

Promoting Professional Growth Through Leadership Practices

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Abstract

The study aimed to identify leadership practices that promote professional growth among elementary school heads in the Bicol speaking town, focusing on their leadership strategies and contributions to professional development. It sought to understand their profiles, leadership practices, and the relationships between these factors. The study involved 115 school heads and used descriptive statistics, Pearson Chi-Square Test, and Somer's Delta correlation for data analysis. Findings revealed that most respondents were experienced, with the majority aged 51 and above, holding master's degrees, and serving 11-15 years as school heads. They demonstrated strong leadership in fostering collaboration, managing resources, and enhancing educational quality, though areas like role modeling and facility management needed improvement. Leadership practices, such as focusing on teaching and learning, significantly contributed to mentoring and training programs. Correlations showed that age, educational attainment, and years of service positively influenced leadership practices. A proposed intervention guidebook was developed to address these areas and promote leadership excellence. Recommendations included improving role modeling, streamlining facilities management, enhancing training on teaching and learning, and fostering inclusive leadership. Ongoing professional development, community engagement, and regular evaluations were also suggested to ensure continued growth in leadership practices.

Keywords: Professional growth; leadership practice; building connections; creating a supportive work environment; developing self and others; focusing on teaching and learning; leading strategically; managing school operations and resources; mentoring programs; training opportunities

1. Introduction

The improvement of teaching quality, student learning outcomes, and educational systems rely on the professional development of educators. Effective leadership cultivates an environment that promotes continuous improvement and innovation in educational institutions, making leadership practices essential for promoting such growth Spillane et al. (2002). The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between professional growth and leadership practices of school heads. Several legislative frameworks and policies have been put in place in the Philippines to support and promote professional development and leadership in education, as these aspects are widely acknowledged. These legal foundations included international accords as well as national legislation, regional agreements, divisional rules, and guidelines established at the educational level.

The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines is the primary authority for ensuring compliance with educational standards, including those related to teacher professional development. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Conventions (2003): The Philippines has ratified many UNESCO treaties emphasizing the value of high-quality education and teacher professional development. The Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines of 1987 under Article XIV, Section 5 compels the state to protect and defend every citizen's right to a high-quality education at all levels. Republic Act No. 10533, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, stresses the need for continuous professional development of educators to improve teaching quality and student outcomes (Alibogha and Bedona, 2018). DepEd has implemented various policies to promote professional growth, including DepEd Order No. 2, s. 2015, which establishes a performance management system for setting goals and engaging in professional development. DepEd Order No. 83, s. 2012, through School-Based Management (SBM), decentralizes decision-making, promotes resource flexibility, and encourages collaborative leadership, fostering innovation and tailored professional development.

Additionally, DepEd Memorandum No. 050, s. 2020 highlights the importance of upskilling teachers and school heads to improve learning outcomes, while DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2020, emphasizes the professional standards for school heads. Effective leadership is crucial in driving educational reforms, as it impacts both student performance and educational development. The study focused on the leadership practices in elementary schools in the Bicol-speaking town, aiming to foster professional growth and leadership excellence, which can serve as a model for other educational institutions. The study aims for systemic change, benefiting students, teachers, and educational reforms at various levels.

2. Methodology

This study used a quantitative, descriptive-correlational design with a survey questionnaire to collect data on respondents' profiles, leadership practices, and contributions to professional growth. Descriptive analysis was applied to gather information on the respondents' age, sex, educational attainment, years of service, position, and leadership practices such as leading strategically and focusing on teaching. Correlation analysis was used to determine the significant relationships between respondents' profiles and their leadership practices, as well as between their leadership practices and contributions to professional growth. Statistical techniques were employed to analyze the data and identify relationships between variables.

2.1 Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Technique

The study included 115 school heads from the Bicol-speaking town, using total enumeration to ensure every school head was included. This method provided a comprehensive understanding of leadership practices and their impact on professional growth, avoiding biases associated with sampling. By examining factors such as age, gender, educational background, years of service, and position, the study captured diverse perspectives and experiences. This approach enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings, enabling policymakers to develop targeted programs to support school heads' roles.

Table 1. Number of Respondents

Bicol Speaking Town	No. of School Heads
District A	14
District B	10
District C	10
District D	20
District E	16

District F	26
District G	19
Total	115

2.2 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher obtained permission from the school division superintendent to collect data from elementary school heads in the Bicol speaking town of Camarines Norte. Ethical standards were upheld by ensuring respondents' right to participate voluntarily, decline sensitive questions, and withdraw at any time without justification. A Likert-scale survey was used to gather data on the respondents' profiles, leadership practices, and contributions to professional growth, with correlation analysis employed to identify relationships between these variables. Based on the findings, the researcher proposed interventions to improve leadership practices and support professional growth.

2.3 Statistical Treatment of Data

The researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the respondents' profiles and leadership practices, including frequencies, percentages, and weighted means for Likert-scale responses. Pearson Chi-Square Test was applied to examine the relationship between respondents' profiles and their leadership practices, while Somer's D assessed the relationship between leadership practices and contributions to professional growth. Correlation analysis was employed to determine the strength and direction of associations between variables. IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21 software was used for statistical analysis, and document analysis guided the proposal of an intervention to enhance leadership practices.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Profile of the Respondents

The study revealed a diverse profile across age, sex, educational attainment, years in service as school head, and position as shown in table 2.

3.1.1 Age. The study found that the highest representation of school heads was in the 51 years old and above age group, with 50 respondents (43.50%), while the lowest representation was in the 31-40 years old age group, with 17 respondents (14.80%). This suggests that older school leaders tend to have more experience, which enhances their leadership maturity and decision-making abilities. However, the underrepresentation of younger school heads highlights the need for leadership development programs targeting younger professionals to ensure smooth succession. This is supported by the study of Nwafor and Ololube (2024), who emphasize the importance of principals continually improving their administrative skills through professional development to achieve better educational outcomes.

3.1.2 Sex. The study found that male respondents represented the highest proportion, with 52.20% or 60 respondents, while female respondents made up 47.80% or 55 respondents, indicating a balanced gender distribution in school leadership roles. This suggests that both genders are well-represented in the education sector, reflecting a positive trend toward gender equality. However, continued efforts are necessary to ensure equal opportunities for both men and women in higher leadership positions. This aligns with the study of Al-Naqbi and Aderibigbe's (2024) study, which highlighted challenges in promoting Emirati women to senior leadership roles, including barriers to career progression, institutional support disparities, and gender biases.

Table 2. Profile of Respondents

Profile	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1. Age (years)		
31 – 40	17	14.80
41 – 50	48	41.70
51 – above	50	43.50
2. Sex		
Male	60	52.20
Female	55	47.80
3. Educational Attainment		
College	5	4.30
With MA Units	32	27.80
MAED Graduate	59	51.30
With Doctorate Units	5	4.30
Doctorate Graduate	14	12.20
4. Years in Service as School Head		
Less than a year	1	0.90
1 – 5 years	32	27.80
6 – 10 years	35	30.40
11 – 15 years	41	35.70
16 years and above	6	5.20
5. Position		
Head Teacher I	3	2.60
Head Teacher II	5	4.30
Head Teacher III	14	12.20
Head Teacher IV	1	0.90
Master Teacher I	1	0.90
Master Teacher II	1	0.90
Principal I	52	45.20
Principal II	17	14.80
Principal III	5	4.30
Principal IV	1	0.90
TIC	9	7.80
OIC	6	5.20

3.1.3 Highest Educational Attainment. The study found that most respondents, 51.30% or 59, held a Master of Arts in Education (MAED) degree, indicating a strong foundation in educational theory and practice. However, only 4.30% or 5 respondents had completed Doctorate units, and another 4.30% were college graduates, suggesting a need for further educational advancement among school leaders. Encouraging school heads to pursue doctoral studies or additional academic qualifications could enhance their ability to tackle the complex challenges of educational leadership. This is supported by the study of Zalsos and Corpus (2024), who highlighted that most respondents held master's degrees, emphasizing the potential for leveraging this academic foundation to enhance educational quality and foster innovation.

3.1.4 Years in Service as School Head. The study revealed that 35.70% of respondents had 11-15 years of experience as school heads, indicating a well-established leadership base. This extensive experience provides valuable insights into the educational landscape. However, the presence of one respondent (0.90%) with less than a year of experience emphasizes the need for support, mentorship, and professional development to help new school heads transition effectively into their leadership roles. This aligns with the study of Bryant and Walker (2024), which found that middle leaders play a pivotal role in school

improvement, and while some systems offer formal professional development, many middle leaders prefer job-embedded learning.

3.1.5 Position. The study found that most respondents were Principal 1, comprising 45.20% of the sample, suggesting that most school heads are in the early or mid-level stages of their careers. The lower representation (0.90%) of senior leadership positions such as Head Teacher IV, Master Teacher I, Master Teacher II, and Principal IV indicates the need for clearer career progression pathways within the education system. Strengthening support for career advancement could provide opportunities for school heads to move into higher leadership roles. However, this is refuted by the study of Machovcova et al. (2024), which found that senior managers appointed to fixed-term managerial positions later in their careers represent the most sustainable group, while temporary managers appointed early in their careers are at risk of having their career development disrupted.

3.2 Leadership Practices of the School Heads in Promoting Professional Growth

3.2.1 Leading Strategically. It highlights the role of school heads in setting the direction, goals, and objectives of schools, and in ensuring that these are understood and embraced by all stakeholders. It encompasses the school heads’ commitment to a strategic course of action consistent with institutional goals towards maximizing organizational performance. School heads are expected to identify and comprehend relevant sources of information such as existing laws, policies, research, feedback, and contexts, and establish their connections and alignment. School heads should have a complete understanding of schools’ current and desired states. They should support in executing various collaborative strategies with stakeholders to respond appropriately to the dynamic and rapidly evolving needs of schools.

The study found that school heads generally excel in leading strategically, with respondents strongly agreeing (WM=4.81) on their alignment with the DepEd vision, mission, and core values. The highest agreement was on demonstrating knowledge of these values (WM=4.90), while the lowest agreement was on serving as role models in embodying these values (WM=4.65), though still strongly agreed upon. This suggests that while school heads are committed to strategic leadership, there may be challenges in fully embodying these values in the wider school community. The study indicates a need for further efforts to enhance the visibility and practice of these values by school heads. These findings align with the study by Francisco et al. (2024), which revealed that in the Schools Division Office of Mandaluyong City, management programs at both the school and division levels, including in-service training and capacity building, have demonstrated high effectiveness in program management, achieving DepEd’s goals, and improving employee performance and stakeholder engagement.

Table 3. Leadership Practices of School Heads in Promoting Professional Growth in terms of Leading Strategically

	Practices	WM	Verbal Interpretation
1.	Demonstrate knowledge of the DepEd vision, mission, and core values to foster shared understanding and alignment of school policies, programs, projects, and activities.	4.90	Strongly Agree
2.	Communicate the DepEd vision, mission, and core values to the wider school community to ensure shared understanding and alignment of school policies, programs, projects and activities.	4.68	Strongly Agree
3.	Collaborate with school personnel in communicating the DepEd vision, mission and core values to the wider school community to strengthen shared understanding and alignment of school policies, programs, projects and activities.	4.83	Strongly Agree
4.	Serve as a role model in the school and the wider school community in embodying the	4.65	Strongly Agree

DepEd vision, mission, and core values to sustain shared understanding and alignment of school policies, programs, projects and activities.			
5.	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the phases of development and implementation of school plans aligned with institutional goals and policies.	4.89	Strongly Agree
6.	Develop and implement with the planning team school plans aligned with institutional goals and policies.	4.83	Strongly Agree
7.	Engage the school community in the development and implementation of school plans aligned with institutional goals and policies.	4.84	Strongly Agree
8.	Share with fellow school heads best practice in the development and implementation of school plans aligned with institutional goals and policies.	4.82	Strongly Agree
Overall Weighted Mean		4.81	Strongly Agree
Rating Scale	Descriptive Interpretation		
4.20 – 5.0	Strongly Agree		
3.40 – 4.19	Agree		
2.60 – 3.39	Somewhat Agree		
1.80 – 2.59	Disagree		
1.0 – 1.79	Strongly Disagree		

3.2.2 Managing School Operations and Resources. This centers on the role of school heads in managing systems and processes in schools. This Domain highlights the school heads’ commitment in ensuring efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness in discharging functions towards maximizing organizational health. School heads understand and implement laws, policies, guidelines, and issuances that relate to the management of human, financial, and material resources. They should provide support in establishing a culture of transparency and accountability in the continuous delivery of basic education services.

Table 4. Leadership Practices of School Heads in Promoting Professional Growth in terms of Managing School Operations and Resources

	Practices	WM	Verbal Interpretation
1.	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of policies, guidelines, and issuances in managing finances such as allocation, procurement, disbursement, and liquidation aligned with the school plan.	4.74	Strongly Agree
2.	Manage finances adhering to policies, guidelines and issuances in allocation, procurement, disbursement, and liquidation aligned with the school plan.	4.84	Strongly Agree
3.	Exhibit efficient and effective practices in the management of finances consistently adhering to policies, guidelines and issuances in allocation, procurement, disbursement, and liquidation aligned with the school plan.	4.92	Strongly Agree
4.	Create and implement a checking mechanism to sustain efficient and effective management of finances while adhering consistently to policies, guidelines and issuances in allocation, procurement, disbursement, and liquidation aligned with the school plan.	4.99	Strongly Agree
5.	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of policies, guidelines and issuances on acquisition, recording, utilization, repair and maintenance, storage, and disposal in managing school facilities and equipment.	4.90	Strongly Agree
6.	Manage school facilities and equipment in adherence to policies, guidelines and issuances on acquisition, recording, utilization, repair and maintenance, storage, and disposal.	4.74	Strongly Agree
7.	Establish shared accountability in managing school facilities and equipment in adherence to policies, guidelines and issuances on acquisition, recording, utilization, repair and maintenance, storage, and disposal.	4.83	Strongly Agree
8.	Systematize processes in managing school facilities and equipment in adherence to policies, guidelines and issuances on acquisition, recording, utilization, repair and maintenance, storage, and disposal.	4.70	Strongly Agree
Overall Weighted Mean		4.83	Strongly Agree
Rating Scale	Descriptive Interpretation		
4.20 – 5.0	Strongly Agree		
3.40 – 4.19	Agree		

2.60 – 3.39	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>
1.80 – 2.59	<i>Disagree</i>
1.0 – 1.79	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>

Moreover, the study revealed that school heads are highly effective in managing school operations and resources, with respondents strongly agreeing (WM=4.83) that they adhere to policies and guidelines, particularly in financial management. The highest-rated practice (WM=4.99) involved creating and implementing a checking mechanism to ensure transparency and accountability in resource allocation, procurement, and disbursement. However, the slightly lower agreement (WM=4.70) on systematizing processes for managing school facilities and equipment suggests room for improvement in areas like maintenance and disposal practices. The findings highlight a need for further training or support to enhance systematic resource management and maintain high standards of operational efficiency. This contrasts with the study by Legede et al. (2024), which identified issues in budget implementation and financial resource management in selected government elementary schools, emphasizing the need for stakeholder involvement and regular monitoring to improve accountability and transparency.

3.2.3 Focusing on Teaching and Learning. It concentrates on the work of school heads in promoting quality teaching and learning. This Domain emphasizes the school heads’ commitment to providing instructional leadership towards improving competence among teachers and outcomes among learners. In this domain, school heads are expected to provide technical assistance on instruction that relates to curriculum, practice, and performance. They should also create a learner-centered environment that ensures access to inclusive, excellent, relevant, and liberating education

Table 5. Leadership Practices of School Heads in Promoting Professional Growth in terms of Focusing on Teaching and Learning

Practices		WM	Verbal Interpretation
1.	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of school-based review, contextualization, and implementation of learning standards.	4.95	Strongly Agree
2.	Assist teachers in the review, contextualization, and implementation of learning standards to make the curriculum relevant for learners.	4.87	Strongly Agree
3.	Work with teams in the conduct of review, contextualization, and implementation of learning standards to assist teachers in making the curriculum relevant for learners.	4.90	Strongly Agree
4.	Share exemplary practice in the review, contextualization, and implementation of learning standards to effectively assist teachers in making the curriculum relevant for learners.	4.14	Agree
5.	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of teaching standards and pedagogies within and across learning areas to provide technical assistance to teachers to improve their teaching practice.	4.77	Strongly Agree
6.	Provide technical assistance to teachers on teaching standards and pedagogies within and across learning areas to improve their teaching practice.	4.59	Strongly Agree
7.	Engage school personnel such as master teachers, head teachers and department heads in providing technical assistance to teachers on teaching standards and pedagogies within and across learning areas to improve their teaching practice.	4.16	Agree
8.	Exhibit best practice in providing technical assistance to teachers for them to develop exemplary practices consistent with teaching standards and pedagogies within and across learning areas.	4.19	Agree Strongly
Overall Weighted Mean		4.57	Agree
Rating Scale	Descriptive Interpretation		
4.20 – 5.0	<i>Strongly Agree</i>		
3.40 – 4.19	<i>Agree</i>		
2.60 – 3.39	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>		
1.80 – 2.59	<i>Disagree</i>		
1.0 – 1.79	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>		

Furthermore, the study showed that school heads are generally effective in focusing on teaching and learning, with respondents strongly agreeing (WM=4.57) on leadership practices in this area. The highest-rated indicator (WM=4.95) was demonstrating knowledge and understanding of school-based review, contextualization, and implementation of learning standards, reflecting a strong commitment to instructional leadership and curriculum development. However, the lowest-rated response (WM=4.14) involved sharing exemplary practices to assist teachers in making the curriculum relevant for learners, suggesting an area for improvement in mentorship and collaboration. This gap indicates the need for structured initiatives to support the sharing of best practices among teachers, which could enhance curriculum relevance and teaching effectiveness. These findings align with the study of Bada et al. (2024), who emphasized the critical role of instructional leadership in improving teacher performance, achieving desired learning outcomes, and creating a supportive learning environment through focused leadership strategies.

3.2.4 Developing Self and Others. It recognizes the role of school heads in nurturing themselves and others. School heads are expected to reflect on their personal and professional development to enhance their practice in leading and developing people as they support their personnel’s professional development and welfare.

Table 6. Leadership Practices of School Heads in Promoting Professional Growth in terms of Developing Self and Others

Practices		WM	Verbal Interpretation
1.	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the implementation of the performance management system in improving school personnel and office performance.	4.81	Strongly Agree
2.	Implement the performance management system with a team to support the career advancement of school personnel, and to improve office performance.	4.79	Strongly Agree
3.	Monitor and evaluate with school personnel the implementation of the performance management system to ensure career advancement for individual school personnel and to improve office performance.	4.90	Strongly Agree
4.	Exhibit exemplary practice in the efficient and effective implementation of the performance management system to ensure career advancement for individual school personnel, and to sustain improved office performance.	4.75	Strongly Agree
5.	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of professional development in enhancing strengths and in addressing performance gaps among school personnel.	4.90	Strongly Agree
6.	Implement professional development initiatives to enhance strengths and address performance gaps among school personnel.	4.68	Strongly Agree
7.	Monitor and evaluate the implementation of professional development initiatives in enhancing strengths and in addressing performance gaps among school personnel.	4.08	Agree
8.	Model exemplary practice in the implementation of professional development initiatives to enhance strengths and address performance gaps among school personnel.	4.15	Agree Strongly
Overall Weighted Mean		4.63	Agree

Rating Scale	Descriptive Interpretation
4.20 – 5.0	Strongly Agree
3.40 – 4.19	Agree
2.60 – 3.39	Somewhat Agree
1.80 – 2.59	Disagree
1.0 – 1.79	Strongly Disagree

Moreover, the study reveals that school heads excel in monitoring and evaluating the performance management system to support career advancement and office performance (WM=4.90), reflecting strong

leadership in developing both themselves and others. However, the lowest response relates to the monitoring and evaluation of professional development initiatives (WM=4.08), suggesting room for improvement in assessing and refining these programs. The overall rating of 4.63 indicates generally strong performance, though there is a need for more structured monitoring of professional development. Kilag (2023) supports these findings, emphasizing the significant impact of principals' leadership practices, including idealized influence and inspirational motivation, on personal development. Kilag's study also highlights the importance of creating a supportive environment that encourages collaboration, growth mindset, and personalized learning to further enhance personal development within the school community.

3.2.5 Building Connections. This underscores the school heads' competence in engaging stakeholders in initiatives towards the improvement of school communities. This domain points to the school heads' commitment to advocating that education is everyone's responsibility. In this domain, school heads are expected to be responsible and accountable for inculcating a deeper understanding of the vision, mission, and core values, and directions of the school to relevant entities.

Table 7. Leadership Practices of School Heads in Promoting Professional Growth in terms of Building Connections

Practices		WM	Verbal Interpretation
1.	Involve the community, such as parents, alumni, authorities, industries, and other stakeholders, in school programs, projects and activities to gain support for learner development, as well as school and community improvement.	4.84	Strongly Agree
2.	Initiate partnerships with the community, such as parents, alumni, authorities, industries, and other stakeholders, to strengthen support for learner development, as well as school and community improvement.	4.82	Strongly Agree
3.	Empower the community, such as parents, alumni, authorities, industries, and other stakeholders, to participate in addressing concerns on learner development, as well as school and community improvement.	4.95	Strongly Agree
4.	Lead the community, including parents, alumni, authorities, industries, and other stakeholders, in creating collaborative actions in solving complex issues on learner development, as well as school and community improvement.	4.95	Strongly Agree
Overall Weighted Mean		4.89	Strongly Agree
Rating Scale	Descriptive Interpretation		
4.20 – 5.0	Strongly Agree		
3.40 – 4.19	Agree		
2.60 – 3.39	Somewhat Agree		
1.80 – 2.59	Disagree		
1.0 – 1.79	Strongly Disagree		

Furthermore, the study revealed that school heads exhibit strong leadership practices in building connections, as evidenced by a high average rating of 4.89, with respondents strongly agreeing on their effectiveness in this domain. The highest-rated indicators (WM=4.95) involved empowering the community and leading collaborative actions to address learner development and school improvement, demonstrating the school heads' ability to mobilize stakeholders and foster shared goals. However, the slightly lower response (WM=4.82) regarding initiating partnerships indicates potential opportunities for enhancing proactive efforts in expanding and sustaining support networks for school initiatives. These findings underscore the importance of strategic partnerships and proactive collaboration in strengthening community involvement and achieving educational goals. In contrast, Msonge and Lekule (2024) study refuted these findings, highlighting insufficiencies in collaboration due to inadequate training and lack of interpersonal and technical skills among school administrators. They recommend targeted training programs for school leaders to promote teamwork

and encourage teacher collaboration, which is vital for boosting morale, creativity, and overall school efficacy.

3.3 Contributions of School Heads in the Promotion of Professional Growth

3.3.1 Training Opportunities. It refers to integrating career awareness and opportunities into the school curriculum. School heads should collaborate with teachers, invite guest speakers, organize career fairs, and facilitate workplace visits and internships.

Table 8. Contribution of School Heads in the Promotion of Professional Growth in terms of Training Opportunities

Practices		WM	Verbal Interpretation
1.	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the integration of career awareness and opportunities in the provision of learning experiences aligned with the curriculum.	4.88	Strongly Agree
2.	Ensure integration of career awareness and opportunities in the provision of learning experiences aligned with the curriculum.	4.75	Strongly Agree
3.	Undertake initiatives in integration career awareness and opportunities in the provision of learning experiences aligned with the curriculum.	4.78	Strongly Agree
4.	Institutionalize integration of career awareness and opportunities into the school curriculum and all other learning experiences.	4.94	Strongly Agree
Overall Weighted Mean		4.84	Strongly Agree
Rating Scale	Descriptive Interpretation		
4.20 – 5.0	Strongly Agree		
3.40 – 4.19	Agree		
2.60 – 3.39	Somewhat Agree		
1.80 – 2.59	Disagree		
1.0 – 1.79	Strongly Disagree		

Moreover, the study revealed that school heads are highly effective in promoting professional growth through training opportunities, as shown by a high average rating of 4.84, with strong agreement on institutionalizing career awareness integration into the curriculum (WM=4.94). This reflects their commitment to preparing teachers with essential skills and knowledge for career development. However, the slightly lower agreement (WM=4.75) on aligning all learning experiences with career awareness highlights potential areas for improvement in fully integrating career-focused initiatives throughout the curriculum. The findings suggest that while school heads are making substantial progress, a more systematic approach may be needed to ensure consistent career development opportunities across all educational programs. These findings align with the study of Kilag et al. (2023), who emphasized that empowered school leaders with transformational leadership behaviors positively influence teacher satisfaction, commitment, and effectiveness, strategically aligning school goals with broader educational objectives for impactful school improvement.

3.3.2 Mentoring Programs. It refers to the programs undertaken by the school heads to improve professional development within the school community. It emphasizes the importance of understanding professional reflection and learning, applying it to improve practice, and collaborating with other school heads to share insights and ideas. It highlights the need to model exemplary leadership practices, such as critically evaluating practices and setting clear targets for professional development, to inspire confidence and motivation among staff and contribute to the broader educational community's growth and development.

Table 9. Contribution of School Heads in the Promotion of Professional Growth in terms of Mentoring Programs

Practices		WM	Verbal Interpretation
1.	Demonstrate understanding of how professional reflection and learning can be used in improving practice.	4.72	Strongly Agree
2.	Apply professional reflection and learning to improve one's practice.	4.93	Strongly Agree
3.	Initiate professional reflections and promote learning opportunities with other school heads to improve practice.	4.05	Agree
4.	Model exemplary leadership practices within and beyond school contexts in critically evaluating practice and setting clearly defined targets for professional development.	4.86	Strongly Agree
Overall Weighted Mean		4.64	Strongly Agree
Rating Scale	Descriptive Interpretation		
4.20 – 5.0	Strongly Agree		
3.40 – 4.19	Agree		
2.60 – 3.39	Somewhat Agree		
1.80 – 2.59	Disagree		
1.0 – 1.79	Strongly Disagree		

Furthermore, the study found that mentoring programs significantly contribute to professional growth, as indicated by a high average rating of 4.64, with respondents strongly agreeing on the importance of applying professional reflection and learning to improve practice (WM=4.93). This underscores school heads' commitment to self-improvement and fostering a culture of personal development and self-assessment. However, the lower rating (WM=4.05) for initiating professional reflections and promoting learning opportunities with other school heads highlights the need for improved collaboration and knowledge-sharing among peers. Encouraging more structured and frequent opportunities for school heads to engage with one another could enhance the mentoring experience and build a stronger sense of community. These findings align with the study of Kilag et al. (2023), who emphasized that effective school leaders prioritize collaboration, foster positive relationships, and articulate a clear vision, all of which contribute to a positive school culture and enhanced professional and student outcomes.

3.3.3 Creating a Supportive Work Environment. It emphasizes the role of a school head in creating and maintaining a supportive work environment. The school head must demonstrate an understanding of managing a learner-friendly, inclusive, and healthy learning environment, oversee day-to-day operations, and engage the wider school community in discussions and initiatives. Empowering the school community through professional development opportunities, encouraging ownership of initiatives, and delegating responsibilities are crucial for fostering a sense of ownership and investment in the school's environment.

Table 10. Contribution of School Heads in the Promotion of Professional Growth in terms of Creating a Supportive Work Environment

Practices		WM	Verbal Interpretation
1.	Demonstrate understanding of managing a learner-friendly, inclusive, and healthy learning environment.	4.68	Strongly Agree
2.	Manage a learner-friendly inclusive and healthy learning environment.	4.88	Strongly Agree
3.	Engage the wider school community in maintaining a learner-friendly, inclusive, and healthy learning environment.	4.73	Strongly Agree
4.	Empower the wider school community in promoting and sustaining a learner-friendly, inclusive, and healthy learning environment.	4.77	Strongly Agree
Overall Weighted Mean		4.76	Strongly Agree
Rating Scale	Descriptive Interpretation		
4.20 – 5.0	Strongly Agree		
3.40 – 4.19	Agree		

- 2.60 – 3.39 Somewhat Agree
- 1.80 – 2.59 Disagree
- 1.0 – 1.79 Strongly Disagree

The study revealed that school heads are highly effective in fostering a supportive work environment that promotes professional growth, with an overall mean rating of 4.76, interpreted as strongly agree. Respondents highlighted the commitment of school heads to managing learner-friendly, inclusive, and healthy environments, as evidenced by a high rating of 4.88. However, a slightly lower rating of 4.68 for demonstrating understanding in managing such environments suggests that school heads may benefit from additional training to deepen their knowledge of inclusive practices. These findings align with the study of Adhikari (2021), who emphasized the importance of cooperative and culturally responsive teaching, recommending workshops for teachers on effective classroom management strategies to enhance motivation and learning outcomes.

3.4 Relationship Between Profile and Leadership Practices in Promoting Professional Growth

Table 11 presents the relationship between respondents' profiles and their leadership practices in promoting professional growth, revealing several significant correlations. Age positively correlates with focusing on teaching and learning ($\chi^2=31.888$) and developing self and others ($\chi^2=28.155$), while sex shows no significant influence on leadership practices. Educational attainment strongly predicts leadership success, particularly in focusing on teaching and learning ($\chi^2=65.956$), developing self and others ($\chi^2=46.333$), and building connections ($\chi^2=40.922$), whereas years of service significantly correlates with managing school operations ($\chi^2=38.000$), focusing on teaching and learning ($\chi^2=61.761$), and developing self and others ($\chi^2=68.062$). Additionally, position plays a crucial role in leading strategically ($\chi^2=73.696$), focusing on teaching and learning ($\chi^2=198.689$), and developing self and others ($\chi^2=143.205$). However, building connections showed no significant correlation with other profile factors ($p>0.05$), highlighting the need for targeted training in this area. These findings align with the study of Lewis (2025), who emphasized the importance of succession planning to improve leadership retention, development, and engagement, ensuring a continuous pipeline of effective school leaders.

Table 11. Test of Relationship between the Profile of the Respondents and their Leadership Practices in Promoting Professional Growth

Profile	Leadership Practices									
	Leading Strategically		Managing School Operations and Resources		Focusing on Teaching and Learning		Developing Self and Others		Building Connections	
	χ^2 -value	<i>p</i> -value	χ^2 -value	<i>p</i> -value	χ^2 -value	<i>p</i> -value	χ^2 -value	<i>p</i> -value	χ^2 -value	<i>p</i> -value
Age	12.917	0.228	17.037	0.148	31.888*	0.023	28.155*	0.014	4.550	0.603
Sex	6.476	0.263	4.723	0.580	4.496	0.876	3.354	0.850	3.077	0.380
Educational Attainment	29.741	0.074	35.320	0.064	65.956**	0.002	46.333*	0.016	40.922*	0.000
Years in Service as School Head	21.879	0.347	38.000*	0.035	61.761**	0.005	68.062*	0.000	16.617	0.165
Position	73.696*	0.047	68.206	0.402	198.689*	0.000	143.205**	0.000	22.167	0.924

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
 **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

3.5 Relationship Between Leadership Practices of the Respondents and their Contributions to the Promotion of Professional Growth

Table 12 shows the relationship between leadership practices and contributions to promoting professional growth, revealing strong positive correlations with training opportunities. Managing school operations and resources (d=0.426), focusing on teaching and learning (d=0.812), developing self and others (d=0.707), and building connections (d=0.379) significantly enhance training initiatives. Additionally, mentoring programs are strongly influenced by leadership practices, with focusing on teaching and learning (d=0.495) and developing self and others (d=0.530) showing strong positive correlations. Meanwhile, building connections (d=0.228) and managing school operations and resources (d=0.184) demonstrate weaker but still significant relationships with mentoring programs. However, creating a supportive work environment and leading strategically showed no significant correlations, suggesting the need for additional approaches to foster these areas. This was aligned with the study of Smith (2025), who found mentoring programs effective in developing instructional leadership, these findings underscore the importance of leadership practices like trust-building, balancing challenge with support, and coaching in driving professional growth.

Table 12. Test of Relationship Leadership Practices of the Respondents and their Contributions to the Promotion of Professional Growth

Leadership Practices	Aspects of Contributions in the Promotion of Professional Growth					
	Training Opportunities		Mentoring Programs		Creating a Supportive Work Environment	
	d	p-value	d	p-value	d	p-value
Leading Strategically	0.080	0.271	0.074	0.367	-0.048	0.555
Managing School Operations and Resources	0.426**	0.000	0.184*	0.019	0.118	0.161
Focusing on Teaching and Learning	0.812**	0.000	0.495**	0.000	0.031	0.666
Developing Self and Others	0.707**	0.000	0.530**	0.000	0.043	0.588
Building Connections	0.379**	0.000	0.228**	0.007	-0.021	0.815

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

3.6 Proposed Intervention Plan to Enhance Leadership Practices in Promoting the Professional Growth of School Head

The success of educational institutions and student development relies heavily on empowering school leaders, as emphasized in Empowering School Leaders: A Guidebook for Professional Growth and Excellence. This guidebook aligns with DepEd Memorandum No. 050 s. 2020 and DepEd Order No. 24 s. 2020, reinforcing the Department of Education’s commitment to enhancing leadership capabilities and improving teacher quality. It provides practical strategies for managing school resources, implementing impactful curricula, addressing performance gaps, and building partnerships with stakeholders to foster student and community development. The guide also emphasizes incorporating career awareness into curricula, creating inclusive environments, and promoting transformative leadership practices for academic excellence. Upon approval by district supervisors, the handbook and key research findings will be shared with school heads during district meetings to inspire and support effective leadership.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that school heads, predominantly experienced and well-educated, demonstrate strong leadership practices aligned with the DepEd's vision, mission, and core values, particularly in managing school operations and promoting professional growth. However, areas for improvement include embodying core values as role models, systematizing facilities management, and enhancing leadership effectiveness in building connections. Leadership practices such as focusing on teaching, learning, and developing self and others significantly contribute to training opportunities and mentoring programs, while creating supportive work environments requires alternative approaches. Educational attainment, experience, and leadership positions strongly influence leadership success, emphasizing the need for targeted professional development programs. A proposed guidebook offers practical strategies for school management, curriculum implementation, and fostering community partnerships to inspire leadership excellence and enhance educational outcomes. Recommendations include fostering integrity, streamlining facilities management, promoting inclusive practices, enhancing stakeholder relationships, and implementing regular evaluations to support and improve leadership practices.

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