



**BRIDGING THE WRITING GAP THROUGH CAMPUS JOURNALISM AT DONA
MATILDE MEMORIAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: THE SCHOOL HEAD'S ROLE
IN STRENGTHENING INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES**

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ABSTRACT

This action research explored the effectiveness of integrating campus journalism into writing instruction to enhance learners' writing competence and examined the school head's role in strengthening instructional practices. Conducted at Doña Matilde Memorial Elementary School, the study involved 20 Grades 5 and 6 learners identified with low writing performance and 14 teacher-coaches. Using a one-group pre-test–post-test design, data were gathered through a writing competence rubric and a teacher perception survey. Results revealed a significant improvement in learners' writing performance, with the overall mean increasing from 2.35 ("Fair") in the pre-test to 4.10 ("Very Satisfactory") in the post-test. Gains were most notable in vocabulary development and organization of ideas, demonstrating that journalism-integrated instruction effectively enhanced learners' writing proficiency. Teachers strongly agreed (WM = 4.75) that the school head's leadership—manifested through professional development, collaboration, and continuous feedback—was instrumental in the project's success. Moreover, 72% of learners ranked in the Top 5 in district journalism competitions, with three advancing to the Division level, confirming the intervention's positive impact on both academic and co-curricular performance. The study concludes that strong instructional leadership, coupled with innovative literacy interventions, can bridge the writing gap and elevate school performance. It recommends the institutionalization and replication of journalism-based writing programs to sustain literacy improvement across schools.

Keywords: *campus journalism, bridging writing gap, instructional practices*

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I. Context and Rationale

Writing is a fundamental skill essential to learning across disciplines. However, recent screenings for campus journalism contests at Doña Matilde Memorial Elementary School revealed a significant gap in learners' writing competence. Many Grade 5 and 6 pupils struggled to organize ideas, use appropriate vocabulary, and construct grammatically correct sentences, making it difficult for the school to identify qualified contestants for journalism events.

Recognizing campus journalism as a valuable platform for authentic writing practice, the school initiated an intervention that integrates journalism activities into classroom writing instruction. Under the leadership of the school head, a series of writing workshops, coaching sessions, and mentoring programs were organized to enhance both teacher and learner competence in writing.

Writing is both a cognitive and social process that improves through consistent practice, feedback, and meaningful engagement. According to Graham and Perin (2007), regular writing instruction and feedback significantly enhance learners' writing performance. In the Philippine context, the Department of Education (DepEd, 2016) underscores the importance of campus journalism in developing communication skills, critical thinking, and self-confidence among learners.

Integrating journalism into writing instruction provides learners with authentic contexts to apply language skills, fostering creativity, clarity, and purpose in their written work. Furthermore, studies highlight the critical role of instructional leadership in promoting literacy

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(Hallinger, 2011). School heads who provide mentoring, monitoring, and professional development create an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

Thus, the integration of campus journalism, supported by strong instructional leadership, serves as an innovative approach to addressing learners' writing deficiencies and nurturing future communicators.

II. Research Questions

This study sought to determine the effectiveness of campus journalism integration in improving the writing competence of Grade 6 learners. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of writing competence of Grades 5 and 6 learners before and after the integration of campus journalism?
2. What is the mean level of teachers' perception of the school head's support in enhancing writing instruction?
3. How did the integration of campus journalism affect the learners' performance in journalism competitions?
4. What specific leadership practices can be institutionalized to sustain improved writing instruction?

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III. Research Methods

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative action research design using a one-group pretest-posttest design to determine the effect of campus journalism integration on the writing competence of Grades 5 and 6 learners.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents were 20 Grades 5 and 6 learners and 14 teacher-coaches from Doña Matilde Memorial Elementary School. Learners were selected based on low writing performance, while teachers were purposively chosen as implementers of the intervention.

Research Instruments

1. Writing Competence Rubric – assessed learners' writing skills in four domains: organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, using a 5-point scale.
2. Teacher Perception Survey – used a 5-point Likert scale to measure teachers' assessment of the school head's leadership support and effectiveness of the program.

Scoring of Responses

Following the administration of the research instruments and collection of data, the responses and assessment results were tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted using appropriate statistical measures. The scoring process enabled the researcher to determine the

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level of learners' writing competence and teachers' perceptions of the school head's support in implementing the intervention

The following scale was used in interpreting the results:

Mean Range	Interpretation
4.21–5.00	Excellent
3.41–4.20	Very Satisfactory
2.61–3.40	Satisfactory
1.81–2.60	Fair
1.00–1.80	Needs Improvement

Research Procedure

The intervention followed three phases:

1. Pre-Implementation: Conducted baseline writing assessments and orientation of teacher-coaches.
2. Implementation: Integrated journalism strategies in writing lessons through workshops, mentoring, and simulated press activities for six weeks.
3. Post-Implementation: Administered post-tests and collected teacher perception surveys.

IV. RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores of Grades 5 and 6 Learners

Indicators	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Mean Gain	Interpretation
Organization of Ideas	2.40	4.15	1.75	Improved
Vocabulary Development	2.20	4.05	1.85	Improved

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Grammar & Sentence Construction	2.30	4.00	1.70	Improved
Mechanics	2.50	4.20	1.70	Improved
Overall Mean	2.35	4.10	1.75	Greatly Improved

Table 1 presents the comparative mean scores of the Grades 5 and 6 learners in the pre-test and post-test, assessing their writing competence across four indicators: organization of ideas, vocabulary development, grammar and sentence construction, and mechanics.

The learners' pre-test overall mean of 2.35 falls under the "Fair" category, indicating limited writing competence prior to the intervention. Meanwhile, the post-test mean of 4.10 falls under the "Very Satisfactory" category, reflecting a remarkable enhancement in learners' writing performance.

The data show that all four indicators improved substantially after the implementation of the campus journalism-based intervention. The overall mean gain of 1.75, equivalent to a 74.5% increase in performance, confirms that the intervention had a substantial positive impact on learners' writing competence. This validates the effectiveness of integrating campus journalism into writing instruction as a strategy to bridge the writing gap, motivate learners to write purposefully, and enhance their readiness for academic and journalistic writing tasks.

Table 2. Teachers' Perception of School Head's Support

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Professional development provided	4.80	Strongly Agree

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Enhanced classroom writing activities	4.70	Strongly Agree
Provision of materials and logistics	4.65	Strongly Agree
Improved collaboration through leadership	4.85	Strongly Agree
Regular monitoring and feedback	4.75	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	4.75	Strongly Agree

Table 2 presents the teachers' perception of the school head's support in implementing the intervention aimed at improving learners' writing competence through campus journalism. The overall weighted mean of 4.75, interpreted as "Strongly Agree," signifies that the teachers perceived the school head's involvement and leadership as highly supportive and instrumental in achieving the project's success.

Among the indicators, "Improved collaboration through leadership" obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.85, suggesting that the school head effectively fostered a culture of teamwork and shared responsibility among teachers. This implies that the leader's participative and empowering approach enhanced teacher engagement and motivation to strengthen writing instruction.

The indicator "Professional development provided" (4.80) ranked second, indicating that teachers recognized the importance of the capacity-building initiatives organized or supported by the school head, such as workshops, coaching, and mentoring on writing strategies and campus journalism.

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Indicators such as “Regular monitoring and feedback” (4.75) and “Enhanced classroom writing activities” (4.70) also received strong agreement, emphasizing the significance of continuous supervision, instructional feedback, and enriched writing tasks as part of the intervention. Furthermore, “Provision of materials and logistics” (4.65) confirmed that the school head ensured adequate resources and logistical support to sustain the program’s implementation.

Overall, the data indicate that the school head’s active leadership and support mechanisms—through professional development, collaboration, monitoring, and provision of resources—were perceived by teachers as vital enablers in bridging the writing gap and integrating campus journalism into instruction. These findings affirm the critical role of the school head in creating an environment conducive to both teacher empowerment and learner achievement.

Table 3. Learners’ Performance in Journalism Competitions

Level	Participants	Top 5 Winners	Percentage	Advanced to DSPC
District	18	13	72%	3

Table 3 presents the performance of the learners who participated in the District Schools Press Conference (DSPC) following the implementation of the campus journalism-based intervention. Out of 18 learners, 13 (or 72%) ranked within the Top 5 in their respective journalism categories, while 3 learners qualified to advance to the Division Schools Press Conference.

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The data clearly demonstrate a substantial improvement in learners' journalistic writing competence and performance. The high percentage of winners suggests that the integration of campus journalism into writing instruction not only enhanced learners' technical writing skills but also built their confidence and competitiveness in journalistic endeavors.

The results also affirm that the school head's leadership support, particularly in providing professional development for teacher-coaches, regular monitoring, and adequate logistical assistance, contributed to the learners' successful performance. The achievements at the district and division levels serve as tangible evidence of the project's effectiveness in bridging the writing gap among Grades 5 and 6 learners and fostering a culture of excellence in campus journalism within the school.

Overall, the findings in Table 3 validate the impact of the intervention both in classroom writing performance and in actual journalistic competitions, reflecting the strong alignment between instructional improvement and co-curricular success.

The findings clearly indicate that the integration of campus journalism substantially improved learners' writing competence. Teachers' responses also affirm the importance of the school head's leadership in providing direction, technical assistance, and motivation. The institutional support fostered a culture of collaboration and excellence, allowing teachers to implement writing-focused strategies effectively.

The learners' strong performance in campus journalism competitions further validates the success of the intervention. The measurable improvements in writing skills translated into

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real-world achievements, demonstrating that when leadership, instruction, and learner engagement align, school performance improves holistically.

Institutionalized Leadership Practices for Sustaining Writing Instruction

Based on the implementation and outcomes of the intervention, several leadership practices emerged as critical factors in sustaining improved writing instruction. These include the provision of continuous professional development for teacher-coaches, regular monitoring and instructional feedback, collaborative planning sessions, mentoring and coaching programs, and the allocation of resources to support campus journalism activities.

These practices contributed to the successful implementation of the project and may be institutionalized to ensure the continuous development of learners' writing competence and the sustainability of journalism-based literacy initiatives.

V. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

1. Learners' writing competence improved substantially, with the overall mean increasing from 2.35 to 4.10.
2. Teachers strongly agreed (WM = 4.75) that the school head's leadership and support contributed to the successful implementation of the intervention.
3. Seventy-two percent (72%) of the participating learners ranked among the Top 5 in district journalism competitions, while three advanced to the Division Schools Press Conference.
4. Continuous mentoring, professional development, monitoring, and resource support

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emerged as leadership practices that can be institutionalized to sustain improved writing instruction.

Conclusions

- The integration of campus journalism effectively enhanced the writing competence of Grades 5 and 6 learners, particularly in vocabulary development, organization of ideas, grammar, and mechanics.
- Campus journalism provided learners with authentic and meaningful writing experiences that increased engagement, creativity, and confidence in written communication.
- Teachers perceived the school head's leadership support as highly effective in facilitating the successful implementation of the intervention through professional development, collaboration, monitoring, and resource provision.
- The improved performance of learners in journalism competitions demonstrated the positive impact of journalism-integrated instruction on both academic and co-curricular achievement.
- Sustained instructional leadership and support mechanisms are essential in maintaining and strengthening literacy improvement initiatives within the school.

Recommendations

1. For School Heads: Continue to institutionalize campus journalism-based writing programs and provide ongoing mentoring for teachers.
2. For Teachers: Utilize journalism techniques in daily writing instruction to sustain

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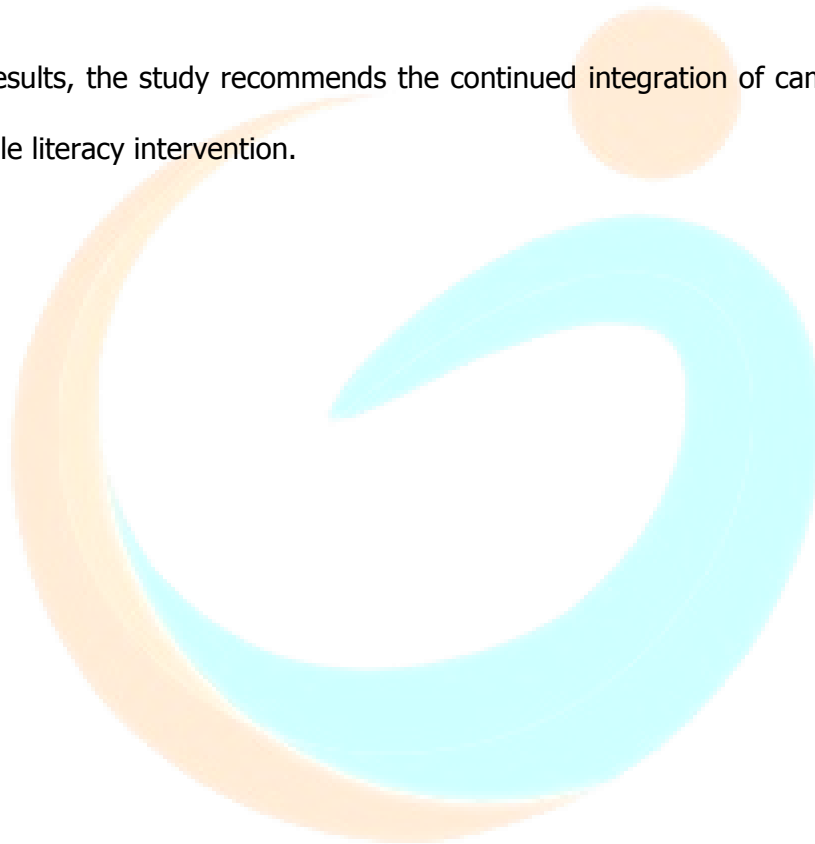
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learners' motivation and competence.

3. For Learners: Participate actively in journalism activities to enhance writing fluency and confidence.
4. DepEd and stakeholders may consider incorporating journalism-based literacy interventions in district literacy improvement programs."

Given these results, the study recommends the continued integration of campus journalism as a sustainable literacy intervention.



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