The Leadership Skills of School Heads: Basis for Policy Recommendation on Accountability

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Abstract: The study's primary aim is to evaluate the leadership competence of school principals in the Southwest 2 district of the DepEd Butuan City Division. The evaluation will be used as a basis for suggesting policies on accountability. Descriptive-correlational research design was used in this study, and Cochran's formula was employed to determine the sample size of participants. Results revealed that 50% of the school heads were aged between 51-55, had completed their master's degree, had 7-9 years of experience, and attended at least 16-20 trainings in the last five years. While the teachers' perceptions of their school heads' responsibility and accountability traits were satisfactory, their leadership skills in various areas such as vision for results and equity, planning and operation, culture, staff development, and personal leadership and growth were only somewhat true. Furthermore, Spearman rho correlation analysis demonstrated no significant relationship between the school heads' profiles and their level of leadership skills. Similarly, the Mann-Whitney U test did not provide significant evidence of a difference at a 0.05 level of significance.

Keywords: *Leadership Skills, School Heads, Policy Recommendation, Accountability*

Introduction

The role of a school head is multifaceted and involves various responsibilities, especially in their position as a visionary leader. The effectiveness of a school head is determined by factors such as experience, efficacy in specific tasks, and time management. In the Philippines, the Governance of Basic Education Act mandates that a school head is responsible for administrative and instructional supervision of public elementary and high schools or a cluster thereof. Additionally, school heads are given the Authority, Responsibility, and Accountability in all school affairs, consistent with national policies and standards.

The Department of Education in Butuan City Division monitors school leadership through quarterly assessments of districts to identify concerns, gaps, and issues in school operations. Technical assistance is provided to school heads and teachers based on these identified concerns. During one such assessment, issues were identified in improving partnerships and linkages, strengthening leadership and governance efforts, and addressing scheduling conflicts.

In this context, school leadership has been given attention in the Department of Education to examine its impact on school operations and students' achievements. Corollary, the Department of Education Butuan City Division ensures that school heads give equal importance to school leadership. The conduct of quarterly monitoring of the fifteen (15) districts enables the Public Schools District Supervisors and designated Division Monitoring Supervisor to determine the gaps and issues in school leadership. The identified concerns, issues, gaps, and problems (CIGPs) become the bases of the technical assistance to be given to the school heads and teachers.

During the conduct of the 3rd quarter online Division Field Technical Assistance Monitoring and Evaluation of the Southwest District schools where the researcher is the assigned Division Monitoring Supervisor, several issues, and concerns were found, to wit: 1) the need to improve their partnerships and linkages to help improve students' performances and improve school culture and community; (2) two (2) out of the 8 schools are School-Based Leadership Level III which means 6 of the schools need to exert more effort in Leadership and Governance, Curriculum Learning, Accountability, and Continuous Improvement and Leadership of Resources; and (3) overlapped schedule of meetings of school heads which divides his/ her time in leading the schools. On the other hand, based on the informal interview conducted among selected teachers, they revealed that their school head delegates tasks to them that are supposed to be their school head's responsibility. Among these are the crafting of the Enhanced Improvement Plan, Annual Implementation Plan, and Work and Financial Plans. School heads as leaders must facilitate and provide input in the crafting of the plans, however, teachers were given the total responsibility to design and develop these plans. Moreover, teachers also disclosed that they were asked to comply with their school head's tasks (e.g., outputs after the seminar attended by the school head).

The study entitled "The Leadership Skills of School Heads: Basis for Policy Recommendation on Accountability" aimed to determine the level of leadership

skills and behaviors of eight school heads in the Southwest District of Butuan City Division. The study focused on leadership accountability in terms of vision for results and equity, planning and operations, culture, staff development and leadership, personal leadership, and growth.

Methods

A descriptive research design was employed in this study to portray the collected data on the school heads' characteristics, personal qualities, and leadership abilities. Additionally, it aimed to explore the connection between school heads' profiles and their leadership skills and compare the ratings provided by school respondents and teacher respondents.

The survey used in the study was modeled after two sources: the New Leaders for New School journal's instrument titled "Evaluating Principals Balancing Accountability with Professional Growth" (2010) and a researcher-made questionnaire on assessing school heads' personalities. Three experts in the field of school leadership validated both instruments. To assess the instruments' feasibility, a trial was conducted with 30 teachers and eight school heads from West 1 District. Results indicated a high level of reliability, with the school heads' and teachers' responses to the school heads' leadership skills tool achieving a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.967 and 0.987, respectively. The teachers' responses to the school heads' personality traits achieved a very high level of reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.948.

This study focused on the selected teachers and school heads from the eight (8) schools within the Division of Butuan City. The evaluation of the 8 school heads was conducted through two data collection tools - an evaluation tool answered by both the teachers and school heads, and a survey questionnaire and rating scale answered solely by the school heads to assess their leadership skills. Meanwhile, the teachers answered two rating scale questionnaires to evaluate the personality and leadership skills of the school heads.

To gather the necessary data, the researcher requested permission from the Schools Division Superintendent to conduct the study in the Southwest district schools. The approved letter was then sent to the assigned Public School District Supervisor to inform them of the study's implementation. Both teacher-respondents and school head respondents were given the survey form and questionnaire, which were collected immediately after completion.

Results and Discussion

The first table provides information on the age distribution of school heads. Out of the total of 8 school heads, 4 fall within the age range of 51-55, while 2 are over 55, and 1 each fall within the age ranges of 31-35 and 41-45. This indicates that a significant majority of 75% or 6 out of 8 school heads are in their prime age. These school heads have likely been in their positions for a considerable amount of time, which has allowed them to mature in their leadership roles and responsibilities, not just within the school but also in other situations. This level of maturity may enable them to handle diverse situations and adapt easily to the various personalities of their stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and community partners.

Table 1. Profile of the participants according to age

Age Ranges	Frequency	Percent
36 – 40 years old	1	12.5
41 – 45 years old	1	12.5
46 – 50 years old	0	0
51 – 55 years old	4	50.0
55 years old	2	25.0
Total	8	100.0

In her journal article "Does Age Affect Leadership Abilities," Benedet (2022) stressed the importance of investing time in developing leadership skills. She suggested that individuals demonstrating potential should be mentored by leaders who can provide them with the right opportunities to shine. Age was found to have minimal impact on leadership, as the right circumstances can bring out innate abilities in people. Meanwhile, psychological research has identified unique traits that older leaders possess when compared to their younger counterparts.

As can be gleaned in Table 2, half of the school heads (4 out of 8) obtained their master's degree, fulfilling their academic requirements, while a quarter (2 out of 8) completed their PhD academic requirements. One school head (12.5%) holds an MAED/MAEM degree, and another (also 12.5%) holds a PhD/EdD degree. It is not mandatory to possess a post-graduate degree to become a school head in the Department of Education, but having one provides an edge for promotion to higher ranks and better salaries. Additionally, having a post-graduate degree helps school heads understand leadership philosophies and apply their knowledge and skills to guide their subordinates and other stakeholders.

Table 2. Profile of the School heads in terms of highest educational attainment

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percent
MAED/MAEM CAR	4	50.00
MAED/MAEM	1	12.5
With Phd/EdD units	0	0.00
PhD/EdD CAR	2	25.00
PhD/EdD	1	12.5

	Total	8	100.0

The above contentions are supported by Mc Millan (2019) when he states in his study that, a school head who has a doctoral degree has a lot of benefits for his/her teachers. First, taking the step to an advanced degree demonstrates a commitment to lifelong learning. As educators, staying abreast of current educational issues, best practices, and evidence-based

practices are critical when leading schools. More so than ever, professional growth and lifelong learning opportunities are now expectations of educational leaders today. Secondly, participating in doctoral-level programs provides a robust framework of colleagues and resources where one can glean vitally important information as we all strive to lead great schools.

Table 3 indicates that half of the school heads in the Southwest District have been in the service for 7-9 years, while the other half have 10-12 years of experience. This suggests that they are currently at the peak of their leadership careers, possessing ample experience while still requiring development in areas such as managing people, executing programs and activities, handling projects, and adapting to unexpected changes and shifts in educational processes and systems.

Table 3. Profile of the School heads in terms of highest educational attainment

Years as School Heads	Frequency	Percent
7- 9 yrs	4	50.0
10 – 12 yrs	4	50.0
13 – 15 yrs	0	0
16- 18 yrs	0	0
More than 18 yrs	0	0
Total	8	100.0

In Table 4, the number of leadership trainings attended by school heads during the past five years of their leadership journey is disclosed. The table reveals that out of the eight school heads, six of them or 75% have attended a minimum of 16-20 trainings, while one head or 12.5% has attended 11-15 trainings, and the remaining one or 12.5% has attended more than one training. It is apparent that the Department of Education (DepEd) provides training opportunities through its Central, Regional, and Division Offices, which explains why the school heads have attended almost the same number of leadership trainings. However, some school heads have also invested their personal funds to attend Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs provided by other organizations.

In terms of promotion, per DepEd Order 42 s. 2007 on "The Revised Guidelines on Selection, Promotion, and

Designation of School heads, each level of attendance (CO, RO, DO) corresponds to certain points. However, only one certificate is considered in the ranking which is the highest level attended by the school head. Thus, if not required some of them do not anymore take the opportunity to attend.

School heads must be able to provide strong instructional leadership for continuous improvement of teaching and learning. They need to be equipped with the knowledge necessary to mediate "between teachers and external ideas" as they navigate the expectations of the school board, parents, and the community. They need to make informed decisions and resolve conflicts and dilemmas surrounding curriculum and instruction while ensuring that the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students are met. Although educational leaders are not expected to be experts on all educational topics, they need to be able to provide differentiated feedback to staff members and direct staff to additional support as needed. Experts have argued that school heads will be able to provide leadership for improving teaching and learning only if they receive this relevant training (Rabinovsky,2017).

Table 5 presents the teachers' perceptions of their school heads' personality traits in terms of openness. The overall weighted mean of the 5 indicators reveals that the school heads were rated 4.08 or Very Satisfactory. This implies that the teachers have the knowledge about school-related information that they need to know and there is enough information- dissemination by the school heads through different mechanisms.

Table 5. Teacher-Respondents' Perception of School Heads' Personality Traits in terms of Responsibility

Indicators	Wtd Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1.leads the school such that everyone can follow the processes, decisions, and appointments	4.12	.922	Somewhat true	Very Satisfactory

2. prepares Annual Implementation Plan, Work, and Financial Plan that includes a compatible budget	4.12	.938	Somewhat true	Very Satisfactory
3. provides technical assistance on the academic functions of teachers	2.66	.513	Seldom true	Fair
4. makes decisions that result in the achievement of instructional goals	4.15	.882	Somewhat true	Very Satisfactory
5. conducts classroom observations of teachers at least twice per school year	4.38	.842	Somewhat true	Very Satisfactory
Overall Weighted Mean	**3.906**	**.744**	**Occasionally true**	**Satisfactory**

Among the five (5) indicators rated as Very Satisfactory, indicator 3, "establishes a healthy relationship and develops a set of values that everyone can agree upon" has the lowest weighted mean which is 4.09 while indicator 4, "embraces and adopts changes" has the highest with 4.20. The lowest weighted mean may be attributed to the transition in education during this time of pandemic where the school heads cannot physically exhibit the healthy relationship otherwise clearly exhibited in in-person dealings. This rating could also mean that the school heads followed rules and guidelines imposed as articulated in the circulated memoranda.

On the other hand, indicator 5, "provides useful and genuine feedback through an established system (e.g., State of the School Address-SOSA)" was rated 3.84 or Satisfactory by teacher- respondents. This would mean that the school heads were not consistent in providing feedback to the stakeholders in organized and formal ways which can be considered as a proper forum.

According to Whang (2021) in his article entitled, the role of school heads and why they matter during the COVID pandemic, good leadership in schools fosters nurturing learning environments that help children grow and develop. Table 5 discloses teachers' responses on their perceptions of their school heads' personality traits in terms of responsibility. The overall weighted mean is 3.906 with a verbal description of Satisfactory.

There are 4 out 5 indicators rated as Very Satisfactory which include, "leads the school such that everyone can follow the processes, decisions, and appointments", 4.12, "prepares Annual Implementation Plan, Work, and Financial Plan that includes a compatible budget",4.12, "makes decisions that result in the achievement of instructional goals", 4.15, and "conducts classroom observations of teachers at least twice per school year", 4.38 which is the highest. This could mean that the school head seriously followed DepEd Memorandum 004 s 2020 which is on "Implementation of the Results-Based Performance Management System- Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers for SY 2021-2022." This memorandum pronounces the need to conduct two (2) classroom observations for the entire school year. Hence, ratees should submit 2 classroom observation tool (COT) rating sheets/ interobserver agreement forms… which shall be done between September 2021 and February 2022, and between March 2022 and July 2022.

On the other hand, the indicator stating, "makes decisions that result in the achievement of instructional goals" has 4.15 or Very Satisfactory rating while the indicators, "leads the school such that everyone can follow the processes, decisions, and appointments" and "prepares Annual Implementation Plan, Work, and Financial Plan that includes a compatible budget" have the same 4.12 ratings with a verbal description of Satisfactory. Based on these results, it is revealed that school heads take the lead in the preparations of school plans and in decision- making processes. These functions are expected from a school head per DepEd Order 44 s. 2015, re: Guidelines the School Improvement Planning (SIP) Process and the School Report Card (SRC). This mandates all schools to prepare an Annual Implementation Plan for each calendar year as the blueprint of all the school's plans and activities. As the head of the School Planning Team (SPT), the school head is expected to take the lead in identifying Priority Improvement Areas (PIAs) and Planning Worksheets.

On the other hand, the indicator, "provides technical assistance on the academic functions of teachers" has a rating of 2.66 with a verbal description of Fair. This implies that although the school heads conduct classroom observations to teachers, they either do not give enough advice and support to teachers in terms of education needs or do not provide appropriate or updated teaching pedagogies especially during this time of the new normal. The school heads may have provided feedback to the teachers of their strengths and weaknesses in their demonstration teaching but failed to provide the technical assistance the teachers need.

Whang (2021) states that school heads have various areas of responsibility including human resources, financial resources, educational activities of students and teachers, external relations, the well-being of students and teachers, and teaching students. They are at the heart of the education system, connecting education authorities, teachers, students, and communities. In times of crisis, more than ever, they need time and energy to concentrate on the immediate challenges. This could be done through measures such as temporarily adjusting school heads' administrative workloads or compensating them for the increased volume of work. During difficult times, school leaders must be encouraged, supported, and their efforts recognized as they play a crucial role in ensuring that learning continues, even at a distance. As implied in the studies mentioned above, the effectiveness of their leadership is mirrored in the successes their teachers and students attain and in other related achievements that their respective schools are expected to meet.

Table 6 shows the teacher respondents' perception of school heads' personality traits in terms of accountability which has an overall weighted mean of 3.91 with a verbal description of Satisfactory. The result reveals the need to improve the sense of accountability of the school heads. The indicators with Very Satisfactory verbal descriptions include, "communicates to the parents the policies and mandates of DepEd and the school itself", 4.26, "provides a detailed and updated justification of disbursement and liquidation reports to stakeholders at least once a month", 4.17, "ensures that the Enhanced School Improvement Plan is articulated to the teachers and the community", 4.22, and "monitors the progress of the school", 4.23. In terms of parents' communication on the policies and mandates, the teachers consider the school heads to have articulated the important details they need to know. On the disbursement and liquidation reports, all schools are required to have an updated liquidation report posted on the transparency board. The schools have possibly posted updated liquidation reports of MOOE and other Income Generating Projects (IGPs) that made the teachers rate the school head as Very Satisfactory. On ensuring the articulation of the Enhanced Scholl Improvement Plan (ESIP) to the teachers and community, the teachers themselves together with the community stakeholders write the ESIP. As members of the School Planning Team (SPT), they also do the monitoring of the Programs, Activities, and Projects (PAPs) and revisit those twice a school year as these become the bases of the approval by the disbursing officer of school purchases. As the head of the school, he/ she needs to facilitate the conduct of review and articulation to be able to achieve the school plans and have accomplishment reports because the Division Field Technical Assistance Team (DFTAT) conducts monitoring on the progress of schools based on the ESIP and AIP.

Table 6. Teacher-Respondents' Perception of School Heads' Personality Traits in terms of Accountability

Indicators	Wtd Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. communicates to the parents the policies and mandates of DepEd and the school itself	4.26	.88	Somewhat true	VS
2. provides a detailed and updated justification of disbursement and liquidation reports to stakeholders at least once a month	4.167	.89	Somewhat true	VS
3. provides team members with useful and detailed feedback on their work	2.65	.52	Occasionally true	Fair
4. ensures that the Enhanced School Improvement Plan is articulated to the teachers and the community	4.22	.91	Somewhat true	VS
5. monitors the progress of the school	4.23	.90	Somewhat true	VS
Overall Weighted mean	3.91	.76	Satisfactory	S

Legend: 1.00-1.99-Poor; 2.00-2.99-Fair; 3.00-3.99-Satisfactory; 4.00-4.99-Very Satisfactory; 5.00-Outstanding

The role of school heads in education is dynamic, expansive, and influential, particularly in promoting school improvement and effectiveness. This has led to an emphasis on accountability frameworks in education policies worldwide, as school leaders are responsible for managing and leading all affairs of the school consistent with national educational policies, plans, and standards.

Indeed, DepEd school leaders are accountable for the schools' processes. In fact, Paragraph 3 of Section No. 7 Letter E, Chapter 1 states that consistent with the national educational policies, plans, and standards, the school heads shall have the Authority, Responsibility, and Accountability (AuRA) in leading and managing all affairs of the school.

Table 7 presents the result of the level of leadership skills along Vision for Results and Equity as rated by the teacher respondents and school head respondents. The data presented in reveals the leadership skills of school heads in terms of Vision for Results and Equity. The overall weighted mean along with all the indicators as evaluated by teacher respondents have a verbal interpretation of Somewhat True. The highest among indicators is "endorses continuous improvement", 4.27 followed by "maintains focus on students' achievement goals for all students", 4.17, then "articulates a clear shared vision and mission for the school's achievement", 4.14, and the two indicators, "maintains focus on students' achievement goals for all students" and "creates a sense of shared purpose" 4.12. If the school head projects influential leadership, it is easy for the teachers to collaborate and the school vision is easier to achieve (Berkovich and Eyal, 2018).

Table 7. Level of Leadership Skills of School Heads along Vision for Results and Equity

On the other hand, the school heads' ratings to their leadership skills are also interpreted as Somewhat True with an average weighted mean of 4.55. Among the indicators, the highest are, "creates a sense of shared purpose" and "endorses continuous improvement" with ratings of 4.75. Although the latter indicator's rating has the same with the teachers', the former indicator rated by the school heads is opposite to the perception of the teachers as it was rated the lowest. This might be due to the teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness and impact of the school head's responsibilities. The school head might assume that he/she has established oneness in his plans with the teachers, yet the teachers themselves have not observed the consistent positive outcomes.

The data reveal that the school heads articulate a vision, set high goals, and create an environment where all teachers and students succeed. Also, the ratings manifest that they can execute their functions as instructional leaders. They have the vision and express this to the stakeholders for the benefit of the school and the clienteles in general. Gillat and Sulzer-Azaroff (1994) as cited by Bellibas (2015), support school heads' direct involvement in instructional improvement and student learning. They argued that when the school head acts more like a teacher by observing classrooms, setting goals with students, and giving feedback and praise to students, student achievement is more likely to increase. From this perspective, the school head is a strong instructional leader who should directly and actively engage in classrooms and work not only with teachers but also with students.

Moreover, Meador (2019) in her study states that a good school head is balanced within all her roles and works hard to ensure that she is doing what she feels is best for all subordinates involved. He/ She must become efficient at practices such as prioritizing, scheduling, and organizing. Moreover, he/she should be positive and enthusiastic in the day-to-day activities of the school and listen to what his or her subordinates are saying because an effective leader is available to teachers, staff members, parents, students, and community members. He must stay calm in difficult situations, think before acting, and put the needs of the school before himself. In addition, an effective school head steps up to fill in holes as needed, even if it isn't a part of his daily routine.

The leadership skills of school heads in Planning and Operation are presented in Table 8. According to the ratings given by teacher-respondents, all indicators were interpreted as Somewhat True with an average weighted mean of 4.17, indicating that they are aligned with the school head and other stakeholders in identifying the school's situation, designing, and implementing action plans, managing time, and allocating resources to support school goals. However, among the indicators, one of them, "allocates resources effectively to teachers and the school needs to support learning goals," had the lowest weighted mean of 4.09, despite being rated as Very Satisfactory.

Table 8. ... Planning ...

through ... MOOE ... equipm ... classes and learning activities. This is stipulated in item number e of Letter D on the Use of MOOE. Therefore, it is necessary for school heads to include all plans related to learning goals in the Enhanced School Improvement Plan and Annual Implementation Plan, including the budget matrix in the Work and Financial Plan.

Despite this mandate, there have been instances where school heads have diverted funds, sacrificing the allocation for other areas. In some cases, teachers are requested to spend their own money for classroom beautification, construction, and restructuring, which leads to the highest percentage of MOOE

being redirected. Gempes & Ochada (2018) further revealed that proper allocation, implementation, and utilization of MOOE funds by school heads should promote transparency, and involvement of teachers in financial planning should also be observed. Teachers should be centrally involved in MOOE allocation and purchase of instructional materials needed (i.e., photocopy of lesson materials, chalk, bond papers, etc.) as MOOE serves as a fund provision for schools' maintenance and operations.

Thus, it is crucial to note that basic and supplementary budgets are necessary to provide schools with per-pupil allocation of funding to aid their different operations, including the allocation of MOOE for classroom needs and other learning materials.

Table 9 shows the leadership skill of school heads in terms of culture. The overall weighted mean based on the teachers rating is 4.16 which is interpreted as Somewhat True. The highest among the indicators is "implements systems and processes to ensure the active participation of parents and students in school improvement," which is 4.23, which is also Somewhat True, while the lowest indicator, though it has the same interpretation, "creates mechanisms that involve all faculty in decision making," has a rating of 4.06.   On the other hand, the school heads' rating also indicates an overall weighted mean of 4.60, Very Satisfactory. The highest among all indicators is "ensures that teachers and other personnel demonstrate consistent values and positive behaviors aligned to the school's vision and mission" which have a 4.75 or a Very Satisfactory rating. The indicator "engages to get families and communities in supporting their children still has a Very Satisfactory Verbal description. The results reveal that conflicts are not among the issues in the schools of the Southwest District. With a consistent Somewhat True interpretation of teacher- respondents and school heads, the data on learning and the school's learning goals" has the lowest numerical rating, however, imply that there are no majors that arise among the stakeholders of the schools. It can be inferred that the school heads of the district know how to make negotiations in decision-making processes. According to Momodu (2013) as effective school heads must learn the skills of mediation and negotiation because even in the healthiest of schools, conflicts will arise.

Table 9. Level of Leadership Skills of School Heads in terms of Culture

Unresolved conflicts break communication and are contradictory to the school vision. It is when the school heads become sensitive to the teachers' needs that they feel their significance and value to the organization. As cited by the American Institutes for Research (2015), school heads attend to teachers' affective needs such as building a sense of community when they include faculty members in developing a "shared meaning" of the school's vision, mission, and goals. There must be a good communication mechanism among teachers', students', and school administrators' within and outside the school for goals achievement at all levels of education (Akinfolarin & Rufai, 2017). To have effective administration, school administrators must communicate school goals promptly to staff and students.

The visible leadership of a school head (Benoliel, 2018) leads to strong school culture and the ability to respond to staff needs and support ongoing development in school organizations. As they should increase the commitment of the employees to the institution to meet individual expectations and create a positive school culture (Lee & Louis, 2019). This is what the results manifest because of the Somewhat True interpretations.

Table 10 shows the leadership skills of school heads along with staff development. Based on the results presented in the data above, the teacher- respondents and school heads rated the school heads with a Somewhat True interpretation having 4.12 and 4.48 ratings, respectively. Among the lowest indicators as rated by the teacher- respondents include: "sets clearer expectations for performance and takes the lead in the performance of all staff" and "trains and supports a high-performing instructional Leadership Team" with 4. 12 ratings. While the school heads rated the indicators, "increases teacher effectiveness through in-service training" and "provides regular feedback to teachers and rewards accomplishments" as the lowest with 4.38 ratings.

Table 10. Level of Leadership Skills of School Heads along with Staff Development

Further, the results imply that the school heads show human capital support and concern to the professional growth of staff, provide technical assistance to the teachers, and give feedback to the teachers. It can be inferred that because of the required conduct of Classroom Observation twice a school year even amidst the pandemic that the teachers feel the instructional leadership support of their school heads. It is also during the CO that the school heads provide feedback of their strengths and weaknesses as the bases of the crafting of their Individual Development Plan (IDP) which is also a requirement from them. Perhaps, the Division Field Technical Assistance Team monitoring is also a contributory factor to the carrying out of leadership functions by the school heads.

Table 11 presents the level of leadership skills of school heads along personal leadership and growth. Although the school heads have an overall weighted mean of 4.28 interpreted as Very Satisfactory, the weighted mean of the indicators varies. The highest is the indicator "identifies solutions both anticipating and responding to opportunities and challenges" with a weighted mean of 4.62. This is contrary to the weighted mean of the indicator rated by teacher-respondents, which is considered the lowest. This indicates that the school heads themselves feel that they have targeted the most appropriate solutions to school issues and concerns, however, some teachers do not consider those as the most significant and reasonable. On the other hand, the indicator, "updates educational attainment (currently enrolled for Masters/ Doctorate degree courses)" has the lowest weighted mean with 3.88 interpreted as Satisfied. The school heads feel that they are stagnant at present in terms of their educational status. They have accepted the necessity for them to be enrolled in post-graduate studies, while the teacher-respondents believe that the educational status of their school heads is already enough as leaders.

Table 11. Level of Leadership Skills of School Heads along Personal Leadership and Growth

The responses of the school heads adhere to the study of Korkmaz (2015), in which he claims that the quality of the work varies according to the professional development opportunities of the employee and ensures that the employee and his / her environment are always open to new knowledge and experience. Moreover, Ekinci (2015) amplifies that the competence of people in their professions can only be increased through professional development and argues that it is possible to observe and eliminate the problems that arise from other people in the same occupational group through professional development.

According to Burkhardt, 2001 as cited by Reyes (2018), individuals learn and develop leadership through a variety of mediums such as formal coursework youth and collegiate programs, educational experiences, and on-the-job experiences. Thus, it is necessary for the school heads to be updated by attending or joining courses such as SEAMEO, INOTECH, Lunduyan, and other NEAP-facilitated courses to update the roles and responsibilities as school heads.

Table 12 presents the significant relationship between the profile of the school heads and their level of leadership skills in the identified domains. The data in the Table show the result of the Spearman Rho correlation analysis between the school heads' profile and their level of leadership skills. Results reveal that age and leadership skills along with staff development obtained a correlation value of .806 and p-value of .016, indicating a significant relationship at 0.05 level of significance set for analysis. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected with respect to this variable. This means that as the school head grows in age, there is a tendency for her to raise the level of leadership skill along with staff development.

Table 12. Relationship between the profile of the school heads and their level of leadership skills

Profile Variables	Vision for Results and Equity	Planning and Operations	Culture	Staff Development	Personal leadership and Growth

AGE	Correlation Coefficient	.139	.441	.503	.806*	.131
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.742	.274	.203	.016	.757
	Decision on H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o	Reject H_o	Do not reject H_o
	Interpretation	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Significant	Not significant
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	Correlation Coefficient	.318	.616	.701	.572	.680
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.443	.104	.053	.138	.063
	Decision on H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o
	Interpretation	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
YEARS AS SCHOOL HEAD	Correlation Coefficient	.113	.120	.407	.500	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.790	.778	.317	.207	1.000
	Decision on H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o
	Interpretation	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
RELEVANT	Correlation Coefficient	.000	.000	.291	.444	.447
TRAININGS ATTENDED	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	1.000	.485	.270	.267
	Decision on H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o
	Interpretation	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant

The increased maturity of a school head leads to a deeper understanding of people, especially subordinates, inspiring teachers to do better and aim for higher positions. This is true for all teachers, not just in Southwest district schools. The wisdom shared by older school heads in handling people and giving advice on personal and professional growth is valuable.

However, research shows that school head effectiveness is not necessarily associated with age or years of experience, but rather their competencies in leadership and educational planning. Profile variables such as highest educational attainment and relevant training attended did not show significant relationships with leadership skills. While younger leaders may lack experience, they often possess positive leadership qualities and embrace change, which can benefit the organization. School heads must have strong instructional leadership skills and be equipped with knowledge to navigate expectations and provide differentiated feedback to staff. Relevant training is necessary for school heads to provide leadership for improving teaching and learning.

Table 13 presents the Mann-Whitney test result between the rating of the school head respondents and the teacher-respondents on the leadership skills of the school heads.

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine whether the ratings of the school heads differed significantly from those of the teacher-respondents. The results reveal that while the school heads have generally higher ratings on their leadership skills than the ratings of the teacher-respondents (as shown by negative z-values), the data did not guarantee the significance of difference at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that the school heads regardless of their profile have varying leadership skills and attitudes. For example, a school head who's young at service has almost the same attitude and leadership skills as that older than him/her. Moreover, a school head with a master's degree is better appreciated by the teachers than that with a PhD degree. Teachers' satisfaction with the leadership skills of the school head varies in the way they are handled or dealt with and not on the profile of the school head. It can also be inferred that leadership

skills depend on the school head's ability to lead. On the other hand, although the school heads have higher ratings compared to the teacher-respondents, both weighted means of their ratings have the same interpretation which is Somewhat True. Thus, this does not make a significant difference.

There are several studies that support these claims. Regarding the number of years as school head, effectiveness is not associated with age which says to vary at all levels as teachers perform their assigned duties especially in recognizing students' diversity and providing a motivating environment for them to learn (Comighud & Arevalo, 2020). Furthermore, Cańete (2019) noted that regardless of age and experience, being a school head matters as to their level of competencies in the area of educational leadership out of school operations and development.

On the other hand, Bozkus (2016) explained that school heads' length of leadership experiences has negative relationships and therefore do not indicate significant connectedness to the leadership styles of the school heads.

Butalid (2019) shared that school heads whether novice or experienced, have an equal level of experience with the experienced leaders in the aspect of educational planning. In many developing countries, it is believed that experience, measured by years of teaching, is sufficient to take on the roles and responsibilities of a school leader (Bush, 2018).

Table 13. Mann-Whitney U Test between the ratings of the school head respondents and the teacher-respondents on the leadership skills of the school heads

	Vision for Results and Equity	Planning and Operations	Culture	Staff Development	Personal leadership and Growth
Mann-Whitney U	499.500	472.000	469.000	562.000	640.500
Wilcoxon W	13702.500	1367 5.00 0	13672.000	13765.000	676.500
Z	-1.113	-1.328	-1.347	-.647	-.056
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.266	.184	.178	.518	.955
Decision on H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o	Do not reject H_o
Interpretation	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant

a. Grouping Variable: respondent

Becoming an education leader can be challenging, with various issues arising during the transition period, depending on several factors. Strained interpersonal relationships, poor facility maintenance, and lack of teacher involvement can contribute to a challenging transition, while a cooperative staff, effective systems already in place, and familiarity with the system can facilitate a smooth transition Novice rural school heads may face additional challenges, including supervising staff, feeling isolated, achieving work-life balance, dealing with the legacy of their predecessors, managing community demands, and planning for board succession (Van Jaarsveld, Mentz & Challens, 2015).

Such challenges can impact their success or failure in their critical first two years. While some participants felt supported due to mentors and effective networking, others felt alone in dealing with the demands of their new role.

Novice school heads may feel overwhelmed due to the sense of responsibility that comes with the role, leading to other problems such as task volume, diversity, and unpredictability (Bogler & Somech, 2002). These challenges can be lessened or exacerbated depending on the transition conditions. To be successful, school heads need to possess strong instructional leadership skills, mediate between teachers and external ideas, and navigate the expectations of stakeholders such as the school board, parents, and the community (Rabinovsky,2017).They must also make informed decisions, resolve conflicts, and ensure that the academic, social, and emotional needs of students are met. Relevant training is essential to equip school heads with the necessary knowledge to provide leadership for improving teaching and learning (Rabinovsky,2017).

Conclusions

The study's findings led to the following conclusions:

1. The school leaders in the Southwest district possess maturity and experience, enabling them to tackle emerging challenges, adapt to global trends, and manage teachers with diverse personalities.
2. The personality traits of Southwest district teachers, particularly in terms of accountability and responsibility, have been deemed satisfactory but may impede their professionalism.
3. The school leaders' profiles and leadership skills are not significantly correlated with various domains of leadership skills, such as Vision for Results and Equity, Planning and Operations, Culture, Staff Development, and Personal Leadership Growth.
4. The school leaders' personal profiles are not significantly

associated with their leadership skills.

5. The ratings of school head-respondents and teacher-respondents on the leadership skills of school leaders do not differ significantly.

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