THE EMERGING TRENDS ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP UNDER COVID 19 PANDEMIC: AN EXPERIENTIAL INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT. School leaders identified various challenges in dealing with emerging trends during the Covid 19 pandemic, such as difficulties in instructional delivery and quality learning engagement. They also discovered significant development in their leadership competencies, such as creativity and innovativeness, and inspired them to work with passion and commitment. Challenges also provided opportunities for leadership explorations and professional advancement, creating wider rooms for self-actualization and realization. Leaders recognized coping mechanisms and strategies for dealing with the challenges of Curriculum implementation, School governance, and Resource management, such as intensifying involvement and participation of family and community, promoting and valuing the culture of research, creating an inspiring learning environment, promoting participatory governance and democratic form of leadership, and intensifying resource mobilization through people empowerment. They suggested a comprehensive development process to upgrade and upskill school leaders' leadership potential through professional learning engagements and exposure.

Keywords: Emerging Trends, Covid 19 Pandemic, School Leadership, Leadership competence, Curriculum Implementation, School governance, Resource Management

INTRODUCTION

The cases of COVID-19 are increasing the problems for the world and raising many questions for businesses, education, and many other sectors of society. Education is one of the sectors that has been greatly affected and school leaders and people are working full of risks and uncertainties. To support children's overall well-being, health, and safety, the continuity of education should be at the forefront of all relevant considerations and decisions. School leaders from various educational institutions and schools from both private and public places are facing a leadership crisis due to maneuvering trends of the pandemic.

The Department of Education is committed to ensuring the continuity of education in the Philippines in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the adoption of DepEd Order No. 2020 which provides the Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan

for SY 2020-2021. This is in response to the pandemic, which has paralyzed education and restricted face-to-face interactions with students. The theme of resilient school leaders is a well-known yet challenging phrase that can be read from newsprints, social media forms, speeches, and talks, and can be heard all over the radio and television newscasts conveying the eagerness and commitment of the Department of Education to pursue its vision. The Department of Education has given schools the authority to plan for the continuity of education under alternative learning modalities like distance and blended learning. This study aims to understand the feelings, perceptions, and sentiments of school leaders about their experience while performing their duties in the middle of this looming situation. It will provide validated and genuine information on how school leaders live with this kind of scenario.

The world today is still facing a tough situation even after the efforts of all the nations to end the spread of the COVID-19 Pandemic across the globe. Various faces of challenges in all aspects of human lives have been seriously felt by billions of people. Most countries are affected by this worldwide threat of pandemic like business shutdowns, work stoppages, nationwide restriction and control of human activities and movements; closure of face-to-face classes, religious gatherings, travel bans, and limited social interactions with people.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

This study examined the life stories and lived experiences of school leaders in their quest to face the emerging trends brought by Covid 19 Pandemic in school leadership along with curriculum implementation, school management, and resource management, deepening the understanding of the challenges met by school leaders, its effect to their leadership competence, and how they cope with difficulties along school management. Focus Group Discussion was used as an approach to collecting the responses from the participants. By applying the five steps analysis procedures in a qualitative study. Data Logging, Anecdotes, Vignettes, Data Coding, and Thematic Network, this study derived these comprehensive findings and conclusions.

1.	School leaders identified emerging trends in school leadership along with curriculum implementation like the implementation of modular distance learning as the new education modality due to the abrupt changes and adjustments brought by Covid 19 Pandemic. The emerging trends in school leadership along with school governance are emulated by recognizing the vital role of the school and communities in the implementation of the distance learning delivery modality through the Basic Education Learning continuity Plan (BC-LCP). While on the aspect of resource management, school leaders the emerging trends are displayed through revitalizing the pillars of support through enhanced community partnership and building wider connections to people despite the limitations and restrictions.

2.	School leaders identified various challenges in dealing with the emerging trends along curriculum implementation

during the pandemic such as difficulties in instructional delivery and quality learning engagement. Accordingly, the current challenges in this area include; difficulties in conducting monitoring and assessment due to the geographical locations of the houses, weather conditions, and the abrupt changes in government policies regarding Covid 19 restrictions. In addition, teachers have spent so much time facilitating the production of modules and other learning materials, and no personal engagement between teachers and learners was some of the challenges met along MDL implementation. Further, the presence of unsupportive parents was also a problem during modular distance learning. Management capabilities in dealing with school planning and implementation of programs, projects, and activities while adhering to restrictions during Covid 19 Pandemic is considered a challenge to school leaders along with school governance. These involve the implementation of the Alternative Working Arrangements (AWA) popularly known as the Work from Home Scheme implemented by the Department of Education.

This policy limits the physical presence of school personnel and restrictions on conducting face-to-face meetings, conferences were controlled. Hence, school planning, implementation, and monitoring efforts were affected. In addition, another challenge along with this aspect is the capability of the school leaders to do online transactions and reporting. Internet connections and computer literacy were somewhat big issues on the part of the school leaders. The provision of technical support to teachers, parents, and stakeholders was considered a big challenge in school

governance as most of them were not capable of dealing with online platforms. Lastly, the participation and support of the parents matter most in running the school. Challenges in resources management reflected on the capacity level of the schools in sustaining its need as the community experienced financial stress and maneuvering trends of the economy. This consists of unstable internet connectivity; inadequate learning resources; electric power interruptions; vague learning contents; overloaded lesson activities; limited teacher scaffolds; poor peer communication; conflict with home responsibilities; poor learning environment; financial related problems; physical health compromises; and mental health struggles.

3.   School leaders discovered significant development in their leadership competencies along curriculum implementation where they found and believed that those challenges help them develop their creativity & innovativeness, help instructional leaders build an s strong foundation of humility and optimism during tough situations and inspired them to work with full of passions and commitment despite vastness on health adversities. While on the aspect of school governance, school leaders treated improvement in their leadership potentials as such for them challenges provide great opportunities like leadership explorations and professional advancement, creating wider rooms for self-actualization and realization. Further, school leaders find challenges under Covid 19 pandemic along with resource management as an opportunity to increase school leaders' motivation in dealing with potential people and larger

communities and develop a high level of commitment and self-confidence.

4.   School leaders recognized coping mechanisms and strategies for dealing with the challenges along with Curriculum implementation, School governance, and Resource management. First, school leaders affirmed that challenges along curriculum implementation were handled positively by intensifying involvement and participation of family and community in ensuring the quality of learning delivery amid Covid 19 Pandemic, promoting and valuing the culture of research, and developing strategies to address the needs of the learners and by showcasing professional engagement to teachers through learning and development program in schools. While along with school governance, school leaders have overcome challenges by creating an inspiring learning environment through school-community partnerships and promoting participatory governance and democratic form of leadership in the workplace while school heads coped with those challenges by intensifying resource mobilization through people empowerment.

5.   School leaders suggested a comprehensive development process to be initiated after the conduct of experiential inquiry by upgrading and upskilling school leaders' leadership potentials through professional learning engagements and exposure as part of the comprehensive development processes. In this aspect, various identified actions were posted for consideration in which "attending in a highly specialized and standardized training concerting crisis management approaches

does help in developing the leadership competence of school leaders, provision of TA, involved in benchmarking activities, immersions, educational tours, peer learning sessions and other professional learning and development activities for school leaders.

Based on the above thematic findings, the researcher provided the following recommendations:

1.   School leaders be adept with the new education emerging trends by providing them access to both online and printed issuances, guidelines, and policies to help them win the challenges in school leadership.

2.   Continuous upgrading of leadership capabilities of the school leaders be provided by constantly communicating with them and providing technical assistance (TA) to improve their well-being and confidence.

3.   The SDO Sorsogon be provided opportunities for the school heads to engage in personality, psychosocial, and values formation programs.

4.   Providing opportunities for the school leaders be provided to expose themselves to crisis management training.

5.   Preparation of the Enhanced Learning and Development Plan for the school leaders be considered.

Accordingly, the following were the suggested future studies related to the full understanding of how school leaders hold their journey dealing with various challenges in school leadership.

a.   Experience of Teachers and School Heads in School-Based Management Validation on Level of Practice

b.   Leadership Journey and Reality Amid Digital Changes

c.   The Lived Experiences of Teachers Serving as Elementary School Heads in the Province of Sorsogon

d.   LGBTQ+ Community: Professional and Leadership Journey in School