

Research Paper

School Principal Administrative-Supervisory Leadership During the Pandemic: A Phenomenological Qualitative Study

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Abstract

This qualitative study aims to explore the administrative-supervisory leadership experiences and perspectives of fifteen (15) school principals in the Division of Toledo City, Cebu, DepEd Region VII, during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The research utilized a descriptive phenomenological approach, which involved face-to-face semi-structured interviews, observation notes, and documentation. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data in six steps, including familiarization, coding, creating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and creating a report. The findings of the study revealed that principals faced various challenges during the pandemic crisis, including maintaining the continuity of learning, ensuring the safety of students and teachers, managing resources, and supporting the well-being of school personnel. Despite these challenges, the principals demonstrated strong leadership skills by adapting to the situation, collaborating with stakeholders, and implementing innovative strategies. The study's limitations include a small sample size and a specific geographic location, which limits the generalizability of the findings. This study contributes to the understanding of how school principals experience and navigate leadership during a crisis, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The practical implications of this study suggest that school leaders should prioritize collaboration and adaptability in crisis management, support the well-being of school personnel, and implement innovative strategies to address challenges. The study's novelty lies in its application of a phenomenological approach to explore the subjective experiences of school principals during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

Keywords *COVID-19 pandemic; school principals; leadership*

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is essential in many aspects of society. Gardner (1993), one of the most cited authors (4223 citations in Google Scholar), claimed that achieving the goal without a good leader is unthinkable. The years 2020-2021 were challenging. The abrupt changes in the economy and social interaction, as well as the government's strict constraints requiring people to adapt and adjust to the new normal, have put leaders' abilities to the test.

The principal is the school's leader and has responsibility over the entire school community. He has administrative and supervisory responsibilities (Kerry 2005). The failure of the body reflects his inadequacy as a leader, whereas the success of the school community reflects the level of education and abilities (Funderburk, 2021). As a result, his achievement in administrative and supervisory duties demonstrates the effectiveness of his leadership.

According to the Philippines (2001), the Republic Act No. 9155. An Act Instituting a Framework of Governance for Basic Education, Establishing Authority and Accountability, Renaming the Department of Education, Culture, And Sports as The Department of Education, And for Other Purposes states that the school head serves as both an instructional leader and an administrative manager (Chapter 1 Section No. 7, Letter E, Paragraph 2) Hence, he is responsible for carrying out the school-wide mission, vision, and goals.

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In addition, the Philippines Department of Education issues DepEd Order No. 42, s 2007 – The Revised Guidelines on Selection, Promotion, and Designation of School Heads–stated that the school head is in charge and accountable for the administrative and instructional supervision of the school. In the basic policies for the application to the position of Principal I, it was indicated that the applicant/s must possess the skills in administrative and supervisory leadership and once and for all must pass the executive and managerial competence.

According to Paton (2021), administration is critical to the overall health of an organization. This is the driving force behind the effectiveness and efficiency of operation. Administrative leadership guides individuals toward a common objective (Usman, 2016). According to Zepada (2014), the administrative duty that rests on the shoulders of the principal ensures the body's survival. Administrative leadership from the principal is necessary for the organization's growth, a safe learning environment, and enhanced school facilities, laboratories, and amenities (Alhassani, 2022).

The principal regulates the tone and environment of the entire body; it connects organs and allows them to work as a system. When a leader combines authority and leadership, the entire system performs better. The principal should create a system that can address the needs of the body while meeting the organization's objectives and goals. Effective administrative leadership reflects an organization's success and implies improved coordination and control (Mostafa et al., 2021).

The principal must understand the complexity and breadth of their functions and duties. Supervisory is also a major job of the principal, who is a leader who works to improve education and curriculum (Tintoré et al., 2022). Furthermore, Bellamy (2008) asserted that the principal has the most difficult job in the field of education (p.599). The supervisory leader is a transformational leader who inspires, encourages, serves as a role model, and is introspective. He maintains and emphasizes connections with teachers, students, and members of the community (Lawrence et al., 2020). As part of his supervisory responsibilities, the principal should ensure that students achieve the required learning outcomes and are prepared for college, employment, entrepreneurship, and middle-level skills.

Supervisory leadership is actively used if learners and teachers strive for excellence. The highlight of supervisory leadership is planning to complete the institution's vision, mission, and goals, and this is only applicable if the leader has listening and communicating abilities, can communicate ideals, and considers learners' and teachers' interests (Lawrence et al., 2020).

In pursuit of DepEd Order No. 001, s. 2020 titled Guidelines for NEAP Recognition of Professional Development Programs and Courses for Teachers and School Leaders, The Philippines Department of Education issues DepEd Memorandum No. 050, s. 2020 titled DepEd Professional Development Priorities for Teachers and School Leaders for School Year 2020-2023, covers administrative and supervisory duties and responsibilities, as well as professional development for school heads. The following is a summary of this study:

1. Strategic Leadership
2. School Management and Operations
3. Teaching and Learning Supervision
4. Self and Others Development
5. Working with and Through Other People

As previously stated, the demand for the principal's administrative supervisory leadership is never static, but evolves and changes over time. The efficiency and effectiveness of school principals, whether older or younger, have been tested through rapid technological advancements and unfavorable socioeconomic conditions. Continuous learning and professional development are required.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Determining the principal's administrative supervisory leadership's impact on the global pandemic.
2. Determine the primary factors impeding their ability to perform administrative supervisory duties and functions.
3. Assimilate the attributes required to lead the institution, especially during a crisis.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate and comprehend how secondary school principals exercise administrative supervisory leadership under adverse conditions. The three main research questions were as follows:

1. How do school principals display administrative supervisory leadership during difficult times?
2. What factors impede secondary school principals' ability to lead effectively?
3. What abilities are required to manage an organization during difficult times?

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The school principal is a leader who works tirelessly to improve the organization as a whole. Although principals are prepared to be resilient in difficult times, the current socioeconomic situation has put the leaders' devotion, endurance, and skills to the test.

The researchers adopted the system approach developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy. "The system was viewed as a series of interconnected and interdependent pieces, with the interaction of any portion of the system affecting the entire system" (Arnold & Wade, 2015, p. 670). The system approach regards all elements' interrelationships and interdependence as necessary components of the overall system.

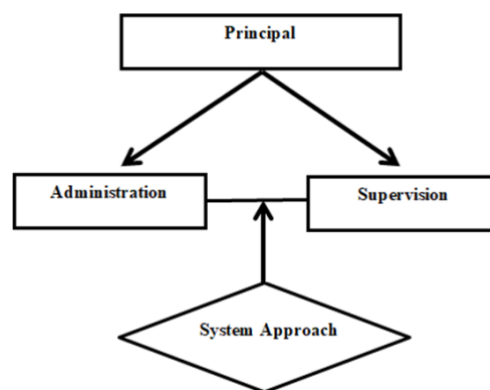


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework on the encompassment of system approach on principal's administrative-supervisory leadership

The mutually interdependent components work together to achieve the organization's goals and objectives. Administration and supervision leadership are two distinct, yet interrelated variables in this study. Administrative and supervisory leadership have no relationship, although they require the role of principal. The primary functions of these two principles are critical for the development and maintenance of the general wellness of the school community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Principal's Administrative-Supervisory leadership

The principal of a school is a leader with high-level administrative and managerial responsibility. Leadership is the art and science of leading and guiding people toward a common goal. It includes the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out tasks and obligations. Leadership is more intricate than we realize; it has a vast range of connotations in social, political, cultural, and educational contexts.

During difficult times, most people focus their attention on the leader/s in a democratic system where freedom and equality are highly valued. This is the ultimate test of leadership abilities: planning, management, coordination, and control. The school principal plays a critical role in ensuring that the organization's operating procedures are followed.

Sergiovanni (1981) posited: *"The real action for leadership is in the testing of common assumptions, in the creation and nurturing of standards, traditions, and beliefs, and in the establishing and supporting of a school culture which governs behavior."* (p. 4)

Ramsden (1998) defined an effective leader as one who can adjust and be flexible in the face of change. The ability to accept and adjust to changes in environmental settings and an individual's behavior implies success in management plans. Because change is unavoidable, methods and strategies must be adaptable to the demands of time and conditions.

The two inseparable responsibilities of school principals are administration and supervision. In the field, the administrative and supervisory roles of principals overlap. Principals, in a broader sense, administer to oversee and supervise administrators. The administrative function is linked to the supervisory role, which focuses on instructional and curriculum improvement and oversees the entire community, teacher performance, and academic process.

The Philippines Department of Education publishes sets of professional standards for school leaders and supervisors that explain how to strengthen the principal's administrative and supervisory responsibilities. The drafts identify four domains and 20 strands (DepEd. Order No. 011, 2019).

In a school, for instance, the principal has broad authority (administrative and supervisory duties); he must deal with people from various backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs. Similar to military line fighting, the principal is the school's front line. He operates in advance, develops plans and strategies, is the decision-maker, and is on the frontlines of defense and offense. He is directly responsible for the overall development and progress of the organization. He administers and supervises the body, guaranteeing the effectiveness of the strategy and system as well as setting goals, managing, and utilizing resources (Fatimah et al., 2010). It is widely held that institutional improvement and change are inextricably linked to the principal's effective leadership, whereas failures are associated with the principal's poor leadership.

Principal's Administrative Role

Sergiovanni et al. (1981, as cited in Ali & Aballa Mohamed, 2017) defined administration as the process of collaborating with and through others to achieve institutional educational goals (p. 327). On the one hand, Phongphanit (2019), like Sergiovanni, believes that administration is a process that ensures involvement, participation, collaboration, and cooperation to achieve the desired goal. The terms administration and management were used interchangeably by the researchers in this study. The principal is responsible for both administrative and supervisory duties. In the context of educational leadership, there is no discernible difference between "administration" and "management." Management is defined as an act of regulating or organizing something according to Oxford Learner's Dictionary (n.d.) and Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.). On the one hand, Oxford Learner's Dictionary (n.d.) and Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) define administration as the planning,

organization, and control of a business. According to Macias (2013), administration and management do not have their own spheres; they are interconnected and necessary to complete the purpose and reach the goal.

Administration and management are synonymous; both are required to maintain the organization in balance (Nikezic & Nikezic 2021). According to Henri Fayol, quoted in Bose's book (2012), the two concepts (administration and management) can be used interchangeably and are synonymous. To achieve this goal, all administrative and managerial duties require planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and regulating.

In the current pandemic era, school leaders are under increased pressure to manage enormous workloads while dealing with various changes and problems brought about by rapid technological innovations. Success requires strong administrative leadership. According to some researchers, the principal administrative role is one of the most challenging positions in education, as the leader must be knowledgeable in both theory and practice. Educational leadership did not differ from any other leadership type. This necessitates dedication, passion, integration, and commitment.

Each leader has a distinct leadership style that evolves over time, based on its effectiveness and efficiency in a specific setting. To handle an issue or problem and produce a successful organizational system, the school principal may use one special method or a combination of methods, approaches, and instruments.

According to Peca's (2000) research on *Critical Educational Administration: Research, Theory, and Practice*, schools are governed by an objective and subjective system. The existence and integration of both are critical to an organization's overall productivity. Furthermore, Al-Khateeb (2021) contends that management style is critical in achieving and fulfilling educational institutions' aims and objectives. Thus, democratic management promotes organizational productivity.

According to Amin and Thrift (2008), the principal's philosophy is the fuel that moves the entire body; it dictates discipline, culture, practice, programmes, and rules. They continue by stating that the principal's ideology is crucial for the operation of the organizational structure, which consists of individual interactions, regulations, and resources (Amin & Thrift, 2008). Furthermore, as Mannheim (1968, cited in Peca, 2000) stated, the embodiment of ideology in the school is crucial for self-maintenance because the leader handed the ideology down through the next generation.

Although the school head has the freedom to shape the entire school community in a democratic managerial setting, he is required to perform the responsibility and job committed to his office. Henri Fayol identified the following core administrative functions: planning, organizing, leading, and controlling (McNamara 2009).

Planning

"He who fails to plan is planning to fail," Winston Churchill once remarked. The term planning has numerous definitions, but one of the most popular is the setting of standards, execution of regulations, staffing and delegation, coordination, and control (Lorinkova et al., 2013).

According to Goodwin and Wright (2010), planning is the prediction or anticipation of expected events. Planning is a step-by-step procedure that aims to ensure an organization's success and sustainability. Planning is one of the most critical functions of a manager; it necessitates decision making, solid judgment, and cautious selection. According to Ericson et al. (2000), planning is responsible for an organization's existence and survival.

Planning is a process that seeks to develop plans and methods for the organization's betterment and progress by establishing an in-depth understanding of future programs. Koontz and O'Donnell (1972) presented an outline and eight (8) planning phases. The steps are as follows.

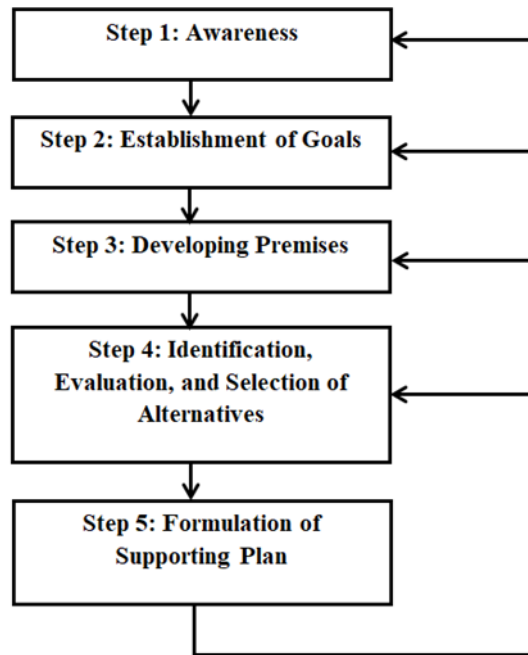


Figure 2. The Outline of H. Koontz and C. O'Donnell, the process of planning

Step 1: Developing an Awareness of the Present State

In practice, this is not the true planning stage, but it is an important aspect in planning. According to Koontz and O'Donnell (1972), the first and most basic step in planning is to raise awareness of the present environment's opportunities and difficulties as well as being aware of the program's potential strengths and limitations. The administrator sets a vision, mission, and purpose for the program at this stage, including what to do, when to do it, how to do it, and who will do it. This stage was dubbed "pre-planning". The study of existing frameworks and prior research relevant to strategy development is critical to the success of this stage. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis can be used in this step.

Step 2: Establishing Outcome Statements: Goal Planning, Domain Planning, Hybrid Planning

As stated above, one of the most crucial plans is to be aware of the internal and external possibilities and challenges in the current situation. After the principal or administrator has identified the potential strengths and weaknesses, the next step in the planning process is to develop outcome statements. It is essentially the stage of defining goals and objectives for a long-term or short-term plan.

The principal or administrator may emphasize opportunities while analyzing measures to minimize and avoid potential threats. Domain planning, also known as directional planning, may have a set or series of hierarchical partitions that contain different inter-related goals (Baiolletti et al., n.d.). At this stage, the principal or administrator designs a valid and sound plan/s that indicates formal objective specifications with the expected result.

Everything is in perpetual flux, and the environment and situation change periodically. Adapting to new difficulties, defining targets, and refining the existing general domain plan would significantly assist the principal or administrator in increasing the productivity of the desired outcome. A hybrid planning system commits to a specific goal. It is a stage in which you decide what precise parameterized line of action to use to achieve the program's desired result (long et al, 2009)

Step 3: Developing Premise

Planning is a forward-thinking approach that anticipates the risks and issues as they arise. These assumptions are referred to as premises. It is critical to build logical assumptions by gathering

appropriate studies, data, techniques, and methods, and comprehending the reality and environmental conditions in the most practical way. These assumptions help shape policies and principles that are critical to the quality and development of the intended program. All planning agents must be on the same page and adhere to the same assumption. The plan's success depends on the quality of the premises (Kilman 1984).

Step 4: Identification, Evaluation, and Selection of Alternatives

Following the establishment of the plan's particular aims and objectives as well as the formulation of the premises, the following step would be to choose the course of action. The route of action can be ordinary or inventive. "An innovative approach may be adopted by incorporating more individuals and exchanging their thoughts," Planning (2015). If the project is vital, more alternatives should be developed and thoroughly discussed among the organization's members" (pp. 104). This stage includes investigation, observation, experimentation, and continuous communication to ensure that the course of action is effective. Evaluating these viewpoints and suggestions would greatly assist the entire body in reaching the desired conclusion.

Step 5: Formulating Alternative Plan

In reality, many changes and unexpected problems or events can occur during real-time planning. A single strategy is appropriate only for minor events that require rapid decision-making. The principal or administrator is responsible for the programme's advancement and success. Choosing an alternative strategy, on the other hand, may enable the business to complete the plan in the best quality and most profitable manner possible. If the general plan fails, the administrator should have numerous backup plans.

The Importance of Planning

Planning is the most critical phase of development. The principal is the school's management and the primary champion for reform. The principal must be well rounded, with knowledge of the theory and its implementation. For success, one must plan ahead of time. The following are the benefits of planning, regardless of whether you are a teacher, political leader, principal, or business manager:

1. Providing direction and developing goals: Planning is essential for the growth of any firm. Knowing which specific path needs to be completed or accomplished generates this purpose. The purpose of this study was to provide a foundation for improved communication and commitment.
2. Building Strategies - Planning aids in the development of effective strategies. Strategies direct the leader to achieve the desired results. A strategy indicates an action compared to theory.
3. Risk reduction and threat avoidance: Planning focuses on the strengths and opportunities of reducing risk and preventing danger. The ability to formulate hypotheses and anticipate and structure sound assumptions allows the [school] manager to identify potential difficulties.
4. Flexibility and innovativeness: The power of planning is the ability to adapt to change and to be flexible in the face of unforeseen concerns and problems. Planning fosters flexibility and innovation, which represents continuous learning, open communication, and self-assurance.
5. Planning transforms the organization into a welcoming learning environment, encouraging cooperation and teamwork. Planning builds trust and produces visionary leaders and followers. In general, it strengthens relationships, involvement, participation, and openness.
6. Achieving the intended result: because it requires everyone to participate, it boosts its effectiveness and makes the program attainable. The program is driven to completion by integrating all the strategies, methodologies, and approaches. Communication and teamwork are critical for completing a specific task.

Organizing

After the principal has established the plan's directives and objectives, the next stage is to carry it out. Organizing is the process of creating an organizational structure, allocating resources, and

assigning tasks. The plan is the theoretical field, and organizing is the practical ground. Organizing is a critical step in the successful implementation of policies and plans; it is the driving force that leads to the achievement of the specific goal (Gabriel, et al., 2014).

A school is a place where people are nurtured and molded to be responsible and competitive. It develops and organizes processes and programs to help students reach their full potential. In contrast, principals have direct control and duty for improving the quality of a student's learning environment. He has the right as a superior to operate the plan however he sees fit, as well as the responsibility to carry out the duty entrusted upon him. Effective school management is clearly indicated by effective organization.

Organizing is a difficult undertaking, particularly when starting from scratch. The organization is concerned with behavior, finances, timetables, and processes. The organization's goal is to carry out the plan as efficiently as possible. The following are the steps in the organizing process for Allen, et al., (1964).

1. Identifying the work and dividing the labor - Taylor (1911) states that the administrator must clearly describe the assignment or task and divide the work from easy to difficult. The identification and division of labor aid in the optimal utilization of resources and manpower, the avoidance of overlapping and duplicative work, and the promotion of harmonious working function.

2. Establishing group work - After identifying the tasks and assignments required for the plan's success, the following stage is to select the group that will collaborate. This is commonly referred to as departmentalization. Departmentalization and specialization of work attempt to unite workers within a department and maximize product quality.

3. Delegation - Delegation of duties is critical for achieving the intended result. The duties must be properly allocated in accordance with the individual's competency, and each department, regardless of size, must have someone in charge accountable for maintaining the harmony of the environment and carrying such mission and aim to completion.

4. Establishing ties between individuals and groups - Strong and consistent communication between individuals is required for the body to function properly. Creating a clear hierarchical framework and assigning roles increases team coordination. The importance of coordination in task completion cannot be overstated.

The Benefits of Organization

Builds harmony and unite workers

- Improves communication
- Better identification and definition of task and responsibility
- Reduce the waste of time, energy, and effort
- Prevents the reiteration of the work
- Creates better understanding of the plan
- Maintaining the smooth functioning of the organization
- Enhance effective administration

Leading

The principal has a direct impact on the growth of the entire school community. He is an important planner, organizer, and leader. The ability to lead the organization is always demanded of the principal. A leader must have the necessary knowledge, ability, and attitude to efficiently and successfully organize his teammates and regulate an individual's conduct. Effective communication abilities, according to Tolici (2021), are required for all leaders. The leader must be able to persuade, motivate, and encourage people to carry out their responsibilities with a sense of responsibility.

According to Jalagat (2017), a successful leader possesses both individual and organizational leadership abilities. Individual leadership is the management of oneself. As previously said, a leader

who struggles to manage his or her own issues may struggle to lead others. It is critical for the leader to be able to guide his subordinates, develop and use their abilities toward a common goal. On the one hand, organizational leadership is defined as the capacity to develop a solid plan and strategy to achieve the organization's objectives and goals. It is critical for the principal to comprehend the organization as a whole, as well as his subordinates' feelings, strengths, and weaknesses. A successful leader is a good communicator (Tian, et al 2022).

Leading is inextricably linked to the organization's culture, tradition, and philosophy. The principal is the organization's primary mover; he supervises, establishes standards, organizes, and regulates. The leadership of the school and the establishment of school policies must be interwoven into the organizational mission, vision, and philosophy. Organizational high performance can be linked back to the value system of the organization, which is anchored in its philosophy, mission, and vision (Shayo, 2003).

According to Kolzow (2014), notable research has found that effective leaders share common qualities. The qualities are as follows:

1. Intelligence - The ability to analyze data, make sound decisions and judgements, and communicate and understand others effectively.
2. Creativity - The ability to generate novel ideas and inventive solutions.
3. Self-confidence— Demonstrates self-confidence in thinking, doing, and leading.
4. Drive - Drive with zeal, emotion, and tenacity.
5. Task-relevant Knowledge - Demonstrates sufficient knowledge and the capacity to establish sound solutions for dealing with challenges or concerns.
6. Credibility - Integrity, trustworthiness, competency, dependability, and responsibility are all examples of credibility.
7. Motivation - The ability to influence and motivate people to attain common goals.
8. Flexibility - The ability to adapt to changes and modify techniques to fit the specific environmental circumstance and condition.

The Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) issued DepEd Memorandum No. 050, s. 2020 aspires to build and improve the leadership qualities of school leaders. The various courses, programs, and seminars that the government and other departments have undertaken and produced have aided in the improvement of institutions. It has been stated that preparing and developing leaders during times of crisis and opportunity benefits the nation by increasing management effectiveness and efficiency (Daft, 2015).

Controlling

Control is a crucial role of leadership and management. There is no doubt that the principal faces a variety of problems, ranging from human to material resources. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines control as "the ability or power to decide or strongly influence the particular way in which something will happen or someone will behave, or the condition of having such ability or power." The Cambridge Dictionary defines control as "the ability or power to decide or strongly influence the particular way in which something will happen or someone will behave, or the condition of having such ability or power."

According to Saulpic and Zarlowski (2014), management control is a strategy that helps an organization to achieve its goals by addressing the risks posed by external and internal conflict and obstacles (p. 220). Effective management control is critical to ensuring a high-quality product and meeting the organization's objectives. To carry out the plan, the principal must exert authority over his or her subordinates. If anything isn't working properly, an immediate response and control are required to restore normal operation. Management control is critical in the educational setting for improving existing programs and ensuring quality education. A plan without adequate control is said to be dead.

Controlling is the last but most essential management function. Managerial control is the culmination of all managerial functions. The principal is the educational institution's headmaster; his or her job as the holder of administrative authority is critical to the organization's growth and development (Mahardianingtyas, 2019). The principal's primary role as the school's control holder is to govern his subordinates' behavior, successfully execute the plan, and maximize the team's potential.

Controlling (2015) proposes five reasons for controlling:

1. Accomplishing organizational goals
2. Judging accuracy of standards
3. Making efficient use of resources
4. Improving employee motivation
5. Ensuring order and discipline
6. Facilitating coordination in action

Principal's Supervisory Role

The Cambridge dictionary defines supervision as "the act of watching a person or activity and making certain that everything is done correctly...", "the activity of managing a department, project... making sure that things are done correctly and according to the rules," and "the activity of managing a department, project... making sure that things are done correctly and according to the rules." Chamberlain, et al., (2018) emphasizes that the primary supervisory role entails monitoring, evaluation, and overall understanding of education quality standards.

One of the constant and most significant duties of the principal, the leader in the teaching-learning environment, is supervision. The principal establishes definite goals and guides the body in the appropriate direction. His responsibilities as a supervisory leader cannot be overlooked. Supervisory leadership, according to Nwogo (2012), directs, consoles, advises, and assists in achieving the intended learning outcomes. Tayebwa, et al. (2021), go on to say that instructional supervision is critical in assuring the qualitative and quantitative quality performance of teachers and students. It is critical that the principal be knowledgeable in both practice and theory when supervising the teaching-learning process. Supervisory leadership encourages personal and professional development and is concerned with the full potential of both students and faculty.

Working with and influencing others is the process of supervision. McGregor (1960, as cited in Lawter et al, 2015) in his perspective of human nature as indicated in his theory — The theory X and theory Y. According to "Theory X," man is inherently lazy and irresponsible. The "Theory Y" represents the positive side of man, people who enjoy their work and are capable of self-direction and control. It is assumed that X (one of the team members) is disorganized and does not accomplish his job well. The principal (Y-Type) must guarantee that his subordinates are satisfied with their work, guiding them to carry out the assigned activities and assignments with pride and accountability. Furthermore, according to Lawter et al (2015), Y-Type leaders can attract positivity in the workplace and generate higher levels of motivational and supportive support. According to the notion of motivation, the leader's actions and attitude influence work performance. The principal is the institution's primary mover; he must ensure that the entire organization satisfies the objectives and educational minimum standards. As the educational institution's head supervisor, the principal must exhibit uttermost concern for his team's psychological and sociological well-being in order to reflect the goal and vision of the institution. The success of supervisory leadership is determined by how well he manages the behavior of his subordinates.

The leader's persuasive voice should not be underestimated; it always has a favorable impact on the quality and success of the endeavor. The ability of the leader to move a large group of men and convince others to carry out the task and mission to the finish line is regarded as a crucial and imperative skill. An influential voice is essential because it can impact involvement, cooperation

and collaboration, commitment, empowerment, and overall body performance.

Benedict (2013) presents five supervisory skills needed by principal

1. Conceptual skill - is the capacity to properly understand, interpret, and analyze complicated data collected, as well as combine and modify it to provide meaningful and creative solutions.
2. Technical skill — the ability to apply knowledge and abilities gained in a given task or job description.
3. Human relation skill – the capacity to successfully communicate, inspire, motivate, persuade, and pursue a large number of men to complete their jobs in order to fulfill the institution's unique goals and objectives.
4. Evaluation skill - the capacity to assess and interpret thoughts and ideas in order to make informed judgment and decisions useful for change and improvement is referred to as evaluation skill.
5. Communication skill - is the ability to establish good communication that is required in order to build empathy, understanding, and harmony inside the organization.

The quality of instructors' and students' performance was reflected by the principal supervisory leadership. His understanding, monitoring, analysis, and assessment skills are critical for the enhancement of the teacher-student learning process, the harmonious organization of the institution, and effective classroom control and environment. The principal should be an all-around leader with extensive management and leadership skills and experience. He must continually compete with the standards, maintain a friendly interactive and secure environment, and assure a high-quality learning process.

RESEARCH METHOD

The aim of this study was to explore the administrative-supervisory leadership experiences and perspectives of principals in DepEd Region VII, Division of Toledo City, Cebu, during the COVID-19 pandemic, using a descriptive phenomenological qualitative approach. The study focused on 15 full-time principals, purposefully selected to include five from public elementary schools, five from public secondary schools, and five from private institutions. Participants were informed of the study's purpose and signed a consent form before the interview. They were also assured that their responses would be kept anonymous and confidential and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Data was collected using semi-structured face-to-face interviews, observation notes, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews included eleven open-ended questions based on a review of relevant literature. Observation notes were taken during the interviews and focused on observed phenomena. Audio recordings were made of the interviews and transcribed verbatim for later analysis.

To increase the study's validity and reliability, the researchers used triangulation qualitative approaches, conflicting evidence, respondent validation, and constant comparison. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, which involved six steps: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) coding, (3) creating themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) creating a report. Thematic analysis is a frequently used qualitative research method in grounded theory, ethnography, and phenomenology.

Overall, this methodology provides a clear and concise overview of the study's aims, participants, data collection methods, and data analysis approach, while also demonstrating the researchers' efforts to ensure the study's validity and reliability.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: *The challenges that principals have experienced throughout this pandemic*

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a significant toll on the education system and school principals in the Philippines. Over 180 educational institutions worldwide have closed due to the crisis (Winthrop, 2020). School principals have faced numerous challenges during this time, with the majority of them admitting that being a principal during a pandemic is far from easy. As one principal noted, *"The pandemic has disrupted normal operational procedures and methods of administering and managing the entire school"* (Sp1).

School principals were caught off guard by the pandemic, but they remain charged and trusted to find ways to provide quality education to their students despite the constraints imposed by the government and the Department of Education. They are expected to administer and supervise their schools to achieve the expected outputs and outcomes demanded by the Department of Education. As one participant stated, *"We must still learn and find ways to successfully address the issue of providing quality education to students"* (Ep1).

The pandemic has also taken a significant toll on the mental and physical well-being of school leaders, as well as teachers. They have witnessed how their teachers faced major challenges and experienced difficulties, including struggling to balance work, family, and home obligations. Some teachers faced anxiety during this time (Sp2). School principals in elementary education, in particular, face significant demands, especially in ensuring that pupils from kindergarten to grade three have the required competencies, notably in reading. As one principal noted, *"Although we actively encourage parents to assist and teach their children to read, based on parent feedback, they too had difficulty teaching their children to read, write, and count"* (Ep2).

In public schools, the lack of funding for module reproduction has been a major obstacle for school principals. One participant noted that *"The most challenging obstacle I encountered was a lack of funding for module reproduction. The school MOOE did not cover the expected budget. As a result, the school implemented a module distribution of 1:2 or 1:3 among students"* (Ep5). In contrast, private schools have been able to provide both synchronous and asynchronous online learning, along with employing tutors to help their students with their studies. Public school students have faced numerous challenges due to the lack of reliable internet connection and adequate online learning equipment. As one principal noted, *"The issue in public schools is that the majority of students do not have a reliable internet connection or adequate online learning equipment, and because some of them live in the mountains, they only use modular learning"* (Psp1).

The pandemic has also resulted in burnout for principals and teachers due to the considerable increase in paperwork assigned to them in contrast to before the pandemic. As one principal stated, *"During the pandemic, principals and teachers experienced burnout as a result of a considerable increase in paperwork assigned to them in contrast to before the pandemic. Because the internet signal is unreliable, meeting report deadlines is a constant challenge"* (Sp3).

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the education system and school principals in the Philippines. School leaders are facing numerous challenges, including the lack of funding for module reproduction, unreliable internet connection, and burnout. Despite the constraints, school principals remain resilient and determined to provide quality education to their students.

Theme 2: *The factors that impede their ability to carry out their administrative-supervisory responsibilities and duties*

During the pandemic, school principals faced several challenges that hindered their ability to perform their administrative and supervisory duties effectively. According to one participant, *"The more paperwork we have, the less effective we become"* (Ep4). Principals had to work long hours to meet deadlines, often staying at work until midnight. They struggled to balance the demands of school administration and human resources.

Communication was a major issue for principals during the pandemic. Poor internet

connectivity made it difficult to interact with teachers efficiently, as noted by one principal (Sp4), who stated that *"communication inhibits task and duty performance."* Effective communication is critical for team leadership and carrying out the school's VMGO. One participant (Psp5) expressed concern about the quality of the education-teaching process, stating that *"what troubles me the most is assuring the quality of the teaching-learning process."*

Despite the Department of Education's provision of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) for the school year 2020-2021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were still concerns about the quality of learning from distance education. Some principals (Ep3, Sp2) observed a decrease in student motivation over time, and there was no reliable metric for assessing the quality of student learning. With a large number of students in some schools, some had to share one module, and there was no way to prove if their answers came from the internet.

Teachers also faced difficulties in assessing students' progress during the pandemic. As one participant (Sp5) noted, *"In the teaching-learning process, the teachers and the learners used to have face-to-face interactions,"* making it easier to monitor students' progress. With distance learning, teachers could not observe their students' authentic outputs and responses accurately. They had to rely on their students to provide them with accurate information, which was not always the case.

Another issue was the lack of parental support. Some parents had difficulty teaching their children how to read and answer the modules, leading them to complete the modules for their children. As one participant noted (Ep5), *"Parents are also having difficulty teaching their children to read and answer the modules."*

Overall, the quality of the teaching and learning process was a significant issue for school principals during the pandemic, with several factors impeding their ability to carry out their administrative-supervisory responsibilities and duties effectively.

Theme 3: The actions taken and the qualities enhanced during the pandemic

During the pandemic, school principals faced numerous challenges and concerns that impeded their ability to carry out their administrative-supervisory duties effectively. One of the biggest hindrances was the increase in paperwork, which resulted in principals working long hours, even after their working hours had ended. As Sp4 noted, communication was also an issue that affected their task and duty performance, with poor internet connection hindering efficient interaction with teachers.

According to Psp5, the quality of education and the teaching process was a major concern, despite the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) provided by the Department of Education. The lack of face-to-face interactions between teachers and students made it difficult to monitor students' progress accurately. Ep3 and Sp2 noted a decrease in student motivation, which was challenging to assess due to the absence of an accurate metric. Additionally, some parents struggled to support their children's learning, which led to issues with module completion.

Regarding actions taken and qualities enhanced during the pandemic, Sp5 stated that leadership became transactional, with the focus on ensuring the safety of teachers and students. The principal also tapped into willing individuals and parents to provide support to the school and disseminate information to ensure students received quality education. Ep2, who has been a principal for almost ten years, changed her outlook and demonstrated effective leadership, stating, *"she works for the country and for the children,"* and that the pandemic had provided her with a broad range of experiences.

Based on the coding used, the participants' responses on virtues and qualities can be summarized as law-abiding, innovative, and skilled in collaborating with concerned individuals. As one participant noted, *"We have learned how to collaborate and engage stakeholders in the education process, which is critical in these trying times."*

Overall, the findings suggest that the pandemic has created significant challenges for school principals, making it difficult to carry out their administrative-supervisory responsibilities effectively. However, the participants have demonstrated resilience, innovation, and effective leadership in response to these challenges.

DISCUSSION

Theme 1: The challenges that principals have experienced throughout this pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges to school administrators, especially principals, who are responsible for ensuring the smooth operation of their schools. The theme of challenges experienced by principals during the pandemic is a crucial aspect to investigate. The findings from this study revealed several challenges that principals encountered throughout the pandemic, including managing the safety of students and teachers, coordinating distance learning, and dealing with budget constraints.

The first challenge identified by the participants was managing the safety of students and teachers during the pandemic. Principals have to implement safety measures such as social distancing, providing personal protective equipment, and conducting regular temperature checks to prevent the spread of the virus in their schools. This was a challenging task for principals, especially in schools with limited resources, and it required effective communication and collaboration with stakeholders to achieve this goal.

The second challenge identified by the participants was coordinating distance learning. Principals had to ensure that students had access to technology and that teachers were trained to deliver online instruction. This required significant efforts to adjust and modify the existing curriculum and instructional methods, which posed a significant challenge for principals. The participants highlighted that the transition to distance learning was difficult for some students, particularly those from low-income families, who lacked the necessary equipment and internet access.

The third challenge identified by the participants was dealing with budget constraints. The pandemic has brought economic difficulties, leading to budget cuts and limitations on school expenditures. The participants reported that this has affected their capacity to purchase equipment and resources necessary for distance learning, as well as affecting their capacity to provide adequate support and compensation for their teachers.

Overall, the findings from this study suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has posed significant challenges for principals, particularly in managing the safety of students and teachers, coordinating distance learning, and dealing with budget constraints. These challenges required principals to be adaptable, innovative, and proactive in finding solutions to the issues they faced. Furthermore, the participants emphasized the importance of effective communication, collaboration, and support from stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and the Department of Education, in addressing these challenges.

Thus, this study highlights the significant challenges faced by principals during the pandemic and provides valuable insights into their experiences. The findings suggest that there is a need for policymakers and educational leaders to address the challenges faced by principals and provide support and resources necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of students and teachers. Future research could explore the long-term impacts of the pandemic on school administration and provide recommendations for improving school management during times of crisis.

Theme 2: The factors that impede their ability to carry out their administrative-supervisory responsibilities and duties

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented changes in the education system, particularly in the role of school principals. In theme 2, we explored the factors that impede the ability of principals to carry out their administrative-supervisory responsibilities and duties.

One of the most prominent challenges identified by the participants is the overwhelming paperwork that principals are required to complete. The more paperwork they have, the less effective they are, and as a result, principals continue to work long hours after their working hours have ended, often until midnight, just to meet deadlines. This creates a significant burden on the principals, affecting their work-life balance and ultimately impacting their ability to effectively manage their schools.

Furthermore, the pandemic has created an unprecedented challenge for principals in terms of communication. With remote learning becoming the norm, the principal has had difficulty communicating efficiently and effectively with their teachers due to a poor internet connection. As a result, task and duty performance have been inhibited, making it challenging to carry out the school's Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objectives (VMGO).

Moreover, maintaining the quality of the education-teaching process has become a concern

for the participants. Despite the Department of Education providing the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) for the school year 2020-2021, the quality of learning from distance learning still remains uncertain. Principals struggle to assess the quality of student learning accurately, as there is no metric to determine whether the answers in the modules were obtained from the internet or whether students shared modules with others.

The lack of face-to-face interactions between teachers and students has also made it challenging for principals to monitor student progress. Teachers cannot accurately observe their students during the pandemic, and as a result, they cannot validate authentic outputs and responses. This has made it difficult to identify which students are struggling and in need of additional support.

Finally, parental support has also become a significant concern for principals during the pandemic. Some parents have difficulty teaching their children to read and answer the modules, resulting in parents admitting to answering the modules for their children. This situation hinders the quality of the teaching and learning process, ultimately impacting the students' education. Henceforth, the factors identified in theme 2 show the challenges and difficulties that principals have faced in carrying out their administrative-supervisory responsibilities and duties during the pandemic. These challenges, such as overwhelming paperwork, poor communication, and lack of face-to-face interactions, have made it challenging to maintain the quality of education and student learning. These findings suggest the need for better support and resources for principals to effectively manage their schools during times of crisis.

Theme 3: The actions taken and the qualities enhanced during the pandemic

In response to the challenges and factors impeding their ability to carry out administrative-supervisory responsibilities and duties, school principals have taken a range of actions and enhanced certain qualities during the pandemic. The data from the interviews suggests that these actions and qualities can be grouped into three main categories: adapting to new guidelines and protocols, leveraging collaboration, and demonstrating leadership qualities.

One of the main actions taken by principals in response to the pandemic was adapting to new guidelines and protocols. This included following new guidelines and protocols set forth by the Department of Education, such as the Basic Learning Continuity Plan and changing the curriculum to focus on Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELC). Principals also had to adapt to new safety protocols and procedures, such as implementing social distancing measures, providing PPEs, and ensuring the health and safety of both students and staff.

The second category of actions taken by principals was leveraging collaboration. This included tapping individuals who were willing to support the school, such as parents and community leaders, to disseminate information and push for full support of the school's needs. Principals also had to collaborate with other school administrators to ensure the smooth implementation of new guidelines and protocols. For example, one principal mentioned that she formed a committee to coordinate with the local government unit and barangay officials to provide support to their school.

Finally, principals also demonstrated enhanced leadership qualities during the pandemic. They were faced with making difficult decisions and ensuring that the school continued to operate despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. This required them to be innovative, resilient, and law-abiding. One principal even remarked that the pandemic had offered her wide-ranging experiences and had changed her outlook, as she worked for the country and for the children. Therefore, the data suggests that school principals have taken a range of actions and enhanced certain qualities during the pandemic in response to the challenges and factors impeding their ability to carry out administrative-supervisory responsibilities and duties. The actions and qualities can be grouped into three main categories: adapting to new guidelines and protocols, leveraging collaboration, and demonstrating leadership qualities. By adapting to new guidelines, collaborating with others, and demonstrating strong leadership, principals have been able to ensure that their schools continue to operate and provide quality education to their students despite the pandemic.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study aimed to explore the experiences and challenges faced by school principals in the Philippines during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings revealed that school

principals faced various challenges such as limited resources, difficulty in adapting to online platforms, and lack of face-to-face interactions with students and teachers. Additionally, factors such as government policies, teacher and parent concerns, and student engagement also impeded their ability to carry out their administrative and supervisory duties.

Despite these challenges, the study also showed that school principals took various actions and enhanced their qualities during the pandemic. These actions included implementing alternative learning modalities, collaborating with concerned individuals, and following government guidelines to ensure the safety of teachers and students. They also demonstrated qualities such as resilience, adaptability, and innovation to cope with the sudden changes brought about by the pandemic.

Overall, this study highlights the significant role of school principals in ensuring the continuity of education during times of crisis. It is evident that they faced various challenges and limitations, but they also displayed remarkable strengths and qualities that helped them overcome these obstacles. The findings of this study provide valuable insights that can aid in developing policies and interventions that can support and empower school principals in the Philippines and in other countries facing similar challenges.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

Limitations:

There are some limitations to this study that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the study was conducted in the Philippines, and the findings may not be generalizable to other countries with different educational systems, policies, and cultures. Secondly, the sample size was relatively small, which may limit the representativeness of the findings. Lastly, the study relied on self-report data, which may be subject to social desirability bias.

Further research:

Further research is needed to address the limitations of this study and to expand our understanding of the challenges faced by school principals during the pandemic. Firstly, future studies could compare the experiences of school principals in different countries to identify similarities and differences in their challenges and coping strategies. Secondly, larger sample sizes and more diverse participant groups could be used to improve the generalizability of the findings. Lastly, future studies could use mixed-methods approaches, including both self-report data and objective measures, to increase the validity of the findings. Furthermore, future research could explore the role of technology in mitigating the challenges faced by school principals during the pandemic.

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