

## School leadership practices in La Paz District: Inputs for a proposed upskilling program

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**Abstract:** The study assessed the school leadership practices in La Paz District, Agusan Del Sur, during the School Year 2023 – 2024. The descriptive-correlation research method was employed in this study, and the questionnaire was used as the data – gathering tool. Validated survey questionnaires were given to 154 teachers from public elementary and junior high school teachers in La Paz district together research data. Results showed that the leadership practices of school heads were moderately practiced in terms of intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, idealized Influence, and inspirational motivation. The level of school performance in the DepEd programs in terms of performance improvement and SBM is in the Developing Level. There is a significant association between the school heads' leadership practices and the school's performance. The analysis showed that performance improvement is significantly associated with the school heads' leadership practices in terms of intellectual stimulation, idealized consideration, idealized influence, and inspirational motivation. Finally, the study's recommendations included a leadership upskilling program that might enhance or maintain school administrators' leadership styles as they work to provide all students with a basic education that is high-quality, relevant, accessible, and free.

Keywords: Education, Leadership Practices, School Performance

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## INTRODUCTION

School leadership practices refer to the actions, attitudes, and methods used by principals, school administrators, and other school leaders to successfully oversee and guide a school community, (Harris, 2020). These practices encompass a wide range of responsibilities and tasks to foster a positive school culture, support student learning and achievement, and promote the overall well-being of students and staff. Thus, school leadership practices play a crucial role in shaping a school's overall environment, culture, and effectiveness its effectiveness.

The impact of 21st-century leadership skills to school leadership practices is a more inclusive, adaptable, and forward-thinking method to leadership that drives organizational success, fosters employee development, and addresses societal challenges.

In the Philippines, education leaders face several challenges that make upskilling and reskilling especially important. One of these challenges is the shortage of qualified teachers, a common problem in many countries worldwide. Educational leaders must, therefore, be able to identify and develop the skills of existing teachers to ensure that they are equipped to deliver quality education to their students (Teferra and Altbachl, 2020).

Hence, good leadership may help teachers develop their full potential much more in improving school performance and implementation of programs. Tionson (2023), in his

research conducted at La Paz District, Division of Agusan del Sur, posited that teacher leadership can help school administrators improve schools. However, teachers do not view themselves as school leaders but as implementers of programs and activities, although they may lead other teachers. His study also revealed that the transformational leadership of school heads significantly influenced the teacher's efficacy.

In La Paz District, Agusan Del Sur, where the researcher is recently connected, it is observed that unexpected adversities currently affront school heads. They are facing threats perennial to many, if not all, school organizations. The implementation of educational reforms and policies in addressing the existing nutritional deficiency among learners, the holistic development of learners in terms of hygienic practice, and the strong involvement of both internal and external stakeholders in carrying out school programs, projects, and activities are some problems and challenges encountered by the school administrators.

It is in this light that the researcher, being a school head, was motivated to conduct a study and evaluation that determined the extent of leadership practices of school heads during the implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) in elementary and secondary schools in La Paz in the Division of Agusan del Sur. The study likewise proposed a leadership upskilling program that would improve or sustain the school heads' leadership practices as they strive to deliver quality, accessible, relevant, and liberating basic education for all.

### *Problem Statement*

The study determined the school leadership practices in La Paz District, Agusan Del Sur. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the extent of leadership practices of school heads in terms of intellectual stimulation; individual consideration; idealized influence; and inspirational motivation?
2. What is the level of school performance of DepEd programs along SBM, GPP, WINS, and feeding?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the extent of leadership practices of school heads and the level of school performance?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Various studies highlight the central role of school leadership practices in shaping organizational success and improving school performance (Maxwell, 2019; Goolamally & Ahmad, 2022). Principals, as key leaders, influence school direction through their vision, decision-making, and relationships, aligning with Bolman and Deal's (2023) argument that effective leadership requires both long-term thinking and responsiveness to internal and external dynamics. According to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2020), decades of research have consistently sought to understand the connection between leadership practices, student learning, and outcomes, with major international reviews—such as the OECD (2008) report—laying out important policy recommendations on leadership roles, distributed leadership, professional development, and recruitment strategies.

Modern educational demands require school administrators to develop 21st-century leadership competencies, enabling them to guide organizational growth, enhance teaching quality, and navigate increasingly complex learning environments (Bahadur, 2021). Principals play a pivotal role in cultivating a supportive culture for teachers, driving educational progress,

and addressing multifaceted school challenges (Sowell, 2022). Leadership effectiveness, particularly transformational leadership, is underscored by several characteristics: idealized influence, where leaders inspire trust and model ethical behavior (Okoli et al., 2021; Le & Le, 2021); inspirational motivation, where they articulate a compelling vision and energize collective efforts (Edirisooriya, 2020; Hasija et al., 2019); intellectual stimulation, where they challenge the status quo and promote creativity (Sundi, 2013; Shahzad & Zareen, 2021); and individualized consideration, where they provide socio-emotional support and foster individual growth (Wang et al., 2020; Paracha et al., 2022). Together, these traits create a leadership style that motivates, empowers, and aligns stakeholders toward shared educational goals (Roberson & Roberson, 2019; Ross et al., 2021).

Beyond leadership characteristics, effective school performance is further reinforced through key programs like School-Based Management (SBM) under Republic Act 9155, which decentralizes decision-making to empower school communities in budget, hiring, and curriculum matters. Programs like the *Gulayan sa Paaralan* Program (GPP) support food security and nutrition, the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Schools (WinS) program promotes student health and attendance, and the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP) addresses short-term hunger to improve learning outcomes (DepEd, 2016; DepEd, 2023). Together, these initiatives complement leadership practices by creating conducive conditions for learning and holistic student development.

These studies provided the researcher with deep insights into the interconnectedness of leadership, school management, and student outcomes. By integrating leadership theories, program frameworks, and empirical findings, the study is grounded in robust conceptual and methodological foundations, guiding the researcher in formulating new ideas and contributing meaningful perspectives to the field. This synthesis not only highlights the critical role of effective leadership and contextual interventions but also affirms the importance of continuous exploration and innovation to address evolving educational challenges.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research design*

The study employed a descriptive – correlational method of research using a survey questionnaire, and unstructured interviews were utilized to gather data from the 30 respondents. The descriptive-correlational method is a research approach used to explore and describe relationships between variables without necessarily establishing causation. In this method, researchers collect data on various variables of interest within a sample population and then analyze the relationships between these variables. Therefore, findings from descriptive-correlational studies are typically used to generate hypotheses for future research rather than draw definitive conclusions about cause – and – effect relationships.

This descriptive survey dealt with quantitative data on school leadership practices in La Paz District. The quantitative aspect is an appropriate method of gathering the data designed for the target respondents to answer the questions. The process of gathering the data was based using questionnaires. Statistical tools such as weighted mean was employed for the analysis and interpretation of the data. The plan and structure of this research is to provide a credible answer to the research question. Its purpose is to describe existing characteristics such as achievement, attitudes, behavior, and relationships. The descriptive research method is appropriate for the present investigation because it deals with the school leadership practices of the Lapaz district.

Variables are not manipulated; they are only identified and studied as they occur in a natural setting.

### *Research Locale*

The Municipality of La Paz. La Paz is a municipality in the province of Agusan del Sur in the Caraga of the Philippines. The population was 30,969 at the 2020 census. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, the municipality has a land area of 1,481.12 square kilometers (571.86 sq mi) [5], constituting 14.83% of the 9,989.52-square-kilometre- (3,856.98 sq mi) total area of Agusan del Sur, which makes it the largest municipality in the Philippines in terms of land area. La Paz is politically subdivided into 15 barangays.

The respondents are located in La Paz, Agusan del Sur. It consists of 154 public elementary and secondary school teachers. Furthermore, the respondents' place and the study's conduct are within La Paz District, Agusan del Sur, Philippines.

### *Respondents of the study*

The respondents were all public elementary and secondary school teachers in the Municipality of La Paz, Schools Division of Agusan del Sur. The respondents of this study were the 154 teachers of 22 in the different public elementary and secondary schools in the said division. A random sampling technique was employed to choose the participants of the study. Below is the distribution of teacher respondents in La Paz District, Division of Agusan del Sur.

### *Research instrument*

The survey questionnaire utilized in the study was adapted from the Transformative Leadership Questionnaire of Sunaengsih, C., et.al. (2021) which was modified to make the respondents' options parallel with the Five Point Likert scale. The set of questionnaires dealt with the school leadership practices.

### *Validity and reliability of the research instrument*

The research questionnaire underwent face and content validation by experts who are master teachers from other schools. Time allotment was taken into consideration in the completion of the questionnaire to determine the time frame in answering the participants. The teachers were asked to rate the specific items and whether these were applicable or not appropriate. They were also requested to write their comments on the applicability of the items under each component area.

The experts who validated the content indicated that all the items were applicable and relevant to each component. Regarding the reliability test of the survey questionnaire, the researcher conducted Phase 1, where 26 teachers from other schools conducted tryout and it was found that some questions were unsuited and showed low reliability. Then, the researcher revised the survey questionnaire and conducted another tryout for the reliability test, and it was found that the results were high. After this, the survey questionnaire was ready to conduct the study. Cronbach's alpha was utilized to determine the significance of the validity and reliability test of the research questionnaires. The tool provides a quantitative assessment of internal consistency, helps ensure the quality and validity of survey data, guides scale development and refinement, and supports informed decision-making in research and practice. Its application helps researchers gauge the trustworthiness and robustness of the questionnaire instrument used in their studies.

### *Data Analysis Procedure*

The statistical tools used for data analysis and interpretation were the following:

Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed to determine the significant relationship between school leadership practices and school performance. influence of conversational leadership of school head on teacher self–efficacy.

Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the reliability of scales and tests by measuring how well the items in a set correlate with each other. It provides a quantitative estimate of internal consistency, which is crucial for determining the validity and usefulness of psychometric instruments in research and practice.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### *Extent of leadership practices of school heads*

The study explored the extent of school heads' leadership practices across four transformational leadership dimensions: intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, idealized influence, and inspirational motivation.

In terms of intellectual stimulation, the overall mean was 4.16 (moderately practiced), indicating that school heads generally encouraged teachers to be creative, explore new ideas, work in teams, and grow professionally. The highest-rated item was encouraging creativity in lesson delivery (mean = 4.29), while the lowest was providing opportunities for team building (mean = 3.94), possibly due to financial constraints. This aligns with Sundi (2013) and Anand and Anjali (2021), who highlighted intellectual stimulation's role in promoting commitment and innovative problem-solving.

For individual consideration, the overall mean was 4.09 (moderately practiced), showing that school heads supported teachers' work, accepted suggestions, offered feedback, and fostered personal development. The highest-rated item was supporting excellent achievements (mean = 4.27), and the lowest was recognizing opinions on leadership style (mean = 3.90). These findings reflect the importance of fair, respectful leadership, as emphasized by Wang et al. (2020) and Elgelal and Noermijati (2022), which boosts motivation and job satisfaction.

Under idealized influence, the overall mean was 4.28 (moderately practiced), suggesting that school heads were seen as role models, promoting respect, advocating good behavior, committing to school goals, and addressing mistakes professionally. Promoting respect received the highest score (mean = 4.46), while investigating mistakes scored lowest (mean = 4.23). This supports the view of Bass and Riggio (2006) and Okoli et al. (2021) that leaders' integrity and ethical behavior inspire trust and admiration among followers.

Regarding inspirational motivation, the overall mean was 4.20 (moderately practiced), reflecting school heads' ability to challenge teachers, celebrate achievements, guide strategies, and promote shared goals. The highest-rated item was challenging teachers to work hard and display professionalism (mean = 4.35), while the lowest was scheduling special meetings for complex tasks (mean = 4.06). This connects with the findings of Hasija et al. (2019) and Anand and Anjali (2021), emphasizing the power of motivational leadership in building resilience, commitment, and high performance.

The results suggest that school heads consistently apply moderately practiced leadership strategies across all dimensions, creating an environment of support, innovation, respect, and

shared purpose. These practices are essential for fostering teacher growth, improving school performance, and addressing evolving educational challenges.

### *Level of school performance of DepEd programs along SBM, GPP, WINS, and feeding*

The results on school performance regarding School-Based Management (SBM) reveal varying levels of maturity across schools. Only 4.5% of respondents classified their school's overall performance as Advanced, characterized by a proactive, strategic stance in school-level decision-making, resource allocation, and policy enforcement. A larger group, 45.5%, rated their schools as Maturing, indicating that long-term procedures, strong stakeholder accountability, and a culture of continuous learning are well-established. Meanwhile, 50% reported their schools as still at the Developing level, reflecting early improvements in governance, flexible adaptations to local challenges, and emerging stakeholder collaborations.

Although the key elements of SBM are generally in place across the country, gaps remain — notably, some schools have yet to fully implement crucial components, and parents and communities often play limited roles in decision-making and accountability. Research by Jaelani and Masnun (2019) emphasizes that expanding the role of school governing councils and optimizing stakeholder involvement, information systems, and reward mechanisms are essential for driving quality education outcomes. As Abulencia (2012) notes, SBM in the Philippines has been adopted as both a governance framework and a structural reform aimed at producing functionally literate citizens.

Regarding Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Schools (WinS), the findings show uneven implementation. Based on the responses, 41% rated water components below minimum levels (0.000–0.999), along with 64% for sanitation, 59% for hygiene, 18% for deworming, and 59% for health education. Despite these low scores, 45.5% reported a score of 3.000 for deworming, but none reached that level in water, sanitation, or hygiene. Overall, the respondents noted that WinS implementation is highly supported thanks to strong partnerships between program administrators, implementers, school health personnel, parents' associations, government and non-government organizations, and local government units.

According to DepEd Order No. 10, s. 2016, the WinS program aims to promote hygiene, prevent disease, encourage health-seeking behavior, enhance school attendance, and uphold gender equality, with schools evaluated on five key areas: water, sanitation, hygiene, deworming, and health education. Schools are rated using a three-star rubric system to assess their progress and ensure sustained health improvements.

### *Relationship between the extent of leadership practices of school heads and the level of school performance*

The school heads' leadership practices and overall school performance. The results revealed that performance improvement was significantly associated with the school heads' leadership practices in the domains of intellectual stimulation ( $r = .180$ ,  $p = .026$ ), individualized consideration ( $r = .249$ ,  $p = .002$ ), idealized influence ( $r = .260$ ,  $p = .001$ ), and inspirational motivation ( $r = .253$ ,  $p = .002$ ). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected for these variables, affirming that these specific leadership practices are linked to higher school performance. It is noteworthy that 50% of the schools were assessed as performing beyond the developing level, while the leadership practices were generally perceived as moderately

practiced. This finding implies that as school heads demonstrate stronger and more consistently practiced leadership, teachers are more likely to be motivated to work harder, thereby elevating the school's overall performance.

In school environments where teachers feel inspired, empowered, and supported, higher performance outcomes are more likely to emerge because principals play a critical role in fostering a collaborative, inclusive, and respectful school culture. In this study, the researcher modeled a leadership approach that harnessed the full potential of the teaching staff, focusing on strengthening instructional quality and raising the bar for school achievements. As Maxwell (2019) and Goolamally and Ahmad (2022) emphasize, leadership practices are central to organizational success and are foundational to school improvement. School principals, through their vision, practices, and relationships, shape the trajectory of their schools, highlighting the importance of long-term thinking and both internal and external influence (Bolman & Deal, 2023).

While significant associations were found between specific leadership practices and performance improvement, the leadership practices overall—perceived as moderately practiced—did not show significant associations with other aspects of school performance, as evidenced by p-values exceeding the 0.05 threshold. This suggests that while strong leadership can drive improvements in instructional quality, curriculum development, and teachers' problem-solving abilities, broader school performance indicators, such as school-based management implementation and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Schools (WinS) programs, are largely determined by the extent of stakeholder involvement in school governance. As Bahadur (2021) and Sowell (2022) assert, school administrators play a pivotal role in steering the institution's mission, fostering academic advancement, and cultivating a culture of support, which collectively drive sustainable educational development.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, several important conclusions are drawn. First, effective school leadership practices are essential for creating a positive and supportive school community that promotes student success, fosters collaboration, advances equity, and nurtures a culture of continuous improvement. When school administrators enhance their leadership practices, they can strengthen stakeholder collaboration and create an environment that supports the well-being and academic achievement of both students and staff. Effective leadership, therefore, is foundational not only for fostering a positive school culture but also for driving academic excellence and preparing students for future success.

Second, the study reveals that the current level of school performance in the DepEd programs, particularly regarding performance improvement and school-based management (SBM), remains at the Developing stage. Among the key program areas, the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Schools (WinS) program showed the lowest results, with deworming recording the lowest percentage of implementation. This suggests limited engagement from stakeholders in supporting the full implementation of these programs, which may negatively affect the overall well-being and health of the school community.

Finally, the analysis confirms a significant association between school heads' leadership practices and school performance. Specifically, performance improvement was found to be significantly linked to leadership practices such as intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, idealized influence, and inspirational motivation. This underscores the critical role

that strong, dynamic, and inclusive leadership plays in driving school success and advancing meaningful educational outcomes.

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