

Bridging Policy and Practice: A Comparative Analysis of Leadership Development Programs for Newly Appointed School Heads in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Although school leadership is a key contributor to the reform process of the school, most new school heads in the Philippines take their roles without proper, equal and coherent preparation, which this study aims to accommodate with comparative policy analysis. This paper provided a comparative study of the leadership development programs of newly appointed school heads in the Philippines with a view to finding out gaps in the policy and implementation as practiced in the region. The study employed a qualitative policy analysis research design that entailed an AI-aided review of official documents published by DepEd, NEAP, and the CSC based on the framework suggested by Cardno (2018). Being a document-based research study, there were no human participant ethical procedures, which followed the principles of academic integrity. The results showed that there were major differences in the design and delivery of programs on a regional basis. Although most of the programs have proven to be consistent with the Philippine Professional Standards of School Heads (PPSSH), there has been a lack of cohesiveness between such important aspects of digital leadership as Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI), and digital leadership. Among the main issues were ineffective mentoring and monitoring procedures, unequal access, and the unstructured post-training support that in turn limited the effectiveness and sustainability of programs. The research findings conclude that successful development of leadership requires contextualized presentation, inclusive development, and ongoing assistance. It suggests system-wide changes to institutionalize SEL, GESI, and digital competencies, entrench effective mentoring systems and M&E, and equitable access. These measures are necessary to develop a flexible, visionary school leadership pipeline that is in line with the national standards and global SDGs.

Keywords: school leadership, policy analysis, PPSH, social emotional learning, digital leadership

INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership has become an acknowledgement of a school turnaround and student achievement. Around the world, efficient school leaders are not merely instructional leaders but equity agents, resiliency agents, and innovators (Bush, 2018; OECD, 2020). In the Philippines, the role of school leaders has now grown enormously and includes pedagogical oversight, crisis management, infrastructure oversight and community participation. This development is indicative of the general changes in education systems across the world with leadership supposed to be transformational, inclusive and future oriented.

The urgent need to improve leadership capacity to combat learning recovery, decentralization, and systemic inequities is highlighted in national reforms, such as Education Commission 2 (EDCOM 2) reports. The readiness of school leaders will be a defining factor in the educational results in the country as it overcomes the post-pandemic difficulties and continues to face disparities in access and quality.

Although the role of school leadership is being given serious attention by policy makers, leadership preparation in the Philippines is still a fragmented, inconsistent and inaccessible process particularly in the geographically isolated and disadvantaged regions. Most school heads are appointed without undergoing any training in instructional leadership, strategic planning, or even crisis management and end up with role overloads, which results in poor school governance. Current leadership development interventions are often theoretical and urban and unrelated to realities of school heads in marginalized communities.

Comparative visions of both ASEAN and global experience indicate more structured leadership pipelines that are competency-based. However, the body of empirical studies that critically analyze the Philippine leadership development system in terms of policy and practice is very minimal. It is this lapse that helps to prevent the development of responsive and equity-based reforms.

This paper, *Bridging Policy and Practice: A Comparative Analysis of Leadership Development Programs of newly appointed school heads in the Philippines* examined the systemic gaps in leadership preparation among Filipino school heads. It performed an analysis of the current leadership policy and structures as well as the obstacles to effective leadership development through AI assisted analysis of documents. The study is important to the discussion on educational reform and provided evidence-based suggestions of a coherent, context sensitive, and competency-driven leadership pipeline.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is common knowledge that school leadership plays a pivotal role in enhancing student achievement, teacher effectiveness and school sustainability. In the world, leadership training has been associated with enhanced quality of teaching, participatory governance, and school development (Leithwood et al., 2020). Countries in Southeast Asia and the rest of the world have reacted to leadership issues by designing structured competency-based development initiatives. As an example, the Ministry of Education in Singapore has formalized a pipeline of tiers of leadership by deploying the Academy of Singapore Teachers, which is an institutional approach that builds up leadership pipeline levels by integration of mentoring, practicum-based training, and leadership labs (Ng, 2019). Likewise, the National Professional Qualifications (NPQs), which exist in the United Kingdom, provide modular leadership development based on the evidence and in accordance to career development (Earley and Greany, 2017). These models indicate an international trend towards distributed, adaptive and context sensitive leadership training.

Leadership development is a burning issue in the Philippine setting. Aquino et al. (2021) have discovered that many school heads take up their positions without being inducted or having sufficient training in the areas of instructional supervision, strategic planning, and stakeholder involvement. This disparity is especially severe in geographically remote and disadvantaged locations (Pacadar & Doronio, 2023), where continuing education (CPD) is poorly accessible and leadership infrastructure is ineffective. According to the Education Commission 2 (EDCOM 2) Year Two Report (2025), the preparation of leadership is also disjointed, mentioning that the implementation of programs is not consistent, there is no mentorship framework, and the content of the training does not align with the roles of leadership.

Although the significance of leadership preparation has been identified, the scanty empirical studies have critically evaluated the system of leadership development in the Philippines through the prism of policy and practice. The literature is inclined towards leadership styles (Estacio, 2023) or good practice in certain regions, whereas it does not concentrate on the gaps in the system that prevent leadership preparedness at a national level. Additionally, as much as global models are important, it has been found to have no localised frameworks that capture the cultural, geographic and institutional parameters of Philippine schools. Brooks (2016) insists that the lack of political dynamics, unequal distribution of resources, and professional autonomy usually limits leadership reform in the Philippines, thus the imitation of foreign models is not adequate without placing them in the context of the local environment.

In this paper, *Bridging Policy and Practice: A Comparative Analysis of Leadership Development Programs to Newly Appointed School Heads in the Philippines*, the researcher attempts to address this gap by describing the

systemic failures in leadership preparation among Filipino school heads. This document review will personally examine the current leadership training and policies offered to new school heads by DepEd using AI assisted content analysis to determine some of the impediments to effective leadership training. The research will address the literature on educational reform by providing evidence-based suggestions to a coherent, inclusive, and competency-based leadership pipeline. It will also be in line with international standards including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals- especially SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) so that leadership development is not only locally sensitive but internationally at the same level.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in a multi-theoretical framework that draws from **Transformational Leadership Theory**, **Distributed Leadership Theory**, and **Human Capital Theory**, providing a robust lens through which to examine the systemic inadequacies in school leadership preparation in the Philippines.

Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership focuses on the role of school administrators in motivating and improving the performance of teachers and pupils. Within the Philippine scenario, school administrators are viewed as leaders who should inspire and motivate school improvement. As a result, transformational leadership acts as an ideal standard within the Philippine scenario. However, the fact that school administrators acquire no formal training makes it difficult for them to practice these traits effectively. This theory will be applicable within the discussion on effects on visionary and ethical school running.

Distributed Leadership Theory (Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership posits that leadership is not the sole responsibility of the school head but is shared among teachers, staff, and stakeholders. This model is particularly relevant in resource-constrained Philippine schools, where collaborative governance is essential. The theory will help explore how inadequate preparation affects the ability of school heads to foster shared leadership, build capacity among staff, and engage communities meaningfully.

Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964). Human Capital Theory asserts that investment in education and training enhances individual and institutional productivity. Applied to school leadership, it underscores the importance of structured, competency-based preparation programs in developing effective leaders. This theory will frame the policy analysis component of the study, examining how leadership development systems—or the lack thereof—impact school performance, equity, and sustainability.

Contextual Integration: Philippine Education Reform and SDGs. The framework is further contextualized by the Philippine education reform landscape, particularly the findings of the EDCOM 2 reports, which highlight leadership preparation as a systemic weakness. It also aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), reinforcing the global imperative for inclusive and accountable leadership system.

Statement Of The Problem

A significant gap exists between the intended goals of national leadership development programs for newly appointed school heads in the Philippines and their actual readiness for the role. Despite policy frameworks like those from NEAP and NCBSH, these programs often fail to provide adequate, contextualized training. This inadequacy is compounded by a lack of localized, scenario-based learning and insufficient integration of modern leadership philosophies. Consequently, unprepared school leaders contribute to inconsistent school performance and hinder the nation's progress towards its educational development goals. Specifically, this study answered the following questions:

1. How does the training conducted in each identified region differ in their impact on enhancing instructional leadership competencies and school improvement practices among newly appointed school heads?

2. What are the regional differences in the implementation, delivery, and perceived effectiveness of leadership development programs for newly appointed school heads across DepEd regions?
3. To what extent are DepEd's leadership development programs aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Strong Institutions)?
4. What gaps and challenges exist in the design, implementation, and follow-through of leadership development programs for newly appointed school heads?
5. How can the challenges be addressed to improve leadership readiness and school performance?

Scope And Limitation Of The Study

This study focuses on analyzing official policy documents related to school leadership development in the Philippines, specifically those accessible through verified online platforms such as the Department of Education (DepEd), National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP), and Civil Service Commission (CSC). The scope includes identifying leadership competencies, development priorities, and alignment with global frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) using AI-assisted qualitative analysis tools. However, the study is limited by its reliance on publicly available digital documents, which may exclude internal memos, unpublished guidelines, or region-specific adaptations. Additionally, while AI tools enhance efficiency and thematic precision, they may not fully capture nuanced cultural or contextual interpretations without human validation. Time constraints also restrict longitudinal analysis and stakeholder interviews, narrowing the study's focus to document-based insights within a defined research window.

Significance Of The Study

This study holds critical significance for multiple stakeholders across the Philippine education landscape and beyond. By examining the systemic gaps in school leadership preparation, it aims to catalyze reforms that are both locally responsive and globally aligned.

For School Leaders and Aspiring Principals. This study offers a critical reflection on the realities of assuming leadership roles without adequate preparation. It highlights the professional and emotional toll of navigating complex responsibilities with limited support, while also providing a foundation for advocating structured, competency-based leadership development programs. By surfacing these challenges, the research empowers current and future school heads to seek collaborative solutions, engage in reflective practice, and champion reforms that elevate the quality of school governance.

For Educational Institutions and Training Providers. The study underscores the urgent need to redesign leadership preparation programs that are contextually grounded and equity driven. It informs curriculum development for graduate studies, in-service training, and certification pathways, encouraging universities, training centers, and DepEd-accredited providers to co-create leadership pipelines that respond to the lived realities of school heads. The findings can serve as a blueprint for integrating transformational and distributed leadership principles into formal training modules.

For Policymakers and DepEd Officials. This research provides evidence-based insights that support policy reform in leadership development. It aligns with the findings of EDCOM 2 and the broader goals of the Basic Education Development Plan, offering concrete recommendations for establishing national standards, career pathways, and sustainable systems of support for school leaders. By framing leadership preparation as a strategic investment in human capital, the study contributes to long-term educational equity and institutional resilience.

For Communities and Stakeholders. The study reinforces the importance of participatory governance and invisible leadership in driving school improvement. It encourages parents, local officials, and civil society groups to engage more actively in shaping leadership practices that reflect community values and aspirations. By

promoting collective ownership of educational outcomes, the research fosters a culture of shared responsibility and empowerment.

For Comparative and Global Education Researchers. The study adds a valuable case to the global discourse on leadership development in decentralized and low-resource education systems. It offers a culturally grounded, critically reflective analysis of the Philippine context, which can inform leadership reforms in other ASEAN and Global South countries. Through its integration of transformational, distributed, and human capital theories, the research bridges academic inquiry with practical relevance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This study used Qualitative Policy Analysis Using Document Review. This design allowed the researcher to systematically examine the content, intent, and implications of existing policies, frameworks, and guidelines related to school leadership without collecting new data from participants.

The research focused on key leadership development policies such as the National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads (NCBSSH), the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) programs, and the National Qualifying Examination for School Heads (NQESH). The policies were analyzed using document review.

Research Environment. The research is situated within a digital policy repository, a curated, online collection of official documents, frameworks, and guidelines issued by Philippine education agencies such as the Department of Education (DepEd), National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP), and Civil Service Commission (CSC). This setting is highly relevant to the study's aim of critically analyzing leadership development policies, as it provides direct access to the primary sources that shape the professional preparation and qualification of school heads.

Sources of Data. For this policy analysis study on school leadership development in the Philippines, the data sources included official policy documents from the Department of Education (DepEd), National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP), and Civil Service Commission (CSC).

Research Tool. This study employed the validated framework proposed by Cardno (2018) for analyzing educational policy documents. The framework includes Content analysis by identifying themes, values, and assumptions embedded in policy texts.

Data Gathering Procedures. To gather data, focusing on policy analysis using AI-assisted content analysis, the study employed a systematic online document retrieval process template. This approach ensured that the data collection is rigorous, replicable, and aligned with qualitative research standards.

Documents were downloaded, catalogued, and analyzed using the validated policy document analysis framework, which includes content, discourse, and historical tracing techniques. This enables the researcher to identify policy intentions, embedded assumptions, and implementation gaps.

Data Analysis. In this study, data analysis was conducted through a qualitative, AI-assisted content analysis approach, focusing on official policy documents related to school leadership development in the Philippines. The analysis began with the organization and preprocessing of documents sourced from verified online repositories such as the Department of Education (DepEd), the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP), and the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

Ethical Considerations for the Study. Given that this study employed a qualitative policy analysis design using exclusively publicly available documents, the primary ethical concerns common in human-subject research (informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, risk of harm) are **not directly applicable**. The researcher discloses the aid of artificial intelligence in analyzing data and in enhancing language and grammar.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study revealed nuanced regional patterns and systemic gaps in leadership development programs, offering critical insights into their design, implementation, and impact on instructional leadership and improvement.

Impact of the Policy and Training Conducted on Enhancing Instructional Leadership Competencies and School Improvement Practices among Newly Appointed School Heads

The statistics show a system that is effective in creating a level of technical competency that is comparable to PPSSH but cannot offer the stable, nurturing, and wholesome ecosystem of leadership development required in transformational leadership. The uniform differences between different regions indicate that it is not a local issue but a wider issue of the entire country that needs to be addressed in the way the programs are developed, the support systems, and the forms of accountability.

Broadly, Agreement with PPSSH, but Shallow Implementation of Underlying Modern Competencies. Although every part of the country models their programs based on the improvement of the Philippine Professional Standards in School Head (PPSSH) competencies such as instructional supervision, strategic planning, and governance, a uniform system-wide narrowing in the effective incorporation of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI), and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) or digital leadership will always exist.

It implies that the concept of leadership development is now being considered in the context more of technical and managerial perspective. It is concerned with adherence to national norms and direct operational work, but not with the development of the comprehensive, adaptive, and inclusive leadership skills that would help to overcome the complicated contemporary educational issues. The inattention to SEL and GESI means that there is a gap in cultivating leaders with the potential to advance the well-being, equity and belonging of every student and teacher.

A Disparaging Gulf in Sustainability and Support Systems. One of the problems that are common in all 12 regions is a serious deficiency in formal post-training support. The gaps are represented by important words such as No mentoring follow-up, Weak sustainability, No clear mentoring and Weak M & E (Monitoring and Evaluation). Leadership development is not being taken as a continuous developmental process but as a one-off training event. The new school heads are provided with theoretical knowledge and tools, and they are left to apply them on their own, without any further coaching, mentoring, and means of feedback and constant improvement.

This loophole hugely reduces returns on the investment of such training. The early competencies acquired will not last long without the help of continuous support, as they will face the challenge of day-to-day administrative tasks. This causes leader burnout, lack of consistency in best practice implementation, and finally, stagnant school improvement processes.

Isolated Innovations amongst Standardized Approaches. Though most of the regions use the standardized training on Capability Enhancement, there are some regions (especially I-III and VI) that present unique, innovative characteristics. They are the real-world immersion of Region I, asynchronous delivery and modular of the Region III, structured onboarding and ADDIE based design of the Region VI.

This implies that there is potential and actual innovation in delivery and design that occurs in pockets throughout the system. These areas are no longer operating on an one-size-fits-all workshop basis but are moving to more contextualized and flexible models with more theory and in recognition of the time and needs of new leaders. These best practices should be disseminated among regions encouraged and facilitated by the national policy to elevate the standards of different regions.

Regional Differences in Implementation, Delivery, and Perceived Effectiveness of Leadership Development Programs for Newly Appointed School Heads

The various regional variations in the way leadership development programs are implemented, delivered, and perceived to work by the leaders who are newly appointed as the school heads across the DepEd regions are a dilemma of interplay between the responsiveness of context, availability of resources, and the strategic orientation. Although, all regions show the intention to develop the level of instructional leadership competencies in accordance with the Philippine Professional Standards of School Heads (PPSSH), modalities and outcomes are quite different.

There is a significant difference between Implementation and Delivery. Regions I, II, III, e.g., have been more local and modular as Region III, TRISAM-ALC Leadership Training, focusing on localized leadership and stakeholder involvement. Such areas are more prone to incorporating reflective practice and decision-making models, which implies a more serious approach to adaptive leadership. Regions IV-B, on the other hand, use many standardized Capability Enhancement Trainings that, although aligned to PPSSH, generally are not differentiated by the region or stage of career. The mechanisms of delivery also differ: some are based on workshop application and Theory of Change mapping (e.g. Region XII and CARAGA), others on governance frameworks and strategic planning (e.g. Region IV-A and IV-B).

Effectiveness Perceived is also varied. Areas that have more focused and participative models of delivery indicate better engagement and relevance, especially when programs have classroom observation instruments, SIP-SEAL integration, and collaborative planning. Nonetheless, in various geographical locations, efficacy is compromised by the occurrence of several problems: poor ICT adoption, inadequate post-training facilities, and immature monitoring and evaluation systems (M&E). The gaps indicate that the sustainability of the leadership development and depth is not balanced as the technical competencies are being developed.

This underlines the necessity of differentiated program design that is sensitive to the regional realities, institutionalizing post-training mentoring, integrating ICT and inclusive frameworks (SEL, GESI) throughout all the leadership development programs. A more consistent national benchmarking framework might aid in aligning delivery without sacrificing local innovation with the new school heads being not only technically prepared but also enabled to spearhead transformative and equity-oriented school improvement.

The Extent of DepEd's Leadership Development Programs' Alignment with the PPSSH and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 and SDG 16)

The leadership development programs used by the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippine regions show a moderate to high level of compliance with the Philippine Professional Standards of School Head (PPSSH), partial but developing compliance with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 and 16. The information shows that a majority of the regional programs, including induction trainings, capability improvement programs, and career progression modules, are directly designed with PPSSH competencies, especially instructional leadership, strategic planning, and governance. This indicates a high policy coherence with national standards, which proves that DepEd pays much attention to professionalizing the school leadership due to systematic career-stage development.

The implication has been towards the necessity of a national benchmarking and validation framework which does not only follow the alignment of PPSSH but also clearly maps contributions to SDG 4 and SDG 16. This involves institutionalization of SEL, GESI, and ICT integration as part of the essential pillars of leadership development, empowerment of M&E systems, continuity through mentoring and coaching. This way, DepEd will be in a better position to leave compliance and transform into a transformative leadership ecosystem - one that equips school heads to guide inclusive, resilient and future-ready school in accordance with the national ambitions and the global development objectives.

Gaps and Challenges Existing in the Design, Implementation, and follow-through of Leadership Development Programs for Newly Appointed School Heads

The DepEd leadership development programs to newly appointed school heads demonstrate a good intentioned but lopsided terrain that is characterized by gaps and challenges that can be critical to the design, implementation, and follow-through phases. These are regionally sensitive issues, but they all tend to lean towards structural limitations that prevent the full achievement of transformative instructional leadership.

There are also tough implementation problems. Resource people and facilitators have weak operational requirements and lack proper training in delivery creates weaknesses in the quality and consistency of delivery. This bridge between policy and practice invalidates the validity and usefulness of the training experience.

Some of the most perennial gaps are found in follow-through and sustainability. Numerous programs do not have well-organized post training plans like mentoring, coaching and feedback systems. Without such aid, the new school heads who are hired have to figure out the complicated leadership requirements alone, and they may face inertia and burnout.

Overall, although the leadership development programs of the DepEd have established some of the foundational structures, they are limited to fragmentation in design, implementation, and follow-through. The answers to these gaps lie in systematic level recalibration- recalibration that entails instilling values of inclusiveness, enhancing capacity of facilitators, institutionalization of post-training support and equitable access to all regions. It is only at this point that leadership development can become a change driver towards good education and robust institutions, which is in compliance with PPSSH, SDG 4, and SDG 16.

Addressing Challenges to Improve Leadership Readiness and School Performance

To enhance leadership preparedness and school performance in new school heads, a strategic change of an ad hoc intervention approach to a coherent, equity-focused, and future-oriented leadership development ecosystem is necessary. The identified challenges, including a lack of SEL and GESI integration and poor digital competencies and unstandardized monitoring, can be resolved by specific systemic interventions, which not only develop personal competencies, but also enhance institutional stability.

To start with, it is necessary to incorporate Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) in all leadership programming. Through the incorporation of case studies, simulations, and inclusive leadership models, school heads would be able to become emotionally intelligent and have an equity lens to guide diverse school communities.

Second, filling the gaps in digital leadership by providing specific ICT courses and practical training will enable school heads to be tech-enabled leaders. Since schools are becoming more data-driven, more platform-driven, and more digital, leaders need to be prepared to make effective decisions, navigate digital impetus, and be innovation models.

Third, unorganized mentoring and coaching must be addressed by incorporating peer mentoring, feedback mechanisms, and individualized mentoring into leadership programs. The need and interest matching of the mentors and mentees promotes reflective practice and enhances the professional development.

Fourth, to guarantee accountability and adaptive learning, a single monitoring and evaluation (M&E) toolkit must be designed. The application of the REAP W-MAP tracking, feedback forms, and impact assessments will allow refining the programs with the data as well as aligning the results with the outcomes of PPSSH and RPMS.

Fifth, the shift in the design of linear programs to individualized learning experiences in which the REAP outcomes direct the enrolment and career advancement will facilitate the structured professional development. Leaders need to feel like they have differentiated pathways, which are based on their context, their strengths, and aspirations, and not modules which are uniform.

Lastly, the equitable expansion of programs regionally and breaking the logistical logjam with hybrid delivery models and regional benchmarking platforms will mean that leadership growth is open to all school heads, even those in geographically distant or underserved regions. This does not only boost access but also facilitates cross-regional learning and innovation.

Overall, to solve these problems, the approach should be system-thinking, i.e., something that would comprise the values of inclusiveness, digital fluency, perpetual support, and scalable infrastructure. In doing this, DepEd stands a chance of growing a new breed of school leaders not just technically qualified but also emotionally intelligent, equity-minded and institutionally based leaders who will be ready to steer meaningful school performance and educational transformation.

FINDINGS

The study reveals significant regional variations and systemic gaps in the design, delivery, and impact of leadership development programs for newly appointed school heads.

1. Impact of regional leadership trainings vary due to differences in design, delivery, and support. There were more positive results when using contextualized, dialogical approaches that were in line with PPSSH and school development plans in clusters I–III. In contrast, Regions IV–XIII were predominantly using generic models with little incorporation of SEL, GESI and ICT, leading to lower gains in instructional leadership. And in the long-term, lack of mentoring and monitoring eroded impact. Customized, integrated and ongoing programmes produce higher levels of leadership readiness and school improvement. The impact of leadership training is not consistent from region to region or one end of the scale to the other. Zones that value context, inclusivity and ongoing
2. Findings indicate varied regional experiences in terms of the adoption, facilitation and perceived benefit of developing aspiring school leader's in-service across DepEd regions. The implementation and effect of leadership programs differ between airline systems. Contextualizing, reflecting approaches with more integration of PPSSH produced higher impact in Regions I–III. Regions IV–XIII used standard model cases with low incorporation of SEL, GESI and ICT, resulting in moderate impact. Sites with mentoring and monitoring systems had greater sustainability whereas other sites lacked follow-up and scalability.
3. DepEd's Regional Leadership Development Programs demonstrate moderate to strong alignment with the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). The alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 (Quality Education) and 16 (Peaceful Just and Inclusive Societies) was found to be partially and unevenly aligned. Many of the regional programs were directly tied to PPSSH Competencies (Instructional Leadership, Strategic Planning, Governance) which indicated a significant level of commitment to National Standards. Alignment with SDG 4 (Quality Education) was not consistent throughout the region. Contributions to SDG 16 (Peaceful Just and Inclusive Societies) were present; however, they were limited. Governance and Leadership were promoted through the programs, however, the programs lacked effective monitoring and evaluation systems, post-program training support, and very few institutional feedback mechanisms that would allow for continued sustainability and long-term effects of the programs. In summary, all of the regional programs demonstrated strong alignment with the PPSSH. To achieve full realization of SDG 4 and 16 requires further inclusion of inclusive, data-driven and systemic leadership practices in all aspects of leadership development programs. By strengthening these areas, school heads will have professional competency as well as the ability to lead sustainable, fair and high performing educational institutions.
4. Leadership development initiatives offered for school heads who have been assigned to various regions under DepEd have observable gaps and challenges with regards to design, implementation, and follow-through. Looking at the designs, there are very limited initiatives that are based on consistent conceptual frameworks and very minimal consideration given to Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI), and digital competencies necessary for modern and inclusive school leadership. Moreover, there are less competent facilitators, standards for mentors and coaches not very

clearly outlined and implemented, and very limited efforts based on resource alignment, which leads to ineffective and inconsistent efforts at developing competencies. There are also very limited efforts put into follow-through processes with regards to very limited mentoring, coaching, and feedback opportunities necessary for developing and sustaining school leadership competencies. There are very limited use and consideration given to frameworks and tools necessary for monitoring and evaluation efforts, such as tracking within REAP. There are also very limited considerations made for equity and scale with various initiatives almost exclusively offered within places and regions with more privileged and better accesses with very limited focus within disadvantaged communities. Moreover, there are very limited alignments made with RPMS indicators.

5. In terms of remedy, it appears that what needs to be done is address some systemic issues and weaknesses and develop a more resilient and proactive pipeline for school leaders. Integrating SEL and GESI approaches within leadership training enhances Bell and Bott's emotions and inclusion capabilities, which remain indispensable assets in more flexible and adaptive school leadership. Adding online learning paths on ICT and data knowledge empowers school leaders to effectively navigate and lead within a tech-driven setting. Systematic mentoring and coaching with a peer review process substantially enhances professional school leadership. As a whole, developing a common M&E toolkit, like REAP tracking and impact measurement, helps optimize and improve. Aligning program learning paths with career paths and RPMS outcomes enables personalized learning and professional growth. Lastly, region-wide equal distribution and benchmarking via online HYB models expands affordable and cross-regional innovation.

CONCLUSION

The implications from the research are that while there is some foundation level alignment between leadership development initiatives and national standards on PPSSH, there are differing levels of impact on educational leadership and school outcomes. Those regions that adopted more contextual and comprehensive approaches involving SEL, GESI, ICT, and mentoring realized better readiness levels and school performance outcomes. Scaled-down and equity-centric models delivered moderate benefits. It will be necessary to address these gaps and develop a system level agenda for monitoring, differentiated learning, and scaling up to develop a more resilient and PPSSH compliant leadership pipeline that supports SDG 4 and SDG 16.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends a multi-stakeholder approach to reforming leadership development for newly appointed school heads.

School Leaders and Aspiring Leaders. It is critical that there be a deliberate, competency-based training and mentoring process. It needs to be structured and address not only the technical skills associated with administration but also the more emotional skills necessary for successful school leaders.

Educational Institutions and Training Providers. It is encouraged that educational institutions and training providers revisit their learning designs and integrate SEL, GESI, and digital leadership. There should be an emphasis on co-creation with DepEd and division offices about leadership pipelines with a focus on developing more transformational and distributed forms of leadership.

Policymakers and DepEd Officials. Policymakers and DepEd officials should coordinate efforts and set standards for leadership and career paths that align with PPSSH, RPMS, and SDG goals. It should include developing common standards and approaches for monitoring and evaluating leadership development, impact, and resilience. Investing in leadership development should be made as a cornerstone strategy for the plan for basic education.

Communities and Stakeholders. It is imperative for communities and stakeholders to be involved in participatory governance to influence leadership practices that suit community values and aspirations.

Comparative and Global Education Researchers. Researchers in comparative and global education are encouraged to build on this work as a touchstone for exploring beliefs and practices related to leadership and development within these specific types of learning environments. The Philippine experience can be instructive on ways and means of scaling culturally and equity-based conceptualizations and interpretations of leadership within these global learning systems.

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