



SCHOOL HEADS' ROLES AND CHALLENGES OF MANAGING AND GOVERNING SCHOOLS: INPUT FOR SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

KENIMA Q. IDAO

Teacher I

Angela A. Celis Memorial School

kenima18idao@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examined the roles, implementation practices, challenges, and coping mechanisms of school heads in managing and governing public schools in the District of Jaro, Iloilo City during the School Year 2025–2026. A qualitative narrative research design was used. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with nine (9) school heads and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings showed that school heads perform key roles in instructional supervision, human resource management, financial administration, stakeholder engagement, and fostering positive school relationships. Governance practices were implemented through strategic planning, collaborative leadership, resource management, instructional supervision, and monitoring and evaluation. Despite challenges such as limited resources, heavy workloads, diverse learner needs, policy changes, and technological demands, school heads employed effective planning, communication, time management, delegation, and leadership development to manage their responsibilities. The study underscores the need for continuous support and capacity building to enhance the effectiveness of school governance.

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Keywords: *School Heads, Roles and Challenges of Managing and Governing Schools, Effective School Governance*

INTRODUCTION

A school was a formal institution designed to provide systematic instruction, develop knowledge and skills, and shape learners into productive members of society. According to UNESCO (2021), schools served as the cornerstone of education systems, offering structured learning environments where students acquired not only academic competencies but also social, emotional, and ethical values essential for lifelong learning.

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education (DepEd, 2022) defined a school as a learning organization responsible for providing quality, equitable, and accessible basic education. Its core functions included curriculum implementation, learner support, and community partnership.

The Department of Education (DepEd), which governed the Philippine educational system, designated a school head to lead, manage, supervise, and ensure the delivery of accessible, relevant, and quality education.

A school head was the overall leader and manager of a school who ensured that the institution achieved its educational goals through effective administration, instructional leadership, and community engagement. According to the Department of Education (DepEd, 2022), the school head was responsible for managing school operations, supervising teachers

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and staff, and promoting quality, equitable, and inclusive learning outcomes within the framework of School-Based Management (SBM).

Hallinger (2020) defined the school head (often referred to as principal or head teacher) as an instructional leader who set the vision, provided direction, and supported teachers to improve teaching and learning.

Leading an institution strategically required a higher level of management. School leadership played a vital role in creating and fostering an environment where learners, teachers, and stakeholders felt safe, motivated, and engaged as they worked hand-in-hand to provide society with a better future. Within the Philippine context, the Department of Education (DepEd) recognized that effective school leadership was vital for improving teaching quality and learner achievement. According to the Department of Education (2020), school heads were not only administrative managers but also instructional leaders who promoted a shared vision, ensured teacher development, and created an environment conducive to learning.

This concept was reinforced in DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2020, which adopted the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) to enhance the competencies and professional growth of school leaders. Sebastian and Beatriz (2021) highlighted that DepEd school heads faced complex challenges in balancing instructional supervision and administrative functions.

As a result, this study was undertaken out of a personal and professional aspiration to become a school leader in the future. Understanding the roles, responsibilities, challenges,

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and best practices in school management and governance was essential for preparing myself to lead effectively.

By exploring how school heads implemented leadership functions, managed resources, engaged stakeholders, and addressed challenges, this study provided valuable insights that guided my development as a future school head.

It also allowed the researcher to reflect on the qualities, strategies, and decision-making processes necessary to foster an inclusive, efficient, and high-performing school environment.

Ultimately, this research served as both a learning experience and a roadmap for her journey toward educational leadership.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology, including the research design, participants, data-gathering procedures, research instrument, and data analysis. It aims to determine the roles and challenges of school heads in managing and governing schools in the District of Jaro, Iloilo City during the school year 2025–2026.

Research Method

The study employed a qualitative research method using in-depth interviews. According to Deckert and Wilson (2023), descriptive research uses tools such as surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and observations to gather data and describe variables as they

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exist in a specific setting. This approach helps researchers understand contexts and characteristics without determining cause-and-effect relationships.

In this study, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews in which the interviewer and interviewee sat at a comfortable distance while discussing a series of questions related to the topic. The purpose was to obtain the participants' essential views and experiences regarding the issue within its social context.

Research Design

The study employed a phenomenological research design, a qualitative approach that focuses on understanding individuals' lived experiences.

Phenomenology seeks to explore how people perceive and interpret their experiences and how these perspectives may differ from commonly held views. This approach typically involves interviewing participants to gather their insights and impressions and is widely used in fields such as psychology, sociology, and social work.

Phenomenology specifically examines the structures of consciousness as experienced from a first-person perspective. Its primary aim is to investigate and describe phenomena as they are consciously experienced, without relying on causal explanations or being influenced by preconceived assumptions (Biemel & Spiegelberg, 2024).

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study consisted of nine (9) school heads from the District of Jaro, specifically from Districts IV-A, IV-B, and IV-C in Iloilo City during the school year 2025–2026. They were selected based on recommendations from their respective Public Schools

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District Supervisors (PSDS) to ensure that the participants had relevant experience in school management and governance.

The inclusion criteria were: currently appointed as a school head in a public school under the Department of Education (DepEd), with at least three years of leadership experience, actively involved in school governance and management, and willing to participate in the study.

These criteria ensured that the participants could provide meaningful insights into leadership practices, challenges, and strategies in school administration.

The District of Jaro was chosen as the study site because it represents a diverse educational setting within Iloilo City, with schools varying in programs, resources, and student populations, allowing the study to capture varied perspectives on school leadership.

Sampling Design

The study utilized purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are intentionally selected because they possess specific characteristics relevant to the study (Nikolopoulou, 2023).

Also known as judgmental sampling, this method relies on the researcher's judgment in choosing individuals who can provide the most relevant and meaningful information for the research objectives.

Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative and mixed-methods research, particularly when identifying information-rich participants despite limited resources, although it may involve a higher risk of researcher bias.

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Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made interview schedule as its research instrument. The interview schedule consisted of four questions designed to address the purpose of the study. Voice and video recorders were used for data gathering and documentation, subject to the participants' permission.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Prior to the determination of the validity of the researcher-made interview schedule, the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, and a panel of jurors with expertise in research, testing and assessment, and English were requested to validate each question for review and modification.

Validity refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, correctness, and usefulness of the inferences made by a researcher. In terms of content-related evidence of validity, it is important that the content and format of the measurement tool are aligned with the definitions of the variables and the sample of subjects to be measured. Such alignment is essential in validating the items in a questionnaire and ensuring that the instrument accurately measures the intended constructs (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

The comments, corrections, and suggestions of the panel of validators regarding the interview schedule were taken into consideration using the appropriate form of Good and Scates (Appendix A).

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Data Gathering Procedures

Letters were sent to the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent and the Office of the District Supervisors to secure permission to conduct the study.

After approval was obtained, the researcher personally visited the schools, communities, or other convenient locations to conduct the interviews.

During the in-depth interviews, voice and video recorders were used to accurately capture the participants' responses. After the interviews, the researcher organized and consolidated all collected data for analysis.

Data Analyses

The data gathered from the selected school heads in the District of Jaro were systematically analyzed to uncover patterns, themes, and insights relevant to the study's objectives. This chapter presents the qualitative findings on the roles of school heads in managing and governing schools, how these roles are implemented, the challenges encountered, and the coping mechanisms employed to ensure effective school management and governance.

A thematic analysis approach was employed to interpret the data. Thematic analysis is a rigorous qualitative method that identifies, analyzes, and reports patterns or themes within data, allowing researchers to derive meaningful insights from complex narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2023). This approach is particularly suited for exploring the lived experiences of participants, as it captures both commonalities and variations in perspectives while providing a structured framework for interpretation.

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Through this method, the collected data were carefully reviewed, coded, and organized into themes that align with the study’s research questions. This process involved summarizing key information, identifying recurring ideas, and interpreting their significance in the context of school leadership and governance. The thematic analysis enabled the researcher to present a coherent and comprehensive account of how school heads fulfill their leadership roles, navigate challenges, and apply strategies to promote instructional quality, operational efficiency, and stakeholder engagement.

By employing thematic analysis, this chapter not only describes the participants’ experiences but also provides analytical insights into the patterns and practices that underpin effective school management. The findings presented here form the basis for understanding leadership dynamics in schools and for providing recommendations to enhance governance and instructional outcomes in the educational system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study employed the qualitative method using in-depth interviews. The research design used was the narrative approach, with thematic analysis as the method of data analysis.

The participants of the study were nine (9) school heads in the District of Jaro. A researcher-made interview questionnaire was used as the data-gathering instrument and was validated by experts. The interviews were scheduled during the supervisors’ vacant time.

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Formal letters were personally delivered to the Schools Division Superintendent and the Public Schools District Supervisor, who approved the conduct of the study and facilitated the identification of the participants.

The researcher personally conducted the in-depth interviews with the school heads. A voice recorder was used for data gathering, and photo documentation was done with the participants' permission.

After the series of interviews, the researcher consolidated all the collected data. The narratives were gathered, transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted using a thematic approach.

The findings of the study are the following:

The study revealed that the roles of school heads in managing and governing schools include supervision, human resource management, fostering rapport and camaraderie among teachers and staff, financial management, and collaboration with parents and the community.

In the implementation of school management and governance, school heads are responsible for planning and organizing school programs, projects, and activities; conducting instructional supervision; managing resources and promoting learner welfare; engaging stakeholders through collaborative leadership; and carrying out monitoring and evaluation.

The study further revealed that school heads encounter several challenges in performing their management and governance functions, such as infrastructure and resource limitations, overlapping programs, heavy administrative workload, meeting the needs of diverse learners, sustaining teacher motivation and adapting to policies, responding to technological changes, and maintaining leadership balance.

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To address these challenges, school heads employed effective planning, proactive communication, time management and structured scheduling, strategic prioritization, delegation and leadership capacity building, and integrated coping strategies.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

The findings show that school heads perform both managerial and relational leadership roles. They supervise instruction, manage human resources and finances, build positive relationships with teachers and staff, and work with parents and communities. These responsibilities show that effective school governance requires administrative competence, instructional leadership, and strong stakeholder collaboration.

The findings also show that school heads play a strategic role in implementing school governance. Through planning, organizing, instructional supervision, resource management, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring, they help ensure that school programs are aligned with goals and responsive to learners' needs. This suggests that effective governance depends on planning, collaboration, and accountability.

The study further reveals that school governance is affected by both structural and human factors. Challenges such as limited resources, overlapping programs, heavy workload, diverse learner needs, low teacher motivation, and technological and policy changes require school heads to be adaptable, strategic, and people-centered in their leadership.

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To address these challenges, school heads use good planning, structured scheduling, strategic prioritization, proactive communication, and delegation. These coping strategies help them manage responsibilities effectively and sustain good school governance.

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