SCHOOL HEADS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN RELATION TO TEACHERS' CLASSROOM INITIATIVES

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Abstract

School heads perform specific work functions to ensure classroom teachers deliver high-quality education. This study looked into the school heads' instructional leadership in relation to the teachers' classroom initiatives. It was conducted in the three Districts in Oroquieta City Division, Misamis Occidental, Philippines. The descriptive-correlational design was used in the study with 117 teachers who served as the respondents selected through a stratified random sampling technique. The data-gathering instruments used were the researcher-made School Heads' Instructional Leadership and Teachers' Classroom Initiatives Questionnaires. *Weighted Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient* were the statistical tools used in analyzing the data gathered. Results revealed that the level of the instructional leadership of the school heads was outstanding, and the teachers' classroom initiatives were to a very great extent. The school heads' instructional leadership was highly influential in the teachers' classroom initiatives. Thus, how well the school heads led the teachers determined the initiatives the latter made for their profession. The study recommends that school heads sustain a high level of instructional leadership for the classroom teachers to become motivated to upgrade their classroom and professional practices beyond what is required of them as educators.

KEYWORDS: education, teachers, practices, Philippines, school heads

INTRODUCTION

From the last quarter of the twentieth century to the present, instructional leadership has been one of the most investigated topics in educational administration (Özdemir et al., 2020). School heads must adopt instructional leadership techniques to deliver high-quality teaching and learning, student development, and teacher-professional growth (Lincuna & Caingcoy, 2020). School leaders need to use instructional leadership to improve educational outcomes (Harris et al., 2019).

Instructional leadership differs from country to country (Sumintono et al., 2019). In the Philippines, Republic Act 9155 requires school heads to lead teachers or learning facilitators in implementing quality educational programs, services, and projects, while non-teaching staff handle the school's administrative, fiscal, and auxiliary services. In this vein, school heads need to do their tasks well to improve educational outcomes and the progress of their schools (Garcia, 2021).

Instructional leaders can change educational institutions and modify academic processes to improve teachers' teaching qualities (Bhayangkara et al., 2020). A study on school heads' instructional leadership skills and teachers' performance and efficacy revealed that instructional leaders could greatly influence the quality of teaching and student learning (Daing, 2023). Instructional leadership involves support, motivation, management, a healthy learning culture, and good leadership styles (Maponya, 2020).

On the other hand, teachers are the most powerful change agents in society, and training them can help fulfill expectations, like going the extra mile to improve the educational system (Pandey, 2019). Teachers' classroom initiatives entail educators rechecking their beliefs, identity, and notions about learning, as evidenced by their methods of teaching (Patrick & Joshi, 2019), positively influencing students' achievement (Filgona et al., 2020; Petrie et al., 2021).

Teachers need to be motivated to improvise instructional media in the interest of teaching (Soliu & Elisha, 2019). With technology-related initiatives, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has enabled education to reach most remote areas (Sharma, 2021). As teachers sustain continuing professional development for professional growth and development (Tyagi & Misra, 2021), they can also implement reading initiatives to reduce reading difficulties among their learners (Siegel, 2020). Though several studies were conducted on the instructional leadership of school heads, few studies were conducted showing the link between school heads leading the instructional process and the teachers taking the initiatives for classroom and professional advancement. The practical gap in research led to the conduct of the study.

In Oroquieta City Division, many learners were observed to perform poorly in the different subject areas in the various levels of education. Hence, school heads have faced the challenge of improving the learners' academic performance for the various competencies in need of development. The outcomes of the study could shed light on the significance and influence of instructional leadership for classroom teachers to perform beyond the minimum requirements prescribed by their profession.

MATERIAL, METHODOLOGY, AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Material of the Study

The respondents of this study were 117 elementary school teachers in the three districts in Oroquieta City Division. They were chosen through stratified random sampling. Researcher-made School Heads' Instructional Leadership Questionnaire with three constructs such as defining vision and mission, promoting positive culture, and instructional supervision, was used. The second fifteen-item instrument utilized was the Teachers' Classroom Initiatives Questionnaire with three constructs such as instructional material upgrading, technological integration, and learner-reading activities. The instruments underwent the validation process. Also, a pilot test was conducted to establish the reliability through the Cronbach's Alpha results. The statistical tools used to analyze the data were *Weighted Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient*.

Methodology

The researcher sent the request letter to the Schools Division Superintendent of Oroquieta City Division so that the questionnaires might be administered to the target respondents. When the letter was approved, the researcher coordinated with the District supervisors and the school heads of the schools included in the study. The Informed Consent Form containing the nature and purpose of the research was given to the respondents for them to sign as proof of their voluntary participation. The distribution and retrieval of the questionnaires were done by the researcher herself. The data gathered were tallied for statistical treatment. Analysis and interpretation of the research findings followed.

Literature Review

Principals' instructional leadership is one of the most important predictors of improvement in school performance (Harris et al., 2019). Principals who produce encouraging outcomes for school improvement have been found to have a significant role in instructional leadership (Shaked et al., 2021). Strong instructional leadership capacity can improve the culture of teaching and learning (Huong, 2020), significantly influencing learning institutions (Hui & Singh, 2020).

Successful schools result from instructional leadership (Ma & Marion, 2021). A study disclosed that for education to change, effective instructional leadership by elementary school heads is needed (Basañes, 2020) for effective education to occur (Leithwood et al., 2020). Also, leadership demonstrated by school heads can impact teachers' participation in mentoring, peer observation, and coaching (Kim & Lee, 2020).

Though the teacher still leads the instruction, using digital technology can be most helpful in ensuring quality instruction (Macaruso et al., 2020). Teachers need to use innovative instructional materials, such as objects or devices, that can help facilitate meaningful learning to take place (Nwachokor et al., 2019). They need to create activities that can keep the learners' interest and make them engage effectively to avoid boredom and make the learners catch up with the level of learning like their peers (Cennamo & Kalk, 2019).

A study on the impact of instructional leadership on student academic achievement claimed that when a principal can concentrate on the standard of learning, teaching, and teacher development, his or her instructional leadership is more likely to have beneficial effects on student's academic progress (Hou et al., 2019). Teachers alter and enhance their pedagogical approaches when given a chance to acquire and practice effective instructional techniques using innovative learning materials (Bellibaş et al., 2022). A study conducted in Tanzania disclosed that heads of schools are key instructional supervisors in schools (Ngole & Mkulu, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of the School Heads' Instructional Leadership

Table 1 shows that the overall level of the school heads' instructional leadership was outstanding (WM=4.66; SD= 0.03). This finding implies that school heads led their schools well, as observed by the teachers under their supervision. It also means that the school heads ensured that other stakeholders could feel their presence and leadership in the schools.

School heads are designated to watch over the overall system and academic transactions and activities in school. As leaders, they are looked up to by their constituents, especially the teachers, on the directions related to school matters. Thus, school heads must demonstrate the ability to take the lead since other educators assigned to the different grade levels consider what their school leaders do in compliance with the various directives given by

DepEd. Especially in instruction, many programs are in place to address the many concerns related to the learners' education. School heads must collaborate with teachers to achieve the schools' common goals.

As shown in the Table, defining vision and mission as a construct of school heads' instructional leadership was rated outstanding (WM= 4.67; SD= 0.43). This result means that the school heads have followed the mandate of DepEd, which specifically prescribes the alignment of school activities and programs to what the educational institution stands for. The vision and mission of the schools stipulate the individual responsibilities that stakeholders are expected to fulfill accordingly. As part of academic institutions, everyone can collaborate to achieve common goals. Thus, there needs to be evident cooperation and partnership among teachers, parents, and other stakeholders.

Furthermore, the respondents rated school leadership in promoting positive culture equally outstanding (WM=4.62; SD=0.53). This finding implies that the school heads could implement a school atmosphere with harmonious and healthy relationships among the people in the school setting. The school heads communicated effectively to establish rapport with teachers and students. Engaging in conversations as circumstances allowed the school heads to create an academic environment free from unnecessary discomfort or tension, with the image of being reachable to individuals lower in personal and professional status. Moreover, based on the study results, the school heads had done regular classroom visits to know firsthand the teachers' and students' concerns.

The school heads were likewise rated outstanding regarding their instructional supervision (WM=4.69; SD=0.50). This finding implies that the school heads performed the necessary activities to ensure that instruction in the classroom was duly and adequately observed. As leaders in the academic institution, they ascertained that instruction delivery was based on teaching standards wherein the teachers facilitated the competencies expected to be developed in the learners.

School heads are required to craft the instructional supervisory plan. It contains the objectives intended for the teachers to be able to demonstrate for an academic year. Specific areas for supervision are indicated, as well as the respective means or strategies of ensuring the attainment of the various activities within a timeframe formulated. The school heads ensure that the means of achieving the target outcomes of the schools are appropriate and effective toward the realization of the educational goals. Hou et al. (2019) posited that school leaders need exhibit exemplary leadership attributes in performing duties. Sunaryo (2020) claimed that teachers' performance can be improved if the principal is good at supervision.

As part of the instructional supervision, the school heads look into the lesson plans used and the classroom management adopted by the teachers at the frontline of delivering quality education to the young. There can be areas for improvement that the school heads believe should be given attention by the teachers. In that case, the

latter are given constructive feedback as a venue for professional development and progress. Hence, when the teachers claim or demonstrate technical concerns related to instruction delivery, the school heads are apt to provide technical assistance.

Table 1
Level of School Heads' Instructional Leadership
(n=117)

Constructs	WM	StDev	Interpretation
Defining Vision and Mission	4.67	0.43	Outstanding
Promoting Positive Culture	4.62	0.53	Outstanding
Instructional Supervision	4.69	0.50	Outstanding
Overall Weighted Mean	4.66	0.03	Outstanding

Legend   4.21 – 5.00 Outstanding (O)   1.81-2.60 Fair (F)

3.41 – 4.20 Very Satisfactory (VS)   1.00-1.80 Poor (P)

2.61 – 3.40 Satisfactory (S)

Extent of Teachers' Classroom Initiatives
Table 2 shows that the teachers' classroom initiatives were to a very great extent (WM=4.75; SD=0.06). This finding implies that teachers extended an extra effort in ensuring that they delivered classroom instruction with the availment of technological resources in their respective schools. As educators, they have done what was necessary beyond what they were required to do.

Teachers are mandated to abide by their responsibilities as stipulated in their appointments as teachers in public schools. They are expected to comply with the requirements of DepEd and participate in the programs or activities that the Department sets in place. However, classroom teachers can do more than they are required to do. They can do activities that benefit the learners, though it may mean the extra mile, regarding physical effort and financial resources. The teachers can avail of ways to make them more competitive as educators.

It is shown in the Table that the teachers' classroom initiative as to instructional material upgrading was rated to a very great extent (WM=4.69; SD=0.39). This finding implies that the teachers did not limit themselves to the learning materials that DepEd provided to the teachers for classroom instruction. Learning kits and curriculum guides are given for the teachers to follow in accomplishing the learning competencies identified as beneficial to the learners.

Teachers can discharge their duties more than the minimum requirement. They may supplement the learning materials by exploring various resources, especially online resources, to make the contents and presentations more engaging and meaningful to

Page | 1099

the learners. The teachers may concentrate on something other than what is stipulated in the curriculum guide but seek ways to improve their teaching to make their learners learn better. There can be an array of instructional resources that the teachers can utilize to upgrade the materials readily provided to them by DepEd.

The teachers' classroom initiative as to technological integration was also to a very great extent (WM=4.83; SD=0.37). This finding implies that teachers used technology in the classroom. DepEd provided them with laptop computers, so they supplemented their instruction with available digital resources. Educators have upgraded their skills in using technology in the classroom to deliver instruction most effectively and interestingly.

Furthermore, it is shown that the teachers' classroom initiative in terms of learner-reading activities was also rated to a very great extent (WM=4.73; SD=0.37). This finding implies that the teachers exerted the necessary effort to ensure that the learners were provided with reading activities that could facilitate the development of their reading skills. Several reading programs have been in place to help address the dismal status of the reading competencies of the learners, especially at the elementary levels. Hence, classroom teachers must go beyond their regular classroom activities. Scallon et al. (2021) claimed that proactive teachers go beyond their time to teach their learners).

Teachers can spend extra time for the learners manifesting reading deficiencies so that the reading problems can be addressed and may not exist further as the learners reach higher grade levels. More activities may be given to enhance the vocabulary skills of the learners to develop their word recognition and reading comprehension skills. With the reading initiatives the teachers may do, they can assist struggling learners in overcoming reading problems and spend their academic years meaningfully.

Table 2
Extent of the Teachers' Classroom Initiatives
(n=117)

Constructs	WM	StDev	Interpretation
Instructional Material Upgrading	4.69	0.39	Very Great Extent
Technological Integration	4.82	0.37	Very Great Extent
Learner-Reading Activities	4.73	0.37	Very Great Extent
Overall Weighted Mean	4.75	0.06	Very Great Extent

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 Very Great Extent (VGE) 1.81-2.60 Less Extent (LE)

3.41 – 4.20 Great Extent (GE) 1.00-1.80 Least Extent (LtE)

2.61 – 3.40 Average Extent (AE)

Significant Relationship between the Level of the School Heads' Instructional

Leadership and the Extent of the Teachers' Classroom Initiatives

Table 3 shows that all the constructs of school heads' instructional leadership have a highly significant relationship to the constructs of the teachers' classroom initiatives. Thus, the Null Hypothesis was rejected. This finding means that how the school heads led the teacher in the delivery of instruction was very influential on the teachers' decision to improve their teaching skills as to the activities done in the classroom. The teachers exerted efforts to upgrade or enhance their current practices and professional standing, having seen their school heads visibly leading them in achieving school goals.

As shown in the Table, defining vision and mission as a construct of school heads' instructional leadership had a highly significant relationship with instructional material upgrading (r-value=0.61; p-value=0.000), technological integration (r-value=0.41; p-value=0.000), and learner-reading activities (r-value=0.55; p-value=0.000). This finding implies that when school heads demonstrated clearly what the schools stand for, especially with the many programs prescribed by DepEd to refine the instructional process in response to the concerns confronting schools, the classroom learners became more responsive and proactive in their classes. The teachers were willing to go beyond their duties upon seeing the leadership of their school leads, giving them direction and guidance in what they had to do as educators.

Table 3 also shows that promoting positive culture as a construct of school heads' instructional leadership had a highly significant relationship with instructional material upgrading (r-value=0.61; p-value=0.000), technological integration (r-value=0.43; p-value=0.000), and learner-reading activities (r-value=0.53; p-value=0.000). This finding means that with the school heads promoting a positive culture in schools where they freely and openly interacted with teachers and learners, the teachers were more likely to craft the materials useful in delivering instruction well. In this vein, when teachers see the support their school heads provide, they find a reason to avail of technological resources that can be useful for instruction and the reading activities the learners may engage in.

It is also indicated that instructional supervision as a construct of school heads' instructional leadership had a highly significant relationship with the teachers' instructional material upgrading (r-value=0.52; p-value=0.000), technological integration (r-value=0.48; p-value=0.000), and learner-reading activities (r-value=0.51; p-value=0.000). This finding implies that supervision made by the school heads related to the delivery of instruction was very influential to the teachers' initiative to upgrade the instructional materials to enhance classroom instruction. They also utilized online resources to substantiate and innovate the learning process. In the area of reading, where many learners have been performing poorly, school heads have established a school atmosphere where they could collaborate with the teachers to promote learners' to become Saihu (2020) stated that teachers as learning agents must organize the learning process. They should also be highly qualified to be attractive and perceived as valuable (Svendsen, 2020). In this vein, schools need to ensure that the

heads lead the teachers in improving pedagogical and planning the curriculum to achieve school goals (Day et al., 2020).

School heads' instructional leadership plays a crucial role in school functioning, according to what DepEd prescribes. The teachers must have school leaders who can lead them in implementing the thrust of the Department geared toward the full development of the learners as facilitated through quality classroom instruction. When teachers have school heads who set the direction on how education is best delivered, they have more reasons to maximize their full capacities to render their roles as educators more effectively.

Table 3
Significant Relationship between the Level of the School Heads' Instructional
Leadership and the Extent of the Teachers' Classroom Initiatives

Constructs	*r values*	*p-values*	Remarks
Defining Vision and Mission and	0.61	0.00**	Reject Null Hypothesis
Instructional Material Upgrading	0.41	0.00**	Reject Null Hypothesis
Technological Integration	0.55	0.00**	Reject Null Hypothesis
Learner-Reading Activities	0.61	0.00**	
	0.43	0.00**	
	0.53	0.00**	Reject Null Hypothesis
Promoting Positive Culture and			Reject Null Hypothesis
Instructional Material Upgrading	0.52	0.00**	Reject Null Hypothesis
Technological Integration	0.48	0.00**	Reject Null Hypothesis
Learner-Reading Activities	0.51	0.00**	
Instructional Supervision and			Reject Null Hypothesis
Instructional Material Upgrading			Reject Null Hypothesis
Technological Integration			Reject Null Hypothesis
Learner-Reading Activities			

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the school heads' instructional leadership and the teachers' classroom initiatives.

*Legend: 0.00-0.01** Highly Significant; 0.02-0.05*Significant ; above 0.05 Not Significant*

CONCLUSION

School heads have holistically demonstrated commendable instructional leadership amid the educational system's challenges and concerns, especially in the post-pandemic period. They have been able to respond well to the programs set by DepEd and have tried to use the material and human resources available to ensure that quality education is within reach of the learners, especially those who are academically challenged. With the number of issues schools face concerning the different grade levels, an outstanding level of instructional leadership by the school heads can be a valuable means for schools to keep on track and respond proactively to challenging times. School heads' instructional leadership influences what teachers do for professional development, which can translate into the classroom setting. The latter can perform their teaching profession beyond what is required of them as they deem necessary for the good of their learners and educational institution as a whole.

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