CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL HEADS IN THE 2ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF ALBAY

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is one of the key factors in attaining excellence among educational institutions. Educational leaders such as school heads are important members of the educational system who oversee the general management and administration of the school. This study focused on determining the challenges encountered by thirty-four (34) public secondary school heads in the second district of Albay. This research adopted a mixed-method approach for both quantitative and qualitative research designs. Using the adopted survey questionnaire, the result shows that public secondary school heads in the second district of Albay highly implemented most of the functions of school heads as stipulated in R.A 9155. The results highlight that the most common challenges encountered were: (1) expressing ownership and personal responses to the identified issues; (2) enriching curricular offerings based on local needs; and (3) providing an environment that promotes the use of technology among learners and teachers. In terms of coping mechanisms, some of these were attending seminars and capacity building, teaming up with their communities, and talking to the right people. It is recommended that the focus on the development of competencies for school heads be continued and strengthened. Provide them with the necessary support, recognition, and resources to continue their innovative practices and enhance the learning environment.

KEYWORDS: Challenges, school heads, functions, coping mechanisms.

1. INTRODUCTION

Good leadership is one of the most essential tools in attaining educational success. With the overwhelming responsibilities of school principals, stress and anxiety can never be denied. Determining the challenges they encounter is a substantial reason to give emphasis to the evaluation

of the aforementioned issue, for they play a crucial role in the overall functioning of a school. They are responsible for planning, decision-making, accountability and assessment, and daily tasks.

Republic Act 9155, also called the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 or School-Based Management, establishes authority, accountability, and responsibility for achieving higher learning outcomes of essential education services in the nation. It also provides a framework for the governance of primary education and general guidelines for educational policies and standards. In keeping with the decentralization concept, this Act gives all school managers complete control over how their schools are run and takes on a variety of responsibilities, including defining the school's mission, vision, goals, and objectives; fostering a teaching and learning environment; carrying out the curriculum, program, and improvement plan; providing educational programs, projects, and services; developing new modes of instruction; managing staff development; establishing community networks; and managing personnel, staffing complement, physical, and financial resources. (Alvarado, E. S., Sy, F. A. R., & Adriatico, C. 2019).

Chen, D., Ning, B., & Bos, W. (2022) emphasized that school principals in Germany and Chinese Taipei share similar constructs of principal leadership, measured by their allocation of time to diverse categories of tasks. School management as a whole is the most vital principal leadership component for each cohort of school principals, followed by setting school vision/goal and maintaining school climate.

Santizo Rodall, C.A., and Ortega Salazar, S.B. (2018) discovered that principals prioritized enhancing the educational quality of their schools and saw this as the primary factor for evaluating their leadership success. Principals are critical to school performance, and a nested model was developed to demonstrate how a successful school is created from the principal's core, as a socioemotional skills role model, to a culture of continual improvement.

Several studies have discussed the importance of school principals for the overall functioning of the school. The role and duty of the school principal are significant to execute the school's mission and vision and have the authority to establish and decide to accomplish its school objectives (Saputra et al., 2022; Bafadal et al., 2019). With the increasing accountability of school workloads, it is not new that some quit their jobs and decided not to pursue careers in this field (Hansen, 2018). Over the years, school leadership has constantly evolved. Expectations have changed due to how leaders spend their time and what they need to know (Grimssom, 2021).

A school principal must put much effort and attention to be effective (Meador,2019). Effective school principals balance their roles and responsibilities to ensure they carry out themselves in a way that they perceive to be best for everyone involved in the school he/she leads. The principal, as a leader, is anticipated to be efficient in carrying out duties and responsibilities, which includes

improving the quality of administration and instructional activities, as well as leading the faculty and teachers to carry out their duties for better quality output and enhanced productivity (Nwabueze et al., 2018).

The study by Ganon-Shilon, S. and Schechter, C. (2019) examines data from interviews with 60 Israeli high school principals undertaking national reform in the state (Jewish and Arab sectors) and religious-state schools across all school districts. The data analysis revealed three important themes: (a) meeting the requirements of teachers, (b) keeping leadership discretion, and (c) adapting to school realities. The findings show that principals play an active role in making sense of educational innovations. Exploring principals' views within the context of sense-making may help to advance scholarship and practice of the difficult leadership role during periods of national reform.

According to the findings of Trinh T. P. et al. (2019), some sociocultural factors influenced Vietnamese school leaders' behaviors, such as the requirement for them to be politically, ethically, and professionally fit, as well as to take on various peripheral duties. School principals in Vietnam typically satisfied state norms for qualifications and management skills, and they were judged to have appropriate capabilities in school management, particularly in improving teachers' teaching capacity and maintaining academic quality.

Cunha, R. S., Cabral, I., Espuny, M. T., & Alves, J. M. (2020) clarified that these problems with school administrators' lack of independence underscore the over-reliance on educational authority and the overabundance of administrative responsibilities. The principals also brought up the heavy paperwork load that these circumstances create on the schools and the lack of coordination between federal and local authorities. Lack of autonomy is a major problem for Portuguese principals since, when autonomy increases; principals are compelled to assume more accountability and administrative responsibilities.

Hojeij, Z., Ibrahim, A., and Baroudi, S. (2023) underlined that given the rapid changes targeted by the national educational reform, leaders were unaware of their new job descriptions and objectives. Leaders struggled with restricted autonomy, scarce resources, bureaucracy, intensification, and greater responsibility. Self-efficacy and self-motivation showed tenacity in stress management. School leaders, particularly during reforms, bear the burden of role expectations and administrative limits when authorities' requirements change.

Although those working in euro-western contexts faced similar dilemmas, Kenyan educational leaders faced the added challenge of working with Ubuntu cultural values such as respect for seniority, loyalty to one's kin, care for the whole community, and harmonious working relationships (Oduol et al.; S.,2019).

The data came from a longitudinal study by Ahmed, E. I., and Al-Dhuwaihi, A. (2020), novice principals in one of Saudi Arabia's central provinces. The study focuses on interview data collected from 12 randomly selected newly hired first-time principals. We discovered that almost all novices faced four major practice problems: multiple roles, loneliness and isolation, workflow, and the legacy and style of the previous administration.

The results show in the study by Mansor A. et al. (2022) that all five schools had to deal with comparable problems, including low funding, deteriorating facilities, a shortage of staff, and problems with teacher competency. Every respondent overcame these obstacles with enthusiasm and inventiveness. They developed their information and communication technology abilities to take on the position of learner leaders, identified new ways to raise money for the school, and set an example for instructional leadership. The results will make it possible for decision-makers and educators, especially those in small schools, to give every kid a high-quality education.

Cruz-González, C., Rodríguez, C. L., & Segovia, J. D. (2021) discussed that the function that principals perform as school leaders is gaining more and more attention. Understanding how principals create their professional leadership identity is essential to comprehend how they affect student achievement and determine how educational leaders shape their professional identities; a thorough review was done. Our goals were to identify the factors that affect how educational leaders develop their professional identities. Identify characteristics that characterize the identity of educational leaders and discuss the potential impact of the findings for both research and professional practice.

Meanwhile, they were also very satisfied with their professional and personal characteristics. In the same vein, school heads have outstanding performance in terms of assessment of themselves, their relationship with others, their job, and their beliefs on the concept of life. At the same time, they are extremely satisfactory in terms of their personal and professional attributes, such as decisiveness, honesty, dedication/commitment, initiative/resourcefulness, courtesy, human relations, leadership, stress tolerance, fairness, and good grooming. (Abdurahman et al., J. A. K. 2021).

Findings from research conducted by Blasabas and Sumaljag in 2020 indicate that participants encountered various difficulties, including a shortage of learning resources, insufficient training and orientation, subpar quality of materials, and increased workload. Despite these obstacles, school administrators demonstrate resilience by implementing innovative approaches, relying on social support networks, and utilizing personal coping mechanisms to address their present circumstances. In the study of Santander, E. B. and Lumapenet, H. T. (2022), coping techniques considerably impacted occupational stress, including physical, emotional, and mental stress. Furthermore, coping methods had a considerable impact on the emotional well-being of school administrators.

The role of school principals dramatically influences the quality of instruction and the overall operation of educational institutions. In the second congressional district of Albay, principals play a critical role in promoting an efficient and supportive learning environment for children and supporting the professional development of teachers and staff. Although they play a crucial role, challenges encountered by school heads in the area are a significant concern. An in-depth examination of the many facets of challenges among these educational leaders is sought in this study, along with an analysis of the coping mechanisms and strategies employed to address challenges encountered.

Objectives Of The Study

This study aimed to determine the challenges encountered by public secondary school heads in the second congressional district of Albay. Specifically, this study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1) Determine the level of implementation of the functions for school heads as stipulated in RA 9155.
2) Identify the challenges along the identified variables.
3) Determine the coping mechanisms and strategies employed by public secondary school heads to address the challenges they encounter.
4) Provide recommendations and proposal for policymakers and educational leaders to address the identified challenges and improve the quality of education in the 2nd Congressional District of Albay.

Theoretical Framework

Secondary public schools face particular opportunities and problems like many other educational institutions worldwide. Principals' well-being and the efficient operation of schools and the larger educational community depend on their career happiness. A happy and motivated principal is likelier to demonstrate strong leadership, support an excellent school climate, and make wise decisions that benefit teachers and kids. In order to improve educational leadership, teacher retention, and the overall educational experience for the students in the area, this research intends to offer insightful information about the challenges encountered by public secondary school heads in the second district of Albay.

The context is the phase where it dealt with the study about the challenges public secondary school heads encountered in the second congressional district of Albay. It includes the public secondary schools in four municipalities and one city. The input phase will focus on determining the level of implementation of the functions for school heads as stipulated in RA 9155, which is the least implemented function that helps identify the challenges the school heads encounter. In the process phase, we will develop and implement targeted seminars, training, and interventions based on the findings from the context and input phases. These processes will address the specific career

satisfaction issues identified among principals. The final phase, the product, will focus on the outcomes and products of our research. This will include assessing improvements in job satisfaction, leadership effectiveness, and overall well-being. The ultimate product of this research will be a set of evidence-based recommendations and a framework for sustainable enhancement strategies tailored to address the challenges encountered by public secondary school heads in the second district of Albay.

The research underpins two prominent theories: Organizational Learning Theory by Max Weber and Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory. These theories offer valuable insights into the organizational dynamics and leadership practices within educational settings, providing foundation for understanding the challenges faced by school administrators in the specified district.

Organizational Learning Theory by Max Weber emphasizes the significance of bureaucratic structures and rational-legal authority within organizations. In the context of public secondary schools, this theory underscores the importance of formalized rules, procedures, and hierarchies in governing administrative processes. School heads are expected to adhere to established protocols while making decisions and managing day-to-day operations. Weber's theory also highlights the importance of specialization and division of labor, wherein school administrators delegate tasks efficiently to optimize organizational effectiveness. Moreover, Weber's concept of the ideal bureaucracy emphasizes principles such as hierarchy, impersonality, and meritocracy, guiding school leaders in their interactions with staff, students, and stakeholders. By adhering to these principles, school administrators can foster a culture of accountability, fairness, and efficiency within their institutions.

Complementing Organizational Learning Theory is Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory, which proposes that effective leadership, depends on matching leadership styles to the developmental level of followers. According to this theory, school heads must adapt their leadership approach based on the readiness and competence of their staff members. In situations where teachers exhibit high competence and motivation, a delegating leadership style may be appropriate, allowing for greater autonomy and decision-making authority. Conversely, in instances where teachers require more guidance and support, a directing or coaching leadership style may be necessary to provide clarity and direction. By employing a flexible leadership approach tailored to the specific needs of their staff, school heads can effectively navigate the complexities of the educational institution and build the culture of collaboration as well as growth.

The integration of Organizational Learning Theory and Situational Leadership Theory offers a comprehensive understanding of the challenges encountered by public secondary school heads in the 2nd Congressional District of Albay. Drawing upon Weber's emphasis on bureaucracy and formalized authority, the study examines how school administrators navigate organizational

processes and adhere to established protocols. Additionally, Situational Leadership Theory informs the analysis of leadership styles adopted by school heads in response to varying levels of teacher readiness and competence. By understanding the interplay between organizational structures and leadership practices, the research aims to identify key factors influencing school leadership effectiveness and propose strategies for addressing challenges within educational settings.

Conceptual Framework

The research will be structured within the context of the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, and Product) model to provide a comprehensive framework for investigating the challenges encountered by public secondary school heads in the second congressional district of Albay.

The context is the phase where it dealt with the study about the challenges public secondary school heads encountered in the second congressional district of Albay. It includes the public secondary schools in four municipalities and one city. The input phase will focus on determining the level of implementation of the functions for school heads as stipulated in RA 9155, which is the least implemented function that helps identify the challenges the school heads encounter. In the process phase, we will develop and implement targeted seminars, training, and interventions based on the findings from the context and input phases. These processes will address the specific career issues identified among principals. The final phase, the product, will focus on the outcomes and products of our research. This will include assessing improvements in job satisfaction, leadership effectiveness, and overall well-being. The ultimate product of this research will be a set of evidence-based recommendations and a framework for sustainable enhancement strategies tailored to address the challenges encountered by public secondary school heads in the second district of Albay.
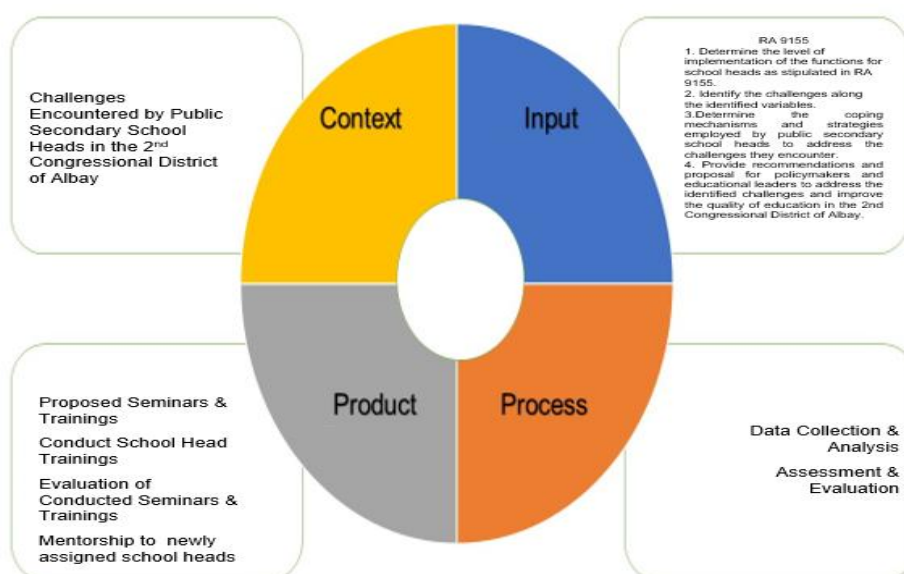

Figure 1. Conceptual Paradigm

2. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a mixed-method approach. This approach combines qualitative and quantitative research within a single study or research effort. This strategy enabled the researcher to collect numerical (quantitative) and non-numerical (qualitative) data better to understand the study problem or phenomenon under inquiry. The quantitative-descriptive survey approach was employed to determine the level of implementation of the functions for school heads. Moreover, an interview is a qualitative research method simply anchored on asking questions to collect data. Furthermore, document analysis, a systematic assessment, and evaluation, including printed and electronic content such as computer-based and internet-transmitted data, require data to be reviewed and interpreted to extract meaning, gain insight, and provide substantial knowledge of the study.

The locale of the study was public secondary schools in the second congressional district of Albay. The present study will only entertain any other principal within the locale above. Moreover, the result of the ongoing research cannot be generalized to all the school heads in the Philippines or the Bicol region, for only the second congressional district was subjected to the analysis of response. The factors used in the study to determine the level of implementation and challenges encountered are limited to the factors given in the checklist and questionnaire to be provided by the researcher based on previous findings of related endeavors. Therefore, the conclusions are restricted to the school heads of public secondary schools in three municipalities and one city from where the samples were drawn but can be used as a reference and basis for future studies or evaluation.

The study's respondents are made up of a varied range of educational experts in the second congressional district of Albay. This includes 35 principals of secondary schools in the second congressional district, who collectively represent the leadership in the secondary education sector. This group of responders represents a broad cross-section of educational coordinators and leaders, ensuring a full grasp of the dynamics of challenges encountered within the secondary Public School system. The study's research instrument is an adopted questionnaire based on the National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads with quantitative and qualitative data sections. The questionnaire was created to get a thorough insight into the level of implementation of the functions of the school head as stipulated in RA 9155.

In the qualitative portion, open-ended questions allow principals to relate unique experiences, offer detailed insights into their challenges, and make recommendations for coping with the difficulties identified. The data-gathering tools will be divided into two parts. The first part will be a survey questionnaire about the level of implementation of the functions for school heads as stipulated in RA 9155, which will determine the challenges encountered, and the second part will be an interview on the coping mechanisms and strategies. The collected data will be examined with the weighted mean to identify the implementation level of the functions for school heads as defined in RA 9155. The Likert scale will make it possible to comprehend better the level of implementation

of the functions for school heads. The interpretation of data, using adjectival interpretation is shown below:

Scale	Quantification	Adjectival Interpretation
4	3.50-4.49	Highly Implemented
3	2.50-3.49	Implemented
2	1.50-2.49	Less Implemented
1	1.00-1.49	Not Implemented

Weighted mean analysis will determine the highly implemented and least implemented functions. In addition, rank analysis will be used to identify the least implemented functions, which will help pinpoint the challenges the school heads encounter.

$$\text{Weighted mean} = \Sigma(w)n \, (\bar{x})n / \Sigma(w)n$$

Where,

$\bar{x}$ = the mean value of the set of given data.

w = corresponding weight for each observation.

$$\text{Percentile rank} = p / 100 \times (n + 1)$$

In the equation:

p = represents the percentile

n = represents the total number of items in the data set.

A detailed study of the challenges encountered by school heads and the coping mechanisms to address the identified challenges thanks to this multimodal approach. In addition, rank analysis will be used to identify the least implemented functions, which will help pinpoint the challenges the school heads encounter. The data collected was accurately tabulated and summarized to make it easier to analyze the results under each objective with conclusions supported by secondary data. By combining these statistical tools—the percentage technique, rank analysis, weighted mean, and Likert scale assessments—we can comprehensively understand the difficulties encountered by school leaders to help improve educational leadership in the second district of Albay.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The level of implementation of the functions for school heads as stipulated in RA 9155.

This research delves into the challenges faced by school leaders in public high schools within the 2nd Congressional District, focusing on how well they carry out their duties as outlined in RA 9155, lays out the particular roles and activities that school administrators must accomplish to ensure the delivery of quality education. Understanding how effectively these responsibilities are being fulfilled is crucial for pinpointing areas that need improvement and tackling the obstacles that school administrators encounter. To evaluate this, the study employs weighted averages to assess the level of implementation across various areas and skills specified in RA 9155, providing valuable insights into the performance of school leadership within this district. The data reveals that Domain/Competency Strand K is the most implemented, with a weighted mean of 3.96, indicating that school heads effectively execute the competencies associated with this strand. Following closely behind, Domain/Competency Strand J has a weighted mean of 3.93, suggesting that

competencies related to this strand are also being implemented successfully. Domain/Competency Strand I, with a weighted mean of 3.90, ranks third, still showing a solid level of implementation. These findings highlight the effectiveness of school heads in executing the competencies outlined in these strands, providing valuable insights into the strengths and areas of focus within school leadership practices.

The high level of implementation observed in Domain/Competency Strand K underscores the significance of effective educational leadership and management in public secondary schools. School heads demonstrating proficiency in this domain are likely adept at guiding their institutions through challenges, facilitating continuous improvement, and ensuring those educational standards are met. Their involvement in curriculum development ensures alignment with national educational goals and enhances the quality of instruction, ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes. Furthermore, their capability in personnel management contributes to fostering a conducive working environment, promoting teacher professional development, and fostering a culture of excellence within the school community.

Similarly, the notable implementation of Domain/Competency Strand J reflects the commitment of school administrators to establishing strong community partnerships. By actively engaging with stakeholders such as parents, local authorities, and non-governmental organizations, school heads can tap into additional resources, support mechanisms, and expertise to address the diverse needs of students. This collaborative approach enriches the educational experience and employs a sense of ownership and collective responsibility for student success. Moreover, the emphasis on Domain/Competency Strand I highlights the strategic foresight of school leaders in effectively managing resources and optimizing organizational efficiency. Through meticulous planning and prudent resource allocation, they can maximize the impact of available resources, mitigate constraints, and adapt to changing circumstances, thereby ensuring the sustainable operation and growth of the school.

The comprehensive coverage of aspects of school leadership within the domains and competency strands, as highlighted by Ultra et al. (2021), underscores the multifaceted nature of the roles and responsibilities of public secondary school heads. By creating and sharing a coherent vision, mission, goals, and objectives, school leaders set a clear direction for their institutions, inspiring stakeholders and fostering a sense of purpose and unity within the school community. Strategic planning ensures that resources are effectively allocated to achieve these objectives, facilitating sustainable growth and improvement over time. Moreover, collaboration with various stakeholders, as emphasized in the competency strands, enables school leaders to harness the expertise and resources of parents, teachers, students, and community members, enriching the educational experience and enhancing student outcomes. Additionally, assembling high-performing teams is essential for promoting a culture of excellence and innovation within the school, as talented and

motivated staff members contribute to the total success and resilience of the institution. Thus, integrating these leadership components within the domains and competency strands reflects a holistic approach to school leadership, emphasizing the importance of visionary leadership, strategic thinking, collaboration, and talent management in driving educational excellence.

The challenges along the identified variables.

This research aims to identify the challenges public secondary school heads encounter in the 2nd Congressional District across various variables. The variables include setting the mission, vision, goals and objectives of the school; creating a conducive teaching and learning environment; implementing the school curriculum and being accountable for better learning results; establishing the school education program and school improvement plan; providing educational programs, projects, and services that provide fair chances for all learners in the community by providing new and innovative styles of instruction to attain greater learning results; administering and managing the human, physical, and budgetary resources of the school; advising the school's staffing complement based on its needs; fostering staff development; establishing school and community networks and encouraging active engagement of teachers' groups, non-academic personnel in public schools, and parents-teachers-community associations; collecting donations, gifts, bequests, and grants to upgrade teachers'/learning facilitators' competencies, improving and enhance school facilities and provide educational supplies and equipment; and performing other functions as may be assigned by proper authorities.

Challenges	TWM	Rank
1. Involves internal and external stakeholders in formulating and achieving school vision, mission, goals and objectives.	3.35	6.5
2. Expresses ownership and personal responses to the identified issues.	3.03	1
3. Creates and sustains a safe, orderly, nurturing and healthy, environment.	3.18	4.5
4. Provides environment that promotes use of technology among learners and teachers.	3.12	3
5. Provides expert technical assistance and instructional support to teachers.	3.41	8
6. Enriches curricular offerings based on local needs.	3.06	2
7. Manages curriculum innovation and enrichment with the use of technology.	3.18	4.5
8. Organizes teams to champion instructional innovation programs toward curricular responsiveness	3.35	6.5

Table 1. Challenges Encountered by Secondary School Heads in the 2nd District of Albay

The provided data indicates that Domain/Competency Strand D exhibits the lowest level of implementation among public secondary school heads in the 2nd Congressional District, with a weighted mean of 3.12. This suggests potential challenges or areas for improvement in aspects covered by this domain, including ensuring learner-centeredness, employing varied teaching methodologies, and fostering active student participation in the learning process. Similarly,

Domain/Competency Strand B follows with a weighted mean of 3.39, indicating a moderate level of implementation. This domain encompasses creating conducive learning environments, promoting inclusivity and diversity, and employing appropriate assessment strategies to gauge student progress effectively. Domain/Competency Strand A, with a weighted mean of 3.55, ranks as the third least implemented among the competencies. This domain addresses establishing a child-friendly school culture, fostering positive stakeholder relationships, and ensuring a safe and nurturing learning environment. These findings highlight the need for identified interventions and support mechanisms to enhance the implementation of competencies within these domains, thereby promoting holistic development and well-being among students in public secondary schools within the district.

The data reveals that Domain/Competency Strand D, focusing on developing the school education program and school improvement plan, exhibits the lowest level of implementation among the identified competencies with a weighted mean of 3.12. This suggests that school heads may encounter challenges in effectively formulating comprehensive education programs and improvement strategies within their schools. Following closely, Domain/Competency Strand B, related to creating a conducive teaching and learning environment, demonstrates a moderate level of implementation with a weighted mean of 3.39. This indicates that while efforts are being made to establish favorable learning environments, there may be room for enhancement. Additionally, Domain/Competency Strand A, which involves setting the VMGO of the school, ranks as the third least implemented competency with a weighted mean of 3.55. This implies that there is a need for further focus on clearly defining and aligning the overarching goals and direction of the school to drive educational success effectively. These findings emphasized the importance of addressing these areas of lesser implementation to ensure comprehensive and effective school leadership, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes and student success within the 2nd Congressional District.

The data indicates that Domain/Competency Strand D, focusing on developing the school education program and improvement plan, exhibits the lowest implementation level among the identified competencies with a weighted mean of 3.12. This suggests that school heads may face challenges in formulating comprehensive educational programs and improvement strategies. Following closely, Domain/Competency Strand B, concerning the creation of conducive teaching and learning environments, demonstrates a moderate implementation level with a weighted mean of 3.39, indicating potential areas for improvement. Additionally, Domain/Competency Strand A, involving setting the school's mission, vision, goals, and objectives, ranks as the third least implemented competency with a weighted mean of 3.55, suggesting a need for clearer definition and alignment of the school's overarching direction. Addressing these areas of lesser implementation is crucial for enhancing overall school leadership effectiveness and ensuring the attainment of educational goals within the 2nd Congressional District. This underscores the significance of refining education

programs, optimizing learning environments, and establishing clear institutional objectives to drive educational success and improve student outcomes.

The study conducted by Tolo, A., Lillejord, S., Flórez Petour, M. T., & Hopfenbeck, T. N. (2020) sheds light on various approaches adopted by school leaders regarding teacher support and implementation processes. Some school leaders have a high level of trust in teachers' knowledge and skills, allowing them autonomy in managing implementation processes without direct leader support. Conversely, others exhibit a level of distrust in teachers' abilities and rely on external support when facing resistance, believing that the necessary knowledge exists outside the school. However, a third approach sees school leaders viewing knowledge development as a collaborative endeavor, engaging with teachers in continuous judgment about implementation procedures.

Similarly, Sider, S., et al. (2021), through their analysis of data received from 285 school principals in Canada, identified four key themes: relationships, modeling behaviors, communication, and principal isolation and lack of preparation. These themes were scrutinized in terms of how they support principals' professional leadership in fostering inclusive schools. The significance of this study lies in its examination of principals' experiences and how they influence leadership practices, particularly in supporting students with special education needs and fostering inclusive school environments.

Further insights into the challenges faced by school administrators are provided by Perez, E. (2022), who examined the obstacles encountered by effective campus principals within the context of high-stakes accountability constraints. This study delved into how school administrators perceive and manage difficulties associated with being a high school principal and with accountability measures. Notably, the research included principals who left leadership roles due to accountability constraints alongside those who successfully navigated them, providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play.

Together, these studies contributed valuable insights into the multifaceted challenges confronting school leaders and administrators in their pursuit of effective educational leadership and management. They underscore the importance of trust, collaboration, and strategic decision-making in supporting teachers and fostering inclusive school environments. Moreover, they shed light on the complex interplay between external pressures, such as accountability measures, and the need for proactive leadership to navigate these challenges effectively. By understanding these dynamics and implementing targeted strategies, school leaders can better address the diverse needs of their schools and ultimately enhance educational outcomes for all students.

Determine the coping mechanisms and strategies employed by public secondary school heads to address the challenges they encounter.

The study delving into the hurdles faced by public high school principals in Albay's 2nd Congressional District unveiled the tough juggle these leaders navigate. Nevertheless, despite the weighty challenges, they have shown incredible smarts in how they handle things.

School heads face challenges related to understanding and implementing learning standards and curriculum reviews in secondary schools. Some school heads lack awareness of the specific learning standards students should achieve, making it difficult for them to provide thorough guidance during Continuous Professional Development (COT) sessions for teachers.

(According to Participant No. 20. *SEMINAR ON LEARNING STANDARDS, CURRICULUM REVIEW CUM IMPLEMENTATION IN EVERY SECONDARY SCHOOL, it's because there are some school heads who are not even aware of what are the learning standards that a particular student should achieve at the end of every grade level /or every quarter, so once the school head conducts a COT, they cannot give thorough TA to the teachers its because they are not aware of the learning standards*).

As stated by Tirri, K., Eisenschmidt, E., Poom-Valickis, K., & Kuusisto, E.The findings for 2021 demonstrated that issues with principals' professional growth, curricular advancements, and learning communities are comparable in both nations. Compared to their Finnish counterparts, Estonian principals recognized a more significant number of issues pertaining to changes within the learning community; nonetheless, both nations opted to address these issues through growth mindset pedagogy. Principal preparation and development programs ought to focus more on the principal's perspective on teaching and learning, as this can have a significant effect on the entire school community.

Kilag, O. K. T. et al. (2023) highlighted that collaborative work, including all parts of the school community in decision-making and cultivating strong connections with staff, students, and parents, were shown to be priorities for effective principals. Along with emphasizing ongoing professional development for both themselves and their employees, they were also able to clearly define their school's mission and successfully convey it to all relevant parties.

(According to participant no. 25, *the Usufruct agreement between DepEd, LGU, DBP, and parents, as well as capacity building for teachers, are some of the strategies I employ*).

As stated by Elomaa, M. additionally, principals employed emotion-focused, problem-focused, and social coping strategies to manage stress (et al., 2023). Principals also mentioned that they needed

social support and problem-focused assistance for their leadership. The findings demonstrated the significance of coping strategies and social support for principals' professional well-being. Taking a more personal approach to understanding principals' views of what contributes to work-related stress, how they cope, and what kind of help they require allows for considering a range of personal needs, which may be essential to supporting principals' work-related wellness.

The data reveals a significant challenge faced by school heads in comprehending and executing learning standards and curriculum reviews in secondary schools. A notable portion of school heads lack awareness of the specific learning standards students should attain, hindering their ability to offer comprehensive guidance during Continuous Professional Development (CPD) sessions for teachers. This deficiency in understanding poses a substantial obstacle as it hampers their capacity to effectively communicate expectations to educators and provide meaningful support in aligning instructional practices with the prescribed standards. The data emphasizes the potential repercussions of this challenge on the overall quality of education in secondary schools. School heads are pivotal in guiding teachers and shaping the educational environment. However, the lack of awareness regarding learning standards may lead to inconsistencies in curriculum implementation and assessment practices among schools, resulting in variations in student learning experiences and outcomes. Addressing these challenges are crucial to ensure that school heads can lead their schools effectively toward academic excellence, thereby enhancing student success and the quality of education.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Based on the data provided and the National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads, the level of implementation of the functions for school heads, as stipulated in RA 9155, is relatively high. Domain/Competency Strand K is the most implemented, followed by J and I. As a result, the high-weighted mean scores for the specified domains reflect a positive level of implementation of the functions for school heads as outlined in RA 9155 and the NCBS-SH. This suggests a strong commitment to the school head competency criteria.

2. The challenges in implementing the functions for school heads, as stipulated in RA 9155, are evident in the relatively lower implementation levels for Domain/Competency Strand D, B, and A. This highlights the need to address these challenges through targeted support, resource allocation, and professional development initiatives to ensure comprehensive adherence to the competency standards outlined for school heads.

3. How public high school principals/ school heads handle tough situations shows how clever and resourceful they are. They make the most of what they've got, stretching every penny and focusing on what matters, like teacher training and classroom needs. These leaders team up with their communities and talk to the right people, making sure their schools get

the help they need. What's remarkable is how they're not afraid to try new things, using technology and fresh teaching ideas to keep things going strong. Overall, their smarts in managing resources, working with others, speaking up, and trying innovative ways to teach prove they're real pros at handling challenges and keeping education on track.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations were created:

1. Based on conclusion no. 1 it is recommended to continue and strengthen the focus on the development of competencies for school heads. This can be achieved through the following measures: Provide continuous professional development opportunities for school heads to enhance their competencies in the prioritized domains further. a. Knowledge Sharing: Encourage the sharing of best practices among school heads to facilitate peer learning and support the development of competencies, especially for those in the early stages of their careers; b. Training Programs: Implement training programs for future school heads and those already in administrative positions to ensure a pipeline of competent leaders for the future, and c. Communication and Dissemination: Share the findings and implications of the high level of competency implementation with relevant stakeholders to reinforce the importance of school head competency criteria.

2. According to conclusion no.2, the following recommendations can be made: Targeted Support: Identify the specific areas where school heads face challenges in implementing their functions and provide tailored support to address these issues. This can include capacity building, mentorship, and resource allocation to help school heads overcome the identified challenges such as a. Professional Development: Offer continuous professional development opportunities for school heads to enhance their competencies in the areas where they face difficulties. This can include workshops, seminars, and training programs focusing on specific areas where improvement is needed. b. Resource Allocation: Allocate resources to support the implementation of the functions for school heads as stipulated in RA 9155. This can include funding for professional development programs, purchase of necessary equipment, and support for initiatives aimed at improving the quality of education and c. Monitoring and Evaluation: Regularly monitor and evaluate the progress of school heads in implementing their functions and use the findings to inform future support and resource allocation strategies. This will help ensure that the interventions are effective and that school heads continue to improve their competencies. By addressing the challenges in implementing the functions for school heads, it is possible to ensure that all school heads have the necessary competencies to effectively lead their schools and contribute to the ongoing improvement of educational leadership and the quality of education.

3. The conclusion highlights the resourcefulness and innovative approach of public high school principals in managing challenging situations and ensuring the effective functioning of their schools. To further support and leverage their capabilities, it is recommended that

Recognition and Support acknowledge the resourcefulness and leadership of public high school principals in handling challenges. Provide them with the necessary support, recognition, and resources to continue their innovative practices and further enhance the learning environment. This can be done through.

a. Professional Development: Offer professional development opportunities that specifically focus on fostering innovation and resource management. This can include training programs on leveraging technology, implementing fresh teaching ideas, and practical resource allocation and

b. Community Collaboration: Encourage and facilitate increased collaboration between school leaders and their communities. This can involve establishing partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and community leaders to support the schools' needs and foster a more holistic approach to education.

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