



REVISITING SCHOOL HEAD'S COMPETENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN BATANGAS PROVINCE

DE PADUA, MA. RITA LUZ M.

Bilaran Elementary School
maritaluz.depadua@g.batstate-u.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

This study focused on the assessment of the level of management competence of school heads, their profile, and the issues and challenges. The descriptive research design using the quantitative and qualitative approach was utilized in this study employing a researcher – made questionnaire. Focus group discussion was used to identify the issues and challenges encountered in managing schools. Respondents were 261 school heads and 373 teachers in Batangas Province. Weighted mean, t – test, and ANOVA were utilized as statistical tools to treat gathered data. The results revealed that school heads are mostly female, experienced, have master's degree and are highly trained. School heads demonstrate high competence in management in terms of instructional leadership, human resource management and development, learning environment, parents' involvement and community partnership, and school leadership management and operations and moderate competence in some areas of research management. School heads and teachers have varied views in line with human resource management and development, instructional leadership, and research management and similar views in line with learning environment, parent's involvement and community partnership, and school leadership management operations. Age, sex, years of

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service, and trainings and seminars are deviating factors for management competence while educational attainment is not. Resistance to change and professional growth; resources; communication and stakeholder participation; and administrative and bureaucratic constraints are the issues and challenges encountered in managing schools. A sustainable management program entitled EMPOWER (Embedding Purposeful Operations with Excellent Resources) was hereby proposed in line with the findings.

Keywords: *sustainable management; competence; school head*

INTRODUCTION

Management competence of school leaders is a crucial aspect of school operations. School heads need to be competent in several areas, such as instructional leadership, human resource management and development, learning environment, parents' involvement and community partnership, school leadership and operations, and research management. These areas are essential aspects that need to be managed effectively to promote sustainable management for the school and students' welfare.

On a global scale, there is a standard for assessing the management operations of school heads. This standard applies to management systems used by educational institutions. Put slightly differently, ISO 21001 is about how an organization does its work and provides a common management tool for organizations that provide educational products and services that are capable of meeting the requirements and needs of learners and other customers [1]. In the Philippines, the role of school management in improving teacher quality is now more

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clearly defined with the enactment of a landmark education policy that sets professional standards for leaders of the country's schools. The Department of Education published DepEd Order 24, series of 2020 on the Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) [2].

However, school heads have not sustained their management competence (Arif et al., 2019). Teachers, students, and the school reflect this. This low level of management skill posed significant concern. Teachers need the guidance of school heads to improve the delivery of learning. This indicates that the effectiveness of the school heads is important in supporting better academic performance [3]. However, there are many issues and challenges faced by school heads in improving management competence. One of the perceived reasons for the continued decline in student achievement and low academic achievement in public schools is the poor management competence demonstrated by many school heads [4].

Given the above scenario, the researcher, being a school head, also observed that the school heads are facing challenges in managing schools. Therefore, the researcher aimed to determine the level of management competence of school heads. Empowering the school heads would help produce competent teachers and, in turn, excellent students.

OBJECTIVES

This study revisited the management competence of school heads in Batangas Province and identify issues and challenges, to come up with a sustainable management

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program.

Specifically, this study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Describe the profile of the school heads in terms of:
 - 1.1 age;
 - 1.2 sex;
 - 1.3 highest educational attainment.
 - 1.4 years in service as school leader; and
 - 1.5 number of trainings and seminars attended for the last three years.
2. Determine the level of competence of school heads as assessed by teachers and school heads themselves in terms of the following areas:
 - 2.1 instructional leadership.
 - 2.2 human resource management and development;
 - 2.3 learning environment;
 - 2.4 parents' involvement and community partnership;
 - 2.5 school leadership management and operations ; and
 - 2.6 research management.
3. Find out the differences of the assessments of the two group of respondents.
4. Ascertain the significant difference on the level of competence of the school heads when grouped according to profile variables.
5. Identify the issues and challenges encountered in managing the schools.
6. Prepare a sustainable management program.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a descriptive research design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gather data on the profile, level of competence, and issues and challenges of school heads, with the aim of crafting a management guide. The respondents of the study were 261 school heads and 373 teachers from Batangas Province. To determine the sample size, multi-stage sampling was employed, using the Raosoft sampling calculator. Stratified proportionate sampling was also applied to categorize respondents according to each congressional district. The research study utilized a researcher-made to determine the profile of school heads and to assess their management competence. Additionally, a focus group discussion was conducted to identify the issues and challenges faced by school heads in managing schools.

For meaningful interpretation and analysis of the data of the study, the data was treated using the statistical tools. Composite mean was used to determine the level of competence of school heads. The t-test and ANOVA was used to find out the significant differences based on profile and among the two group of respondents.

It was ensured that the information provided by the respondents was used solely for the purpose of this research. In conducting the study, the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 were strictly followed. The identities of the respondents and their schools were not revealed anywhere in the manuscript to maintain confidentiality.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1.1 Profile of School Heads

1.1.1 Age

The majority of the school heads are aged 51 years old and above while more than a quarter falls within the age of 41-50 years old. Additionally, almost a quarter is under the age of 31-40 years old while very few are 30 years old and below. This distribution reveals that older, more experienced educators typically hold the leadership position. The small percentage of young school leaders shows that advancing to higher career steps needs time, which will be attained through experience and age. This result is consistent with the findings a study which state that school heads often reach the management positions when they spend years of teaching experience, thereby increasing their age in the process [5].

Table 1. Profile of School Heads in Terms of Age

Age bracket	Frequency	Percentage
30 years old and below	3	1.1
31-40 years old	56	21.5
41-50 years old	81	31
51 years old and above	121	46.4
Total	261	100

1.1.2 Sex

School leadership is dominated by female school heads, covering almost three-fourths of the population leaving a quarter for the male population. This may be caused by the cultural and traditional mindset of society labelling teachers as a female occupation.

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For this reason, there are more female teachers rising to leadership position since the total population is dominated by females. Women may also be more interested to join the school leadership force. The findings align with the study which highlighted the dominance of female school heads [6].

Table 2. Profile of School heads in Terms of Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	69	26.4
Female	192	73.6
Total	261	100

1.1.3 Highest Educational Attainment

Most school heads attained a Master's degree comprising almost half of the population. This means that the school heads value their education and even pursuing advanced degrees. This result may be attributed to the continuing professional advancement of school heads which is fueled by the qualifications needed for the position. Pursuing higher education is also needed to enhance the skills of the school heads and perform more effectively. This finding is consistent with previous studies that highlighted that school heads continuously seek professional development through advanced degrees [7].

Table 3. Profile of School heads in Terms of Highest Educational Attainment

Educational attainment	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's degree	67	25.7
Master's degree	115	44.1

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Doctorate degree	79	30.3
Total	261	100

1.1.4 Years in Service as School Leader

Most of the school heads spent 11-15 years in service, comprising almost a quarter of the population. This was followed by those with 5-10 years of service. Only a few lands with the classification of having 21-25 years of service. This distribution suggests that most school heads have moderate experience in leadership, with fewer having very long leadership careers. The years of service of school heads may be affected by the retirement policies, which limit the number of years spent in the service.

Table 4. Profile of School Heads in Terms of Years in Service as School leader

Years in service	Frequency	Percentage
5 years and below	47	18
6-10	47	18
11-15	5	21.8
16-20	43	16.5
21-25	26	10
26 years and above	41	15.7
Total	261	100

1.1.5 Number of Trainings and Seminars Attended

More than half of the school heads attended ten or more trainings, while almost a

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quarter participated in four to six trainings or seminars. Only a few school heads attended one to three or seven to nine trainings and seminars. This indicates the commitment of school heads to professional development. In relation to this, school heads demonstrated a very high degree of professional standard practices in terms of personal and professional growth, as well as in establishing relevant professional relationships through seminars and trainings [8].

Table 5. Profile of School heads in Terms of Number of Trainings and Seminars Attended

Number of trainings and seminars	Frequency	Percentage
1-3	12	4.6
4-6	59	22.6
7-9	24	9.2
10 and above	166	63.6
Total	261	100

1.2 Level of Competence of School Heads

1.2.1 Instructional Leadership

School heads demonstrate a high level of competence, as reported by both themselves and the teachers. This indicates that they perform their roles effectively in ensuring the implementation of sound instructional practices. School educational goals are achieved. The high ratings from both teachers and school heads themselves reflect their commitment to fulfilling these responsibilities [9].

Among the top-scored items is collaboration with faculty to develop and implement curriculum enhancements that align with educational standards and student needs. This

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suggests that effective communication and cooperation are maintained among teachers, ensuring that the curriculum remains responsive to student requirements. Managing schools requires significant time and effort, as well as a shared vision within the educational community [10].

Additionally, school heads demonstrate high competence in promoting a student-centered learning environment by advocating for differentiated instruction and personalized learning. This indicates that, through instructional support, individualized instruction is provided to students, which is essential for achieving high-quality education. This may be attributed to the standards set by the DepEd, which emphasize aligning instructional practices with learner needs and preferences. The findings indicate that school heads fully comply with and support these principles of learning.

However, both teachers and school heads identify areas requiring further improvement. The lowest score is observed in developing explicit systems for measuring and improving student learning outcomes, enabling instructional practices to be data-driven and aligned with academic standards. This indicates a lack of effective systems for tracking and utilizing data for school improvement, which may be attributed to limited access to data management tools or the heavy workload of school heads.

Table 6. Competence of School Heads in Instructional Leadership

Collaborates with faculty to develop and implement curriculum enhancements that align with educational	3.86	HC	3.87	HC
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standards and student needs				
Promotes a student-centered learning environment by advocating for differentiated instruction and personalized learning	3.86	HC	3.87	HC
Develops explicit systems for measuring and improving student learning outcomes allowing the instruction practices to be data-driven and aligned with academic standards.	3.67	HC	3.81	HC
Composite Mean	3.77	HC	3.84	HC

Legend: WM – Weighted Mean; VI – Verbal Interpretation; HC – Highly Competent

1.2.2 Human Resource Management and Development

School heads demonstrate a high level of competence in human resource management and development, as assessed by both teachers and the school heads themselves. This reflects the strong capacity of school heads to manage personnel effectively. This may be attributed to prior training and professional development programs attended in the area of human resource management and development.

Among the highest-rated items, as assessed by school heads, is developing and implementing strategies to recognize and reward outstanding performance, thereby fostering a positive and motivating work environment. School heads take the initiative to encourage good practices among teachers by boosting morale, which is essential for staff retention.

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As assessed by teachers, school heads demonstrate high competence in promoting collaboration and teamwork among teachers, effectively facilitating communication channels and conflict resolution processes. This suggests that teachers commend the efforts of school heads in sustaining team cohesion and resolving issues. This finding may be attributed to teachers' observations of how school heads use collaboration to resolve school issues.

In contrast, school heads rate themselves lowest in adhering to legal and ethical standards in all aspects of human resource management. This suggests some self-perceived difficulty in fully complying with HR laws and regulations, which may reflect their self-awareness and perception of potential lapses [11]. For teachers, the lowest-rated item, although still interpreted as highly competent, is conducting regular performance evaluations and providing constructive feedback to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. While performance evaluations are conducted as part of departmental mandates, teachers perceive that the feedback provided may not fully support their professional growth. Limited time and competing priorities can affect how school heads conduct regular feedback and monitoring [12].

Table 7. Competence of School Heads in Human Resource Management and Development

Indicators	School head		Teachers	
	WM	VI	WM	VI

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Conducts regular performance evaluations and provides constructive feedback to teachers to identifying areas of strength and opportunities for improvement	3.72	HC	3.80	HC
Develops and implements strategies to recognize and reward outstanding performance, fostering a positive and motivating work environment	3.83	HC	3.82	HC
Adheres to legal and ethical standards in all aspects of human resource management, ensuring compliance with employment laws, regulations, and policies	3.71	HC	3.84	HC
Demonstrates expertise in the strategic and efficient implementation of the performance management system in ensuring career advancement for school personnel and sustained improvement in office performance.	3.71	HC	3.82	HC
Composite Mean	3.76	HC	3.82	HC

Legend: WM – Weighted Mean; VI – Verbal Interpretation; HC – Highly Competent

1.2.3 Learning Environment

Both school heads and teachers report that school heads are highly competent in managing the learning environment. This indicates that school heads prioritize creating a

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safe and supportive space where students can grow and thrive. This focus may be attributed to their recognition of the impact of environmental factors on teacher performance.

Among the items, the highest score for school heads is promoting a climate of respect, trust, and collaboration among students, staff, and parents. This strong performance reflects their ability to foster a positive learning climate with the support of stakeholders. The importance of inclusive and supportive leadership in developing learning communities that cater to all learners is highlighted [13].

For teachers specifically, school heads demonstrate high competence in encouraging children's participation in both school and community activities. This indicates that teachers view school heads as advocates for the holistic development of students while engaging the community in this goal. This reflects teachers' recognition of the efforts of school heads to provide a safe environment, consistent with the demands for a nurturing learning environment that fosters growth and development. School and community involvement benefits both student participation and educational outcomes [14]. On the other hand, school heads rate their lowest competence in collaborating with counselors and support staff to address the social and emotional needs of students. This may be due to limited availability of professionals in the locality who can address these needs.

Table 8. Competence of School heads in Learning Environment

Indicators	School Head		Teachers	
	WM	VI	WM	VI

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Promote a climate of respect, trust, and collaboration among students, staff, and parents.	3.87	HC	3.88	HC
Collaborate with counselors and support staff to address the social and emotional needs of students.	3.74	HC	3.83	HC
Ensure that learners are provided with avenue for sharing their concerns and thoughts.	3.81	HC	3.82	HC
Composite Mean	3.83	HC	3.86	HC

Legend: WM – Weighted Mean; VI – Verbal Interpretation; HC – Highly Competent

1.2.4 Parents' Involvement and Community

Partnership

School heads demonstrate high competence in parent involvement and community leadership, as reported by both themselves and the teachers. This indicates that school heads effectively engage parents and the community to collaborate with the school for the benefit of students.

School heads organize parent engagement activities, recognizing this as a key responsibility of leadership. Moreover, the DepEd calendar includes parent engagement activities as part of its regular initiatives. This aligns with the findings which emphasize the importance of school efforts to enhance parent engagement [15].

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Both school heads and teachers identify the strongest indicator of competence as the scheduling of regular parent-teacher conferences to discuss academic progress, strengths, and areas for improvement. This demonstrates school heads' commitment to fostering active communication and collaboration between the school and families. This may be due to the national schedule for conducting conferences, which is a regular routine for schools on a quarterly basis. The standardized nature of these conferences makes this item a high priority

On the other hand, school heads rate their competence in using a variety of communication channels, such as newsletters, emails, and social media, to reach parents slightly lower, although it is still considered highly competent. This indicates that school heads have limited strategies in communicating with and supporting parents, which could further enhance parental support for the school. This may stem from an overreliance on parent-teacher conferences, as well as the limited time available for communication due to the heavy workload of school heads.

According to the teachers, the weakest areas lie in offering parent education, advocacy guidance, and resources to encourage parents to participate in decision-making processes that affect their children's education and the school community, although school heads still demonstrate high competence. This indicates that teachers perceive school heads as having less experience in involving parents in decision-making. This may result from situations where school heads must make immediate decisions, which can limit consultation with stakeholders.

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Table 9. Competence of School Heads in Parent's Involvement and Community

Leadership

Indicators	School heads		Teachers	
	WM	VI	WM	VI
Uses a variety of communication channels, such as newsletters, emails, and social media, to reach parents.	3.71	H C	3.82	HC
Schedules regular parent-teacher conferences to discuss academic progress, strengths, and areas for improvement.	3.89	H C	3.89	HC
Offers parents education advocacy guidance and resources to encourage them to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their children's education and the school community	3.79	H C	3.79	HC
Composite Mean	3.78	H C	3.84	HC

Legend: WM – Weighted Mean; VI – Verbal Interpretation; HC – Highly Competent

1.2.5 School Leadership Management and Operations

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School heads demonstrate a high level of competence in school leadership, management, and operations, as assessed by both teachers and school heads themselves. This indicates that school heads effectively lead and manage school operations, ensuring that the institution functions smoothly. The alignment of assessments from both school heads and teachers reflects the high regard teachers have for the efforts of school heads. In line with this, teachers often perceive school heads as well-suited to their roles when management practices are consistently applied [16]

School heads identify their greatest strength as articulating a clear vision and mission for the school. This demonstrates their ability to infuse the school's vision and mission into their work and communicate it effectively to stakeholders. This may result from the widespread advocacy of the DepEd to ensure that goals and strategies align toward a unified direction, specifically the provision of quality education. Consistent with this, to improve schools, the vision must remain clear. This drives the organization toward the attainment of goals and the achievement of its vision [17].

For teachers, ensuring that the school functions according to established educational standards and regulations, while maintaining an environment that meets both legal and academic requirements, represents the strength of school heads. This indicates that teachers view school heads as advocates of standards and regulatory mechanisms that consider both academic and legal aspects of education.

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Table 10. Competence of School Heads in School Leadership Management and Operations

Indicators	School head		Teachers	
	WM	VI	WM	VI
Articulates a clear vision and mission for the school.	3.89	HC	3.85	HC
Manages human and financial resources effectively	3.84	HC	3.80	HC
Ensures that the school always functions by the set education standards and regulations through an environment with both legal and academic requirements.	3.82	HC	3.87	HC
Systematizes all procedures concerning the administration of school facilities and equipment for acquisition, recording, use, repair, maintenance, and storage, as well as disposal, according to policies set so that the school is able to function to optimum levels	3.76	HC	3.84	HC
Composite Mean	3.82	HC	3.84	HC

Legend: WM – Weighted Mean; VI – Verbal Interpretation; HC – Highly Competent

On the other hand, school heads identify their weakness in systematizing procedures related to the administration of school facilities and equipment, although they are still rated as highly competent. This suggests that school heads experience slight difficulties in making procedures for school facilities and equipment cohesive and streamlined. This may result from the absence of clear protocols for maintaining records of all facilities and equipment.

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For teachers, the weakness identified lies in managing human and financial resources effectively, although school heads are still rated as highly competent. This indicates that teachers perceive school heads as sometimes placing human and financial resources lower in priority. While the focus on learners remains essential, resources are crucial for achieving educational goals.

1.2.6 Research Management

School heads demonstrate high competence in research management, as assessed by themselves and teachers. This indicates that both school heads and teachers recognize this competence. This may result from the increasing emphasis in education on research and innovation. Attendance in trainings and capacity-building programs enhances the competence of school heads in research management.

School heads demonstrate high competence in supporting the professional development of teachers and staff to build research skills and knowledge, as assessed by both teachers and school heads. This indicates that school heads establish effective support mechanisms for research management. This may result from the increasing integration of research into teaching and learning.

For teachers, they assess that school heads are known for their ability to enable continuous improvement in practices based on emerging trends, innovation, and best practices within educational research. This demonstrates that school heads foster a research-driven culture that provides opportunities for improvement. This may be attributed to the consistent revisiting of best practices in schools, which encourages

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teachers to continuously improve programs, projects, and activities supported by research results. School heads integrate new practices and innovations. School heads update themselves on new trends and help teachers adopt best practices [18].

On the other hand, among the areas of management competence, school heads show moderate competence only in research management. Specifically, school heads demonstrate moderate competence in leading the development and implementation of a research agenda aligned with the school's mission and educational priorities. This justifies the inclusion of Project ALIGN-RA (Aligning Research Agenda Toward School Vision and Excellence) in the proposed sustainable management program.

This indicates that school heads have not fully established an aligned research agenda anchored to school priorities. This may result from the limited time of school personnel to engage in discussions due to heavy workloads and competing priorities. Additionally, school heads demonstrate moderate competence in monitoring and evaluating research outcomes in terms of effectiveness for research initiatives and their impact on school practices and student learning. This shows that there is limited implementation of systematic processes for assessing the impact of research initiatives on school practices.

For teachers, the area of weakness lies in promoting collaboration and partnerships with external organizations, universities, and research institutions to expand the scope and quality of school-based research. This indicates that teachers are not fully satisfied with how schools establish collaborative relationships for research. This may result from limited

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opportunities for sharing and exploration as more urgent matters require attention.

Consistent with this, school heads and teachers face several obstacles in conducting research, including a lack of training and seminars on the subject, insufficient funding for projects, difficulty analyzing qualitative data, heavy teaching loads, and laborious proposal processes. They also report being too busy with personal and teaching responsibilities to engage in research. Research abilities among teachers and school administrators vary significantly [19].

Table 11. Competence of School Heads in Research Management

Indicators	School head		Teachers	
	WM	VI	WM	VI
Leads the development and implementation of a research agenda aligned with the school's mission and educational priorities	3.49	MC	3.72	HC
Supports professional development for teachers and staff to build research skills and knowledge, thus building a research-driven culture in school.	3.64	HC	3.75	HC
Enables continuous improvement in practices based on emerging trends, innovation, and best practices within educational research that will inform adaptation to the school context.	3.62	HC	3.75	HC
Composite Mean	3.53	HC	3.73	HC

Legend: WM – Weighted Mean; VI – Verbal Interpretation; HC – Highly Competent; MC – Moderately Competent

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1.3 Differences on the Assessments of the Two Groups of Respondents

There is considerable difference in the evaluation of instructional leadership ability of the school heads by their teachers, where the latter tends to rate them higher. The difference might be because teachers have direct exposure to instructional leadership practice and are therefore more thankful for the support of the school heads.

Differences were also significant in Human Resource Management and Development. Teachers may feel more human resource support because they have direct contact with school heads on professional development and performance appraisal. Research management had the greatest variation. The school heads were rated higher by teachers, indicating that teachers see the research efforts initiated by school heads more than what school heads themselves might rate themselves. Teachers may feel that the research initiatives are enough.

Conversely, there are no differences at all between the ratings for learning environment, parents' involvement and community partnership, and School Leadership Management and Operation. These results show that both groups possess homogeneous perceptions of the capability of school heads in these aspects, indicating definite and well-executed practices. Studies highlighted that school heads have the responsibility to maintain learning environment, engage parents and community, and manage school operations [10].

Table 12. Comparison Between the Assessments of the Two Groups of Respondents

Variables	p-values	Verbal Interpretation
Instructional Leadership	.006	Significant

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Human Resource Management and Development	.020	Significant
Learning Environment	.307	Not Significant
Parents' Involvement and Community Partnership	.050	Not Significant
School Leadership Management and Operation	.475	Not Significant
Research management	.000	Significant

1.4 Differences on the Level of Competence of the School Heads When Grouped According to Profile Variable

Management competence of school heads varied significantly according to age, sex, years of service, and trainings attended, but not by educational attainment. Age does not significantly correlate with management competence, both of which exceed the significance level of 0.05.

Table 13. Comparison in the assessments of the school heads in terms of age

Variables	p-values range	Verbal Interpretation
Age	.014 – .592	Significant
Sex	.001 - .096	Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	.156 - .460	Not Significant
Years in Service	.000 - .020	Significant
Number of Trainings and Seminars	.001 - .097	Significant

1.5 Issues and Challenges

Management competence of school heads varied significantly according to age, sex, year Four

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themes emerged: resistance to change and lack of professional growth; lack of financial and material resources; weak communication and stakeholder participation; and administrative and bureaucratic constraints.

4.5.1. Resistance to Change and Lack of Professional Growth

The FGD participants mentioned that one of the issues and challenges that they encountered in managing school is the resistance to change and lack of professional growth. This causes some difficulties when introducing new strategies and programs that should have improved the school. Administrators must also keep up with the ever-changing educational landscape, including new state and federal regulations, changing curriculum, and technological advancements [20].

4.5.2 Lack of Financial and Material Resources

Another challenge is the limited financial resources. The strength of the programs and activities often lies in their adequate funding. School heads must be resourceful and make the most of what they have, but insufficient resources can be a burden. School heads often resort to the stakeholders' support. This may be attributed to the changing demands of education, which oftentimes cause the depletion of resources. Consistently, finance was the strongest predictor of managers' performance, while facilities were the worst predictor [21].

4.5.3 Weak Communication and Stakeholder Participation

The school heads also face some problems in communicating with stakeholders and soliciting engagement on school programs. The limited channels of communication coupled

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with time constraints also affected the communication line. This may be because of the workload of school heads, which needs more time and effort, so they often minimize time in stakeholders' engagement. School heads face a big challenge to involve parents and other stakeholders in the pursuit of better education. Involving parents and the community in education has drawn a lot of attention as a crucial component of improving educational results and promoting social progress [14].

4.5.4 Administrative and Bureaucratic Constraints

The existing rules also affect the school heads. As much as they want to be efficient in their operations, laws governing the processes cause delay. This is an unavoidable circumstance, but the provision of early planning may resolve the issue. However, this pressing issue still affects management. Consistently, Olurusula and Belo (2018) noted that administrative challenges are important variables for effective school school head management.

1.6 Sustainable Management Program

Utilizing the findings of this study, a sustainable management program was proposed by the researcher. This program entitled: EMPOWER (Embedding Purposeful Operations With Excellent Resources) aimed to improve school management while addressing the identified gaps in management competence. This aimed to promote long-term impactful practices that will lead the school towards continuous improvement.

The first identified gap is the development and implementation of a research agenda aligned with the school's mission and priorities which will be addressed through

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Project ALIGN-RA (Aligning Research Agenda Toward School Vision and Excellence). This includes workshops on research agenda, agenda alignment orientation, and consultation. It was also found that school heads have moderate competence in identifying relevant research questions and topics addressing school challenges and opportunities which will be catered by Project INSIGHT (Identifying Needs, Solutions, and Innovative Gaps through Holistic Thinking), this may be addressed while the third gap is in the monitoring and evaluating of research outcomes for effectiveness and impact on school practices which will be resolved by Project IMPACT-RE (Improving Monitoring, Progress Assessment, and Change Tracking in Research Evaluation).

This study found out that there is a difference on the management competence of school heads in terms of age, sex, years of service, and training. To address this, the researcher included project LEAD (Leadership Enhancement and Alignment for Development). The key feature of this training is that the facilitators will determine the profile of the participants and provide relevant professional development suited to the characteristics of the school heads.

This study also identified four issues and challenges. To address these challenges, the researcher included projects that will help the school heads perform their work despite the circumstances. The first one is resistance to change and lack of professional growth which will be addressed through project SHIFT (Strengthening Habits, Innovation, and Forward-Thinking) was included in the program. The second issue is lack of financial and material resources which will be addressed through project RAM (Resource Augmentation

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and Mobilization). The third issue is weak communication and stakeholder participation which will be addressed through project CONNECT (Community Outreach, Networking, and Engagement for Collaborative Transformation). The fourth issue is administrative and bureaucratic constraints which is addressed through project STREAMLINE (Systems Review, Transparency, and Efficiency for Administrative Management).

CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the foregoing findings, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. School heads were predominantly female, experienced, held master's degrees, and had attended multiple trainings.
2. School heads demonstrated high competence in management, particularly in instructional leadership, human resource management and development, learning environment, parents' involvement and community partnership, school leadership management and operations, and research management.
3. Significant differences were observed in the assessments of school heads and teachers regarding human resource management and development, instructional leadership, and research management, while no significant differences were found in learning environment, parents' involvement and community partnership, and school leadership management and operations.
4. Management competence of school heads varied significantly according to age, sex, years of service, and trainings attended, but not by educational attainment.

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- *****
5. Professional development, availability of resources, stakeholder engagement, and bureaucratic constraints influenced how school heads managed schools.
 6. A sustainable management program was developed to address gaps in research management competence, differences in management competence across profile variables, and the issues and challenges encountered by school heads.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the collected data, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Human resource management office of the department may utilize the findings of this study to implement relevant and meaningful professional development initiatives to enhance the management competence of school heads.
2. School heads may adapt the proposed sustainable management program (EMPOWER) to address management gaps and issues and challenges in managing schools.
3. Further studies may be conducted to improve the generalizability of findings.

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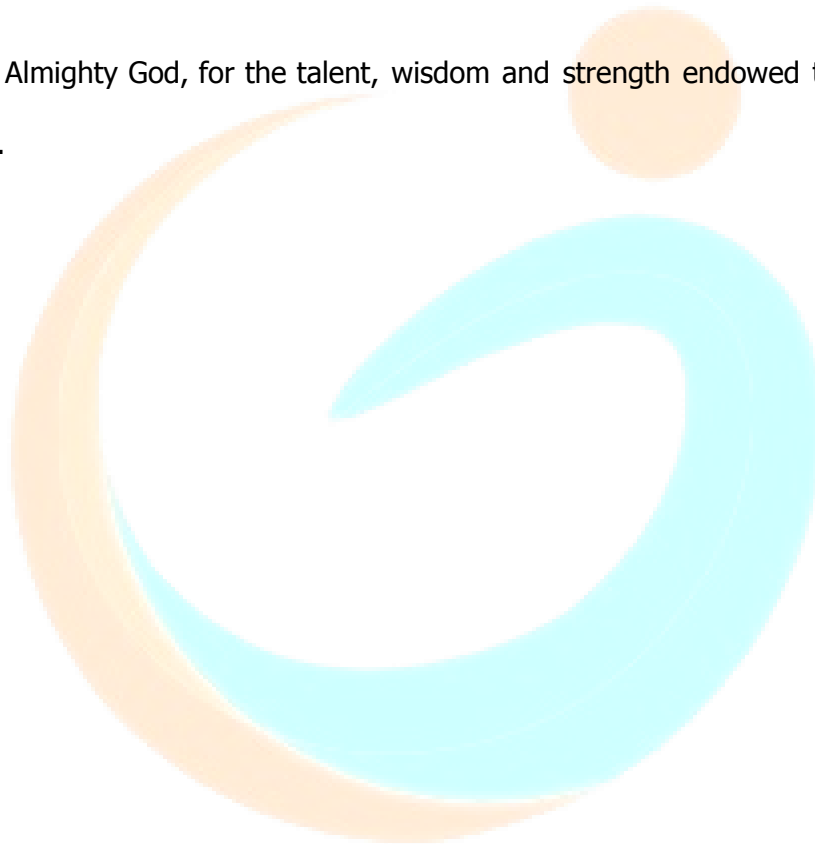
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