Instructional leadership among elementary school heads: Examining the relationships of demographic profiles, leadership practices and associated challenges

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ABSTRACT

Effective management among teachers, staff, students, and parents requires strong instructional leadership of the school head. Thus, this study aims to investigate the instructional leadership practices and challenges of the school heads in elementary schools in Biliran District and the relationship among the demographic profiles, leadership practices and associated challenges. Utilizing explanatory sequential design, total of 11 elementary school heads are included in this study while adopting the survey questionnaire of Norby and Lhabu (2021) which modified from the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale by Philip Hallinger which is used throughout the world. The findings have shown that school heads in Biliran District, in the Philippines, demonstrated a very high level in leadership practices, exhibiting a strong commitment to their roles and responsibilities. Meanwhile, results indicate that there were no significant relationships shown between school heads' demographic profile and their instructional practices, implying that these personal factors do not impact their effectiveness as instructional leaders. However, a significant negative correlation was found between instructional leadership practices and the challenges they faced. The post-interview through the emerging themes positively supported the claims from the survey results. The report suggests bolstering professional development, enhancing support mechanisms, decentralized decision-making and promoting teacher collaboration.

1. INTRODUCTION

The instructional leadership's cornerstone and the basis for enhancing schools are the curriculum, teaching, and learning. Effective administration of personnel, learners, and parents requires strong management abilities (Westberry & Zhao, 2021). In addition, instructional leadership has become well known throughout the world due to its important function in guaranteeing high-quality education and the efficiency of schools (Norbu & Lhabu, 2021).

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education (DepEd) Order 24, s. was institutionalized. 2020, which centers on DepEd Order 25, s. and the National Adoption and

Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). Within the Department of Education, 2020 for Supervisors (PPSS) creates a national and international framework for raising the professional standards of school administrators and supervisors (Pegg et al., 2020).

Moreover, the current educational system in the Philippines is becoming more decentralized, with school-level decision-making currently in charge of school improvement. This change puts the onus of ensuring the caliber of instruction in their institutions on school principals. School principals have a critical role in a decentralized system, especially in their function as instructional leaders (Republic Act No. 9155, 2001).

According to Lao and UNICEF (2021), successful school leaders encourage teamwork, assist educators, include parents as collaborators in improving student learning, and build mutual respect and trust between communities and schools (Lao & UNICEF, 2021). Consequently, to fulfill the worldwide goal of high-quality education and lifelong learners, school leaders are expected to exhibit a wide variety of abilities in their positions.

Furthermore, the Instructional Leadership Framework of Phillip Hallinger's work, or the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) has been the basis for instructional leadership throughout the work since 1982 and has been used as the basis for school head's development purposes even the development of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). Research on school leadership has confirmed and demonstrated the reliability of the PIMRS. Meanwhile, defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and fostering a positive school learning climate are the three main facets of instructional leadership that are assessed. The effectiveness of instructional leadership will be evaluated by school principals using this scale (Wassenaar & Pearce, 2018).

 To successfully connect leadership to learning, Philip Hallinger's study emphasizes the three essential functions of a principal: people, academic structures, and vision and goals. It also underscores the necessity of continual professional growth beyond initial training.

According to Ismail et al. (2018), when school heads effectively serve as instructional leaders, resource providers, and skilled communicators to improve the teaching and learning process and motivate teachers to become experts in both material and pedagogy, teachers perform well. This illustrates how school administrators' instructional leadership influences teachers' functional competence, especially in the knowledge dimension.

Furthermore, instructional leaders engage in staff development activities, stay conspicuously present in the classroom throughout teaching hours, and observe in classrooms. They are also available to instructors for discussions pertaining to instruction. There is a strong positive correlation between their visible presence and aspects of the school climate. According to earlier studies on this topic, the instructional leader is the proactive agent in the classroom, monitoring instruction, being reachable by instructors, developing both educators and learners, and overseeing and taking part in staff development initiatives (Akram et al., 2018).

Existing research on instructional leadership is extensive but lacks a detailed examination of how these practices are applied and challenged in decentralized decision-making contexts, especially in elementary schools. By targeting school heads of elementary schools in the unexplored Biliran District, this study addresses the gaps. Furthermore, the way that demographic variables (such as sex, age, and educational attainment) affect instructional leadership practices and the problems that come with them is frequently ignored in contemporary research. There is also a lack of empirical evidence linking these demographic variables to leadership practices in managing curriculum and instruction. Therefore, this study generally aimed to investigate the instructional leadership practices and challenges of the school heads in elementary schools in Biliran District as well as the relationships among the variables that may be associated with these practices and challenges.

2. OBJECTIVES

The study aimed to examine the instructional leadership practices and challenges of the school heads in elementary schools in Biliran District.

Thus, specifically answer the following specific objectives:

1. Determine the demographic profile of the respondent school heads, examining characteristics such as their sex, age, civil status, highest educational attainment, years in service, and current position

2. Examine the level of school heads' general leadership practices.

3. Find out the level of school heads' common instructional leadership practices in terms of managing curriculum and instruction.

4. Investigate the school heads' challenges towards instructional leadership practices.

5. Ascertain the relationships among the key variables. This involves the connections between the level of school heads' general leadership practices, their level of common instructional leadership practices in managing curriculum and instruction, and the challenges they face in this area.

6. How are instructional leadership practices implemented by elementary school heads in their schools?

3. THEORETICAL BASIS

The present investigation is firmly based on extant literature on instructional leadership, incorporating crucial notions and claims from many sources. The direction and focus of this study were shaped by these sources, which served as the foundation for understanding the function of school heads in overseeing curriculum, instruction, and overall school effectiveness.

The head of the school is the main person in charge of all academic and administrative aspects of the institution. To fulfill this job, the head of the school must decide almost everything pertaining to how the school is run. As such, the head of the school needs to be skilled in planning, leading, and making decisions (Gumus, 2019). In addition, school heads oversee the curriculum's execution and establish a classroom climate that promotes students' adoption of a learning culture (Butler et al., 2015).

The role of school leaders is critical in changing the learning environment. Through their methods of information exchange, networking, mentorship, and advancement promotion, they have a tremendous impact. According to Aquino et al. (2021), there is a significant difference in the leadership techniques of school heads and instructors, which results in significantly better reactions and outcomes.

Meanwhile, school heads have five key responsibilities that they must fulfill to perform effectively and efficiently. First, they must plan by establishing objectives, prioritizing tasks, and creating well-coordinated action plans. The second step in staffing is choosing educators who possess the knowledge and abilities needed to guarantee organizational success. Third, organizing entails putting together the necessary tools and carrying out the assigned responsibilities, as well as setting up the schedule, communication rules, and tasks, to accomplish organizational goals. Fourth, controlling entails keeping an eye on performance and evaluating it to make sure objectives are reached. Finally, directing includes correcting any disparities, responding to results by connecting them to possibilities for the future, and attempting to increase teacher productivity (Noureen et al., 2020).

Quick generation and dissemination of fresh information by school administrators improves their access to networks and educational opportunities. Administrators who are highly visible within the school, devote a significant amount of time to planning and overseeing education, and demonstrate a strong commitment to the learning environment are characteristics of effective schools (Simmons & Taylor, 2019).

According to Wahyuni et al. (2020), strengthening educational institutions is crucial, particularly in nations where educational standards are falling behind. This indicates that having competent instructional leadership is essential. Janer & Deri (2020) state that as time goes on, these school administrators are likely to acquire new skills that are refined and tested because of their regular performance of their duties, continually testing their managerial abilities. These leaders have the capacity to serve as mentors to the incoming class of teachers.

As revealed in the study of Soroño and Quirap (2023), there is a positive correlation between instructors' effectiveness and school heads' roles as instructional resources. Teachers perform better when school chiefs strengthen their instructional leadership through sharing best practices, attending workshops, and giving updates. This emphasizes how important it is for school heads to be involved in instructional leadership to improve teaching outcomes.

Effective instructional leadership is essential to a principal's overall performance, claim Loeb et al. (2010). This kind of leadership entails tasks like establishing goals, giving feedback to educators, and encouraging professional growth. Performance scores for principals who thrive in instructional leadership are generally higher. The results imply that good communication, as a component of

instructional leadership, has a favorable impact on all aspects of school operations, including parent involvement, teacher morale, and student engagement.

The study of Daing (2022) highlights the value of effective communication in leadership by demonstrating a favorable correlation between school heads' roles as communicators and teachers' performance. This demonstrates the dedication of school leaders to creating a climate of trust and introspection, which motivates teachers to have deep, thought-provoking discussions about solving problems. To give instructors opportunities for innovative instruction, school directors should also keep up with advances in educational resources. In addition, school leaders are responsible for overseeing extracurricular and academic activities, analyzing data, and continuously following up on any recommendations made by administrators and teachers. Therefore, department heads and other school administrators should think about developing new initiatives or improving already-existing leadership training in order to preserve and improve instructional leadership abilities and teacher effectiveness in the classroom (Daing, 2022).

4. MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study employed an explanatory sequential research design outlined in (Creswell, 2014). In the descriptive phase, descriptive correlation will be employed to ascertain the relationships among demographic profiles, leadership practices and its associated challenges. Afterwards, a post-interview will be conducted about school heads' instructional practices employed in the school. The respondents of this study were the school heads among elementary schools in Biliran District within the Division of Biliran, Philippines, where the researchers were affiliated. In addition, Biliran District is one of the districts in the division that has the most numbered elementary school heads in the entire division. Furthermore, there were 11 elementary school heads involved in this study through the total enumeration technique. The researchers adopted the survey questionnaire of Norby and Lhabu (2021) which, as well as the foundation of the said questionnaire, were modified from the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale by Philip Hallinger which was used throughout the world. The survey questionnaire is composed of four sections. The first section is the demographic profile of the respondents, and the second section is the general leadership practices.

Meanwhile, the third section is the common instructional leadership practices in terms of managing curriculum and instruction, and the last section is the school heads' challenges towards instructional leadership practices.

To effectively identify the level of instructional practices among elementary school heads this scoring rubric was used: 4.21 – 5.00 (Very High), 3.41 – 4.20 (High), 2.61 – 3.40 (Moderate), 1.81 – 2.60 (Low), 1.00 – 1.80 (Very Low). Meanwhile, for the challenges, this separate scoring rubric was also utilized: 1-1.99 (Very Low), 2.0-2.99 (Low), 3.0-3.99 (High), 4.0-5.0 (Very High). Varied statistical treatments were employed based on the nature of the data. Moreover, frequency, percent, mean and standard deviation were utilized in describing the data, thus categorized as descriptive statistics. Pearson's correlation coefficient was utilized to test for association of the variables, which was continuous data as well as parametric in nature. Meanwhile, on the contrary, Kendall Tau was also utilized by the researchers if the data was non-parametric. Therefore, the Shapiro-Wilk test was employed beforehand to examine the normality of the gathered data. In addition, a chi-square test of independence was also performed to investigate the association of the data in a categorical form.

Meanwhile for the post-interview, the researchers gathered some questions based on their responses from the survey questionnaire conducted and the responses of the school heads were recorded and transcribed to analyze the data through reflexive thematic analysis outlined from Braun and Clarke (2006). Ensuring the validity and trustworthiness of the result, following the validation process of Lincoln and Guba (1985), the emerging themes were ensured that the findings were credible.

Furthermore, the researchers ensured that the participation of the respondents was non-incriminatory, and the confidentiality of the respondents' name was strictly maintained. An informed consent was distributed to them to formally ask their permission to be part of the study, and the researchers explained the purpose of conducting the study. By affixing their signature, it signals that the respondents were willing to be part of the study, and they were given the survey questionnaires afterwards.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis of the data and the interpretation of each table.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the school heads

SEX DISTRIBUTION	FREQUENCY (f)	Percent (%)
Male	2	18.18
Female	9	81.82
Total	**11**	**100.00**
AGE DISTRIBUTION	**FREQUENCY (f)**	**Percent (%)**
37-46	2	18.18
47-56	5	45.45
57-65	4	36.36
Total	**11**	**100.00**
CIVIL STATUS	**FREQUENCY (f)**	**Percent (%)**
Single	1	9.09
Married	10	90.91
Total	**11**	**100.00**
HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	**FREQUENCY (f)**	**Percent (%)**
Doctoral Graduate	4	36.36
with Doctoral Unit	3	27.27
Masteral Graduate	3	27.27
With Masteral Unit	1	9.09
College Graduate	0	0.00
Total	**11**	**100.00**
YEARS IN SERVICE	**FREQUENCY (f)**	**Percent (%)**
6 years or more	11	100
4 to less than 6 years	0	0
2 to less than 4 years	0	0
less than 2 years	0	0
Total	**11**	**100.00**
CURRENT POSITION	**FREQUENCY (f)**	**Percent (%)**
Principal I	6	54.54
Principal II	1	0.90
Principal III	0	0
Principal IV	0	0
Teacher-in-Charge/ Head Teacher	3	27.27
Total	**11**	**100.00**

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the school heads. The respondents of the study consisted of 11 elementary school heads within Biliran District. It can be perceived that majority of the pool is female school heads (81.82%) compared to male school heads (18.18%). The age of the school heads exhibits a diverse distribution, with between 45-56 years old (45.45%) creating a large group compared to the rest, followed by between 57-65 years old (36.36%), and 37-46 years old (18.18%) age bracket. Consequently, this leads to similar findings in the study of Janer and Deri (2020), that elementary school heads were beyond their middle age. Meanwhile, almost all school heads are married (90.915) and with only 1 school head remains single.

While, in terms of their Highest Educational Attainment the pool as well shows a well distributed data with school heads earned their doctoral degree (36.36%) and following with only doctoral unit (27.27%) and masteral graduate (27.27%) and with masteral unit (9.09). Based on the result of the study conducted by Peregrino et al. (2021), the school heads competence and qualifications such as their educational attainment is one of the factors that can affect their performance as the school leaders. Therefore, with exemplary educational attainment of the school heads this adds as well to becoming an effective and efficient school manager in ensuring quality education to the learners. As educational qualification of the school heads is one of the anchors in resolving central issues within the school community.

Furthermore, all school heads have 6 years or more years in service as the school head in their respective designated schools. However, not all of them were full-fledged principals with position some were teacher-in-charge or Head teacher earning 27.27% of the pool and principal 1 position (54.54%) obtained more than half of the sample. With the data showing that there were school heads who were not yet full-fledge principals this was affirmed from the study of Dellomas and Deri (2022) that it was primarily because of the reclassification of items through ERF or Equivalent Record Form and the Principal's Test, also known as the National Qualifying Examination for School Heads (NQESH), which is a requirement for promotion to principal position resulting to school heads who were still Teacher-in-charge or head teacher.

Table 2.   School heads' level of general leadership practices

Leadership Practice	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. Delegate administrative responsibility to staff	3.364	1.629	Moderately Practice	Moderate
2. Supervise and evaluate the instructional rograms in the school	4.909	0.302	Very Highly Practice	Very High
3. Delegate instruction responsibilities to academic head / master teachers/ School-related coordinators	4.000	1.265	Highly Practice	High
4. Involves teachers in the school improvement planning process	4.909	0.302	Very Highly Practice	Very High
5. Arrange teachers' meetings to help them grow professionally	4.909	0.302	Very Highly Practice	Very High
6. Work with teachers to define educational objectives and set goals	4.909	0.302	Very Highly Practice	Very High
7. Plan professional development opportunities according to needs.	4.909	0.302	Very Highly Practice	Very High
8. Develop follow up plans for assessing professional development	5.000	0.000	Very Highly Practice	Very High
9. Lead or attend teacher in-service activities concerned with instruction	4.909	0.302	Very Highly Practice	Very High
10. Organize and deliver the instructional materials to students and teachers	5.000	0.000	Very Highly Practice	Very High
11. Protect classroom instructional time from outside interruptions	4.727	0.467	Very Highly Practice	Very High
12. Make clear who is responsible for coordinating the curriculum across grade levels	4.909	0.302	Very Highly Practice	Very High
13. Use test and other performance measures to assess progress towards school goals	4.818	0.405	Very Highly Practice	Very High
14. Review curriculum and ensure that teachers are aware of changing conception of curriculum	4.909	0.302	Very Highly Practice	Very High
15. Meet teachers to get reports about curriculum implementation.	4.909	0.302	Very Highly Practice	Very High
16. Discuss academic performance results with the faculty to identify curricular strength and weakness	4.909	0.302	Very Highly Practice	Very High
17. Solve issues related to discipline to maximize instructional time.	5.000	0.000	Very Highly Practice	Very High
18. Teachers receives sufficient and quality coaching from Principal/subject coaches\	5.000	0.000	Very Highly Practice	Very High
19. Limit the intrusion of extra and co-curricular activities during instructional time	4.636	0.505	Very Highly Practice	Very High
Average Weighted Mean	4.770	0.377	Very Highly Practice	Very High

Note: 4.21 – 5.00 (Very High), 3.41 – 4.20 (High), 2.61 – 3.40 (Moderate), 1.81 – 2.60 (Low), 1.00 – 1.80(Very Low)

As gleaned in Table 2, it is noteworthy that the elementary school head's level of leadership practices (AWM = 4.770, SD = 0.377) is very high and overall, it can be inferred that all the leadership practices statements were very highly practiced with its average weighted mean emphasized. Comparing all the practices given, leadership practices statements 8, 10, 17 and 18 obtained (M = 5, SD = 0.000) a perfect mean which implies a very highly practiced leadership indicator as it encompasses the rest, as indicated in the table. However, only statement 1 *"Delegate administrative responsibility to staff"* achieved a moderate level indicating a moderately practice indicator compared to others.

Nevertheless, the level of school heads general leadership practices is very high, and it indicates consistent evidence from the leadership practices conducted by Daing and Mustapha (2023). In addition, according to Aquino et al. (2021) school

heads are highly effective communicators because they keep lines of communication open inside the school, settle disputes within the school, and encourage collaboration among members of the school administration, who help instructors enhance

their methods, set up official talks about learning and student progress, set clear objectives for the school, and provide teachers feedback on how they are doing in the classroom.

Table 3. School heads' level of common instructional leadership practices in terms of managing curriculum and instruction

Instructional Practices	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. Checks teacher's record of work	5.000	0.000	Very Highly Practice	Very High
2. Encourage all teachers to come to class well-prepared and on time	5.000	0.000	Very Highly Practice	Very High
3. Makes visits to classrooms to observe teacher's lessons	5.000	0.000	Very Highly Practice	Very High
4. Provides feedback after class observation	5.000	0.000	Very Highly Practice	Very High
5. Discuss with teachers the matters related to the instruction	4.909	0.302	Very Highly Practice	Very High
6. Monitor the classroom curriculum to see that it covers the school's curricular objectives	5.000	0.000	Very Highly Practice	Very High
7. Encourage teachers to take steps to solve instructional issues.	5.000	0.000	Very Highly Practice	Very High
8. Encourage a lesson plan for making the curriculum effective.	5.000	0.000	Very Highly Practice	Very High
9. Ensure that teachers teach the required curriculum.	5.000	0.000	Very Highly Practice	Very High
10. Discuss students' results with teachers for curricular strengths.	5.000	0.000	Very Highly Practice	Very High
11. Carry out result analysis to see the academic progress	4.818	0.405	Very Highly Practice	Very High
12. Evaluate students' work for evidence that standard has been achieved.	5.000	0.000	Very Highly Practice	Very High
13. Enthusiastically support the use in the classroom of skills acquired during in-service training	5.000	0.000	Very Highly Practice	Very High
14. Inform teachers of the school's performance results in written form	4.909	0.302	Very Highly Practice	Very High
15. Informs students at school's academic progress	4.909	0.302	Very Highly Practice	Very High
16. Clear guidelines exist for assessment methodology (question paper setting and marking schemes) for consistency within each standard.	4.909	0.302	Very Highly Practice	Very High
17. Physically available for instructional issues	4.727	0.467	Very Highly Practice	Very High
18. Ensure that students are not called to the office during instructional time	4.818	0.405	Very Highly Practice	Very High
Average Weighted Mean	4.944	0.138	Very Highly Practice	Very High

Note: 4.21 – 5.00 (Very High), 3.41 – 4.20 (High), 2.61 – 3.40 (Moderate), 1.81 – 2.60 (Low), 1.00 – 1.80 (Very Low)

Biliran District demonstrates a strong commitment and awareness to their respective roles and responsibilities as the direct supervisor within their respective school designate as the average weighted mean of the common instructional leadership practices in terms of Managing Curriculum and Instruction (AWM = 4.944, SD = 0.138) exemplifies a very highly practice indicating a very high level of

instructional practices as well. Almost all indicators obtained perfect 5, indicating a very high practice instructional leadership, except for indicators number 5, 11, 14-18. Furthermore, this result entails the same findings of the study of Dellomas and Deri (2022), which generally concluded that school heads in their study exhibited quality leadership practices. However, this is also contrary to the study of Basañes (2020), which revealed that school heads in public primary schools lack expertise in

instructional leadership, particularly when it comes to creating new programs or modifying old ones.

Moreover, according to O'Shea and McLeod (2022), by ensuring that instructional goals, standards, and classroom practices are all in harmony, principals play a crucial role in the implementation of curricula. They assist educators in comprehending the curriculum, customizing learning resources, and putting into practice efficient teaching techniques.

Table 4. School heads' challenges towards instructional leadership practices

Instructional Practices	Mean	SD	Description
1. No clear job description of principal	1.818	1.25	Very Low Challenges
2. Inadequacy of instructional materials	2.000	1.612	Low Challenges
3. Shortage of instructional materials	1.909	1.446	Very Low Challenges
4. Shortage of teachers	1.545	1.036	Very Low Challenges
5. A lack of instructional support personnel	1.727	1.104	Very Low Challenges
6. A lack of other support personnel	1.818	1.328	Very Low Challenges
7. Time spend on attending meeting/seminars/visitors	1.328	1.732	Very Low Challenges
8. Time spent on attending disciplinary issues	2.182	1.537	Low Challenges
9. Lack of financial support/budget	2.182	1.328	Low Challenges
Average Weighted Mean	1.836	1.375	Very Low Challenges

Note: 1-1.99 (Very Low), 2.0-2.99 (Low), 3.0-3.99 (High), 4.0-5.0 (Very High)

Table 4 presents the common challenges of school heads towards instructional leadership; it is noteworthy to observe and understand that as school heads in Biliran District obtained a very highly practice in their instructional leadership. The challenges that they encountered as well

demonstrate an opposite result to their challenges experienced highlighting their reliable and trustworthy responses. The average weighted mean obtained from the challenges experiences by the school head was 1. 836 depicting a very low challenge.

Table 5. Relationships among school heads' leadership practices, school heads' instructional leadership practices in terms of managing curriculum and instruction, and school heads challenges towards instructional leadership practices

Variable	r-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Level of School Heads' Leadership Practices-Level of School Heads' Instructional Leadership Practices	0.243	0.472	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Level of School Heads' Leadership Practices-School Heads Challenges towards Instructional Leadership Practices	-0.679[*]	0.022	Reject Ho	Significant
Level of School Heads' Instructional Leadership Practices -School Heads Challenges towards Instructional Leadership Practices Instructional Leadership Practices	-0.388	0.239	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

As observed in the statement number 1 *"No clear job description of principal"* it is interesting to note that these common challenges of the school head obtained a very low challenges (M = 1.818, SD = 1.25) among them, since this statement was one of the observed challenges in the conducted meta-analysis study by Pitpit (2020) highlighting the statement of Aziz et al. (2017) stating that one of the difficulties principals encounter is striking a balance between their expanding work responsibilities and improving their mentoring and professional growth. As instructional leaders, they must place a high priority on teaching and learning inside the classroom and emphasize the best methods of instruction. Nonetheless, a crucial element of principal effectiveness is good instructional leadership, which includes a variety of tasks like establishing standards for student performance, giving instructors feedback, and assisting teachers in their professional development and that principals with higher overall performance ratings than those without are typically competent instructional leaders (Loeb et al., 2010).

As presented in Table 5, a correlation test was used to determine the association among the variables like school heads' leadership practices, school heads' instructional leadership practices as to managing curriculum and instruction and school heads challenges towards instructional leadership practices. There were no significant relationships between these variables, Level of School Heads' Leadership Practices and Level of School Heads' Instructional Leadership Practices, r(9)= 0.243, p=.472, showing weak positive correlation and Level of School Heads' Instructional Leadership Practices and School Heads Challenges towards Instructional Leadership Practices Instructional Leadership Practices, r(9)= -0.388, p=2.39, showing moderate negative correlation. Thus, failed to reject Ho.

Meanwhile, Level of School Heads' Leadership Practices-School Heads Challenges towards Instructional Leadership Practices exhibits a strong negative correlation, r(9)= -0.679, p=.022, rejecting null hypothesis. This suggests that as school heads' leadership practices improve, the challenges they encounter may decrease as it showed a strong correlation to each other.

Table 6. Relationship between demographic profile and school heads leadership practices

Demographic Profile	Chi-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Age	8.479	0.388	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Sex	0.637	0.425	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Civil Status	2.933	0.087	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Highest Educational Qualification	1.589	0.452	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Current Position	1.589	0.662	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant

Legend: Significant if p value is < 0.05

As presented in Table 6, A chi-square test of independence was performed to investigate the relationship between the school heads' demographic profile and school heads' leadership practices. There were no significant relationships among the variables of the demographic profile to their practices as their p-values are greater than the threshold 0.05. Thus, failed to reject Ho, this suggests that the school heads' profiles do not affect the leadership practices they employ as the direct supervisors of their respective schools.

Table 7. Relationship between demographic profile and school heads' instructional leadership practices in terms of managing curriculum and instruction

Demographic Profile	Chi-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Age	11.000	0.202	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Sex	0.196	0.658	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Civil Status	0.629	0.428	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Highest Educational Qualification	1.781	0.410	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Current Position	6.062	0.416	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant

Legend: Significant if p value is < 0.05

As presented in Table 7, a chi-square test of independence was performed to investigate the relationship between the school heads' demographic profile and school heads' instructional leadership

practices in terms of managing curriculum and instruction. There were no significant relationships among the variables of the demographic profile to their practices as their p-values are greater than the threshold 0.05. Thus, failed to reject Ho, this suggests that the school heads' profiles do not affect the leadership practices in managing curriculum and instruction as the direct supervisors of their respective schools.

Moreover, instructional leaders actively participate in staff development, watch classrooms, stay in contact with teachers, and provide support to both teachers and students. The study also reveals a significant beneficial relationship between school administrators' instructional leadership and teachers' functional competency (Aquino et al., 2021).

Table 8. Relationship between demographic profile and school heads challenges towards instructional leadership practices

Demographic Profile	Chi-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Age	22.000	0.143	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Sex	1.757	0.415	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Civil Status	0.412	0.814	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Highest Educational Qualification	5.500	0.240	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Current Position	3.712	0.716	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant

Legend: Significant if p value is < 0.05

As presented in Table 8, a chi-square test of independence was performed to investigate the relationship between the school heads' demographic profile and school heads' challenges towards instructional leadership practices in terms of managing curriculum and instruction. There were no significant relationships among the variables of the demographic profile to their practices as their p-values is greater than the threshold 0.05. Thus, failed to reject Ho, this suggests that the school heads' profiles do not affect the school heads challenges towards instructional leadership practices as the direct supervisors of their respective schools.

After a post-interview was conducted among elementary school heads about their instructional practices implemented in the school, their responses were transcribed and analyze through Reflexive Thematic Analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006) and there were four emerging themes interpreted with their excerpted responses.

Theme: Promoting collaborative decision- making

Elementary school leaders promote collaborative decision-making by involving teachers, parents, and stakeholders in essential school procedures. They conduct participatory workshops to develop School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and Annual Implementation Plans (AIPs), ensuring that these plans accurately represent the authentic needs of educators and students. Leaders also assign responsibilities via committees consisting of educators and parent representatives, enabling them to formulate solutions for issues such as academic

achievement and student well-being. Quarterly meetings are conducted to assess classroom methods and integrate collective feedback, ensuring decisions reflect the majority's consensus for the benefit of learners.

Below were the testaments of school heads' relentless support in promoting a just leadership within their jurisdiction:

[In our school, I consistently ensure the involvement of teachers in decisions regarding significant matters, particularly those pertaining to the curriculum and stakeholders' suggestions in intensifying partnership. During our School Improvement Plan (SIP) workshops and even Annual Implementation Plan (AIP), I promote the sharing of ideas to ensure that the plans address the genuine needs of our educators and learners as well. (P1)]

[Before the start of the new school year, I formed and assigned committees or coordinators to ensure that work is well distributed, including academic performance, student welfare, and resource management. These committees consist of teachers, parents of the learners or even our GPTA officers and has the authority to devise solutions. It fosters a sense of collective accountability and collaboration. (P3)].

[Every quarter specifically data submission of learners' performance, we convene to evaluate effective practices and identify areas for enhancement in our classrooms. I consider their

opinions and make judgments based on what the majority believe will most benefit the learners (P5)]

According to Saleem et al. (2021) it has shown that teachers' instructional performance is consistently empirically linked to the actions of school leaders and their collaborative leadership styles. Moreover, it was discovered that the collaborative leadership style of school heads is significantly linked to the teaching performance of instructors. In a related study, Parveen et al. (2022) determined that the leadership of school administrators is pivotal in promoting school effectiveness, which contributes to the enhancement of contemporary knowledge and classroom instruction, thereby optimizing educational achievements and improving both teacher performance and student academic outcomes. Therefore, in resolving school issues and providing a just learning environment for the learners, school heads must ensure that they promote collaborative decision-making and must have the said skills.

Theme: Providing targeted professional development

The school principal emphasizes professional development by arranging tailored in-service training sessions to meet specific teacher requirements discovered through performance evaluations, such as the incorporation of technology into instruction. They aggressively promote teacher participation in seminars that improve teaching strategies and methodologies. The head also invites external specialists to impart specific expertise, as demonstrated by a session on 21st-century teaching skills during a Learning Action Cell (LAC) meeting.

The school heads expressed their support to the teacher's development:

[I regularly conducted an in-service training to my teachers, and I guarantee that our in-service training programs are customized to meet the specific requirements of our educators. After identifying a deficiency through Individual Performance Commitment and Review form (IPCRF) in the incorporation of technology into courses, I facilitated a session aimed at the optimal utilization of digital technologies in the classroom (P2)]

[Facilitating the professional development of my teachers are priority for me. I always encourage them to join seminars related to school activities or improving teachers' strategies and approaches in the classroom (P8)]

[I solicit external experts who can provide novel insights and specialized knowledge. Recently, I invited a speaker from a local institution to educate our teachers on 21st century skills that teachers should acquire during our Learning Action Cell session (LAC) (P5)]

As mentioned by Crispino and Moyani (2023) professional development is essential for equipping teachers to address the changing requirements of education and improve their efficacy in the classroom. Meeting teachers' developmental needs guarantees their preparedness to provide quality education, foster engaging learning environments, and motivate student achievement. This highlights the necessity for ongoing support and customized professional development programs to enhance the teaching profession and foster national advancement.

Theme: Monitoring of teachers' classroom performance

This shows how important it is to do regular walkthroughs in the classroom to look at how teachers are doing, find their skills, and point out areas where they can improve. After each visit, good practices are praised and given constructive comments. Teachers are also given support based on their specific needs, such as cash help for events like district or provincial meets. After classroom observations, there are meetings to talk about performance, deal with problems, and work together on action plans for professional growth.

As mentioned by the participants:

[I often perform classroom walkthroughs to assess the delivery of teachings. This enables me to discern both strengths and places for enhancement in pedagogical practices. Following each visit, I ensure to offer constructive feedback and acknowledge the commendable practices I observe (P4)]

[To help teachers do their jobs well, I give them resources that are tailored to their needs." For example, when I saw that some of my teachers needs this financial support during the sports event like district meet or provincial meet I always call the GPTA officers to inform the needs of my teachers as coaches, I ensure that all of them will be given amount of support (P2)]

[I set up a post-conference with the teacher after every classroom observation." It gives us a chance to talk about their work, deal with problems, and come up with action plans for growth together (P11)]

For schools to have good teaching and learning, school heads must keep an eye on their teachers. It helps school leaders figure out how good the teachers are, what they're doing well, and what they need to work on. By keeping an eye on teachers on a regular basis, school leaders can give them quick and helpful feedback that helps them improve as professionals. Additionally, it helps by providing teachers with specific support and tools that meet their needs, which can improve their work and motivation. Consistent monitoring also helps build a culture of accountability and constant improvement, which leads to better results for students and general school success (Caingcoy, 2022).

Theme: Promoting a positive school culture

For a positive and motivated school atmosphere, it's important for school heads to keep an eye on teachers. Heads of schools can boost morale and build a feeling of pride in the school community by regularly recognizing and praising the successes of both teachers and students during weekly assemblies. Celebrating big accomplishments, like finishing a school project or having a good term, makes everyone more committed and brings attention to the hard work that makes the school great. These actions not only support teachers, but they also show students how important it is to work together and be dedicated.

School heads expressed their practices in promoting school culture within their designated school.

[When we have our weekly assemblies, I make it a point to praise the good work of both teachers and students. Whether it's a teacher who has used a successful strategy or a student who has shown progress, enjoying these wins makes our school feel proud and motivated, just like when the division office holds a competition (P7)]

[We also have celebrations when big things happen, like when a school project is finished, or a term goes well. These events bring people together and remind everyone of all the hard work and commitment that goes into making our school successful (P1)]

An important thing that educational leaders can do to help make the school a good place to teach and learn is to promote a positive school culture. It helps create an atmosphere where students, teachers, and the community can find new chances and make the most of them. According to Garcia et al. (2022), it is more likely caused by the way educational leaders

are perceived when they first start working in a school and how they carry out their duties.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study emphasized how important it was for primary school principals in the Biliran District to perform their duties as instructional leaders, especially when it comes to overseeing curricula and encouraging the performance of students. This study revealed that the school heads regularly demonstrated high levels of leadership in tasks like overseeing educational initiatives, encouraging professional growth for teachers, and fostering a positive learning environment. These leaders ensured teaching effectiveness by maintaining strong instructional leadership even in a decentralized educational environment. Furthermore, there was no statistically significant correlation between the demographic profiles of school heads and their leadership or instructional practices. This suggested that attributes like age, gender, or educational achievement may not necessarily impact one's capacity for leadership. Nonetheless, a significant inverse relationship was found between the degree of leadership practices and the difficulties faced by the school heads, indicating that difficulties decreased as leadership efficacy increased. Furthermore, the emerged themes supported the responses of the school heads during the survey questionnaire and it was indeed positive that the school heads from elementary schools were practicing the good instructional leadership in their assigned areas.

Several suggestions were made considering these findings. First, school head-specific professional development programs should be reinforced with an emphasis on improving leadership abilities and tackling instructional issues. To help school heads deal with the challenges of a decentralized decision-making structure, support systems should also be extended. It is important to promote greater collaboration between educators and school administrators to better align curriculum creation with the educational goals of the institution.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

I declare that my research paper has no conflicting interest and the content of my paper is originally made in accordance with ethical standards and there are no financial or personal influences that have affected the integrity of my paper.

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