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INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS IN INTEGRATED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: PERSPECTIVES FROM A PUBLIC SCHOOL HEAD IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

Instructional leadership has been widely recognized as a critical factor influencing school effectiveness, particularly in basic education settings where school heads play a central role in shaping teaching–learning processes. In the Philippine context, integrated elementary schools face unique challenges related to resource constraints, learner diversity, and instructional supervision across grade levels. This study examines instructional leadership practices and their contribution to school effectiveness from the perspective of a public elementary school head in an integrated school. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews, document analysis, and reflective narratives of the school head. Thematic analysis revealed four major dimensions of instructional leadership: (1) leadership for teaching and learning improvement, (2) teacher capacity building and professional support, (3) instructional monitoring and feedback, and (4) fostering a collaborative school culture. Findings indicate that purposeful instructional leadership positively influences teacher performance, learner engagement, and overall school effectiveness despite contextual limitations. The study highlights the importance of context-sensitive leadership practices and provides implications for school leadership development in integrated elementary schools in the Philippines.

Keywords: *instructional leadership, school effectiveness, integrated elementary schools, school heads, Philippines*

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I. INTRODUCTION

School leadership has consistently been identified as a key determinant of school effectiveness, second only to classroom instruction in its impact on student learning. Among various leadership approaches, instructional leadership has gained prominence due to its explicit focus on teaching, learning, and curriculum implementation. Instructional leaders prioritize classroom practices, teacher development, and learner outcomes, making this leadership style particularly relevant in elementary education.

In the Philippines, integrated elementary schools offering multiple grade levels within a single administrative structure present distinct leadership challenges. School heads are tasked with supervising instruction across diverse grade levels while simultaneously addressing administrative, community, and policy-related responsibilities. Despite national reforms emphasizing quality education and school-based management, disparities in instructional quality and learner achievement persist, particularly in public integrated schools.

While existing studies have explored instructional leadership in general educational contexts, there remains limited qualitative research capturing the lived experiences and leadership practices of public elementary school heads in integrated school settings. Addressing this gap, the present study explores how instructional leadership is enacted by a public school head and how these practices contribute to school effectiveness.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership centers on improving teaching and learning by guiding curriculum implementation, supporting teachers, and monitoring instructional practices. Research suggests that effective instructional leaders establish clear academic goals, provide instructional guidance, and create conditions that enable teachers to perform effectively. Rather than focusing solely on managerial tasks, instructional leaders actively engage in classroom observations, professional development, and data-informed decision-making.

2.2 School Effectiveness

School effectiveness refers to a school's ability to achieve desired educational outcomes, including learner achievement, positive school climate, and professional teacher practices. Studies emphasize that effective schools demonstrate strong leadership, high expectations for learning, continuous teacher development, and collaborative organizational cultures. In elementary education, school effectiveness is closely tied to leadership practices that directly influence classroom instruction.

2.3 Instructional Leadership in the Philippine Context

In the Philippine public school system, school heads are expected to function as instructional leaders while managing administrative and community-related responsibilities. However, contextual challenges such as large class sizes, limited resources, and teacher workload often constrain instructional leadership practices. Understanding how school heads navigate these challenges provides valuable insights into leadership practices that are both effective and contextually responsive.

3. Theoretical Framework



This study is anchored in **Instructional Leadership Theory**, which posits that school leaders influence student learning primarily through their impact on teaching practices and instructional conditions. The framework emphasizes leadership functions such as defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate. These functions guide the analysis of leadership practices and their relationship to school effectiveness in an integrated elementary school setting.

4. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study research design to examine instructional leadership practices from the perspective of a public elementary school head. The qualitative case study approach was deemed appropriate as it allows for an in-depth, contextualized exploration of leadership experiences within a real-life school setting. By focusing on a single integrated elementary school, the design enabled a rich and nuanced understanding of how instructional leadership is enacted in response to specific institutional, instructional, and contextual challenges. This approach is particularly suitable for leadership studies that seek to capture meanings, practices, and decision-making processes rather than to generalize findings statistically.

Participant

The participant of the study was an Elementary School Head from Yeban Integrated School, a public integrated elementary school in the Philippines. The participant was selected through purposive sampling, based on established criteria that included leadership experience, direct responsibility for instructional supervision, and active involvement in school-level instructional decision-making. As the primary instructional leader of the school, the participant possessed first-hand

knowledge of leadership practices related to curriculum implementation, teacher development, and instructional monitoring, making them an information-rich case for the study.

Data Collection

Data were collected using multiple qualitative data sources to ensure depth and triangulation. **In**-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the school head to elicit detailed narratives about leadership roles, instructional priorities, and decision-making processes. These interviews allowed flexibility for probing while maintaining alignment with the research focus. In addition, school documents such as instructional plans, classroom observation tools, monitoring reports, and professional development records were analyzed to provide contextual and corroborative evidence of instructional leadership practices. To further enrich the data, reflective narratives written by the school head were collected, offering insights into personal reflections, challenges, and leadership philosophies related to instructional leadership and school effectiveness.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following systematic and iterative procedures of coding, categorization, and theme development. Initial open coding was conducted to identify significant statements and recurring ideas across the data sources. These codes were then clustered into broader categories and refined into major themes through constant comparison and repeated reading of the data. The use of multiple data sources facilitated cross-validation of emerging themes, thereby enhancing the credibility and coherence of the findings. The analytic process was guided by instructional leadership theory to ensure



theoretical alignment while remaining open to inductively generated insights.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from the participant prior to data collection, with clear explanations of the study's purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of participation. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing personal and institutional identifiers, and all data were used solely for academic purposes. The participant was assured of the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences, in accordance with established ethical guidelines for qualitative research.

5. Results and Findings

Theme 1: Instructional Leadership as a Driver of Teaching and Learning Improvement

The school head consistently framed leadership as being anchored on the improvement of classroom instruction rather than administrative compliance alone. Instructional leadership was enacted through setting clear academic goals, aligning teaching practices with curriculum standards, and prioritizing learner outcomes. The school head emphasized that school effectiveness begins with what happens inside the classroom and that leadership must directly support teaching and learning processes.

Participant Response.

“As a school head, I believe my main responsibility is to make sure that teaching and learning are happening effectively in every classroom. Administrative work is important, but instruction should always come first.”

This finding reinforces the core premise of instructional leadership theory, which posits that school leaders influence student learning primarily by shaping

instructional practices and conditions (Hallinger, 2011). Empirical studies consistently show that school heads who focus on instructional improvement such as curriculum alignment and pedagogical coherence contribute significantly to school effectiveness, particularly in elementary schools (Robinson et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2020). In integrated school contexts, where instructional demands vary across grade levels, leadership attention to teaching and learning becomes even more critical.

Theme 2: Teacher Capacity Building as a Core Leadership Practice

The school head highlighted continuous professional development as a key mechanism for sustaining instructional quality. Rather than relying solely on external training, the school head promoted school-based learning activities such as mentoring, peer coaching, and collaborative lesson planning. These practices were viewed as essential for addressing teachers' diverse needs and improving instructional competence.

Participant Response.

“Teachers need constant support. I make it a point to mentor them and encourage peer sharing because learning does not stop after seminars it should continue in the school.”

This theme aligns with research emphasizing that effective instructional leaders invest in teacher professional growth as a pathway to improved student outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Studies indicate that leadership practices focused on teacher learning foster collective efficacy and instructional consistency, which are hallmarks of effective schools (Leithwood et al., 2020). In public schools with limited access to external resources, school-based professional



development becomes a strategic and contextually responsive leadership approach.

Theme 3: Instructional Monitoring and Constructive Feedback for Continuous Improvement

Regular classroom observations and instructional monitoring were identified as essential leadership practices. The school head described monitoring as developmental rather than punitive, emphasizing feedback that supports teacher reflection and improvement. Instructional supervision was framed as a collaborative process aimed at enhancing teaching quality.

Participant Response.

“When I observe classes, my goal is not to find faults but to help teachers reflect on their teaching. Feedback should motivate, not discourage.”

This finding supports literature suggesting that instructional monitoring is most effective when paired with constructive and formative feedback (Robinson et al., 2008). Research shows that developmental supervision strengthens teacher motivation and instructional improvement, particularly when leaders establish trust and shared responsibility for learning outcomes (Hallinger, 2011). Such practices are crucial in integrated schools where instructional coherence must be maintained across grade levels.

Theme 4: Fostering a Collaborative and Supportive School Culture

The school head emphasized collaboration, shared leadership, and open communication as foundational to school effectiveness. Teachers were encouraged to participate in decision-making processes, share instructional practices, and support one another. This

collaborative culture was viewed as essential for sustaining instructional improvements.

Participant Response.

“I want teachers to feel that we are working together. When there is trust and collaboration, it becomes easier to implement changes in instruction.”

This theme aligns with studies highlighting the role of collaborative leadership in school improvement (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Research suggests that schools with strong professional collaboration demonstrate higher levels of instructional quality and organizational effectiveness (Leithwood et al., 2020). In integrated elementary schools, collaboration helps address instructional diversity and strengthens collective responsibility for learner success.

Collectively, the themes demonstrate that instructional leadership in integrated elementary schools is enacted through a combination of instructional focus, teacher development, reflective supervision, and collaborative culture-building. These practices contribute to school effectiveness by indirectly enhancing teaching quality and learner engagement, consistent with established leadership research (Robinson et al., 2008; Hallinger, 2011).

6. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that **instructional leadership plays a vital and multifaceted role in promoting school effectiveness in integrated elementary schools**. Despite persistent contextual constraints such as limited resources, heavy administrative workloads, and diverse learner needs, purposeful leadership practices that prioritize instruction, teacher professional development, and collaborative engagement were found to positively influence teaching quality and learner engagement. These results are consistent with extensive empirical



research indicating that instructional leadership exerts its strongest influence on student learning indirectly by shaping teacher practices, instructional coherence, and the learning environment rather than through direct classroom intervention (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson et al., 2008). When school heads focus on instructional improvement, provide meaningful feedback, and foster teacher learning, they create conditions that enable effective teaching and sustained learner engagement (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of **context-sensitive instructional leadership**, particularly within integrated elementary schools where instructional demands vary across grade levels and learner profiles. In such settings, leadership cannot rely on rigid or one-size-fits-all approaches; instead, it must be adaptive, relational, and responsive to the specific instructional realities of the school community. Research suggests that effective school leaders tailor their leadership strategies to contextual conditions, balancing accountability requirements with instructional support and relational trust-building (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Day et al., 2016). The findings of this study echo this perspective, revealing that the school head's capacity to navigate administrative responsibilities while maintaining a strong focus on instructional priorities is a critical factor in sustaining school effectiveness.

In addition, the emphasis on collaboration and relational leadership observed in this study aligns with literature highlighting the role of professional collaboration in improving instructional quality and organizational performance. Collaborative instructional leadership fosters shared responsibility, collective efficacy, and continuous improvement, all of which are hallmarks of effective schools (Leithwood et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2008). The ability of the school head to cultivate a

supportive and collegial school culture, even within constrained contexts, demonstrates how instructional leadership can function as a strategic lever for school effectiveness. Overall, these findings reinforce the growing consensus in educational leadership research that instructional leadership, when enacted in contextually responsive and relational ways, remains a powerful mechanism for improving teaching and learning outcomes in public elementary schools.

7. Conclusion

This study underscores the significance of instructional leadership in enhancing school effectiveness within integrated elementary schools in the Philippine public education system. By prioritizing teaching and learning, supporting teacher growth, and fostering collaborative school cultures, school heads can meaningfully influence educational outcomes even in resource-constrained contexts. The perspectives of the public school head provide valuable insights into leadership practices that are both effective and contextually grounded.

8. Implications

The findings of this study generate several important implications for educational leadership practice, policy formulation, and future research, particularly within the context of public integrated elementary schools in the Philippines. These implications underscore the critical role of instructional leadership in strengthening school effectiveness and improving teaching-learning outcomes.

First, the study highlights the need for strengthened leadership development programs that explicitly focus on instructional leadership. Leadership training initiatives for school heads should move beyond administrative and managerial competencies to emphasize curriculum leadership, instructional



supervision, data-informed decision-making, and teacher professional development. Pre-service and in-service leadership programs should provide school heads with practical tools and reflective opportunities to enhance their capacity to support classroom instruction. Strengthening instructional leadership competencies equips school heads to become more effective academic leaders who can directly influence teaching quality and learner achievement.

Second, the findings point to the importance of policy support that enables school heads to prioritize instructional supervision. In many public schools, school heads are burdened with extensive administrative and compliance-related responsibilities, which often limit the time and energy devoted to instructional leadership. Educational policies should therefore consider restructuring workloads, streamlining reporting requirements, and providing additional administrative support to allow school heads to focus more consistently on instructional monitoring, coaching, and feedback. Such policy adjustments can create enabling conditions for sustained instructional leadership and improved school effectiveness.

Finally, the study underscores the need for further qualitative and mixed-methods research examining instructional leadership across diverse school contexts. While this study offers in-depth insights from a single integrated elementary school, future research may explore instructional leadership practices across multiple schools, geographic locations, and educational levels. Employing mixed-methods designs and longitudinal approaches can deepen understanding of how instructional leadership influences teacher performance and learner outcomes over time. Expanding empirical evidence in this area will contribute to the refinement of leadership frameworks

and inform context-sensitive policies and practices in educational leadership.

In sum, the implications of this study emphasize that effective instructional leadership requires coherent support at the levels of leadership preparation, policy implementation, and research development. Addressing these areas holistically can strengthen the capacity of school heads to lead instructional improvement and promote sustainable school effectiveness in public elementary education.

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