

On Progress and Pit Falls: The Lived Experiences of Public School Heads in Implementing Programs, Projects, and Activities

Ronald D. Manolong, John Paul Sindangan, Roselle Naral, Gerald Paolo Patrimonio, Arlan Sablan, Reyzen Monserate, Febbie Faith Ramos

University of the Immaculate Conception (UIC) Davao City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study⁵⁷² is to examine the lived experiences of school heads in implementing the programs, projects, and activities in their respective schools. The participants of this study were 10 school heads who are handling school head position in Davao Region. This research utilized in-depth interview and focus group discussion as data gathering methods. The data were analyzed using Nvivo Software to avoid potential biases. The results of the study showed that school heads encountered a number of challenges in implementing PPAs in their school including Limited Resources, Stakeholders Participation, and Challenges of Administrative Bureaucracy. School heads also shared that they coped with these challenges by employing strategies like Conducting Planning for Resource Management, Encourage Stakeholders Participation, Conducting Monitoring and Evaluation, Developing Innovative Solutions; and Capacitating Manpower for Professional Development. Additionally, the participants also shared their recommendations on how to effectively implement school PPAs such as Strategic Planning and Alignment, Stakeholders Engagement and Collaboration, and Continuous Improvement and Innovation. The results of this study are significant baseline data for school heads and administrators to effectively navigate the challenges in implementing the school programs, projects and activities in their respective schools.

Keywords: Public School School Heads, Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs), phenomenology, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

In the field of education, school principals play a critical role in implementing various school programs, projects, and activities that aim to enhance the quality of education (Villanueva et al., 2021). They are responsible for overseeing the implementation of these initiatives which are aligned with the school's goals (Tingle, Corrales, & Peters, 2019). This involves managing strategic planning, resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, monitoring and evaluation, professional development, crisis management, and communication and advocacy efforts.

In an academic institutions, Programs, projects, and activities (PPAs) are integral components of the educational experience, each serving distinct yet interconnected purposes in fostering learning, skill development, and personal growth among students (Pawlowski et al., 2019, Wurdinger et al., 2022, & Baker & Dutton, 2021). In the field of education, school principals as administrator play a critical role in implementing various school programs, projects, and activities that aim to enhance the quality of education (Villanueva et al., 2021) grappling with challenges such as resource allocation (Smith & Lo, 2022), administrative duties (Hudson & Warner, 2021), stakeholder communication (Fletcher & Carr, 2020), resistance to change (Johnson & Brown, 2023), and sustainability concerns (Leithwood et al., 2020).

However, despite their crucial role, school heads often face numerous challenges along the way (Villanueva et al., 2021). An international study conducted by Danaher et al. (2020) thoroughly examines the difficulties school administrators face while implementing plans, projects, and activities. This study identifies essential concerns such as school governance and operations, resource management, accountability, and continuous

improvement through a systematic evaluation. The research conducted in Spain by Figuerola (2022), it was found out that a common view among different education agents on the current practices, challenges of school leaders in Spain includes the persisting challenges such as the lack of real autonomy, a still excessively bureaucratic model, excessive administrative workload, excessive management of organizational processes, a lack of clear principal's training, selection and promotion model, and non-contextualized school accountability systems that hinder the implementation of school programs, projects, and activities. Earlier research has underscored the challenge of exercising educational leadership and governance due to the unclear roles and responsibilities of Spanish school principals (Tintore et al., 2022). Likewise, a recent comparative study (Tintore et al., 2022) between Spain and Portugal revealed a deficiency in school curricular autonomy, as well as a lack of genuine autonomy in school management and leadership.

In the Philippines, the study conducted in National Capital Region (NCR) divisions by Pascual (2023), it was revealed that the school heads' level of performance of their leadership functions such as implementing school programs, projects, and activities had varying degree of impact on internal and external stakeholders' support depending on their existing connection and the latter's proximity to school operations.

In the Davao region, school heads face challenges in preparing for PPs particularly in remote areas. The challenges of implementing PPs in schools require school leaders to be adaptable, resourceful, and innovative. A study by Sumaljag and Blasabas (2019) found that low-quality materials, a lack of training and orientations, a shortage of learning resources, and an increase in workload are among the challenges school administrators in the area encounter when implementing PPs in their respective schools.

While existing studies often outline the challenges faced by school heads, there is a lack of research that deeply explores the subjective experiences and lived realities of school leaders and administrators using a phenomenological approach (Jones, 2017). Phenomenological inquiry can offer valuable insights into the nuanced perceptions, emotions, and meanings attached to these challenges, thus providing a more holistic understanding of school leadership dynamics. Research on challenges in school leadership often fails to adequately represent the experiences of marginalized groups, such as school administrators from minority backgrounds or those working in underserved communities (Garcia, 2020). This gap in the literature limits the understanding of the unique challenges faced by these individuals and hinders efforts to promote equity and inclusion in educational leadership research. School administrators operate within broader socio-political, economic, and cultural contexts that influence the challenges they face (Brown, 2019). However, research often neglects to examine the intersectionality of internal challenges with external factors such as government policies, funding mechanisms, and community dynamics. Exploring the complex interplay between these factors can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by school heads in program implementation. Addressing these issues and research gaps can enrich our understanding of the challenges faced by school heads in implementing programs, projects, and activities, and inform efforts to support effective educational leadership.

The researchers made the decision to carry out this qualitative-phenomenological study in the scenario. Studies on the many obstacles school heads faced when implementing PPAs have already been done, however they only look at bivariate connections and need to be repeated independently by multiple researchers. This concentrated phenomenological study of the challenges school administrators has in carrying out PPAs in the Davao Region makes a significant contribution to research by offering a detailed understanding of the perspectives and experiences of public-school leaders. This study complements quantitative analyses by providing insightful insights that improve our understanding of the complex dynamics within educational environments using a quantitative methodology. This study addresses crucial issues impacting student outcomes. By uncovering challenges faced by school heads in implementing initiatives, it enhances educational policies and practices. Urgency arises from the need to support leaders in complex environments, ensuring student needs are met. Presenting findings at an international conference aims to foster collaboration and improve educational leadership globally.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to examine the lived experiences of the ten (10) School Heads in Davao Region in implementing the programs, projects, and activities in their respective

schools. Further, this study aims to explore the coping mechanisms employed by the school heads to efficiently address the challenges in implementing the PPAs. Lastly, this study intends to unveil the recommendations of the school heads on how they effectively navigate the complexities in implementing the PPAs in their schools.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The study "On Progress and Pitfalls: The Lived Experiences of Public-School Heads in Implementing Programs, Projects, and Activities" is grounded in several key theoretical frameworks. Central to this research is Transformational Leadership Theory as established by Burns (1978) and expanded by Bass (1985), which posits that effective leaders inspire and motivate their followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes and develop their own leadership potential. This theory is particularly relevant for school heads as they navigate the complexities of implementing programs and projects within their schools. Additionally, the Full-Range Leadership Theory, which includes transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the diverse leadership approaches that school heads might employ (Avolio & Bass, 1991). Additionally, the complexity Theory, as articulated by Mason (2008), also informs this study by addressing the dynamic interactions within school systems and their environments. This theory helps in understanding the multifaceted challenges school heads face when implementing new initiatives. Furthermore, key concepts such as leadership styles (Northouse, 2018), organizational culture (Schein, 2010), change management (Kotter, 1996), and stakeholder engagement (Freeman, 1984) are integral to this study. These concepts are based on the assumptions that effective leadership and stakeholder engagement are critical to successful program implementation, and that the organizational culture of a school significantly influences these processes. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study provides a robust framework for analyzing and interpreting the experiences of public-school heads in implementing various programs, projects, and activities, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on educational leadership and management.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized the qualitative phenomenological research design. Qualitative research designs are essential for understanding the nuanced perspectives and subjective meanings embedded within individuals' lived experiences (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). Through methods such as interviews and observations, qualitative research facilitates a deep understanding of the complex and richness of human experiences within their natural contexts (Hennink et al., 2020). Specifically, this study employed a phenomenological approach. A study of Neubauer et al. (2019) emphasized that phenomenology explains the meaning of this experience in terms of *what* is experienced and *how* it is experienced. According to Creswell (2013), phenomenological approach in qualitative research involves "exploring and understanding individuals' subjective experiences within a particular phenomenon". Thus, this approach is suited for the study for it aims to uncover the essence of the experiences of school heads in implementing the programs, projects and activities in their respective schools. This study further aims to delve into the meanings, perspectives, and interpretations attributed to experiences of the participants on their experienced phenomenon, thereby capturing the underlying structures and patterns that shape their consciousness and perception.

Research Site and Participants

The participants and informants of the study were 10 school heads of public schools, both elementary and secondary levels, in Davao Region who have been handling the school head position for at least three (3) years in a public secondary and elementary schools up to the current Academic Year, 2023-2024. The researchers had specifically decided to have school heads from both elementary and secondary as research participants to ensure richness of data. The researchers sent an approval letter to the Schools Division Offices in the Davao Region. This was done to ensure proper channeling, facilitating a smooth conduct of the study with the necessary authorization from the relevant authorities. For the in-depth interview, there five school heads and 10 school heads for focus group discussion. In qualitative research, it is essential to inform participants about

the interview details, including the time and location, ensuring these arrangements are convenient for them (Smith, 2020; Johnson, 2021; Brown, 2022). This approach is common in qualitative research for identifying and selecting information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Williams, 2023; Taylor, 2020; Wilson & Green, 2019). To avoid one-sided or biased results, key informants should be diverse in age, gender, years of experience as school heads, and the schools they govern. This diversity allows the researcher to explore various perspectives and underlying issues or problems being studied (Martinez & Lee, 2021). The informants and participants' ages range from 33 to 64 years old. There are males and females who participated in the study. All of them have been handling the school head position for at least three (3) years in a public secondary and elementary school up to the current Academic Year, 2023-2024. The first three years of service for school heads are critical in establishing the foundation for their effectiveness. Research, including the findings from Thomas (2024), shows that during this period, school heads can significantly impact student achievement, teacher satisfaction, and overall school climate. Research by Andrianto, Komardi, and Priyono (2023) emphasizes the importance of effective leadership in sustaining programs and activities. School heads with less than three years of experience may struggle to ensure the long-term success of initiatives. The researcher established specific criteria to ensure rich and varied responses for the study. Pseudonyms were used to increase anonymity of the participants, thus upholding confidentiality of their identities.

Data Analysis

This qualitative phenomenological study used thematic analysis as primary method in analyzing the data from the responses of the participants gathered through In-depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Braun and Clarke (2023) emphasize that thematic analysis is a foundational method for qualitative research, allowing researchers to systematically identify and analyze patterns within data. They highlight the importance of avoiding common pitfalls to ensure rigorous and insightful analysis. This method involved distilling data and determining broad patterns to conduct more granular research and analysis. The researcher coded every two or three lines of text to identify key words or concepts. To avoid misinterpretation and biases, the researchers used Nvivo Software as tool for thematic analysis. Additionally, the data were reviewed with the help of a qualitative research expert. That is to read and re-read the data, double-check the codes to make it more consistent and valid. Emergent themes were identified after the codebook was prepared. The codebook was used to identify themes and sub- themes that emerged from patterns like conversation topics and vocabulary. Lightfoot et al. (2024) describe themes as central patterns or meaningful units within qualitative data, which emerge from a systematic analysis. In this study, the themes were based on the responses of the participants about their challenges in implementing PPAs in their school, their coping mechanisms, and their recommendations to effectively manage the implementation of PPAs in school. The use of coding and audit trail were utilized in the discussion and analysis of the study since it utilized thematic analysis. The codes used for in-depth interview are (IDIPPA01, IDIPPA02, IDIPPA03...) and for focus group discussion (FGDPPA01, FGDPPA02, FGDPPA03...). The codes were utilized to label the transcribed interviews of the participants of the study.

Trustworthiness

To verify the credibility and reliability of this study, the general criteria identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985), cited in the work of Stahl and King (2020), will be adhered to. This consists of credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability. Adhering to credibility and reliability in research studies, as emphasized by Wood, Sebar, and Vecchio (2020), ensures the integrity and trustworthiness of the findings, thus enhancing the overall validity and impact of the research outcomes. This commitment to rigorous standards strengthens the confidence of both researchers and stakeholders in the study's conclusions and recommendations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section of this research presents the findings of the study. This section examines the detailed narrative of the experiences of the participants. The results are presented in themes and core ideas and based on the order of the research questions. Further, the presentation of data is supported by transcripts gathered from the answers of the participants from the conducted In-Depth Interview and Focus Group Discussion. The data are described, analyzed and explained in this section.

Profile of Participants

The informants and participants of my study were 10 school heads in Davao Region. These school heads have been handling the school head position for at least three (3) years in a public secondary and elementary school up to the current Academic Year, 2023-2024. Five of them participated in the in-depth interview and another five participated in the focus group discussion. These informants, a mixture of five male and five females, and ages that range from 33 to 64 years old, voluntarily participated in this study without expecting any return.

Table 1 Profile of Participants

No.	Code	Sex	Age	Position	Number of Years as School Head	Study Group
1	IDIPPA01	Female	33	Head Teacher 1	4	IDI
2	IDIPPA02	Male	44	Head Teacher I	5	IDI
3	IDIPPA03	Male	48	Principal I	7	IDI
4	IDIPPA04	Male	64	Principal II	15	IDI
5	IDIPPA05	Male	41	Principal 1	5	IDI
6	FGDPPA01	Female	50	Principal II	24	FGD
7	FGDPPA02	Female	50	Principal II	10	FGD
8	FGDPPA03	Female	39	Principal III	8	FGD
9	FGDPPA04	Male	42	Principal II	12	FGD
10	FGDPPA05	Female	53	Principal II	5	FGD

The Lived Experiences of Public-School Heads in Implementing the Programs, Pojects, and Activities

Table 2 showed the essential themes and core ideas extracted from the IDI and FGD on the lived experiences of public-school heads in implementing programs, projects and activities. The themes elicited were discussed thoroughly, supported with the reponses of the participants.

Table 2 The Lived Experiences of Public-School Heads in Implementing the Programs, Pojects, and Activities

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Limited Resources and Finances	Insufficient funding and resources
	Limited budget impacts program execution
	Lack of financial support hampers the implementation of essential programs and activities
	Scarce resources pose challenges in acquiring necessary equipment and materials
	Budget constraints hinder the school's ability to provide optimal facilities and support services
	Resistance to change from stakeholders

Resistance of Stakeholders to Participate	Lack of support from teachers, students, parents and community
	Stakeholders do not support school programs and activities
	Stakeholders' resistance to program implementation
	Aligning stakeholder interests and goals is vital for effective collaboration and program implementation.
Challenges on Administrative Bureaucracy	Bureaucratic hurdles delay progress
	Administrative inefficiencies affect execution
	Cumbersome administrative processes hinder timely program implementation
	Regulatory compliance issues add complexity to program management and oversight
	Inefficient coordination within the administration leads to delays and setbacks in program execution
NGO's Strong Participation	Collaborations with NGO's enhance resource availability
	Strong partnerships bolster initiatives
	Engaging with local entities and community organizations expands access to resources and support
	Leveraging partnerships with NGOs and private sector stakeholders enriches program offerings
	Community involvement fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to program success

Limited Resources and Finances. Based on responses of the participants, it was revealed that one of the challenges in implementing School Programs, Projects and Activities is the limited resources and finances. Despite the strong desire of the school heads to materialize their plans for the development of their academic institution, in general, the lack of financial support and scarcity of resources seem to be the hindrance.

First is really about financial resources because if you want to implement programs and activities, it always involves money, especially if you have limited resources. It's really difficult. (IDIPPA01)

Insufficient funding, inadequate facilities, and a lack of necessary materials can impede the successful implementation of programs in schools. (IDIPPA02)

Limited budgets and inadequate infrastructure, and the overwhelming administrative workload. (IDIPPA03)

Insufficient funding, staffing shortages, and lack of access to necessary materials or facilities can hinder the implementation of Programs, Projects, and Activities. (IDIPPA05)

Resistance of Stakeholders to Participate. The second theme which emerged from the responses of the participants relative to their challenges in implementing PPAs is the Resistance of Stakeholders to Participate. Stakeholders play a pivotal role in the implementation of any school PPAs. This means that if the stakeholders resist to participate, the implementation of PPAs may not also be materialized.

Lack of support from stakeholders. (IDIPPA01)

Facing resistance from team teachers, stakeholders, or end-users can impede progress. (IDIPPA02)

Unsupported stakeholders can hinder the implementation of PPAs. (FGDPPA02)

Implementing new programs or initiatives sometimes faces resistance from staff members, parents, or community members who are comfortable with the status quo. (FGDPPA04)

Building consensus and garnering support from stakeholders such as parents, students, and community members can be challenging. (FGDPPA05)

Challenges on Administrative Bureaucracy. The implementation of PPAs in school, technically, is still subject to approval of higher authority. Sometimes, because of the tedious processes, a number paperworks and adherence to beurucratic processes make the implementation lagging, and worst, impede the latter.

Bureaucratic hurdles like approvals, and paperwork may hinder effective PPA implementation. (IDIPPA03)

Bureaucratic hurdles and administrative inefficiencies posed significant obstacles to timely and effective program implementation. (IDIPPA04)

Too much processes and bureaucracy which lead to problems in the implementation. (IDIPPA05)

Administrative processes and regulations can slow down the implementation of PPAs, leading to frustration and inefficiency. (FGDPPA03)

NGO's Strong Participation. Since the school is part of a bigger community, the involvement and participation of the community and Non-Government Organizations play a crucial role in the successful implementation of school PPAs. This theme focused on the positive experiences of the participants relative to the implementation of their activities in the school. They emphasized that partnerships with NGOs are instrumental to the success of PPAs implementation.

Initiatives like Brigada Eskwela have successfully fostered community involvement and enhanced our facilities. (IDIPPA03)

We've focused on building strong partnerships with local government units, NGOs, and private sector stakeholders. (IDIPPA04)

It was the stakeholders who donated different resources to school. (FGDPPA01)

All programs, projects, and activities we have are in collaboration with NGOs, especially since they are very supportive. (FGDPPA05)

Mechanisms that Participants Employ to Cope with the Challenges in Implementing the Programs, Projects, and Activities of their Respective Academic Institutions

Table 3 showed the essential themes and core ideas extracted from the IDI and FGD on the mechanisms that Participants Employ to Manage the Challenges in Implementing the Programs, Projects, and Activities of their Respective Academic Institutions. The themes elicited were discussed thoroughly, supported with the reponses of the participants.

Table 3 Mechanisms that Participants Employ to Cope with the Challenges in Implementing the Programs, Projects, and Activities of their Respective Academic Institutions

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Conduct Planning and Resource Management	Efficient resource allocation through strategic planning
	Conduct thorough planning for successful program implementation
	Developing clear resource allocation strategies to maximize efficiency and mitigate financial constraints

	Ensuring that available resources are maximized
	Engaging stakeholders through information-sharing and feedback mechanisms to ensure alignment with program goals
Encourage Stakeholders Participation	Foster open dialogue and collaboration with stakeholders
	Involvement of educators, learners, and community members in planning
	Encouraging stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes to enhance program ownership and effectiveness
	Collaborating with local entities and community organizations to leverage resources and expertise
	Engaging stakeholders early and often to build consensus, address concerns, and ensure program alignment with community needs
Conduct Feedbacking, Monitoring and Evaluation	Regular feedback gathering for program enhancement
	Conducting regular feedback sessions for program evaluation
	Cultivating a culture of innovation and continuous improvement
	Holding regular meetings to gather feedback and identify areas for improvement in program implementation
	Fostering an environment that values experimentation, reflection, and learning from failures to drive innovation
	Encouraging feedback sessions following program completion to evaluate successes and challenges and inform future improvements
Develop Innovative Solutions	Adopting a collaborative, strategic, and innovative approach
	Promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement
	Embracing innovation and flexibility to overcome challenges and effectively implement programs
	Celebrating successes and recognizing achievements to inspire further innovation and creativity in program development
Capacitate Manpower for Professional Development	Investing in staff development and partnerships
	Advocating for policy changes to support program implementation
	Prioritizing professional development opportunities to empower educators and enhance teaching practices
	Building strong partnerships with stakeholders and advocating for policy changes to create an enabling environment for program implementation
	Investing in staff development, fostering partnerships to support program implementation and innovation

Conduct Planning for Resource Management. This theme emerged when the respondents were asked what mechanisms they employed to Manage the Challenges in Implementing the Programs, Projects, and Activities of their Respective Academic Institutions. The participants emphasized that the conduct of planning and resource management can greatly help them to successfully implement school programs.

It should involve strategic planning especially on the careful utilization of resources by that I will be able to address financial constraints while ensuring that available resources are utilized efficiently on the programs and activities that should be implemented. (IDIPPA01)

Conduct information-drive, meetings and feedbacking, and careful planning to successfully implement the PPAs. (IDIPPA05)

Developing a clear resource allocation strategy that maximizes the efficient use of available resources. Seek external funding sources, leverage partnerships with community organizations, and explore cost-saving measures to mitigate budgetary constraints. (FGDPPA04)

I begin by conducting a comprehensive needs assessment and strategic planning process to identify Priority Improvement Areas (PIAs). I will focus on initiatives that align with the school's goals, vision, and values, and prioritize resources accordingly. (FGDPPA05)

Encourage Stakeholders Participation. This is the second theme that emerged after collecting and analyzing the data in this study. The participants of the study emphasized that to successfully implement PPAs in the school, stakeholders should be encouraged to participate. They are supposed to be involved from the planning process down to the implementation proper.

Foster open communication and collaboration with all stakeholders involved in the implementation process. Encourage feedback, address concerns, and involve stakeholders in decision-making to enhance buy-in and ownership of the programs. (IDIPPA02)

By fostering open dialogue and building partnerships with local government, community organizations, and private sector partners, we can leverage the collective expertise and resources of everyone involved. (IDIPPA03)

By including educators, learners, and other school stakeholders from both the inside and outside during the planning. (FGDPPA01)

It might be vital to involve all of those PPAs in the planning process when creating the School Improvement Plan (SIP), Annual Improvement Plan (AIP), and this Annual Procurement Plan (APP), particularly when defining Priority Improvement Areas (PIAs), in order to guarantee funding allocation for each program. (FGDPPA02)

Including the stakeholders in the planning process makes it crucial. (FGDPPA03)

Engage with all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, students, and community members, early and often. Foster open communication channels to solicit feedback, address concerns, and build consensus around proposed programs and projects. (FGDPPA05)

Conduct Feedbacking, Monitoring and Evaluation. This is the third theme that emerged as one of the coping mechanisms employed by the school heads to manage the challenges they have experienced in implementing PPAs in their respective schools. Through this, the school heads and the school administration, in general, will be informed as to the status of the programs and projects, consequently, letting them identify the areas for improvements and adjustments.

Gathering feedback through open-ended forms offers valuable insights into recognized strengths and weaknesses of areas for enhancement and improvement in the future. (IDIPPA01)

We hold regular meetings to gather feedback and suggestions. This helps us identify areas where we can improve and make adjustments to our programs as needed. (IDIPPA03)

By fostering an environment where experimentation, reflection, and feedback are valued, we encourage creative problem-solving and innovation. (IDIPPA04)

Furthermore, in addition to SMEA every quarter, a meeting, evaluation, discussion, and feedback on what went well and poorly should be held immediately following the completion of the activity. (FGDPPA03)

Develop Innovative Solutions. This is the fourth theme that emerged from the responses of the participants about their employed coping mechanisms on the challenges they encountered in implementing PPAs in their school. The participants stressed out that innovative solutions are important to successfully implement programs at schools and to mitigate potential pitfalls and overcome challenges effectively.

By adopting a collaborative, strategic, and innovative approach to program implementation, I believe we are better equipped to mitigate potential pitfalls and overcome challenges effectively. (IDIPPA03)

We promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement within our academic institution. By fostering an environment where experimentation, reflection, and feedback are valued, we encourage creative problem-solving and innovation. (IDIPPA04)

Foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement by encouraging experimentation, risk-taking, and learning from failures. Celebrate successes, recognize achievements, and encourage creativity among teachers and students. (FGDPPA03)

We create. We innovate. (FGDPPA04)

Capacitate Manpower for Professional Development. The last theme that emerged has something to do with the capacitation of manpower for professional development. The participants revealed that the school should invest on activities that provide the staff and school personnel opportunities to be developed professionally. With this, when school personnel are fully equipped with necessary skill, they can now be able to address challenges, on their level, relative to the implementation of PPAs in their school.

My strategies focus on staff development and encouraging advanced degrees, strong partnerships, policy advocacy, and continuous improvement. Empowering teachers and leveraging external resources enhance our ability to address challenges. (IDIPPA03)

By investing in professional development opportunities and providing ongoing support, we empower educators to address challenges effectively and innovate in their teaching practices. (FGDPPA05)

Recommendations that Participants can Suggest in Effectively Implementing Programs, Projects, and Activities in School

Table 4 showed the essential themes and core ideas extracted from the IDI and FGD on the Recommendations that Participants can Suggest in Effectively Implementing Programs, Projects, and Activities in School. The themes elicited were discussed thoroughly, supported with the reponses of the participants.

Table 4 Recommendations that Participants can Suggest in Effectively Implementing Programs, Projects, and Activities in School

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Strategic Planning and Alignment	Setting goals and objectives aligned with educational standards
	Conducting needs assessments and monitoring progress for alignment
	Establishing transparent communication channels to ensure alignment and effectiveness
	Developing well-defined plans that align with the school's vision, mission, and goals
	Ensuring all programs align with school initiatives and involve holistic

	development activities
Stakeholders Engagement and Collaboration	Ensuring participation and soliciting contributions from stakeholders
	Prioritizing collaboration with various stakeholders for trust and creativity
	Engaging stakeholders in the feedback process to enhance program implementation
	Involving students in decision-making to ensure relevance and engagement
	Fostering meaningful engagement with parents, students, and community members as active partners
Continuous Improvement and Innovation	Fostering a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation
	Establishing robust feedback mechanisms for data-driven decision-making
	Regularly checking program progress and analyzing data for improvement opportunities
	Encouraging experimentation and innovation to foster a culture of continuous improvement
	Using data analytics to inform decision-making and promote innovation

Strategic Planning and Alignment. This is the first theme that emerged after the participants of the study were asked if what are the recommendations they can suggest to effectively implement PPAs in schools. It was revealed that strategic planning and alignment on the school’s mission, vision and goals are important factors to make sure that the PPAs are properly implemented and to ensure their effectiveness. It is also necessary that the PPAs are included in the Priority Improvements Areas (PIAs) of the school.

Set goals and objectives that align with the mission, vision, and goals of the Department of Education. Ensure constant monitoring and feedback from stakeholders to evaluate effectiveness and identify areas for enhancement. (IDIPPA01)

Define clear objectives, goals, and key performance indicators (KPIs) for each initiative. Regularly review progress and adjust strategies as needed. (IDIPPA02)

Conduct needs assessments, set clear objectives, and establish measurable targets to ensure initiatives are well-defined and aligned with overall school goals. Regular evaluations help maintain alignment with the school’s Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objectives (VMGO). (IDIPPA03)

Develop a complete and well-defined plan that aligns with the school’s Vision, Mission, and Goals. Conduct monitoring, evaluation, and impact analysis to assess the effectiveness of implemented programs. (IDIPPA05)

Ensure all PPAs align with school programs, especially Priority Improvement Areas (PIAs), and involve holistic development activities. (FGDPPA04)

Stakeholders Engagement and Collaboration. This is the second theme which emerged from the responses of the participants on the recommendations they can suggest to effectively implement PPAs in their school. To iterate, the school is part of a bigger community. The importance of stakeholder engagement and collaboration in implementing school programs, projects, and activities cannot be overstated. Engaging stakeholders, including teachers, parents, students, and community members, ensures that diverse perspectives and resources are harnessed, which enhances the relevance and effectiveness of our initiatives. Collaboration fosters a sense of shared ownership and responsibility, leading to increased support and commitment to the success of our programs. Ultimately, this collective effort not only addresses the immediate needs of the school community but also builds a stronger, more resilient educational environment.

Ensure participation from stakeholders, including external parties, from planning to implementation to solicit contributions and ideas. (IDIPPA01)

Engage stakeholders in the feedback process by soliciting their input, suggestions, and insights on program implementation. (IDIPPA02)

Prioritize collaboration and partnership-building with stakeholders, including parents, local businesses, and government. Regular engagement fosters trust and creativity. (IDIPPA03)

Involve students in planning and decision-making to ensure programs are relevant and engaging. Collaborate with community organizations to enhance resources and support. (IDIPPA04)

Involve internal and external parties in the execution of PPAs. Establish open communication with teachers, students, parents, and community members to keep everyone informed and engaged. (IDIPPA05)

Foster meaningful engagement with parents, students, and community members as active partners. Collaborate with local organizations and businesses to leverage resources. (FGDPPA05)

Continuous Improvement and Innovation. This is the theme which emerged from the responses of the participants as their recommendations to effectively implement PPAs in school. The participants emphasized that continuous improvement and innovation in implementing school programs, projects, and activities is pivotal in fostering a culture of learning and adaptation. Regularly checking in on program progress and analyzing data helps identify areas for improvement and encourages teachers and staff to keep learning and experimenting with new ideas. Establishing robust feedback and evaluation mechanisms ensures data-driven decision-making, enabling informed adjustments and continuous enhancement. This approach fosters a culture of experimentation and innovation, leading to the ongoing improvement of our educational programs and overall school performance.

Foster a culture of continuous improvement, learning, and adaptation. Encourage staff and stakeholders to embrace a mindset of improvement and innovation. (IDIPPA02)

Regularly check in on program progress and analyze data to identify what works well and what needs improvement. Encourage teachers and staff to keep learning and trying new ideas. (IDIPPA03)

Embrace a culture of continuous improvement and data-driven decision-making to evaluate program effectiveness and make informed adjustments. (IDIPPA04)

Establish robust feedback and evaluation mechanisms to gather input, assess progress, and measure outcomes. Use data analytics to inform decision-making and continuous improvement. (FGDPPA04)

Encourage everyone to try new ideas and see what works, fostering a culture of experimentation and innovation. (FGDPPA05)

This part of the research presented the discussion of the study regarding the experiences of the school heads in implementing the Programs, Projects, and Activities in school. The first research question, *What are the lived experiences of public-school heads in implementing the programs, projects, and activities?*, elicited four themes: (1) Limited Resources and Finances; (2) Resistance of Stakeholders to Participate; (3) Challenges on Administrative Bureaucracy; and (4) NGO's Strong Participation.

The first theme emphasized the idea that as much the school heads and the administration wanted to efficiently and effectively implement their PPAs, the scarcity of resources and limited budget hindered them. According to Glewwe et al. (2021), the effects and impacts of limited resources and finances on school programs, projects, and activities are multifaceted. When schools face constraints in funding and resources, they may struggle to maintain or expand essential programs, leading to reduced access to quality education and limited opportunities for student enrichment. This can ultimately hinder educational outcomes, perpetuate inequalities, and impede the overall development of students and the school, in general.

Stakeholders play a pivotal role in successfully implementing school PPAs. Now, if the stakeholders resist to participate, implementation will be at stake. When stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, or administrators, are reluctant or unwilling to participate in new initiatives or reforms, it can hinder the effectiveness and success of those programs. Resistance may stem from various factors, including concerns about changes in workload, curriculum content, or perceived lack of consultation in the decision-making process. Addressing and mitigating resistance is crucial for ensuring the smooth and successful implementation of school programs (Akala, 2021).

Indisputably, bureaucracy is a thing in every institutions especially relative to implementation of school programs and activities. In this study, one prominent theme that emerged is the burden of administrative bureaucracy faced by school heads in implementing programs, projects, and activities (Tanadoni et al., 2024). This bureaucracy manifests in the excessive amount of paperwork and approvals required, often involving multiple layers of administration (Terjesen, 2022). School heads experience this as a significant hurdle, as the lengthy processes can significantly delay or even stall the implementation of important initiatives (Koh et al., 2023).

A school cannot stand alone. It needs supporting forces for it to become sustainable. These forces are what we labeled stakeholders. One of the stakeholders is the Non-Government Organizations. School leaders have found collaborating with NGOs to be highly beneficial. These partnerships bring valuable expertise and resources to the table, such as specialist training, workshops, and even equipment donations (Menashy et al., 2021). NGOs can also ease the financial burden through fundraising, allowing for a wider range of programs (Mmaitisi, 2020). Finally, collaboration fosters a sense of community involvement, connecting students and staff with external supporters invested in their success (Bolliger et al., 2019). Overall, strong NGO participation enriches the educational experience for students by providing them with more impactful and diverse programs.

The second research question which focuses on the participants' coping mechanisms on the challenges they encountered, "*How do the participants cope with the challenges in implementing the programs, projects, and activities of their respective academic institutions?*", elicited five themes: (1) Conduct Planning for Resource Management; (2) Encourage Stakeholders Participation; (3) Conduct Monitoring and Evaluation; (4) Develop Innovative Solutions; and (5) Capacitate Manpower for Professional Development.

The first theme under the research question two (2), Conduct Planning for Resource Management, clearly highlights the indispensable part of planning for a certain school initiative to succeed. To effectively implement programs despite limited resources, school heads can utilize Conduct Planning for Resource Management (CPRM). This approach involves carefully identifying all necessary resources (financial, human, material) and formulating strategies to address potential gaps (Anukaenyi & Ene, 2024). CPRM allows for exploring alternative funding sources like grants or partnerships (Karim et al., 2024). Additionally, it promotes efficient allocation, ensuring resources are directed towards activities with the most significant impact (De Sena & Leodegario, 2024). This might involve prioritizing materials, optimizing staff time, and maximizing existing facilities (Wike, 2024). By proactively planning and allocating resources, CPRM empowers school heads to overcome resource limitations and ensure successful program implementation.

School heads can tackle implementation challenges by encouraging stakeholder participation. This strategy leverages the diverse skills, resources, and perspectives of parents, teachers, students, and community members (Letendre, 2024). Stakeholders can offer volunteer time, financial aid, equipment, or even internship opportunities (Lomo et al., 2024). More importantly, their involvement fosters a sense of shared ownership, boosting morale and leading to a more effective process (Uy et al., 2024). However, effective participation requires open communication, soliciting feedback, and providing avenues for stakeholder contribution (Kilag et al., 2024). By fostering collaboration, schools not only overcome resource limitations but also build a stronger community around their programs.

Effective program implementation can be a challenge for school heads. However, incorporating a robust Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system can be a powerful coping mechanism (Shakir & Saeed, 2024). M&E offers a dual benefit: continuous monitoring allows for early identification and correction of issues

throughout implementation, while periodic evaluations assess the program's overall effectiveness in achieving its goals (Hubahib et al., 2024). This data-driven approach empowers school heads to make informed adjustments and ensure their programs are implemented efficiently, ultimately leading to a positive impact on students (Nshimiyimana & Rabie, 2024).

Philippine schools face challenges like diverse student populations and limited resources (Kilag et al., 2024; Parinasan et al., 2024). Developing innovative solutions is crucial in implementing school programs, projects, and activities (Green, 2024). Innovative solutions are crucial for transformative leadership in this context (Uy et al., 2024). Examples include utilizing low-cost technology, forming community partnerships, and implementing student-centered learning methods. Ultimately, developing innovative solutions empowers school heads to overcome challenges and ensure successful program implementation for all students.

The last theme for research question two is Capacitate Manpower for Professional Development. Frianeza et al. (2024) highlight challenges in the education system that hinder professional growth (Frianeza et al., 2024). Effective PD should address these challenges, potentially through training on innovative, resource-conscious teaching strategies. Kilag et al. (2024) introduce experimental learning approaches in PD, suggesting they might be more engaging and effective than traditional methods (Kilag et al., 2024). Maguvhe (2024) emphasizes the importance of PD for inclusive education skills (Maguvhe, 2024). By combining these insights, school heads can design PD programs that are contextualized (Frianeza et al., 2024), engaging (Kilag et al., 2024), skills-focused (Maguvhe, 2024).

The third research question which focuses on the participants' suggested recommendations of the school heads on how to effectively implement programs, projects and activities in schools, "*What recommendations can the participants suggest in effectively implementing programs, projects, and activities in schools?*", elicited three themes: (1) Strategic Planning and Alignment; (2) Stakeholders Engagement and Collaboration; and (3) Continuous Improvement and Innovation.

The first theme is to conduct Strategic Planning and Alignment. To strengthen strategic planning and program alignment, school heads may adopt a three-pronged approach. First, building on Kilag et al. (2024) research, visionary leadership is crucial (Kilag et al., 2024). Leaders with a clear vision can guide the development of a school-wide vision that serves as the foundation for strategic planning. Second, incorporating a collaborative planning environment, as suggested by Phillips et al. (2024), empowers teachers to contribute their expertise (Phillips et al., 2024). This fosters a sense of ownership and ensures programs are relevant and practical. Finally, Fios et al. (2024) highlight the importance of innovative solutions (Fios et al., 2024). Strategic planning should involve exploring creative approaches to address resource constraints or emerging trends, ensuring programs remain effective and meet evolving student and school needs.

The second theme is to improve Stakeholders Engagement and Collaboration. A multifaceted strategy is advised to improve stakeholder participation and collaboration for educational initiatives. First, studies conducted in 2024 by Eyana et al. and Galorio & Bauyot (2024) recommend that school heads be empowered by collaboration and communication training (Eyana et al., 2024; Galorio & Bauyot, 2024). School leaders with authority can promote stakeholder involvement. Second, participatory approaches are supported by Wagle et al. (2024) (Wagle et al., 2024). Involving educators, parents, and even students in the creation of programs can help schools create more inclusive learning environments and programs that better represent the needs of all stakeholders. It is imperative to establish transparent avenues of contact, such as advisory boards, town halls, or internet forums. This makes stakeholders feel important and invested in the success of the school by facilitating the sharing of information and the exchange of feedback. Encouraging school administrators, promoting participation, and fostering open communication, schools can cultivate a collaborative environment that strengthens stakeholder engagement and program success.

Lastly, Continuous Improvement and Innovation is one of the themes emerged from the responses of the school heads as their recommendations to effectively implement PPAs in schools. Schools can cultivate a culture of continuous improvement and innovation by embracing a leadership style that prioritizes these aspects. The research by Kilag et al. (2024) and Mansueto et al. (2024) highlights the importance of transformational leadership (Kilag et al., 2024; Mansueto et al., 2024). These leaders inspire and empower

educators to seek new and better ways of doing things. Furthermore, Fios et al. (2024) emphasize the role of innovative leadership strategies, particularly in the face of contemporary challenges (Fios et al., 2024).

Implications for Educational Practice

The results of this study are significant baseline data for school heads and administrators to effectively navigate the challenges in implementing the school programs, projects and activities. Based on the responses of the participants, the implementation PPAs is hindered by the Limited Resources, Stakeholders Participation, Challenges of Administrative Bureaucracy, among others. With all these, the school heads should conduct strategic planning through resource management. This involves prioritizing programs and activities that address the school's core needs and align with available resources. Seeking out cost-effective solutions and exploring grant opportunities can further stretch limited budgets. Additionally, the school heads should also encourage among themselves and the entire school community to develop innovative solutions to successfully implement school initiatives. On the other hand, Resistance to change can be addressed by fostering Stakeholders Engagement and Collaboration. Schools can implement strategies to Encourage Stakeholders Participation by emphasizing transparency, meaningful roles, and recognition. Communicating program goals and benefits clearly, involving stakeholders in program development, and acknowledging their contributions can foster a more collaborative environment. Lastly, As a school head facing overloaded administrators and lengthy approval processes, you can navigate these challenges. Schedule pre-approval discussions, propose phased implementation for large projects, and back proposals with data. To reduce approval burdens, explore standardized proposals, delegate review tasks, and track approval times to advocate for streamlining. Finally, seek mentorship from experienced school heads for a more collaborative approach to program approval. By being proactive and collaborating with others, you can increase the success of your school programs.

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