions, the school heads can bring to the teachers' attention how they perform in the classroom and what needs to be done to improve the teaching-learning process.

Encouraging Further Studies. Several school heads would motivate their teachers to take master's or doctorate degrees for personal growth and professional development.

The finding suggests that the school leaders wanted the teachers to be rewarded for excellent performance, which could be attained through continuing education. Obtaining Master's or Doctorate degrees may help teachers improve their job performance and increase their chances for promotion.

Vural and Basaran (2021) discovered that teachers preferred to take master's degrees for personal growth and professional development and to acquire more knowledge about their field.

Observing Safety and Health Protocols. The safety and health of teachers and students in the school were the utmost concern of the school heads.

This finding suggests that the school heads were serious about ensuring the safety of the teachers, students, and staff. A safe school is free from violence and represented by an environment with no perceived fear concerning the school or its disciplinary procedures. In a safe school, learners, teachers, staff, and visitors can engage without fear or threats and in a helpful way to support teaching and learning (Mubita, 2021).

Maintaining School Facilities. Along with keeping teachers and students safe and healthy, the school heads ensured that their schools' facilities were well maintained. Along with keeping teachers, students, and staff members safe by observing proper health protocols, the school heads also made sure that school facilities should be maintained. According to Ojuok (2020), in offering good quality education, an institution must provide safe, environment-friendly, and accessible facilities and resources.

Communication with Stakeholders. Nine out of ten school heads claimed that their constant communication with stakeholders enabled them to gather funds to sustain their operations. The finding suggests that the school heads were resolved to solicit stakeholders' help for their school's betterment. Beknown to everyone, the funds allotted for schools are not enough to pay for the repair and maintenance of school facilities. Therefore, the school heads regarded communicating with stakeholders regularly as a best practice.

Stakeholder involvement is a continuing commitment to students' self-learning, especially during these trying times. Accordingly, they are considered partners who are attentive to learners' welfare and academic performance in and out of school (De Torres, 2021).

Current Conditions. Current situations are things happening and the conditions that exist at a particular time (Cambridge University Press, 2023). Employing best practices that enhance the teachers' engagement in the teaching and learning process, the school heads had these prevalent situations in their workplace.

Outstanding Teaching Performance. The participants claimed that their teachers were excellent as regards teaching performance. Because of the school heads' instructional leadership, most of their teachers' teaching performance was outstanding. The finding suggests that the school heads took their duties and responsibilities to heart to set a good example for the teachers. Moreover, the school heads regarded it paramount to accomplish the goals of their school.

Excellent Condition Due to Active Participation of Stakeholders. The participants asseverated that they were fine with funds for the maintenance of their school operations since they could seek help from their stakeholders who belonged to the government and non-government organizations. The finding implies that the school heads strongly engaged their stakeholders in the attainment of the goals of their school, which included looking for funds for the repair, maintenance, or construction of school facilities. Communicating with our stakeholders is relevant in helping schools provide an appropriate learning environment and, in particular, improving the academic performance of our children and the school in general. In developing the holistic being of our learners, the school and stakeholders have a significant responsibility to lead and support them. Stakeholders have a pivotal role in creating an enjoyable school environment that allows growth and development (De Torres, 2021).

Safe and Clean School. Almost all the school heads held that their schools were safe and clean. School environments must be safe and secure for learners, teachers, and non-teaching staff. A school head must properly manage school safety and security to prevent accidents and incidents, creating a learning environment in which a learner's physical, emotional, and social well-being is promoted (Mubita,2021). Since the schools were clean and safe, the school heads were intent on keeping the teachers, students, and staff members secure in a learning environment that is safe and clean.

Good Relationship with Stakeholders. The participants said that their relationships with all their stakeholders were acceptable. The organizations in their community would address the needs of their schools.

In the study of Crite (2008), the results indicated that to increase parent and community involvement, schools need supportive school heads willing to involve parents and community members in the decision-making process and willing to welcome parents and community members into the school. The schools desiring to increase parent and community involvement must possess patience and a willingness to change. In the same vein, Nishimura (2017) held that community participation in school management has great potential for removing mistrust and distance between people and schools by nurturing transparency of information and a culture of mutual respect and jointly pursuing improvement of the school by sharing vision, process, and results.

EXPERIENCED CHALLENGES

The school heads experienced the following difficulties. Nevertheless, their performance remained to be outstanding.

Implementation of the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs).

The school heads revealed that although they were trying to bridge learning gaps, it was not easy for them to execute the MELC since learners were bereft of basic learning skills. The Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCS) are indispensable because students need to be equipped with such to proceed to the next educational level. The finding leads to the belief that the school heads

held to the policies of the Department of Education and saw the need for teachers to do everything they could to assist students in acquiring the Most Essential Learning Competencies.

This generation of school heads has faced the difficulty of creating a child-friendly environment where the spirit of transparency can be felt and seen. The implementation of several projects and programs, such as the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELC), aims at enhancing the educational system and improving schools as better training grounds for the country's future leaders, has also ultimately affected the demands among school heads (Morales et al., 2020).

Lack of Funds for the Maintenance or Repair of School Facilities.
While some of the school heads said they did not experience any problem with leading the school and managing its operations, a few said their schools had insufficient funds to maintain or repair classrooms and other facilities. The school heads considered the lack of funds as a challenge. This finding means that they had to find ways to ensure the safety of students, teachers, and staff by looking for funds to maintain old buildings.

The quality of school facilities affects students in two ways. Firstly, the lack of facilities limits the ability of students to undertake various academic and extracurricular activities. Second, the lack of facilities negatively affects teachers' job satisfaction and reduces their motivation to teach (Andrews, 2019).

Absenteeism Due to Financial Instability. Although half of the school heads did not encounter any challenges regarding human resource management, the responses of those who had are noteworthy to mention. Although, in most cases, teachers performed excellently, some school heads had to contend with absenteeism among some teachers due to financial problems. This finding suggests that despite the efforts of school heads, encouraging teachers to have perfect attendance was not easy.

The learning environment is the foundation of a student's learning process and choices for future workplaces. It is regarded as a crucial element in determining an effective curriculum's effectiveness and pupils' academic accomplishments (Shrestha et al., 2019).

Lack of Personnel (Job Order). Most of the school heads did not experience challenges in human resource management. As much as the school heads wanted to make sure that teachers, students, and staff members were safe, the lack of personnel could not entirely make that happen. The services of job order personnel are important as they keep the learning environment safe for everyone.

Collaborations are a common term used to describe school-community relationships. The best-case scenario for these partnerships is that they formally combine the resources of at least one school, occasionally a group of schools, or even an entire school district, with those in a specific area or the greater community. Such partnerships are meant to endure over time.

STATUS OF TEACHING PERFORMANCE OF TEACHERS

Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) plays an important role in classroom instruction. A PCK involves teachers' competence in delivering the conceptual approach, relational understanding, and adaptive reasoning of the subject matter (Kathirveloo & Marzita, 2014). Teaching or instructions without deep understanding is meaningless. Effective instruction should involve PCK. PCK covers conceptual and procedural knowledge and the stages of understanding they are likely to pass through, from having little understanding to mastery of it. As such, teachers should know how to teach their students effectively (Hanover Research, 2012).

BEST PRACTICES

In the study of (Hanover Research, 2021), understanding learners' dispositions and learning methods is paramount in developing strategies that foster effective and productive learning environments. Effective teaching practices motivate students to become lifelong learners. Teachers developed and utilized the following best practices for their outstanding performances.

Incorporating the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCS) in lessons. The teachers ensured that the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCS) were contained in their daily lesson logs. The indispensability of MELCS cannot be understated. Consequently, the teachers found it important to incorporate such in their lessons. As mentioned, the MELCS can enable students to proceed to the succeeding educational stages. Hence, the teachers wanted their students to be promoted, as they ensured their students were equipped with the MELCS.

Utilization of Information Communication Technology (ICT). In this digital world of education, teachers regard ICT as a contributory factor to learners' acquisition of knowledge inside the classroom. The finding suggests that the teachers welcomed the idea that embracing technology would enhance their teaching skills and improve the teaching-learning process. Integrating Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) in delivering lessons will assist teachers with the global requirement to replace traditional teaching methods with technology-based teaching and learning tools and facilities (Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2015). More so, Kyakulumbye et al. (2015) stated that ICT makes it possible to use cutting-edge educational resources and modernize teaching techniques, fostering greater student engagement and the concurrent learning of technological skills.

Use of Teaching and Learning Resources. Indubitably, using teaching and learning resources is an immense help in facilitating learning. The finding implies that the teachers were resolved to educate their students as they would use various teaching-learning

resources and improve themselves. Being determined to equip students with knowledge and skills entails a continuous search for excellence.

Utilizing Differentiated Activities. The teachers tailored their instruction to meet individual needs. The teachers acknowledged the individual differences of their students; that was why they had them engaged in differentiated activities. Students have multiple intelligences and must be given vast chances to use such. Differentiated instruction is a teaching philosophy based on the premise that students learn best when their teachers accommodate the differences in their readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. The chief objective of differentiated instruction is to take full advantage of every student's ability to learn Tomlinson (2005).

Profiling Learners. The teachers regarded knowing what their students' multiple intelligences, academic standing, and even religions were for them to address their needs.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were obtained from the findings.

The school heads were determined to guide teachers in their instruction to achieve learning outcomes, utilize school funds effectively, manage school employees, provide an environment conducive to learning, and partner with community members.

The teachers ensured that their students gained learning competencies, recognized the diverse needs of students, took evaluating their students' performance seriously, were actively involved in curriculum planning and connected with the community members, and believed in the benefits of professional development.

Age, highest educational attainment, and years of experience did not influence the school heads' leadership and teachers' teaching performance. In particular, the school heads and teachers performed well regardless of the variables above.

How school heads performed their duties and responsibilities had nothing to do with the quality of teaching and efficiency that the teachers exhibited. In essence, it cannot be said that if school heads are outstanding, teachers can deliver high-quality teaching or be efficient.

Hence, the best practices of the school heads and teachers contributed to their outstanding performance.

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