



Public School Heads' Transformational Leadership Practices and Challenges as Perceived by Secondary Heads and Teachers in Olongapo City: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract—This study examined the transformational and administrative leadership practices of public secondary school heads in Olongapo City and the challenges they encountered as perceived by school heads and teachers. Using a descriptive-comparative quantitative design, the study involved nine school heads and 195 teachers from four public secondary schools: Regional Science High School III, Tapinac Senior High School, Mabayan Senior High School, and New Cabalan National High School. A researcher-made questionnaire based on DepEd Order No. 007, s. 2024 was used to measure leadership practices in organizational efficiency, resource allocation and management, policy implementation, workplace climate, and day-to-day school operations, as well as challenges related to teacher retention and recruitment, technology integration, student learning gaps, student mental health, and community trust and engagement. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and analysis of variance. Findings showed that both school heads and teachers perceived administrative leadership practices as highly practiced. School heads rated workplace climate highest, while teachers rated policy implementation and day-to-day operations highest. Challenges were rated as challenging by school heads and sometimes challenging by teachers, with teacher retention and recruitment emerging as the most pressing concern. Most perceptions did not significantly differ when grouped by profile variables, except for selected teacher perceptions related to workplace climate and teacher retention. Based on these findings, a strategic leadership plan was proposed to strengthen leadership development, resource management, teacher support, technology use, learning recovery, mental health support, and community engagement.

Index Terms—transformational leadership, administrative leadership, school heads, secondary schools, Olongapo City, teacher retention, school management.

1. Introduction

Transformational leadership is widely recognized as an important factor in improving school performance, strengthening teacher motivation, and promoting positive organizational change. In school settings, leaders who communicate a shared vision, support teacher development, and encourage collaboration can influence teaching quality,

workplace culture, and student outcomes. However, the effective practice of transformational leadership remains challenged by issues such as limited resources, uneven policy implementation, teacher workload, technology demands, learning gaps, and growing mental health concerns among learners.

In the Philippine basic education context, school heads are guided by national policies such as Republic Act 9155, DepEd orders, and professional standards for school leadership. These policies emphasize school-based management, accountability, instructional support, and responsive leadership. Despite the existence of these standards, schools continue to experience differences in leadership capacity, resource management, staff support, and community engagement. This makes it important to examine how leadership practices are actually perceived by both school heads and teachers.

The local context of Olongapo City provides a meaningful setting for this inquiry. Public secondary schools in the city face common leadership concerns, including teacher retention and recruitment, digital transformation, student learning gaps, mental health needs, and the need to build stronger community trust. While leadership efforts are already present, localized empirical evidence is needed to guide context-sensitive interventions and leadership development programs.

This study therefore aimed to determine and describe the school heads' leadership practices and the challenges they encountered as perceived by school heads and teachers in selected public secondary high schools in Olongapo City during Academic Year 2025-2026. Specifically, it examined respondent profiles, perceived administrative leadership practices, perceived leadership challenges, significant differences in perceptions based on profile variables, and the strategic plan that may be proposed for effective school head leadership.

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2. Methodology

A. Research Design

The study employed descriptive-comparative quantitative research design. The descriptive component was used to present the demographic profile of respondents, describe perceived leadership practices, and identify challenges encountered by school heads. The comparative component was used to test whether perceptions differed significantly when respondents were grouped according to profile variables.

B. Respondents and Locale

The respondents consisted of nine school heads and 195 teachers from four public secondary schools in the Division of Olongapo City: Regional Science High School III, Tapinac Senior High School, Mabayan Senior High School, and New Cabalan National High School. These schools were selected because they include senior high school components, employ school leaders or assistant principals in training, and represent urban or community-based school contexts within Olongapo City.

Table 1

School	School Heads (f)	Teachers (f)
Regional Science High School III	3	45
Tapinac Senior High School	2	50
Mabayuan Senior High School	2	25
New Cabalan National High School	2	75
Total	9	195

C. Research Instrument

The study used a researcher-made survey questionnaire based on DepEd Order No. 007, s. 2024, or the Revised School-Based Management Policy. Two parallel versions were prepared: one for school heads and one for teachers. The questionnaire included three parts: demographic profile, administrative leadership practices, and leadership challenges. Leadership practices were rated using a four-point scale from Not Practiced at All to Highly Practiced, while challenges were rated from Not Challenging at All to Very Challenging.

D. Data Collection and Analysis

After expert validation and pilot testing, the questionnaire was administered to the respondents with the approval of the Schools Division Office and the participating schools. The data were encoded, organized, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency and percentage were used for

demographic profiles, weighted mean was used for perceptions of leadership practices and challenges, and analysis of variance was used to test significant differences at the 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results

A. Profile of Respondents

The school head respondents were predominantly female, with seven females and two males. Most were in the 46-50 age group, and the computed mean age was 49 years. In terms of position, most were School Principal I-II or Head Teacher III-IV. All school heads had graduate-level education, with five holding master's degrees and four holding doctoral degrees. Their average experience as school heads was approximately 13 years.

The teacher respondents were also predominantly female, with 153 females and 42 males. Most were 26-30 years old, and the computed mean age was 34 years. The majority held Teacher I positions, and most had bachelor's degrees, while a considerable number had master's or doctoral degrees. The mean length of service was approximately eight years, indicating a largely early-career teaching workforce with some mid-career and veteran educators.

B. Administrative Leadership Practices

Both school heads and teachers perceived administrative leadership practices as highly practiced. The school heads obtained a grand mean of 3.74, while teachers obtained a grand mean of 3.45. School heads rated workplace climate as the strongest area, followed by policy implementation and day-to-day operations. Teachers rated policy implementation and day-to-day operations as the strongest areas. For both groups, resource allocation and management received the lowest rating, although it remained within the highly practiced range.

C. Challenges Encountered by School Heads

The school heads perceived the identified leadership challenges as challenging, with a grand mean of 2.62. Teachers perceived the same areas as sometimes challenging, with a grand mean of 1.86. For both groups, teacher retention and recruitment ranked as the most challenging area. School heads next identified technology integration, student learning gaps, student mental health, and community trust and engagement. Teachers ranked student mental health second, followed by

Table 2

Profile Area	School Heads	Teachers
Sex	77.8% female; 22.2% male	78.5% female; 21.5% male
Mean Age	49 years old	34 years old
Common Position	School Principal I-II; Head Teacher III-IV	Teacher I
Educational Attainment	Master's and PhD/EdD	Mostly bachelor's, with master's and PhD/EdD holders
Mean Experience	13 years as school head	8 years in service

Table 3

Dimension	School Heads Mean	Interpretation	Teachers Mean	Interpretation
Organizational Efficiency	3.79	Highly Practiced	3.35	Highly Practiced
Resource Allocation and Management	3.38	Highly Practiced	3.30	Highly Practiced
Policy Implementation	3.83	Highly Practiced	3.63	Highly Practiced
Workplace Climate	3.89	Highly Practiced	3.42	Highly Practiced
Day-to-Day School Operations	3.82	Highly Practiced	3.63	Highly Practiced
Grand Mean	3.74	Highly Practiced	3.45	Highly Practiced

Table 4

Challenge Area	School Heads Mean	Interpretation	Teachers Mean	Interpretation
Teachers' Retention and Recruitment	2.83	Challenging	2.22	Sometimes Challenging
Incorporating Technology in Education	2.74	Challenging	1.85	Sometimes Challenging
Addressing Student Learning Gaps	2.64	Challenging	1.78	Sometimes Challenging
Addressing Student Mental Health	2.60	Challenging	1.90	Sometimes Challenging
Building Community Trust and Engagement	2.31	Challenging	1.53	Sometimes Challenging
Grand Mean	2.62	Challenging	1.86	Sometimes Challenging

technology integration, learning gaps, and community trust and engagement.

D. Tests of Significant Difference

The analysis of variance showed that school heads' perceptions of their administrative leadership practices did not significantly differ when grouped according to sex, age, position, educational attainment, or years as a school head. Similarly, their perceptions of challenges did not significantly differ across the same profile variables. This suggests that school heads generally shared similar views regarding both their leadership practices and the challenges they experienced.

For teacher respondents, perceptions of school heads' leadership practices were also generally consistent across age, position, educational attainment, and years in service. The notable exception was workplace climate, where a significant difference was found based on sex. For perceived challenges, teacher responses were generally consistent across profile variables, with only a marginal or selected difference noted in teacher retention and recruitment based on sex. Overall, the findings suggest that most leadership practices and challenges are broadly perceived in similar ways across respondent groups.

4. Discussion

The results indicate that public secondary school heads in Olongapo City demonstrate strong administrative leadership practices across the five measured dimensions. The high-rating for workplace climate among school heads suggests that they see themselves as active in promoting respect, appreciation, collaboration, inclusiveness, and transparency. Teachers, meanwhile, gave the strongest ratings to policy implementation and day-to-day operations, implying that they most clearly observe leadership through visible routines, rule implementation, scheduling, discipline, documentation, and daily problem-solving.

The relatively lower rating for resource allocation and management is important. Although still interpreted as highly practiced, it was the lowest-rated dimension for both school heads and teachers. This suggests that resource management may be a practical area for improvement, especially in contexts where schools must deal with limited materials, facility needs, financial constraints, and competing program priorities. Strengthening this area may further improve organizational efficiency and instructional support.

The challenge findings show a meaningful difference between how school heads and teachers experience leadership difficulties. School heads rated challenges as more intense than teachers did, likely because school heads directly carry administrative responsibility for staffing, technology, learning recovery, mental health support, and community partnerships.

Teachers may recognize these issues but may not fully see the operational burden placed on school leaders.

Teacher retention and recruitment emerged as the most pressing challenge across both respondent groups. This finding highlights the need for leadership strategies that support teacher morale, professional growth, recognition, workload management, and mentoring. Technology integration, student learning gaps, and student mental health also require coordinated school-level responses. These concerns are interconnected: technology affects instruction, learning gaps affect student outcomes, mental health affects attendance and performance, and community trust affects the success of school programs.

The limited number of significant differences across demographic variables suggests that leadership practices and challenges are not isolated to specific groups of school heads or teachers. Instead, they appear to be system-wide concerns. This supports the need for broad leadership development programs and division-level interventions while still allowing schools flexibility to address their own local conditions.

5. Conclusion

- Leadership in the selected public secondary schools of Olongapo City is predominantly female, highly educated, and composed of both newer and experienced school heads.
- The teaching workforce is mostly young, female, and largely in entry-level positions, although many teachers are pursuing or have completed graduate studies.
- Administrative leadership practices are perceived as highly practiced by both school heads and teachers, especially in workplace climate, policy implementation, and day-to-day operations.
- Resource allocation and management, while still highly practiced, is the least emphasized area and may require further strengthening.
- Teacher retention and recruitment is the most pressing leadership challenge, followed by technology integration, learning gaps, student mental health, and community engagement.
- Most perceptions of leadership practices and challenges do not significantly differ across profile variables, suggesting that the issues are generally shared across respondent groups.
- A strategic plan is needed to strengthen leadership practices and address recurring challenges in secondary school management.

A. Recommendations

- Provide continuing professional development for school

Table 5

Key Area	Objective	Suggested Actions	Expected Output
Leadership Development	Improve school heads' leadership and management capacity.	Conduct mentoring, leadership coaching, and succession planning sessions.	More confident and prepared school leaders.
Resource Management	Strengthen efficient and equitable use of school resources.	Use transparent inventory, budgeting, and resource prioritization systems.	Improved resource allocation and program support.
Teacher Retention	Increase teacher morale and reduce turnover risk.	Provide recognition, mentoring, workload support, and professional growth opportunities.	Higher teacher commitment and stability.
Technology Integration	Improve the use of technology in instruction and administration.	Conduct ICT training, provide technical support, and monitor digital tool use.	More effective technology-supported teaching and management.
Learning Gaps	Support learners who need academic intervention.	Implement remediation, progress tracking, peer support, and differentiated instruction.	Reduced learning gaps and improved academic support.
Student Mental Health	Strengthen school response to student well-being needs.	Train teachers to identify warning signs, improve referral systems, and coordinate with parents and professionals.	Safer and more supportive learning environment.
Community Engagement	Build stronger trust between school and stakeholders.	Hold regular consultations, feedback sessions, and partnership activities.	Improved stakeholder participation and trust.

heads focused on mentoring, succession planning, decision-making, and resource management.

- Establish mentoring and support programs for new teachers while allowing experienced teachers to share expertise and leadership in professional learning communities.
- Strengthen resource management and organizational efficiency through practical workshops, inventory systems, school-level planning, and transparent resource allocation.
- Prioritize teacher recruitment and retention through recognition, workload support, coaching, career development, and stronger morale-building programs.
- Support technology integration through teacher training, technical assistance, access planning, and monitoring of digital learning practices.
- Address student learning gaps through remediation, progress monitoring, differentiated instruction, and collaborative instructional planning.
- Strengthen student mental health support through awareness training, referral systems, parent involvement, and coordination with guidance and mental health professionals.
- Build community trust through regular communication, stakeholder participation, transparency, and school-community partnerships.
- Consider the implementation of the proposed strategic plan to improve school leadership effectiveness in public secondary schools.

B. Proposed Strategic Leadership Plan

Based on the findings, the following strategic plan is

proposed to guide school heads in strengthening administrative leadership and addressing identified challenges.

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