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SCHOOL HEADS' MENTORING AND COACHING PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES: BASES FOR INTERVENTION PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the mentoring and coaching practices and challenges of purposively chosen nine school heads as bases of an intervention program in the Schools Division of Iloilo (SDO-Iloilo). Data were collected through a validated interview guide, and the responses were examined using thematic analysis. The results showed that school heads use organized classroom observations, reflective post-conferences, individualized coaching, and cooperative activities like peer mentoring and lesson studies. Teacher reluctance, time restraints, hard workloads, and insufficient resources are among the difficulties noted. Developing rapport and trust, managing time well, looking for outside assistance, differentiated coaching, acknowledgment, and teamwork were all coping mechanisms. An intervention program was created that incorporates structured mentoring, individualized coaching, peer collaboration, ICT training, growth-oriented feedback, and recognition mechanisms promoting ongoing professional development and enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

Keywords: *mentoring practices, coaching practices, school heads, challenges, coping strategies, relational leadership*

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INTRODUCTION

School heads hold a vital role in mentoring and coaching teachers. As instructional facilitators, they are responsible for fostering professional development and addressing the unique challenges that arise across diverse learning environments. In order to assist teachers' professional development, the Philippine Department of Education has highlighted the significance of instructional leadership (DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017). School administrators must prioritize mentoring and coaching as key strategies for achieving teacher excellence and enhancing student performance (DepEd Memorandum No. 173, s. 2019).

Research indicates that there are still gaps in the application, efficacy, and sustainability of mentoring and coaching, despite their acknowledged significance. To standardize and enhance instructional coaching and mentoring, school heads and master teachers should be provided with resources such as handbooks. Although these resources are useful tools, they frequently overlook the contextual difficulties and school heads' preparedness to successfully apply these techniques (Palacio & Digo, 2024).

Inconsistencies in the way these procedures are carried out across schools have been identified through mentoring and coaching on teacher performance. Time restrictions, insufficient training for school administrators, and differing degrees of teacher receptiveness are some of the factors that are still ignored (Corcega & Ching, 2024). According to DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2010, school heads should be skilled in both instruction and human resource management.

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Culajara and Culajara (2024) promoted improved programs that take into account the unique requirements of teachers and school organizational cultures. Their emphasis on the procedures themselves provided little insight into the difficulties school heads encounter while putting these programs into action. Go and Eslabon (2024) highlighted school heads' commitment to coaching and mentoring while noting that they often lack the resources, training, and support needed to meet the complex demands of their role.

To assist school heads in their roles as instructional leaders, the DepEd has implemented various initiatives (DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2020). Through focused professional development programs, these efforts seek to close capacity-building gaps. Much remains to be understood about the specific challenges school administrators encounter in implementing coaching and mentoring programs. Limited attention has been given to how these challenges could inform the development and implementation of effective intervention programs to support school heads in their coaching and mentoring responsibilities.

This study aimed to address these gaps by examining school heads' mentoring and coaching practices, identifying the challenges they encounter, and using the findings to inform the development of a comprehensive intervention program.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology, including the research design, study participants, data-gathering procedures, research instrument, and data analysis techniques.

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The study aimed to examine school heads' mentoring and coaching practices and the challenges they faced, serving as a basis for an intervention program in the SDO-Iloilo.

Research Method

The researcher used a qualitative approach. Purposive sampling, interview guides created by the researcher, and thematic analysis are all included in this. Participants in the study were selected via purposive non-random sampling according to inclusion criteria. In-depth interviews were used to collect data. Data analysis was done using thematic analysis.

During an in-depth interview, the interviewer let the participants sit together and respond to a few questions about coaching and mentoring practices and ts challenges. By asking them questions, the intention was to learn about their opinions and experiences. To assist the researcher and the respondents, an interview guide instrument created by the researcher was also utilized.

Thematic analysis was used to examine the data, which included coded and transcribed recorded interviews. According to Braun and Clarke (2023), themes and sub-themes were found by methodically analyzing patterns of common meaning in the data while paying close attention to researcher reflexivity and theoretical foundation.

Research Design

The Phenomenological Approach, recommended by Fura and Negash (2020), was applied in this work. Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio (2019) described phenomenology as a science whose goal is to characterize specific occurrences or how things seem as lived experiences.

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This method's primary objectives were to characterize and record the study participants' experiences (Nicholls, 2019) and to determine the nature of the specific phenomena (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019). It should be mentioned that each person's interpretation of a specific phenomenon will have meaning based on their life experiences.

Participants of the Study

A total of nine (9) public school heads from the Schools Division Office of Iloilo (SDO-Iloilo) took part in the study. Their names were provided to the researcher by the corresponding district supervisors.

The heads of public schools participated from SDO-Iloilo. Nine participants in all were taken into consideration for this investigation. When choosing study participants, purposive sampling was taken into consideration.

Sampling Design

This study utilized purposive sampling as its sampling approach. This non-probability technique ensures the collection of rich and relevant data by intentionally selecting participants based on specific characteristics, knowledge, or experiences relevant to the study's objectives (Tajik, Golzar & Noor, 2025).

The participants of the study were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) they held the position of school head in a public school; (2) their workplace was located within SDO-Iloilo; and (3) they were involved in mentoring and coaching public-school teachers.

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Research Instrument

This study used a researcher-made interview guide to determine the school heads' mentoring and coaching practices and challenges as bases for an intervention program in the SDO - Iloilo City.

There were four documents in the instrument. (1) A letter to respondents was used to formally inform the participant that they had been chosen to participate in the study and that confidentiality was a key consideration. (2) An assent letter is a Letter of Consent to Interview. It served to notify the researcher of the participants' affirmative and negative answers. The letter was closed with a date and signature attached to the name. (3) The respondent's desired code name and personal details are included in their profile. Additionally, there are three open-ended questions in an interview schedule. These inquiries complemented the study's primary goal.

All of the events throughout the in-depth interview were recorded using voice and video recorders.

Validity of the Research Instrument

The thesis adviser examined the first draft of the text and presented it to a panel of specialists in the fields of science, tests and measurements, and statistics for face and content validation and item inspection in order to determine the validity of the instrument. Each item was examined by the panel of experts for appropriateness or suitability, relevancy, language clarity, sentence accuracy, and other factors. The final draft of the instrument included the adjustments, comments, and recommendations for its improvement.

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The instrument was not subjected to a reliability test. Construct, face, and content validity were taken into account. As previously stated, expert validation was carried out and recommendations were incorporated prior to data collection.

According to Fraenkel & Wallen (2003), content-related evidence of validity is useful in validating the questionnaire's items and must be consistent with the definition of variables and the sample of the subject to be measured. The final draft took into account the panel of validators' remarks, adjustments, and recommendations on the interview guide's items.

The instrument's structure and content took research ethics into account.

Data Gathering Procedures

To protect the welfare of all participants and research personnel, the researcher closely adhered to government safety regulations while carrying out this study. The Public School District Supervisor and School Superintendent of the Schools Division of Iloilo received a formal request for approval to carry out the study. After receiving approval, the researcher gave the signed letter to the relevant school administrators, who will subsequently help find possible study volunteers. Purposive sampling was used by the researcher to choose respondents who actively participate in their schools' coaching and mentoring programs. The participants' relevant experiences and perspectives on the topic were guaranteed by this focused selection.

Following the identification of the participants, the researcher worked with the heads of the schools to arrange the interviews. A series of interviews, arranged by school, was carried out in order to obtain thorough and varied viewpoints. By using this technique, the

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researcher was able to encourage participants to express their experiences and perspectives through in-depth talks. In order to fully document the participants' reactions and insights, interview sessions were recorded in order to precisely capture their comments. In order to record the conversations, the researcher obtained the participants' informed consent before the interview, making sure they understood the objective of the recording.

The researcher summed all of the gathered data for analysis after finishing the interviews. As described by Braun and Clarke (2023), thematic analysis methodology was used to methodically find, examine, and evaluate patterns

of shared meaning within the dataset.

This action allowed the researcher to give a thorough and in-depth description of the participants' experiences with the coaching and mentoring strategies used by school administrators. Understanding the efficacy of these techniques and pinpointing areas for improvement in the intervention program's development were made possible by the analysis's conclusions.

Data Analyses

The validity of the interview guide was evaluated by experts, and all their recommendations and feedback were carefully considered.

The interviews and discussions were transcribed for analysis. The data were examined using reflexive thematic analysis, a qualitative method that recognizes the researcher's active involvement in identifying themes and stresses the importance of reflexivity and theoretical context. This approach systematically uncovers and interprets patterns of shared meaning

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across the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Although it suggests an in-depth understanding of the responses, the process requires careful interpretation to develop codes and themes that accurately reflect the participants' experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study was conducted to determine the school heads mentoring and coaching practices and challenges as bases for an intervention Program in the Schools Division of Iloilo (SDO - Iloilo).

After being carefully selected in compliance with preset inclusion criteria, nine (9) school heads from SDO-Iloilo took part in the study.

A phenomenological study design was employed as part of the qualitative research methodology. The research technique utilized to gather relevant data was an interview guide structured by the researcher and verified by specialists.

A thematic analysis was performed on the hand transcribed data obtained from the interviews. This process involved identifying, evaluating, and interpreting recurring themes in the textual content in order to achieve the research objectives. The thematic analysis process included becoming familiar with the data, creating initial codes, exploring potential themes, evaluating and defining the themes, and completing the final analysis. Throughout the whole data gathering and processing procedure, strict adherence to ethical principles was followed. Participant secrecy and animosity toward their identities are two examples. The data collected from the participants was handled

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responsibly and confirmed by the respondents, as evidenced by their thoughtful remarks during the interview.

The following are the findings of this study:

As based on the findings, structured classroom observations, thoughtful post-conference discussions, and progressive instructional supervision are the main components of the school head mentoring practices, which together assist teachers in enhancing their delivery of instruction and resolving issues in the classroom. Individualized one-on-one sessions, peer and group mentoring through LACs, constructive, growth-oriented feedback, and cooperative activities like lesson study and demonstrative teaching were all emphasized by participants as components of mentoring. These methods, which are based on open communication, trust, and the availability of sufficient resources and clear instruction, allow teachers to assess their strengths, resolve their shortcomings, and improve their professional competencies. In line with findings from the literature, mentoring is seen as both evaluative and developmental, fostering a supportive environment that fortifies teaching methods, enhances classroom management, encourages collaborative learning, and ultimately raises teacher performance and student engagement.

As based on the findings, with a focus on ICT integration, organized observation, and goal-oriented professional development, school head coaching methods are crucial in improving teachers' technical proficiency, instructional competences, and classroom management skills. School heads offer methodical, performance-oriented, and growth-focused coaching through classroom observations, thoughtful feedback, SMART goal-setting,

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and ongoing follow-up. These techniques are based on relational leadership, trust, and open communication, which foster a safe environment where instructors feel empowered to further their careers. Peer coaching, team teaching, and LAC-based workshops are examples of collaborative techniques that enhance shared learning, knowledge sharing, and group capacity building. By providing teachers with tangible examples to follow, modeling and demonstrating successful teaching techniques helps to connect theory and practice. To enhance the quality of instruction and foster long-term teacher development, school heads use coaching practices that include technical advice, emotional support, and collaborative development.

As the findings of the study, the efficacy and consistency of school mentorship programs are hampered by a number of issues. Teachers' aversion to change, differing perspectives on feedback, and unwillingness to embrace new techniques are major barriers that might impede mentoring initiatives. Opportunities for frequent mentoring meetings and follow-ups are limited by time constraints and severe workloads for both mentors and mentees. The substantial benefit of mentoring programs is lowered by a lack of resources, including instructional materials, training, and ongoing assistance. Teachers have varying levels of skill and confidence, so meeting their requirements calls for customized strategies that can take a lot of time. Another difficulty is maintaining teacher involvement and motivation, which emphasizes the necessity of ongoing feedback, support, and acknowledgment. School heads find it difficult to balance mentoring with administrative duties, which has an impact on the regularity and caliber of advice given. These difficulties suggest that strategic planning, specialized support, giving mentoring priority within school schedules,

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and the provision of sufficient resources to promote ongoing professional development are all necessary for effective mentoring.

The success of teacher development programs may be hampered by numerous challenges. Significant challenges include teacher reluctance and the idea that coaching is evaluative rather than helpful, underscoring the necessity of developing trust, communicating clearly, and using incentive techniques to promote transparency and professional development. Opportunities for regular coaching sessions are limited by time restrictions and severe workloads, underscoring the significance of time management, delegating, and strategic scheduling. The quality of coaching is impacted by limited resources, insufficient training, and gaps in knowledge, indicating the necessity of easily accessible teaching resources, professional development, and cooperative support systems. Staff turnover and conflicting priorities make it difficult to maintain continuity and consistency in coaching, which emphasizes the necessity for organized programs and oversight procedures. In order to maintain a secure and effective atmosphere for teacher development, it is essential to keep evaluative and developmental feedback apart because school leaders' dual roles as coaches and evaluators might lead to conflict. Together, these observations show that to maximize the effects of coaching on teacher abilities and instructional quality, systemic support, relational leadership, and careful planning are necessary.

Based on the one-on-one interview, school heads use a variety of techniques to overcome obstacles and guarantee successful teacher development, according to research on coping mechanisms in mentoring and coaching. Building rapport and trust to establish a

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secure, encouraging environment, scheduling and time management to sustain regular coaching and mentoring sessions, and looking for outside resources, training, and professional development opportunities to bolster abilities are all important tactics. While differentiated and tailored coaching attends to each teacher's particular needs, school heads can concentrate on instructional support by delegating administrative chores. A culture of shared learning and group development is fostered by open communication and cooperative behaviors, while teacher engagement is maintained through motivation, recognition, and ongoing feedback. These tactics demonstrate how relational leadership, strategic planning, flexibility, and proactive support are necessary for successful mentoring and coaching in order to overcome obstacles and promote professional development.

The intervention program was established. It is a comprehensive mentoring and coaching program created to help school heads overcome the difficulties they have in helping teachers advance their professional and instructional competencies. In order to improve teacher effectiveness and motivation, the program incorporates organized classroom observations, personalized coaching, peer mentorship, ICT training, growth-oriented feedback, and recognition mechanisms. It is based on the values of cooperation, trust, and mutual support. In order to balance school heads' developmental and evaluative responsibilities, it also places a strong emphasis on collaborative professional growth, relational trust, and adaptive leadership. In addition to risk management techniques to foresee opposition, time restrictions, resource limitations, and exhaustion, the program offers emotional, professional, technical, and administrative assistance. In order to guarantee

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efficacy, sustainability, and compliance with DepEd regulations, monitoring and evaluation are essential. They use ongoing tracking, assessments, focus groups, and organized methods. The proposed intervention program's main goals are to increase instructional quality and teacher well-being in public schools, build professional connections, and promote a culture of progressive development.

Conclusion

The discussion of the insight was based on the order of the research question, highlighting crucial implications of the study.

Effective school head mentoring emphasizes the vital role of relational leadership, organized advice, and cooperative professional development in improving teacher performance, going beyond simple supervision. School heads foster a culture of progressive development where teachers feel appreciated, encouraged, and inspired to improve their teaching methods by combining systematic classroom observations, reflective conversations, individualized mentoring, and peer or group learning opportunities. Mentoring is most effective when it is purposeful, growth-oriented, and sensitive to the needs of individual teachers, as seen by the emphasis on trust, open communication, and resource access. This implies that school leadership involves more than just assessing instruction; it also involves promoting professional development, group learning, and instructional quality, all of which eventually benefit teachers and students.

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By incorporating goal-setting, ICT skill development, systematic classroom observations, and ongoing follow-up, school heads foster an ambiance where teachers feel safe to reflect, develop, and take responsibility for their own professional development. Teacher development flourishes in a culture of support, shared learning, and mentorship, as seen by the emphasis on trust, open communication, and collaborative techniques like peer coaching and LAC sessions. By demonstrating that instructional excellence is developed not only via feedback but also through exemplars and practical advice, modeling good teaching approaches helps close the gap between theory and practice. This implies that long-term gains in teacher effectiveness, instructional quality, and student outcomes require deliberate, methodical, and relationally grounded coaching.

The necessity for school heads to practice empathy, relational leadership, and differentiated approaches that address the needs of individual teachers is highlighted by teacher resistance to change and a range of competency levels. The necessity of strategic planning, prioritization, and campaigning for sufficient funding to maintain mentoring programs is highlighted by time restrictions, workload pressures, and limited resources. For engagement and professional development, it is essential to sustain teacher motivation through acknowledgment, ongoing support, and follow-up. Effective mentoring requires school administrators to maintain a balance between administrative duties and create a culture of trust, cooperation, and ongoing development. It is not merely a technical or procedural activity but also a relational and adaptive practice.

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Barriers that can lessen the efficacy of coaching include teacher reluctance, time constraints, a lack of resources, and school heads' dual position as evaluators. These difficulties show that coaching is a relational and strategic endeavor as well as a technical one, requiring motivational techniques to boost teacher engagement, trust-building, and clear communication. Planning and system-level support are necessary for sustainable coaching, as seen by the necessity for regular monitoring, organized programs, and sufficient assistance. Effective coaching requires striking a balance between organizational techniques, resource management, and interpersonal skills in order to foster a supportive, inspiring, and empowering atmosphere for teachers to enhance their teaching methods.

The effectiveness of school heads as mentors and coaches depends not only on their teaching abilities but also on their capacity to establish trust, organize their time, and offer tailored assistance. School administrators may overcome obstacles and provide a positive, growth-oriented climate that supports teacher development and improves overall instructional quality by encouraging cooperation, acknowledging progress, and utilizing outside resources.

The intervention program provides a comprehensive approach to teacher development by integrating peer cooperation, individualized coaching, mentorship, and ICT training in a culture of trust and support. By combining risk management, monitoring, and feedback, it gives school heads the tools they need to support teachers' ongoing professional development, motivation, and sense of shared responsibility.

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