



CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF SCHOOL HEADS IN INTEGRATED BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOLS: IMPACTS ON INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

MARK JAYSON B. CABARLES

School Principal

Maranatha Christian Academy of Batangas City, Inc.

markjayson.cabarles@deped.gov.ph

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the curriculum leadership practices of school heads in Integrated Basic Education Schools (IBES) in relation to their impact on instructional quality. Anchored on Transformational Leadership, Instructional Leadership, and Distributed Leadership theories, the research employed a descriptive-quantitative design involving 80 respondents—school heads and teachers—selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered using a validated and reliable survey questionnaire measuring curriculum leadership domains (planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) and instructional quality indicators (lesson delivery, teaching strategies, assessment practices). Statistical treatments included frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and Pearson's r correlation. Findings revealed that school heads generally demonstrated a high extent of curriculum leadership practices, particularly in facilitating collaborative planning, aligning curriculum with DepEd standards, and conducting systematic monitoring and evaluation. Instructional quality was likewise rated high, with strengths in varied teaching strategies and assessment practices, though certain areas required enhancement. Correlation analysis indicated a significant

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positive relationship between curriculum leadership practices and instructional quality, suggesting that stronger leadership engagement in curriculum matters contributes to more effective teaching and learning. The study highlights the importance of sustained professional development for school heads, the integration of shared leadership approaches, and the strategic use of monitoring data to inform instructional improvements. It recommends policy support for reducing non-instructional burdens on school leaders, fostering teacher-leader collaboration, and enhancing leadership preparation programs tailored to the integrated school context. The results provide empirical evidence for strengthening curriculum leadership as a lever for improving instructional quality in IBES across the Philippines.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined operationally to provide clarity and ensure a consistent understanding of the variables and concepts used in this study on curriculum leadership practices of school heads in Integrated Basic Education Schools and their impacts on instructional quality. These definitions are based on the specific scope and focus of the research, as they apply to the respondents, setting, and methodology of the study.

1. Curriculum Leadership Practices. In this study, curriculum leadership practices refer to the strategic actions and decisions of school heads in planning, implementing, and monitoring the curriculum to ensure alignment with national standards and responsiveness to the needs of the school community. This includes setting clear learning goals, ensuring resource

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availability, guiding teachers in lesson preparation, and regularly evaluating curriculum delivery for continuous improvement.

2. School Head. The term school head refers to the principal or designated leader responsible for managing the operations of an Integrated Basic Education School. For this study, a school head's role includes supervising curriculum execution, guiding teacher performance, and ensuring that instructional quality meets DepEd standards. The term is limited to those formally appointed to lead IBES within the research locale.

3. Integrated Basic Education Schools (IBES). Integrated Basic Education Schools are institutions that offer both elementary and junior high school levels under one administrative structure. In this study, IBES serve as the setting where curriculum leadership practices are examined, particularly in managing the continuity and coherence of instruction from lower to higher grade levels.

4. Curriculum Planning. Curriculum planning, in the context of this study, refers to the systematic process undertaken by school heads to organize, sequence, and allocate learning competencies and resources in alignment with DepEd's K to 12 curriculum. It includes setting academic priorities, coordinating subject coverage, and scheduling activities to ensure effective lesson delivery.

5. Curriculum Implementation. Curriculum implementation is the process by which the planned curriculum is delivered in classrooms. For this study, it involves the school head's role in supporting teachers, ensuring that instructional activities adhere to planned competencies,

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and providing the necessary materials and conditions for teaching and learning to occur effectively.

6. Curriculum Monitoring and Evaluation. This term refers to the systematic assessment of how the curriculum is being carried out in the school. In the study, it includes school heads observing classes, reviewing lesson plans, assessing student outputs, and using feedback to make necessary adjustments for improving instructional delivery and alignment with learning standards.

7. Instructional Quality. Instructional quality in this research pertains to the overall effectiveness of teaching as reflected in lesson delivery, use of varied teaching strategies, and sound assessment practices. It is measured through the perceptions of teachers and school heads, focusing on how these practices contribute to learner understanding and achievement.

8. Lesson Delivery. Lesson delivery is defined here as the manner in which teachers present and explain lesson content to students. This includes clarity of explanations, engagement techniques, pacing, and ability to connect lessons to learners' prior knowledge. The study measures how leadership practices of school heads influence the quality of lesson delivery.

9. Teaching Strategies. Teaching strategies refer to the methods, techniques, and approaches teachers use to facilitate student learning. In this study, it includes both traditional and innovative methods encouraged or supported by school heads through leadership and professional development initiatives.

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10. Assessment Practices. Assessment practices are the various tools and methods teachers use to measure student learning and provide feedback. This study looks at how school heads, through their curriculum leadership, influence the alignment of assessment with learning objectives, the variety of assessments used, and the integration of results into instructional improvement.

INTRODUCTION

The educational landscape continually evolves, shaped by shifting societal needs, technological advancements, and global goals for student learning. In many countries, the imperative to prepare students for the complexities of the 21st-century workplace has pushed educational systems toward greater integration, interdisciplinarity, and holistic development (Ralebese, Jita, & Badmus, 2025). In this context, conversations around curriculum leadership have become central: who designs, directs, and stewards the curriculum ultimately influences how instruction unfolds in classrooms, how teachers are supported, and how learners are empowered. Understanding curriculum leadership not merely as administrative oversight but as dynamic, instructional guidance underscores its significance in shaping educational quality at scale.

Within schools, the institution's leadership—particularly the school head or principal—plays a pivotal role in mediating between policy intent and classroom realities. As custodians of curriculum implementation, school heads must align national or regional standards with

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local nuances (Chabalala & Naidoo, 2021). Their leadership practices influence teacher development, resource allocation, collaborative culture, and the ongoing adjustments that keep instruction relevant, rigorous, and inclusive. In many systems, the role of school leaders has shifted from managerial to instructional leadership, signaling the recognition that student outcomes are closely tied to the quality of curriculum enactment and the environment cultivated in schools.

Globally, international bodies such as UNESCO and rigorous comparative educational research highlight that strong curriculum leadership correlates with improved instructional quality and learning outcomes. In countries across Europe, North America, and Asia, principals who engage in curriculum design, observe classrooms, mentor teachers, and facilitate professional learning communities are more likely to foster sustained school improvement (Dellomas & Deri, 2022). In Finland, for example, national curriculum frameworks are designed with input from school-based leaders to ensure adaptability and relevance. In Canada and Australia, school leaders often act as lead learners themselves—modeling best practices, coaching teachers, and fostering reflective instruction. These leadership practices stimulate collective responsibility and adaptability in the face of shifting educational demands, from digital literacy to inclusive pedagogy.

Moreover, empirical studies worldwide reveal that curriculum leadership is associated not only with technical compliance but with innovation. In Singapore, curriculum leaders in schools spearhead inquiry-based learning and collaborative planning sessions, fostering a culture of continuous improvement (Gading, 2024). Research in the United Kingdom suggests

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that head teachers who prioritize distributed leadership—empowering department heads and teacher leaders in curriculum decision-making—report higher levels of instructional coherence and better student engagement (Bellibas, Gumus, & Liu, 2021). Equally, in parts of Latin America and Africa where educational systems are decentralized, effective school-level leadership helps mediate disparities in resource availability and teacher preparation, reinforcing equitable access to quality instruction.

At the same time, global trends like the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the need for agile curriculum adaptations. School leaders worldwide had to manage transitions to remote learning, redesign assessment practices, and support teachers navigating new pedagogies (Kemethofer, Helm, & Warwas, 2025). The most effective school heads were those who demonstrated curriculum leadership through clear communication, swift curricular redesign, ongoing teacher support, and attentiveness to learner well-being. As a result, attention to curriculum leadership in policy circles has grown, with frameworks emerging that emphasize leadership not as static policy execution, but as iterative, responsive practice geared toward instructional excellence.

Yet despite these global insights, challenges remain in translating curriculum leadership theory into consistent, high-impact practice across diverse contexts. The relationship between leadership routines, teacher capacity, and instructional outcomes remains complex (Abonyi & Sofo, 2021). Questions persist about how school heads balance managerial tasks with instructional leadership, how they engage teachers meaningfully, and how they navigate constraints such as resources, class size, and external accountability

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pressures. These global patterns underscore the need for context-specific studies that can illuminate how curriculum leadership actually plays out in practice, and how it can be strengthened to uplift instructional quality.

In the Philippines, curriculum leadership practices are embedded within a robust framework of laws, memorandums, and reform programs designed to elevate basic education. Republic Acts such as RA 9155 (Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001) and RA 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013) define the roles of school heads and local school boards in crafting and implementing curriculum. DepEd issuances—including DepEd Order No. 21 s. 2019 initiating the K to 12 curriculum review, and DepEd Order No. 8 s. 2020 mandating a rationalized organization structure—directly call for school heads to lead curriculum alignment and deployment (Lambrecht, Lenkeit, & Hartmann, 2022). These national directives situate school heads as key agents in ensuring that teaching practices reflect the K to 12 learning competencies, contextualized content, and varied assessment modalities.

Moreover, the Department of Education has rolled out programs like the School-Based Management (SBM) and Performance-Based Bonus system, both of which incentivize school heads to foster quality instruction and monitor school performance indicators. Through the Schools Division Office, they receive training and technical assistance in curriculum supervision, monitoring classroom implementation, and facilitating professional development sessions (Shava & Heystek, 2021). Meanwhile, local government units and School Boards oversee adaptation of instructional programs and ensure resources are provided. Together,

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these regulatory frameworks and support structures aim to strengthen curriculum leadership as a lever to improve learning outcomes across elementary and junior high education.

At the school level, principals in the Philippines are expected to conduct regular Learning Action Cell sessions, oversee preparation and implementation of School Improvement Plans (SIPs), and facilitate collaborative curriculum planning among teachers. These practices reflect the DepEd's emphasis on instructional leadership, moving beyond administrative tasks toward curriculum-centered leadership (Sanjani, 2024). Memorandums also require school heads to collect and analyze classroom observation data, guide remedial or enriching interventions, and align school-level initiatives with division and regional assessment data. In urban and rural contexts alike, school heads are tasked with bridging policy, teaching, and community engagement to ensure cohesive curriculum delivery.

These mandates and programs exist within a broader national priority to improve learner outcomes as measured in national assessments like the National Achievement Test (NAT), the Basic Education Exit Profile, and various international benchmarks (Abella, Kilag, Andrin, & Taniza, 2024). The Philippine government continues to launch initiatives to address gaps in instructional quality, especially in remote and under-resourced areas. Despite these frameworks, variations persist among schools in how curriculum leadership is enacted and how these practices translate to improved teacher performance and student learning. Some school heads demonstrate strong facilitative leadership, while others remain constrained by managerial burdens or limited professional development opportunities. The Philippines also faces systemic challenges including teacher shortages, high pupil-teacher ratios, logistical

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issues in implementing multiple learning modalities, and variable access to technology (Darling-Hammond, 2021). These factors complicate efforts to sustain consistent curriculum leadership across regions and school types. Although policy and legal structures articulate the responsibilities and expectations for school heads, the extent to which these translate into effective leadership practice, and consequently instructional quality, remains under-examined in the Philippine context.

At the local level—for instance in Integrated Basic Education Schools (IBES), which serve both elementary and junior high grade levels—the role of the school head is particularly demanding. They must oversee a wider span of grade levels, multiple curricular subjects, and diverse teacher teams (Gore, Rosser, Jaremus, & Miller, 2024). Managing curriculum coherence across kindergarten through Grade 10 requires intentional planning, ongoing teacher collaboration, and monitoring across different stages of learner development. Limited research has explored how school heads in such integrated contexts balance curriculum continuity, teacher support, and instructional evaluation across these broader responsibilities.

Within this local landscape, disparities emerge based on geographic location, school size, and resource levels. Some IBES benefit from strong administrative support, engaged teaching staff, and active community stakeholders, enabling robust curriculum leadership practices (Puruwita, Jamian, & Abdul Aziz, 2022). Others face constraints—insufficient mentoring for teachers, limited time for planning, and heavy non-instructional duties—that limit their ability to exercise strategic curriculum leadership. These variations suggest the need

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for localized inquiry into how curriculum leadership unfolds in IBES and how it affects instruction in real classrooms.

Given the global and national imperatives for curriculum leadership to drive instructional quality, the IBES context offers a unique vantage point to study its impact. Integrated schools operate at the intersection of elementary and secondary curriculum frameworks, raising questions about continuity of pedagogy, progression of learning, and alignment of standards (Ruloff & Petko, 2025). Consequently, studying curriculum leadership in these settings can yield insights into how school heads orchestrate coherent instructional approaches and support teachers across multi-grade levels. Despite policy frameworks and the recognized importance of instructional leadership, there is limited empirical research examining how school heads in Philippine IBES enact curriculum leadership, and how this, in turn, affects instructional quality in classrooms. There is a need to understand the specific leadership practices, facilitation of teacher learning, monitoring of curriculum implementation, and adjustments based on performance data. Moreover, the research gap encompasses identification of barriers and enablers that affect leadership impact in integrated settings, offering evidence to inform both policy refinement and practical interventions.

Therefore, undertaking a study focused on Curriculum Leadership Practices of School Heads in Integrated Basic Education Schools and their Impacts on Instructional Quality is timely and essential. Such research can illuminate the ways in which leadership translates national curriculum mandates and local needs into effective, coherent instruction; identify supports and constraints faced by school heads; and offer evidence-based recommendations

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for enhancing leadership preparation, policy guidance, and school-level capacity to uplift instructional quality in IBES across the Philippines.

Research Instruments

The primary research instrument used in this study is a structured survey questionnaire designed to gather data on the demographic profile of the respondents, the extent of curriculum leadership practices of school heads, and the level of instructional quality in Integrated Basic Education Schools. The questionnaire is divided into two main parts. The first part covers the demographic profile of the respondents, which includes age, gender, and educational attainment. This section is intended to provide baseline information that may be analyzed in relation to the other variables of the study.

The second part of the questionnaire focuses on the variables stated in the Statement of the Problem. This section is organized according to the identified indicators of the study: curriculum leadership practices in terms of curriculum planning, curriculum implementation, and curriculum monitoring and evaluation; and instructional quality in terms of lesson delivery, teaching strategies, and assessment practices. Each indicator is represented by several items that capture the respondents' perceptions and experiences regarding these dimensions. The statements are carefully worded to ensure clarity, neutrality, and alignment with the conceptual framework of the study.

A 4-point Likert scale is used to measure responses in the second part of the questionnaire. The scale's design ensures that the data gathered can be quantitatively

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analyzed to determine the extent of leadership practices and the level of instructional quality as perceived by the respondents. The questionnaire items were developed based on the indicators derived from the Statement of the Problem and informed by literature and policies relevant to curriculum leadership and instructional quality. Draft items were reviewed to ensure they cover all the intended aspects of the study variables and that they are easily understood by the respondents. This alignment between the research questions, variables, and instrument ensures that the data collected will directly address the study's objectives and hypotheses.

By using a standardized survey questionnaire, the study ensures consistency in the data collection process, as all respondents receive the same set of questions in the same format. This uniformity supports the reliability of the results and allows for accurate comparisons across different respondent groups. The design of the instrument facilitates the gathering of quantifiable data suitable for statistical analysis, which is essential for the descriptive-quantitative research design of this study.

Validity and Reliability Testing

To ensure the accuracy and consistency of the research instrument, the survey questionnaire underwent validity and reliability testing prior to its official administration. Content validity was established by subjecting the instrument to the review of a panel of experts composed of educators, school heads, and research specialists who have relevant experience in curriculum leadership and instructional quality. They evaluated the

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questionnaire items based on their clarity, relevance, comprehensiveness, and alignment with the study's objectives. Feedback from the experts was incorporated to refine the wording of the items, ensure alignment with the research variables, and eliminate any ambiguities or redundancies. This process guaranteed that the instrument measures what it is intended to measure.

To further enhance validity, the questionnaire was subjected to pilot testing with a small group of respondents who possess similar characteristics to the target participants but are not included in the actual study. This trial run allowed the researcher to assess the clarity of instructions, the appropriateness of the items, and the average time required for completion. The pilot test also helped identify any items that might be misunderstood, overly complex, or not directly related to the study variables. Necessary revisions were made to improve the overall usability and effectiveness of the questionnaire.

Reliability testing was conducted to determine the internal consistency of the instrument, ensuring that the items measuring the same construct produce consistent results. The pilot test responses were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha, a statistical measure of reliability. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable, indicating that the questionnaire items have satisfactory internal consistency. Items with low correlation to the overall scale were revised or removed to strengthen reliability. The results of the reliability test confirmed that the instrument meets the required level of consistency for a descriptive-quantitative study. This indicates that the questionnaire can be trusted to yield stable and dependable results when administered to the target respondents. The combination

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of expert validation, pilot testing, and statistical reliability testing ensured that the research instrument is both valid and reliable, thereby strengthening the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings.

By undertaking these procedures, the researcher ensured that the survey questionnaire is capable of producing accurate, consistent, and meaningful data. This rigorous process of validity and reliability testing not only enhances the scientific rigor of the study but also ensures that the instrument serves as a sound basis for drawing valid conclusions and making evidence-based recommendations.

Data Gathering Procedures

The data gathering procedures for this study were carried out in a systematic and organized manner to ensure accuracy, reliability, and ethical compliance. Prior to the collection of data, the researcher secured the necessary approvals from the concerned authorities, including permission from the school division office and the heads of the selected Integrated Basic Education Schools. Formal letters were sent to the respective school administrators explaining the objectives of the study, the scope of the data collection, and the confidentiality measures to be implemented. Approval from these authorities served as the formal authorization to proceed with the survey administration.

Once approval was obtained, the researcher coordinated with the designated school heads or focal persons to schedule the administration of the survey questionnaires. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their

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participation, and their right to refuse or withdraw at any point without any negative consequences. Clear instructions on how to answer the questionnaire were provided, and respondents were encouraged to seek clarification for any items they found unclear. This ensured that all participants had a full understanding of the process before they began answering.

The survey questionnaires were distributed either in printed form or through a secure online platform, depending on the accessibility and preference of the respondents. This flexibility allowed the researcher to accommodate varying schedules and minimize disruptions to school activities. Respondents were given ample time to complete the questionnaire, and the researcher closely monitored the collection process to ensure that all distributed instruments were retrieved. For online administration, follow-up reminders were sent to maximize the response rate.

Upon collection, the completed questionnaires were carefully checked for completeness to ensure that all items had been answered appropriately. Any questionnaires with significant missing data were excluded from the final analysis to maintain the integrity of the results. The responses were then encoded and organized into a database for statistical processing. This systematic encoding process minimized errors and ensured that the data were ready for analysis according to the planned statistical treatments.

Throughout the data gathering process, strict adherence to ethical guidelines was maintained. Respondents' identities were kept confidential by using codes instead of names,

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and all data were stored securely to prevent unauthorized access. The researcher ensured that the information gathered was used solely for academic purposes. By following these procedures, the study ensured that data collection was conducted in a credible, transparent, and ethically sound manner, providing a solid foundation for accurate analysis and interpretation of the results.

Statistical Treatment

The data collected in this study were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to address the research questions and test the stated hypotheses. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were employed to summarize and present the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, and educational attainment. These measures provided a clear overview of the respondents' characteristics, which served as the baseline for analyzing relationships with other variables in the study. To determine the extent of curriculum leadership practices and the level of instructional quality, weighted mean was used. This measure allowed the researcher to interpret the responses from the 4-point Likert scale and identify the degree to which the indicators were observed. The weighted mean scores were interpreted using predetermined verbal descriptions to provide meaningful insights into the respondents' perceptions of each indicator, including curriculum planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, lesson delivery, teaching strategies, and assessment practices.

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was applied to test the relationship between the curriculum leadership practices of school heads and the level of

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instructional quality. This statistical tool is appropriate for determining the strength and direction of the relationship between two continuous variables measured on an interval or ratio scale. A significance level of 0.05 was set as the criterion for determining whether the relationship was statistically significant.

The same correlation analysis was also used to examine the relationship between the profile of school heads and their curriculum leadership practices. This provided an understanding of whether certain demographic factors influenced leadership practices in the context of Integrated Basic Education Schools. The results were presented in tabular form, showing both the computed correlation coefficients and the corresponding interpretations. All statistical computations were performed using a reliable statistical software package to ensure accuracy and efficiency. The use of these statistical treatments allowed the study to present objective, evidence-based findings that directly addressed the research objectives and hypotheses. By applying both descriptive and inferential statistics, the study ensured a comprehensive analysis of the data, enabling valid conclusions and actionable recommendations.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical standards to ensure the integrity of the research process and the protection of the rights and welfare of all participants. Prior to data collection, formal permission was sought from the concerned school authorities and the appropriate offices within the Department of Education. The purpose, objectives, and

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procedures of the study were clearly communicated to all potential participants through an informed consent process. Respondents were assured that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to refuse or withdraw from the study at any time without any adverse consequences.

Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the research. No names or personal identifiers were recorded on the survey questionnaires; instead, unique codes were assigned to each respondent for data organization and analysis purposes. All collected data were stored securely, with access limited to the researcher alone, and were used solely for academic purposes related to the study. Any information that could potentially reveal the identity of a respondent was omitted from reports and publications to ensure privacy.

The study also ensured that the survey questions posed no psychological, social, or physical risk to the participants. All items in the questionnaire were designed to be respectful, unbiased, and free from any form of discrimination. Care was taken to avoid sensitive or intrusive questions that might cause discomfort. In cases where participants sought clarification, the researcher provided clear explanations to promote understanding and informed responses.

Upon completion of the study, the results will be shared with the participating schools and relevant stakeholders in a manner that upholds confidentiality. The findings will be presented as aggregated data, ensuring that no individual responses can be traced back to

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specific participants. This transparent reporting process not only respects the contributions of the respondents but also provides valuable feedback to the educational community. By following these ethical considerations, the researcher ensured that the study was conducted with honesty, fairness, and respect for human dignity. These measures not only uphold the professional standards of academic research but also contribute to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings.

Conclusions

Based on the summary of findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The majority of school heads in Integrated Basic Education Schools are in their mid-to late-career stages, predominantly female, and possess graduate-level qualifications, suggesting a leadership profile that combines professional maturity, relevant experience, and advanced academic preparation.
2. Curriculum planning is a relative strength among school heads, as evidenced by their frequent engagement in collaborative and standards-aligned planning activities. However, the translation of these plans into consistent curriculum implementation and systematic monitoring remains a challenge, indicating a gap between planning and execution.
3. Instructional quality, particularly in lesson delivery, is consistently high, reflecting well-organized, engaging, and relevant teaching practices. However, the occasional application of diverse teaching strategies and limited integration of differentiated

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instruction and ICT tools point to areas needing reinforcement for broader and more inclusive instructional effectiveness.

4. Assessment practices are generally sound and often implemented in alignment with learning objectives, complemented by balanced use of formative and summative tools. Nevertheless, the inconsistency in designing assessments for different learning styles suggests a need for more inclusive evaluation approaches.
5. Educational attainment significantly influences curriculum leadership practices, reinforcing the importance of advanced academic preparation in enhancing leadership effectiveness. In contrast, age and gender do not have a significant impact, indicating that leadership competence is shaped more by qualifications and professional development than by demographic factors.
6. Strong positive correlations between all dimensions of curriculum leadership and instructional quality confirm that school heads play a pivotal role in improving teaching and learning outcomes. Effective curriculum leadership across planning, implementation, and monitoring creates a coherent instructional environment that supports sustained quality education.
7. The persistent and high-frequency challenges faced by school heads—particularly balancing administrative and instructional responsibilities, addressing resource gaps, motivating teachers, and catering to diverse learner needs—highlight systemic

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constraints that require institutional and policy-level interventions to enable more focused and effective curriculum leadership.

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