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THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF HEAD TEACHERS AS PROGRAM OWNERS IN IMPLEMENTING THE SCHOOL ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT

This study employed a phenomenological approach of qualitative inquiry. It aimed at exploring and understanding the lived experiences of head teachers as program owners in implementing the school 's annual improvement plan. It also highlighted the challenges they encountered in the implementation of the school annual improvement plan as well as the coping mechanisms and insights in addressing the challenges. Participants were chosen through purposive sampling based on the relevant experiences and alignment with the criteria of the study. The study was conducted in two schools of New Corella District, Division of Davao del Norte. There was a total of 10 participants; three underwent in-depth interviews and seven participants in focus group discussion. The data gathered were analyzed through thematic analysis, and results revealed five major themes in their experiences namely: making consideration of educational priorities; difficulty in budget management; fulfillment of the program implementation; experiencing delays and cancellations of the proposed program and projects; and establishment of collaboration among internal and external stakeholders. In addition, in addressing the challenges, head teachers employed various coping mechanisms that underscored their resilience and leadership capacity. Five key themes were identified: establishing supportive leadership; planning and preparing strategically; allocating resources; facilitating task management; and cultivating interpersonal qualities. Moreover, this study also highlighted critical insights gained from the head teachers regarding strategies for overcoming implementation challenges. These include the value of data-driven planning; leadership resilience; supportive leadership; funding strategies; and inclusive stakeholder collaboration. Emphasis was placed on the importance of transparent communication, visionary leadership, and strategic flexibility in navigating systemic constraints.

KEYWORDS: *Educational Management, Head Teachers, Program Owners, Annual Improvement Plan, Phenomenology, Thematic Analysis, New Corella District, Division of Davao Del Norte*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of education, teachers are increasingly being called upon to take on roles beyond traditional classroom instruction since school principals incorporate them in the management and oversight of educational programs. To support this statement, it was found out that the government's failure to hire sufficient support staff led teachers to take on additional responsibilities beyond their teaching duties (Lawrent, 2019). This makes teachers accountable for developing and implementing the yearly school programs; however, they often encounter challenges in the yearly implementation of the different programs and activities outlined in the school improvement plans.

In Vietnam, they conducted a study to address the issue of developing teacher leadership within the context of curriculum reform. It explored how ecological factors impact the ability of teachers in leading and contributing to school improvement amidst ongoing educational changes. This study implied that the best way to enhance a school is by improving its professional capital where teachers are actively involved and empowered to gain the knowledge and confidence needed to take on leadership roles in learning (Huynh, 2022). Meanwhile, in Bangladesh, head teachers faced challenges such as inadequate leadership capacity, lack of resources and resistance to change which hindered the successful execution of school level improvement plans (Rahman et al., 2020). Additionally, in Portugal, another problem is the lack of clarity and consistency in how teachers perceive and engage with the processes of school improvement planning. This study investigates the critical factors that influence teachers' perspectives on the planning process and the outcomes they anticipate from these efforts (Carvalho et al., 2023).

In the Philippines, particularly in Caibiran District, they have been facing challenges about how teachers work together to improve the school and its performance. During teachers' collaboration, there are teachers who are not cooperating, and some depend only on their team leaders. Not just that, the reason why they had difficulty in the improvement and performance of their school is because they lack proper planning, support and a good mindset towards the work. Thus, principals and administrators would plan and allocate time for teacher collaboration programs to improve school performance and address issues like lack of time. They would also encourage active participation, seek community support and work together

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to find new strategies to increase enrollment and reduce dropout rates (Rahma et. al., 2021).

Moreover, in my firsthand experience particularly in New Corella District, Division of Davao del Norte, teachers often struggle to implement the various programs and activities outlined in the school improvement plans. In fact, some yearly initiatives are never even realized. This has led me to explore and gain insights into the diverse experiences and perspectives of head teachers responsible for executing these plans especially in the school annual improvement plans. Teachers as one of the leaders in school face the daunting responsibility of carrying out initiatives and their insights often reveal the complexities of balancing day-to-day operations with long-term goals, highlighting the need for a supportive framework that empowers them to take ownership of their roles in the improvement process.

In my further readings, a study of Prenger, Poortman and Handelzalts (2021) entitled, "A professional learning networks: From teacher learning to school improvement", and the study of Subedi and Panth (2023) entitled, "Efforts of Head Teachers in Leading and Managing Public School through Developing Projects and Programmes", are relatively associated with my research. However, the researcher has not read any qualitative research concerning the direct experiences and perspectives of head teachers in the implementation of the different activities and programs outlined in the school annual improvement plans especially in the place of New Corella District, Division of Davao del Norte. This gap is critical, as they are essential to the execution of improvement strategies, yet their insights on the practical difficulties remain underexplored and this leads me to conduct this study.

Moreover, the research gap necessitated me in conducting the study immediately to address the urgent need for effective school improvement strategies in an evolving educational landscape. Understanding the experiences of head teachers as program owners is crucial as it uncovers key insights into the effectiveness of current strategies and highlights areas for immediate support and enhancement. The study was urgent and needs immediate action so we can provide actionable recommendations that would empower school leaders, strengthen school programs and create a more resilient educational system capable of meeting today's demands, also to mitigate the potential escalation and further proliferation of the problem.

Furthermore, the findings of this study about the lived experiences of head teachers as program owners and implementer within school annual improvement plans holds significant social relevance in the Department of Education, as it directly impacts the quality of education and student outcomes. Educational policy makers could also benefit from insights into the practical challenges and successes experienced by headteachers in implementing school annual improvement plans which inform policies to provide better support, resources and training for school leaders to ensure that school improvement initiatives are effectively executed and sustained. Moreover, this study would have substantial implications for teacher professional development programs as head teachers are often at the forefront of driving school improvement, their experiences could offer valuable insights into the types of leadership and management skills that are most crucial for fostering a positive and productive school environment. Furthermore, as a researcher, I will publish this study in relevant academic journals to contribute to the broader knowledge base and facilitate its accessibility to a global research community. After the publication, the copy of this study will be given to St. Mary's College of Tagum, Inc. and to the division office of Davao del Norte to be used for future research. Also, while working at the public institution, the findings of this study will be shared and presented during our Learning Action Cell Sessions to help create a more informed, engaged, and professional learning community.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to delve and understand the lived experiences of head teachers as program owners in implementing school annual improvement plans at New Corella District, Division of Davao del Norte. This offers ways with how program owners managed and resolved the obstacles they faced during the implementation process, while also uncovering practical takeaways from their experiences that could help guide fellow educators and stakeholders in future school improvement initiatives.

At this stage in the research, the implementation of the school annual improvement plan was generally defined as the process of overseeing and executing the strategies and activities formulated during the planning phase with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences of head teachers as program owners in advancing educational improvements within the school.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section of the research is the synthesis of relevant scholarly literature to the study. The review indicates previous work in an area and proposes a considerable number of insights and body of knowledge that can facilitate the current study. The review of literature points out patterns, gaps and developments in the relevant scholarly literature related to school leadership and program implementation. Specifically, the review situates the current study within a wider academic context and contributes to the understanding of the lived experiences of head teachers as program owners in the implementation of the school annual improvement plan.

Implementing Annual School Improvement: The Head Teacher's Role

A school improvement plan is a framework designed to systematically improve a school. It is not simply a list of actions or targets, but rather a strategy which is articulated and based on evidence of what is happening at the school that is context specific, culturally relevant, based on the strengths, weaknesses and needs of the school as well as the learners. A school improvement plan acknowledges that every school exists with its own context and environment and hence will require differentiated approaches to address the challenges and embrace opportunities. Additionally, it serves as a guide for school leaders, teachers, and stakeholders to establish realistic and attainable targets connected to the real outcomes for

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students, both academically and with respect to character (Escobar, 2019).

Moreover, it acts as a practical roadmap for identifying areas that require development, outlining specific and achievable objectives, mapping out the necessary actions to reach them. In addition, it lays down a clear timeline for implementing improvements, identifies the resources essential to the process and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of those involved. It fosters a shared sense of direction and accountability among stakeholders, ensuring that everyone works collaboratively toward common goals. It also provides a mechanism for tracking progress and making informed adjustments along the way, making it a dynamic tool for continuous school improvement rather than a static document (Craus et al., 2023).

To begin with, strategic planning is conducted by creating an annual work plan aligned with the school's vision, mission, and goals established at the beginning of the school year. This involves forming a school development team, carrying out planning in accordance with educational procedures, and utilizing development and coaching outcomes to effectively achieve the set objectives. Furthermore, school management strategies play a key role in assessing, planning, designing and organizing documentation, establishing policies, inspiring educators and staff, allocating human resources effectively and cultivating a supportive and strategic school culture (Priyambodo & Hasanah, 2021).

As a result, schools that used a clear and well-organized strategic plan were able to improve in many areas. These successful schools had strong leaders who guided the school toward its goals, and they made sure that everyone understood the vision and mission of the school. Working together with stakeholders is significant in the success of these plans where teachers and staff worked together, supported each other and regularly checked their progress to see if they were meeting their goals. Involving also the people connected to the school made the planning process more effective because when everyone works together and knows what the school is trying to achieve, it's easier to make progress and solve problems (Nugraha et al., 2020).

In today's educational landscape, the development of strategic planning within the education system is becoming increasingly urgent to build effective schools where daily operations and decision-making are aligned with clear and well-structured plans. Strategic planning is a focused effort that aims to achieve the school's vision, mission and long-term goals. To make this process more effective, schools must be adaptive to shifts in their strategic direction and demonstrate openness to risks which emphasize the importance of being proactive and responsive to change and challenges that may arise (Hidayat & Nurmila, 2024).

Nevertheless, the implementation of data-informed tools by schools highlights the potential for congruence between their goals and actions. Schools that are using data to inform their planning typically make more informed decisions because they are using evidence rather than speculation or established practice to plan. This creates opportunities for accountability in terms of getting results towards their goals and the mismanagement of schools' human and financial resources through planning and action clearer to individuals and the school community. With this approach, schools can identify priorities, accurately monitor, evaluate and assess their progress over time, and adjust their planning approach if necessary. This results in a timelier and more effective response to challenges and shortcomings (O'Connor et al., 2023).

Beyond numbers, a school improvement plan is more than just data, it is a collaboration of efforts. Working together to better the teaching and how students learn is an endeavor for everyone connected to the school including teachers, parents, students, and community members, so they can collaborate on ways to partner together to improve the local school. (Viano & Yurkofsky, 2024). Ultimately, a school improvement plan is a practical guide through recommendations that lists an incremental pedagogical change the school commits to taking to improve. It is also a mechanism for the attached school community to align support with each other including local government, organizations and other stakeholders addressing their responsibility as a local community school so that the school has a chance at accessing funds or resources to fulfill its goals. (DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2015).

To foster sustained progress, maintaining school improvement initiatives demands that school communities collaborate with collegiality, trust, shared responsibility and a common purpose. This includes a variety of individuals with specialized skills such as teachers, parents, volunteers, program designers, experts, management staff and students who participated in discussions on school improvement and were invited to join program committees or advisory. Their roles ranged from formally elected leadership positions, such as school principals or program directors and informal leadership roles such as parents and teachers who were involved in the daily teaching and execution of the initiatives (Koh et al., 2023). Additionally, it is important to note that school improvement is an important part of any education system, and school leaders play a big role in making it happen. Through their leadership, communication and decisions help drive change since they are responsible for setting the goal of school, creating and carrying out plans as well as checking if the plans are working (Mustafa et al., 2023).

Furthermore, upon the creation and implementation of a School Improvement Plan (SIP), the School Planning Team should have a clear understanding of the fundamental concepts and processes involved in preparatory activities and orientations are essential to enhance the knowledge of key stakeholders. Some schools invite additional stakeholders beyond the minimum requirement to gather more information and resources. Teams are formed to foster collaborative efforts, and stakeholders play a crucial role in the process, each fulfilling their specific responsibilities. Both internal and external stakeholders contribute significantly to the development and execution of the SIP (Balindong et. al., 2024).

Notably, teachers have a central role in the development and execution of school improvement plans. They are also engaged in the decision-making process, planning and engaging in programs and projects and evaluating the effectiveness of those programs and projects. In addition to teachers, external individuals including parents, local community members and local organizations are also providing valued, increasing support by providing monetary donations, community services

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and/or training, and development opportunities. These add strength to school improvement and ensure the school has availability of resources to expand successful practices. There are also suggestions to offer technical assistance to ensure implementation effectiveness. The school also should form improvement teams to create a plan that addresses priorities based on available resources (Agra, 2023).

Finally, a primary school in Switzerland conducted a study to better understand how the perspectives of teachers about leadership processes inform their involvement in school improvement. School principals were found to be instrumental in motivating teachers to engage in school improvement activity. To encourage teachers to develop professionally, principals may structure the school environment itself by establishing an atmosphere where teachers feel supported and empowered to learn new ideas while enhancing how they teach. This structuring entails motivating teachers to change their professional practices, such as trying out new strategies, being involved in professional development and/or reflecting on their teaching. When teachers have a support system to enhance their teaching practice, they become a more active participant in the school's improvement efforts. In these respects, teachers not only improve their teaching practice but also take on a new sense of accountability to support the growth of their school (Rechsteiner et al., 2022).

Identifying and Addressing Challenges in Implementing School Annual Improvement Plans

Schools frequently encounter many challenges while working to accomplish their confirmed goals in their school improvement plan. Cooker (2022) found that, even when considerable time, money and effort is spent on reforming schools, the reform still led to inconsistency in sustainable reform and improvement. In many situations, the plans are deep or meaningful; they are only addressing superficial problems, short term targets, so while an improvement plan can look good on paper, it does not contribute to solving true problems faced by students and teachers. The study recommends that if schools are going to be successful, they should have considered plans that are thoughtful, connected to the real context of the school, and aimed at long-term sustainable reform and improvement. In line with this, a study conducted in Portugal found that many plans lacked internal coherence, showing inconsistencies between stated goals and the strategies intended to achieve them. Additionally, many of the school plans did not use proven strategies or include strong ways to check if the plans were working. Assessing the effectiveness of school planning processes includes indicators such as alignment of proposed actions with school goals, the feasibility and specificity of activities, the adequacy of resource allocation, and the presence of clear monitoring and evaluation (Carvalho et al., 2022).

Moreover, another study which talked about the problems schools face when using school improvement plans, especially in schools that are trying and wanting for improvement. School leaders often struggle because they do not always have enough freedom, support or tools to follow the plans well. They found out that plans are often written just to meet requirements and are not really used to guide what happens in schools. They often faced challenges like lack of resources and the capacity to effectively carry out the strategies outlined in the plans which makes it even harder to focus on real and lasting changes (Redding & Searby, 2020).

In Pakistan, head teachers had several challenges that impeded their ability as effective school leaders and these challenges included lack of or inadequate resources including teaching materials and facilities, political intervention into school matters, and opportunities for professional training or development (Shah et al. 2024). Similarly, another study which acknowledged some challenges, like limited resource availability and the lack of support of school leaders, held back the potential for improvement goals. These constraints significantly affect the implementation of planned activities, as schools struggled to mobilize the necessary inputs and guidance to move forward with their development efforts (Shimekit & Tizazu, 2021). However, many schools, especially those in low-income communities of color, face big challenges that make it hard to build this ability. These challenges include ongoing lack of resources, trouble involving students and bad reputations. Studies have shown that such challenges can lead to harmful behaviors that disrupt collective agency such as defensiveness, learned helplessness and divisive conflict that is why most research on school improvement has not fully addressed how collective agency can emerge in these challenging contexts (Zumpe, 2024).

In a similar context, a study conducted in Uganda explored how financial management influences the learning of the students. Financial practices significantly improve the learning environment. Schools that implement solid financial planning benefit from better infrastructure, more favorable teacher-student ratios, and greater access to educational materials. On the other hand, schools with poor financial management often face restriction shortages that negatively affect education quality. It also values the importance of strategic financial planning, clear budgeting processes, and active community participation in maximizing limited educational resources (Katureebe et al., 2023).

Not only that, one of the secondary schools in China described challenges in allocating resources due to uneven distribution or poor management. There are also factors affecting efficiency of resource allocation such as school administration practices which determines how well the resources are utilized at the institutional level. To address this issue, it is suggested that policies should make resource management clearer, fairer and better planned which includes improving government oversight and encouraging schools to use resources wisely (Zhu, 2024). Like this, a study conducted in Cambodia, where they also point that in many cases, resources were not equally shared. Some schools had much more support than others, which created a gap in learning outcomes between students in better-resourced schools and those in under-resourced ones. They emphasize that when resources are fairly and effectively distributed it has impacts on students' academic performance. Also, schools with better teaching staff, more learning materials, and a good learning environment showed better academic results (Keo et al., 2021).

However, a study of Nurzen (2022), described how school personnel lack knowledge and capabilities to analyze and interpret the information, making their plans ineffective. Another challenge is the lack of participation from key

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stakeholders, including parents, community stakeholders or district officials. Without their support, it is hard for schools to carry out their intentions to achieve their goals. In line with this, Hunde & Desalegn (2020) emphasized the limited involvement of teachers and other staff in decision-making and lack of necessary facilities hinders the effective implementation of school improvement plans. It is suggested to offer more training for school leaders and other stakeholders, creating a clearer guideline for implementing school improvement plans, encouraging more collaboration and input from everyone involved in the school and strengthening monitoring and evaluation processes to better track progress and improve student outcomes.

Also, in one of the private schools in Dubai, it pointed out how the feedback of school leaders impacts the performance of teachers and contributes to school improvement. However, there are challenges faced by teachers in receiving and applying feedback from school leaders, examining how the quality, frequency and nature of feedback influence teachers' motivation, instructional practices and professional growth. It is suggested that when school leaders engage in regular, clear and supportive feedback practices, teachers are more likely to adopt innovative teaching methods, improve their performance and contribute to a healthy school atmosphere. Furthermore, the research emphasizes that feedback culture is important as it encourages open communication and collaboration between school leaders and teachers, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes (Zrien et al., 2023).

On the other hand, in the United States, there was a study conducted about the issue of aligning strategic improvement plans in their educational goals. They explored how teachers and school principals carry out the strategic improvement planning in schools. They found out that a range of existing activities highlight the potential impact of a newly developed technology, while also offering design recommendations to address gaps in the management of strategic improvement planning. As a result, they suggested the integration of new technology which could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of strategic improvement planning development, supporting better collaboration and decision-making among educators and school leaders (Fatih & Mi, 2019). Similarly, another study which addressed the primary issue of the need for structured quality improvement planning within educational institutions. Findings revealed that there is a lack of effective and strategic planning within the school which hinders the overall development of the institution. The study suggests that a well-structured quality improvement plan, aligned with the school development plan, is crucial for improving educational outcomes (Dewanti et al., 2022).

In contrast, another study was conducted in Pakistan where it examined the differing perceptions of teachers and head teachers regarding accountability measures implemented for public school improvement. Many teachers believe the accountability systems arbitrarily do not perform consistently or fairly. There are also concerns regarding the transparency when carrying out the evaluation systems. Additionally, teachers perceive a lack of support that undermines their inspiration and with it their opportunity for a personal legacy. This indicates an increase in difficulties carrying out school improvement interventions (Jabeen et al., 2023). Similarly, Maher and David (2024) explained that several challenges arose from the leadership of teachers when they engaged in learning and teaching improvements. There are also limited opportunities for training or professional development to enhance their leadership knowledge. In addition, they don't always have adequate support from the administration. These obstacles decrease the effectiveness of teacher leaders in helping to promote school improvement. Schools should identify ways that may better support teacher leaders to promote better teaching practice, foster better collaboration within the staff and establish better educational experience overall.

Following this study, another study focused on the implications of implementation of school improvement foundations and sound fiscal management models on teachers' productivity. It examines the complexities schools face implementing their improvement plans, while also managing limited fiscal resources. The complexities are examined on how these issues affect teachers' abilities to perform their duties in ways that promote student achievement. The study outlines common issues in terms of financial planning, resource allocation, and whether the strategies in the school improvement plan align with the available resources; and ultimately how this absence of correspondence can compromise teachers' motivation and ability to perform. Directly impacting their productivity as teachers in the classroom and school context (Licayan & Orongan, 2024).

Moreover, the study of Kalman (2020) conducted a study on the perceptions and experiences of educators in school improvement. The study recognized that there are multiple factors that impact the potential success of school improvement efforts and one of these include the availability of budget. It also noted the importance of funding sources as well as appropriate complete plans through the budgeting process needed to properly undertake. For instance, a study conducted by Habyarimana et al. (2023), about how insufficient budget and the need for faster and more reliable delivery funds prevent the school feeding program from running smoothly in school which results in the delay of starting and continuing the meal services offered to the students. It was found that when schools do not receive enough financial support or when the funds are not delivered on time, it becomes very difficult for them to plan, prepare and consistently provide meals to students. As a result, schools often face interruptions in their feeding services, causing delays in starting the program at the beginning of the school term or in continuing it throughout the year. It is suggested to increase the allocation of funds to school feeding programs to ensure that schools have the necessary resources to provide consistent and adequate meals to students.

In Uganda, another study also examined how schools manage their financial resources, and how that assists or hinders school development and improvement. One major problem identified in this study was the lack of financial planning. With no plan, the school's resources would either be misallocated or wasted. This then makes it difficult for schools to reach their education goals or to make any major improvements, as well as highlighted that most schools do not receive enough funding from the government or the local communities, so this

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diminishes schools' ability to undertake important educational programs, teacher commitment on improving classroom teaching, access to learning material, and utilization of existing school locations and buildings - and most schools have problems meeting even basic student learning opportunities (Tomusange et al., (2021).

Furthermore, it is evident that sound financial management plays a crucial role in ensuring effective curriculum implementation and it fosters student growth in the vocational schools in Indonesia. They explore the alignment of financial planning with educational goals to meet the varied needs of the learners. It points out that strategic budgeting, proper handling of income and expenditures, and effective financial monitoring influence the quality of teaching and learning. Also, the value of transparency and accountability is financial operations, which are vital for promoting inclusive education, making efficient use of resources and encouraging innovative instructional practices (Novianti et al., 2025).

To ensure fairness and effectiveness, schools are encouraged to adopt approaches that are inclusive, meaning that they consider the voices of all the key stakeholders. Also, by aligning resources with clear goals and involving different perspectives, schools can avoid waste, address inequities and create lasting improvements (Jafari, Khajeh Naeeni, & Nouhi, 2024). Moreover, when schools allocate resources strategically, they are better able to meet diverse learning needs, provide a supportive environment and esure access to quality instruction. Proper resource management can reduce educational inequalities, enhance teaching effectiveness and create opportunities for students to excel academically and personally. In essence, the way resources are utilized directly influences the overall quality of education (Leon-Ramirez, 2025).

In Nigeria, they faced with financial constraints that threaten the quality and continuity of secondary education. Many principals have resorted to innovative and adaptive strategies to bridge funding gaps and ensure the smooth operation of their schools. Because of this, school principals are actively forging partnerships with a variety of community stakeholders including local businesses, parent teacher associations and influential community members. These partnerships often result in financial donations, material support, or collaborative projects that contribute to school development. It implies that seeking external funding and assistance from non-governmental organizations really helps a lot which enables us to maintain and even improve educational quality despite the challenges posed by limited government allocations (Eneji et al., 2025).

Furthermore, another key issue experienced by the school was a frequent delay in disbursing government funds, which disrupted planned activities and created cash flow problems as well as the lack of capacity of the staff in financial management based on performance outcomes, indicating a need for improved skills and knowledge in this area. This suggests that schools should invest in professional development programs aimed at training staff in modern financial management techniques. To address these issues, they recommend strengthening school-based management practices by empowering the school community to take a more active role in financial decision making (Rahmattullah, 2025).

However, in the place of Pakistan, another issue arose of how teachers perceive the whole school development plan and its effectiveness in improving school performance. The research explored the challenges and limitations head teachers face in implementing the whole school development plan, including insufficient resources, lack of training and limited support from higher authorities. The study also highlights the disparity between the policy intentions of the whole school development plan and the realities of its implementation on the ground, focusing on how these factors impact head teachers' ability to lead school improvement efforts and achieve desired educational outcomes (Khanam et al., 2023).

While others faced financial resources in the implementation, time constraints and conflicting schedules also emerged as the most prominent barriers to the successful implementation of school programs. When new programs are introduced without adequate adjustments to existing schedules, educators may find it difficult to allocate sufficient time for proper planning, execution and monitoring. Overlapping of program activities, training sessions and school events create confusion, reduce participation and compromise the quality of implementation (Pabriaga, 2025). Thus, issues in scheduling conflicts can be addressed through the integration of multi-skilled workers into scheduling processes which offers considerable advantages, particularly in enhancing operational flexibility, optimizing workforce allocation and improving overall productivity within organizations. A multi-skilled worker refers to an individual who possesses a range of skills that allow them to perform different types of tasks or roles within an organization, rather than being limited to just one specific job or function (Afshar-Nadjafi, 2021).

Strategic Actions for Driving School Improvement Plan Success

Despite the challenges faced by head teachers in implementing annual improvement plans, effective school leadership remains significant as it drives school success by fostering improved student outcomes and minimizing teacher turnover. When school leaders demonstrate supportive behaviors, it not only encourages teacher retention but also enhances teacher efficacy contributing to a more stable, motivated and effective teaching workforce which in turn, reduces the financial burden and disruption. Educators who perceive their leaders as supportive tend to experience higher levels of overall wellness and are more inclined to speak positively about their schools to prospective families and fellow educators (Lee & Swaner, 2023). It is also evident that active engagement of staff like teachers in the improvement process, led to effective school improvements. It noted that for a school with solid internal structures, engaged leadership, and an established organizational base, finding success in improving student performance is more likely contributes to making schools successful (Lynch et al., 2019).

Building on this, a key insight from the study conducted in Indonesia, where collaboration must be intentional, systematic and embedded into day-to-day operations and strategic planning of schools rather than treating collaboration as an optional or temporary initiative. The study also points to the importance of trust, transparency and shared values as the foundation for any effective collaborative effort. When

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stakeholders believe in the integrity and commitment of one another, they are more likely to collaborate openly and constructively (Mashuri, 2022). This collaboration allows teachers to reflect on their instructional practices, try new strategies with the permission of others, and build support to overcome problems encountered while teaching. Additionally, organizational support and leadership were significant for staff leveraging technologies to build collective capacity where schools provide targeted training, resources, and leadership for them to leverage digital technology to maximize the potential for organizational learning and school improvement (Singaravelu, 2022).

In addition, a study about collaboration encouraged the use of building blocks as a strategic tool for fostering more inclusive, dynamic and supportive learning environments. Effective collaboration extends beyond just working together; it involves the deliberate integration of diverse perspectives, the joint development of strategies, and the shared ownership of outcomes. This means that teachers, administrators, support staff, families and even students must work in unison toward common educational goals. By promoting shared leadership and inclusive decision-making, collaboration can improve school climate, strengthen professional relationships and most importantly, lead to better academic and social outcomes for students (Griffiths et al., 2020).

In particular, the study by Banashree (2020) articulated the importance of collaboration in school improvement. Instead of relying on the traditional hierarchy when only school leaders make decisions, collaboration enables all stakeholders' educators, administrators, students, and community members to make decisions together. The study indicates shared leadership improves teachers' practice, enhances relationships within the school community, and improves learning outcomes for students: hence, schools can sustain continuous improvements through collaborative practice as all members of the improvement team engage with each other, share ideas, and contribute to school improvement, which promotes shared leadership. Collaborative leadership also fosters school improvement in more sustainable forms because the changes depend, not on one person, but on multiple members of the school community working together.

Moreover, organizations that practice collaborative leadership are likely to be better equipped to design and implement innovative programs to meet various educational needs of students, teachers and the surrounding community. An important characteristic of collaborative leadership is that it enables organizations to value many perspectives and to consult many voices, thus refining thoughts and decisions. Finally, collaborative leadership brings additional flexibility to organizational processes and supports the school in responding to immediate pressures, challenges, or circumstances such as systemic educational policy mandates, changes in stakeholder expectations, and student needs. Collaborative leadership supports schools in developing a supportive environment that fosters trust, teamwork, and open communication. When schools use this leadership practice, they can better manage their school operations while developing trust and engagement among the education community for school success. Ultimately, this helps build a positive school culture where everyone feels valued and inspired to work toward achievement (Hafeez & Akhtar, 2022). As has been pointed out, it is also important that school leaders offer adequate emotional support and encouragement. This would also clearly be supported and included in the improvement plan, by creating an environment in which teachers feel safe and empowered to take risks and try new pedagogy (Buenvenida et al., 2020).

Furthermore, supportive leadership is characterized by leaders who are approachable, empathetic, and attentive to the needs and well-being of their followers. Such leaders foster a positive and inclusive work environment, which can lead to enhanced employee satisfaction and performance. The study identifies several antecedents to supportive leadership, including acute stress, creative organizational culture and leader workload which can influence the extent to which leaders adopt supportive behaviors (Dayanti, et al., 2022). In a related finding, supportive leadership affects job satisfaction of the employees especially in educational institutions in Indonesia. It found out that it really does help increase job satisfaction meaning when leaders are kind, helpful and encouraging, employees tend to feel better about their jobs. However, the study also found that the level of support employees feel from their organization didn't make a big difference in that relationship. In other words, even though leaders were supportive, how much the organization itself supported employees didn't strongly affect how satisfied they felt (Mala et al., 2022).

Additionally, when teachers feel supported through meaningful gestures, acknowledgement of their hard work, and opportunities for professional growth, they are more likely to remain in their roles. This emphasizes that school leaders play a vital part in creating a healthy and motivating workplace that strengthens the sense of belongingness and dedication of teachers (Ismail & David, 2024). Moreover, supportive leadership plays a vital role in fostering a positive and productive school environment. Creating a peaceful and fair workplace encourages collaboration and mutual respect, while constructive feedback helps teachers grow professionally without feeling demoralized (Erturk, 2023).

Similarly, a study of Wariza and Montero (2023), discussed how teachers felt fulfilled and satisfied with their work about the performance of students in school. It is believed that work fulfillment, like feeling happy and satisfied with the job, is something that develops over time, like a journey. When teachers feel good about their jobs, this can lead to schools running better and students doing well in their studies. On the other hand, students also expressed their satisfaction in school services particularly with library services and guidance and counseling services. This means that academic and emotional support systems in place are functioning well and meeting the needs of the students, contributing positively to their academic experience. However, not all services met student expectations that's why they suggested a range of improvements to enhance service delivery and overall student satisfaction. Key suggestions included allocating more budget to improve and upgrade physical facilities especially laboratory and canteen which would enhance the learning and campus life experience (Patalinghog et al., 2021).

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In addition, Nkedishu and Onyekwe (2024) described that funding strategies are vital for ensuring the sustainability and smooth operation of both public and private schools. By diversifying financial resources such as seeking support from individual and corporate donors, organizing fundraising initiatives and leveraging parent-teacher associations. Beyond securing funds, strong financial management practices like budgeting, forecasting, expense control, financial reporting and internal auditing maximize the impact of available resources.

Moreover, strong interpersonal skills create a more supportive and productive environment that positively impacts both teaching and learning. Given this, it is essential for head teachers to be trained and well-equipped with a wide range of interpersonal skills. These include showing respect toward teachers and staff, practicing active and effective listening, understanding the diverse personalities and needs of their team members, showing empathy, promoting cooperation and teamwork, using polite and professional language and having the ability to manage and resolve conflicts peacefully (Balama & Ambakisye, 2023).

In connection to this, supportive leadership impacts teacher resilience and enhances job resources such as feedback, autonomy, opportunities for development and social support. For instance, opportunities for development were found to be a significant mediator across all dimensions of resilience, while autonomy and social support played roles in specific resilience aspects. This means that if school leaders are serious about helping teachers stay resilient and positive in the face of adversity, they should focus on giving teachers the right forms of support at work. This means giving teachers the right tools and resources at work to make their job as easy as possible, giving proper training and professional development opportunities, and creating a working environment where teachers feel valued, respected, and encouraged. If teachers have the necessary support in place, they will generally thrive and be more motivated, able to cope with the stressors of teaching, and do the best they can for their students (Bagdžiūnienė et al., 2022).

Supportive leadership not only benefit teachers, but school leaders also play an important role in fostering the social and emotional well-being of the students by shaping a supportive and inclusive school environment. By modeling empathy, creating policies that address emotional needs, and providing access to counseling and wellness programs, leaders cultivate a culture where students feel safe, valued and understood (Daly, Resnikoff & Litke, 2025). When school leaders provide clear expectations, encourage collaboration and empower teachers, they indirectly nurture motivation, confidence and engagement in the studies of the students. A leader who prioritizes open communication and emotional support helps build a sense of belonging and security which allows students to focus on their academic goals (Hussein & Ochieng, 2024).

Likewise, research by Bertsia and Poulou (2023) provided a rich description of resilience, and especially in the context of education, resilience is not something a person is born with or has little or none of. Instead, resilience can not only grow and develop but depends on a variety of personal qualities like a person's attitudes or coping skills and on a variety of more contextual factors, such as those provided by the help of others and their environments. Resilient teachers play an especially important role in helping students develop their own resilience. When teachers foster warmth, care, and consistency the students form positive relationships with them that can become "an important source of support" and help to serve as a buffer against the detrimental effects of stress or adverse life situations. Resilient teachers help students navigate their situation in a way that helps them achieve at school, takes care of their emotional state, and gives them a consideration for success in the future (Bagdžiūnienė et al., 2022).

According to another study conducted in Indonesia, resilience systems in schools should not be viewed as a one off or short-term activity. Developing resilience is ongoing and dynamic, it needs thought, deliberate planning, consistent actions, and flexible strategies. In the school context, resilience is not only the ability to respond to a crisis or adverse situation, but the potential to grow, adapt, and thrive despite the particular problems they face. Schools need to be clear, structured, and active about ensuring their resilience policies are implemented and have sustainability over time in practice. The effectiveness of a school's resilience policy will ultimately be dependent on its ability to identify and understand the numerous factors that either lead to resilience or inhibit it. This requires all internal and external aspects and factors in the context of the school to be identified and understood prior to who will be doing the resilience identification. It is critical to their ability to develop resilience strategies and support to assist their students and staff to better navigate challenges (Dwiningrum et al., 2022).

Moreover, resilience is also seen as the foundation upon which effective leadership is built, enabling leaders to remain adaptable and composed in the face of challenges. By cultivating personal resilience, leaders can better manage stress, recover from setbacks and maintain a positive outlook, which in turn strengthens their capacity to practice compassionate leadership and model constructive interpersonal behaviors (Grimes et al., 2022). Similarly, resilience is a crucial quality in leadership as it enables leaders to remain composed, adaptive and solution-focused during organizational crises. Leaders who demonstrate resilience not only navigate challenges effectively but also inspire confidence and stability among their followers, fostering a collective ability to recover and thrive in difficult circumstances (Eliot, 2020).

In addition, another study where different roles in a project require interpersonal skills such as clear communication to avoid misunderstandings, collaboration to coordinate efforts and problem-solving abilities to handle issues as they arise while, strategic thinking was found to be more prominent in certain roles especially for project owners who are heavily involved during early planning and decision-making stages. Many professionals see these skills as personal traits rather than abilities that can be trained and improved (Shiferaw, 2024). In fact, school leaders' perspectives on successful leadership within a private school addressed how school leaders define and implement effective leadership practices to foster success in their institutions. It stressed out that school leaders viewed successful leadership as a combination of strong communication, visionary planning and fostering a supportive school culture. They emphasized the importance of building trust, providing professional development for teachers and

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ensuring student-centered practices. Also, challenges such as limited autonomy, resource constraints and external pressures were identified as obstacles to achieving ideal leadership outcomes (Raza et al., 2021).

Also, in educational institutions, where teamwork, shared goals, and interpersonal relationships are crucial to success, the study found that effective communication from leaders helps to align staff, students, and stakeholders with the vision and mission of the school. Communication is not just a tool but a fundamental leadership competency that shapes relationships, fosters trust and influences organizational culture. Communication also serves as a feedback loop in effective leadership where leaders who actively seek input, provide constructive feedback and facilitate open dialogues are better positioned to make informed decisions and adapt their leadership style to meet the evolving needs of their institutions (Manoharan & Ashtikar, 2024).

Additionally, communication builds credibility and trust which are two pillars of effective leadership. Leaders who communicate clearly and consistently are more likely to gain the confidence of their followers. The author emphasizes that communication is a relational process, meaning it requires leaders to engage in active listening, show empathy, and respond thoughtfully to the needs and concerns of others. They tend to handle conflicts more constructively and create inclusive environments where diverse perspectives are valued rather than avoiding difficult conversations. Effective communicators confront issues openly and strategically. She reinforces that communication is not just a leadership skill, but it is the foundation upon which leadership is built (Banwart, 2020).

Moreover, Perveen and Nawaz (2021) valued more the importance of communication skills by head teachers to maintain high team morale and address conflicts before they escalate. Strong communication skills are a strong and reliable predictor of a positive climate. That's why schools led by head teachers with these skills tend to have a more supportive, safe and academically focused environment. It also highlights the need for training programs and professional development initiatives that equip head teachers with the communication tools necessary to foster a nurturing school environment, improve teacher performance and ultimately support student success.

Furthermore, effective communication positively affects organizational performance but also depends on various factors. This implies that while mode of communication does play a role in enhancing communication effectiveness, its influence is limited and other elements such as message clarity or feedback mechanisms, might be more critical in determining how well communication functions within the organization. This means that good communication practices contribute to better organizational outcomes, but the extent of their impact may depend on organizational culture, employee engagement and resource availability. This emphasizes the complexity of communication processes in organizations and highlight the need for a comprehensive approach that goes beyond merely communication channels (Musheke & Phiri, 2021),

According to the study conducted by Singh (2024), the use of task management systems tools helps in enhancing productivity and efficiency across a wide range of professional and personal environments. This tool helps in organizing, prioritizing, and executing tasks more effectively. This tool provided multiple integrated features including scheduling, progress tracking, notifications and collaborative tools to improve workflows and collaboration among teams. It also lessens the cognitive load for individuals who typically track tasks on pen-and-paper to allow them more cognitive bandwidth for significant activities. Conversely, there are cognitive and behavioral patterns of individuals when faced with many tasks of differing levels of complexity and significance. This pattern occurs because completing a small task provides immediate and tangible closure and a sense of accomplishment or progress, which can also be psychologically gratifying. Therefore, individuals are more likely to engage in lower-priority items that are quickly completed rather than completing larger, more impactful tasks that require more sustained efforts and attention. This suggests the importance of identifying and developing better practices around task prioritization, such as changing or removing social practices or redesigning task tracking management tools that promote goal alignment (Rusou et al., 2020).

Another study assisted with the dilemma of how to purposefully design and implement teacher leadership roles to support school improvement. The study addresses the challenges schools face in developing teacher leadership infrastructures that have a lasting impact. It also points to the tension schools have in balancing teachers' responsibility for instruction when using a leadership framework, noting the need for structure, support and facilitation for teachers' professional development so teacher leaders have the opportunity to support transformational change. This study discusses how the potential for teacher leadership roles, when implemented in a purposeful way, can lead to shifts in school culture, collaboration, and student outcomes, but also recognizes the barriers schools face in creating effective teacher leadership (Henry et al., 2023).

Specifically, in the Division of Catbalogan City, another study, which investigated how effectively the implementation of school improvement plans have been implemented in relation to both the process and outcomes of implementation. The study concludes general awareness and understanding of the school improvement plans objectives among the administrators and teachers, however, various factors hinder its successful implementation as limited resources, insufficient training, and lack of sufficient engagement of the stakeholders. They recommend providing more comprehensive training and professional development for school administrators and teachers to better equip them with skills, improve resource allocation and strengthen stakeholder engagement (Daca & Pacadaljen, 2020). Additionally, Novice headteachers should be aware that managing budgets and finances can be particularly challenging and it is recommended to gain experience in this before assuming a headship role. It is important to look beyond internal evidence to validate priority areas for improvement. Early focus should be placed on the senior leadership team as they will be instrumental in unlocking sustainable improvement and novice headteachers should be honest with themselves and others about the support they need

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and ensure their school improvement plan is anchored to an overarching vision for success (Rees et al., 2023).

On the other hand, school leaders need a strong understanding of school improvement research and techniques to effectively drive change, and they need to blend research-based best practices with their experience in school improvement and leadership to implement decisions that drive systemic changes across all schools, not just those that are underperforming (Huffman, 2019). What is more, teachers should also have enough knowledge in the execution of the school improvement plans. This was confirmed by one of the studies where both teachers and principals understand the school improvement plans but they differ on how these plans are perceived in terms of their effectiveness. Specifically, teachers' views on the impact of school improvement plans on instructional practices and overall school quality where they tend to depend on their level of understanding of the school improvement plan itself. initiatives. Educators must not only be aware of the specifics of their school's improvement plans but also align with its goals and reform strategies (Doss & Goke 2020).

In addition, data-driven decision making has gained significant importance in education as policymakers increasingly emphasize the need for the field to be grounded in evidence rather than solely on tradition, personal experience or intuition. By integrating data and research findings into the decision-making process, educators can better understand student performance, identify learning gaps and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional strategies which allows schools to allocate resources more strategically, implement targeted interventions and continuously improve teaching practices based on measurable outcomes (Mandinach & Schildkamp, 2021).

Also, another study which examines the design and the characteristics of the use of school improvement plan templates which are commonly used in the United States to guide educational improvements. This template is used to provide a structured framework that guides schools in developing and implementing strategies for improving student outcomes. They found that while many templates emphasize data-driven decision-making, goal setting, and stakeholder engagement, there is significant variation in the clarity, structure, and usability of these templates. The study highlights the need for more standardized and practical templates that better align with the needs of diverse schools and support actionable, sustainable improvements (VanGronigen, 2023).

As demonstrated by another study which investigated the effects of school inspections on school improvement, aiming to propose a framework that could better understand and facilitate the outcomes of school inspection processes. The issue addressed is whether school inspections contribute to meaningful improvements in educational quality and how these inspections can be structured to maximize their impact on school performance. The findings suggest that while school inspections can lead to positive changes in teaching practices and school management, their effectiveness is shaped by factors like the transparency of inspection standards, quality of feedback as well as the capacity of schools to act on recommendations. The authors propose the school inspection outcomes framework which emphasizes not only the inspection process itself but also the importance of post-inspection support and follow-up actions to ensure sustainable improvements in school practices (Ali et al., 2021).

Indeed, the vision for success in school improvement would be developed with headteachers through the peer-to-peer coaching program aimed at improving schools which involves promoting more innovation, where organized coaching helps headteachers trust their vision and strengthen their resolve. The coaching program also aimed to help headteachers reflect on their personal and professional growth, improve their connections and relationships and build stronger resilience. These efforts were expected to lead to a more impactful school leadership community. To achieve this, the plan involved high-quality training for heads and included headteacher pairs gathered half-term for two-hour coaching sessions and during the first hour, one headteacher guides the other and in the second hour, they swap roles (Raybould et al., 2021).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach to better understand how head teachers experience their role in carrying out the school annual improvement plan. It captures personal experiences offering a richer understanding of how head teachers navigate the demands of planning, executing and sustaining school improvement initiatives. According to Manen (1997), qualitative research does not only consider how people experience the phenomena of our study but also acknowledges and values the rich description of participants lived experiences, and the understanding and meanings they articulated as they reflected on their experiences. Creswell (2007) indicates the value of qualitative research as an approach that allows a researcher to distinguish underlying meanings and interpretations of people from their human experiences and interactions in social contexts. Qualitative research is particularly valuable to understand processes, challenges, and strategies in a social context from the perspective of those being studied. Silverman (2011) echoes Creswell's (2007) assertion in that qualitative research is concerned with the exploration of phenomena as they occur in everyday settings. They strive to study the participants in situ. In accordance with other authors and
relevant literature, the qualitative design in this study gave the researcher the opportunity to genuinely explore the realities and considerations of school annual improvement implementation from the point of view of the program owners.

Conversely, the phenomenological approach was used and appropriate in this study because it focused on getting to the meaning of human experiences in ways that reflect on the essential structures and meanings of experiences. This also emphasized that phenomenology aimed to explore how individuals perceive and make sense of their experiences from their own perspectives (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, exploring and describing the essence of a phenomenon as experienced by multiple participants reveals the shared aspects of the experience, emphasizing how individuals perceive and interpret the phenomenon in a similar manner (Creswell, 2013).

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Research Participants

This research utilized purposive sampling, which helped me decide who could provide a rich description of the phenomenon. That said, purposive sampling allowed the overall study to get a deep and rich description of the participants by focusing on individuals with relevant experience and expertise (Foley 2018, cited by Olifant et al., 2020). Moreover, Palinkas et al. (2015) emphasized that purposive sampling is a common strategy used to identify and select individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the topic being studied rather than aiming for a large sample.

In the context of this study, purposive sampling was used to select participants who had direct experience and knowledge in implementing the school annual improvement plan. The researcher carefully chose specific individuals who are expected to share meaningful and useful information. This way of choosing focuses on people who have certain traits, experiences and roles that relate closely to the topic being explored which provides detailed and relevant insights that helps in uncovering meaningful patterns. Moreover, the researcher identified and selected ten participants who are program owners in implementing school annual improvement plans using the following inclusion criteria: (a) head teachers in the secondary level, (b) working at the Department of Education, and (c) with two years of experience in creating and implementing school annual improvement plans. The chosen participants met specific qualifications that made them suitable for the study. With their background and hands-on experience in handling school improvement plans, they were able to share relevant and grounded insights drawn from real practice.

RESULTS

This chapter presents the key perspectives and experiences shared by the participants in the conduct of this study. It highlights reflections, challenges and insights that emerged from the data that was collected during the in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions, providing a deeper understanding of their roles in implementing the school annual improvement plan. The data were recorded with consent from the participants and transcribed afterwards. The transcribed data were analyzed and organized thematically to identify patterns and meaningful insights that will be used for interpretations and findings.

During the analysis, I read multiple times the responses from my participants to come up with the core ideas through the use of the validated questionnaires I provided during the conduct of this study which helped me categorize themes into three groups: one group discussed the lived experiences of head teachers as program owners in implementing school annual improvement plan; another group was the coping mechanisms with regards to the challenges experienced by the head teachers as program owners in implementing school annual improvement plan; and the third group were the insights from the participants that they can be able to share into the readers. To make the findings credible I provided the verbatim responses from the participants as proof and authenticity.

Lived Experiences of Head Teachers as Program Owners in Implementing School Annual Improvement Plan

Table 1 shows the major themes and core ideas which reflect the experiences of head teachers as program owners in implementing the school 's annual improvement plan. This highlights the challenges and achievements of the participants during the implementation of the improvement plan. There were total of five (5) themes that were categorized accordingly which includes: a); making consideration on educational priorities b) difficulty in budget management; c) fulfillment of the program implementation; d) experiencing delays and cancellations of the proposed program and projects; and e) establishment of collaboration among internal and external stakeholders.

Table 1
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Lived Experiences of Head Teachers as Program Owners in Implementing School Annual Improvement Plan

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Making Consideration on Educational Priorities	• balancing the needs of the school in terms of quality, excellence and governance • being hindered with program implementation due to approval delays • considering the factors affecting the planning • having disrupted schedules due to conflicts • experiencing unexpected events such as receiving memos • having overlapping activities in DepEd
Having Difficulty in Budget Management	• having budget cutting after consolidation • failing to receive the intended budget due to error • experiencing frustration due to lack of resources • having limited resources and competition from other organizations restrict participation • feeling uncertain due to availability of funds
Experiencing Fulfillment on the Program Implementation	• feeling fulfilled due to the full implementation and accomplishment of the program • feeling fulfilled due to attainment of objectives

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Major Themes	Core Ideas
	• being fulfilled due to the program going as planned • feeling satisfied due to knowledge gained • feeling happy for the approval and support of the programs
Experiencing Delays and Cancellations of the Proposed Program and Projects	• experiencing delays in receiving budget due to AIP delays approval • experiencing delays or cancellation of program implementation • feeling demotivated when program objectives are not achieved • encountering discouragement when program proposals are cancelled or ignored • cancelling activity implementation due to limited support
Establishing Collaboration among Internal and External Stakeholders	• gaining support from various community groups • having consulted the teachers to identify their needs • having relied on what school can offer • involving students and parents in school programs • encouraging teachers to make their own programs

Making Consideration on Educational Priorities

Effective school planning and implementation requires a strategic balance between delivering quality education, achieving excellence and ensuring sound governance. However, despite the best efforts of head teachers' various practical constraints often hinder the smooth implementation of programs and activities such as limited budgets, strict timeframes and insufficient personnel. Furthermore, scheduling conflicts, unexpected events and overlapping activities frequently disrupt well-organized plans. These recurring challenges highlight the importance of flexibility, coordination and efficient communication to ensure school operations remain focused and effective.

According to IDI-01, he realized that creating an annual improvement plan is a complex and challenging process. He learned that it requires careful consideration of many factors and cannot be done hastily, specifically, the need to balance different aspects of the needs of the school such as ensuring quality education, striving for excellence and maintaining good governance. Because of this complexity, he had to thoroughly review and study the school improvement plan which serves as the foundation of the annual improvement plan.

"So, I found out, it is not easy to craft an AIP because it involves a lot of considerations. Kailangan mong ibalanse talaga lahat ng mga pangangailangan sa eskwelahan as to quality, excellency, governance, so yun pinag aralan ang school improvement plan."

(I realized that crafting an Annual Improvement Plan is not easy, as it requires careful consideration of many factors. You really must balance all the needs of the school ensuring the quality, excellence and good governance. That is why we had to study the school improvement plan.)

Additionally, IDI-02 expects that all school programs and activities are to be carried out within a specific timeframe. However, based on her experiences in the previous years, this expectation does not always align with reality, she observed that many of the proposed programs and activities were not fully executed.

"So, my expectations about sa plan implementation is all the programs and activities supposed to be ma-implement jud siya. Mao na akong mga expectations, dili jud siya ma-implement tanan labi na kung ang imong annual improvement plan is nahimo nimo June na-approve siya pagka-July or August"

(My expectation for the implementation of the plan was that all the programs and activities would really be carried out. But not everything gets implemented especially when the annual improvement plan is prepared in June but only gets approved by July or August.)

Moreover, head teachers are often challenged by various factors that must be considered during the planning stage. According to IDI-03, the factors include the availability of budget, the timeframe within which the program must be completed, and the people involved in carrying out the tasks and each of these elements can significantly affect how well a program is implemented.

"As program implementors, we are aiming for the best, for the quality program implementation, but there are factors to be considered, the factors could be which affects the planning, just like the budgets, the timeframe, and the people who are working with it."

(As program implementers, we always aim for the best for quality program implementation. However, there are several factors that need to be considered during planning such as budget, the timeframe and the people involved in the implementation.)

However, even the best-laid plans can be disrupted by scheduling conflicts, and it is evidently experienced by FGD-05, where he observed that while schedules are often planned, unexpected or more important tasks or events arises, and such changes are a normal part of work and flexibility is important in dealing with shifting priorities.

"Also, with the schedule because there are times na this is the date of the expected schedule but then naay mga important na mga activities, ma move imohang mga plans, so part na siya."

(Scheduling is also a challenge. There are times when activities are set for a certain date, but due to other important events, plans must be moved or adjusted and that's part of the process.)

Moreover, head teachers are not just the one who experienced scheduling conflicts but also parents often face their own set of scheduling conflicts that hinder their full participation in school activities. According to FGD-03, one of the reasons while they

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had difficulty in attending school activities was due to work obligations or personal responsibilities where many are unable to attend meetings or school events regularly.

"Ang problema lang kay dili jud ma perfect ang attendance with regards to parents' kay busy, naa may mga schedule pud nila, Mao lang na ang murag kulang dili ma perfect ba but in terms of desire nila nga muanhi the support naa gyud gehapon."

(The only issue is that we can't achieve perfect attendance from the parents because many of them are busy and have their own schedules. That's the only concern the attendance may be lacking but in terms of their willingness and support to participate, it's there.)

Similarly, FGD-01 also experienced scheduling conflicts due to unexpected events such as sudden memos from higher authorities or last-minute scheduling changes which caused him frustration. These abrupt changes require rescheduling events and coordinating again with resource speakers and other participants, which adds to the difficulty.

"Kay you are setting your activity on that day but sad to note that you will be moved right because of the MEMO. And then the availability of the resource speaker and other involved kay you will be setting another date for them so mao na nga you will be frustrated sometimes with the unexpected changes pero kailangan man jud mu-abide ta."

(You may set your activity on a specific date, but unfortunately, it sometimes must be moved due to a sudden memorandum. Then there's also the availability of the resource speaker and other key people involved. So, you end up rescheduling, which can be frustrating because of these unexpected changes but we really must comply with the directives.)

This is also experienced by FGD-04, where a significant issue lies in the frequent overlapping of activities initiated by DepEd. According to her, overlapping of activities is the top issue being encountered which causes conflicts and confusion among stakeholders.

"*Kuan overlapping of activities in DEPED mao gyud na siya ang schedule number one."*

(One of the main scheduling challenges is the overlapping of activities within the Department of Education and that's really the primary issue.)

Considering educational priorities fosters long-term social and economic development. By identifying and addressing the most pressing needs within the education sector resources can be more effectively allocated to areas that yield the greatest impact. Prioritizing education ensures that learners are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in a competitive and evolving world.

Having Difficulty in Budget Management

Head teachers who are program owners aim for the successful implementation of the school 's annual improvement plan which plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of education and addressing the specific needs of schools. However, the realization of these plans depends on various factors including the effective coordination of resources, stakeholder support and the ability to adapt emerging circumstances.

According to FGD-02, planning and budgeting is a common challenge in school even if they carefully plan and list all the necessary programs and resources for the upcoming activities; however, during the final consolidation at the school level, budget cuts often occur due to limited funding or prioritization across different departments.

"We jot down all the programs and material needed for the certain activities but then, later na pag consolidate na sa tanang programs sa school naay tendency nga cut down jud ang propose budget nimo. It will also affect your activity since, of course, if you conduct an activity, there are needs na budget nga supposed to be mahatag, so makaapekto pud siya.."

(We list all the programs and materials needed for specific activities. However, once all the programs in the school are consolidated, there's usually a tendency for the proposed budget to be reduced. This eventually affects the implementation of activities because each one requires funding that should ideally be provided so it really has an impact.)

Aside from the limited resources, IDI-01 shared that head teachers also encounter challenges about the clerical errors in the annual improvement plan which leads to significant setbacks and results frustration. In this case, a simple mistake prevented the approval of a planned activity, meaning the program could not proceed and the intended purpose of the original program was no longer served.

"And frustrated naman for example may mga pagkakataon talaga na hindi ma implement yung program for the reason of number 1, nangyari na sa amin yung meron lang clerical error sa school AIP namin na hindi matanggap, hindi ma approve yung e sa-submit namin doon na activity design so hindi na conduct yung activity so ano ang nangyari sa budget, napunta doon sa surplus. So andon pa rin yung money ma-i-convert yung money doon sa mga school supplies so ma-purchase pa rin yung money pero hindi na nakalagay, hindi na na serve yung purpose doon sa program."

(It can be frustrating when certain programs can't be implemented. For example, in our case, there was a time when a program wasn't approved due to a simple clerical error in our school AIP because of that, the activity design we submitted was not accepted and the activity was not conducted. As a result, the budget was placed under what they call "surplus". Although the funds were eventually used to purchase school supplies, the original purpose of the program was no longer served.)

Limited resources, particularly financial constraints, are a common challenge in many schools especially during the implementation phase of programs or projects. This causes frustration according to IDI-02, especially when the burden of fulfilling responsibilities outweighs the available support.

"Ang frustrating dihaa, during sa implementation, wala kay resources, wala kay money so kuot your own bulsa. Kung gusto ka para approved imong activity design, pero usahay mauna imong program bago ang budget maiwit na siya, tapal kuot sa sariling bulsa"

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(What's frustrating during implementation is the lack of resources financially. Sometimes, you end up spending out of your own pocket just to push through with an approved activity design. Often, the program happens before the funds are released, so you're forced to cover the expenses yourself.)

Also, FGD-04 expressed her idea that number one which causes her frustration is because of the limited budget which restricts what can be done, such as providing incentives or inviting quality speakers. Another thing is if the target participants are not properly engaged or served, it causes further dissatisfaction.

"Then frustrated of course number one is the budget, number two if your respondents or your main purpose or participants or your main purpose is not well served, naay mga kakulian so diha jud ka ma frustrate. Sige nalang kay kulang man ang budget imbes nay mga token unta and manginbite unta ka ug mga high kanang caliber nga mga speakers dili nalang"

(The frustration mainly comes from two things: first, the limited budget and second when your objectives aren't fully achieved or your participants' needs aren't properly addressed due to certain setbacks. That's where the frustration really comes in. Sometimes, because of the lack of funds, you just must let go of some plans like giving tokens or inviting high-caliber speakers and end up not doing them at all.)

Aside from frustrations caused by limited resources, FGD-05 shared his experience about how they face shortages during implementation, and they need to find other ways to get the resources they need. As he manages a student group called responders, many students want to join, but he limits the participation because the students are already part of other groups and there's not enough budget.

"During sa AIP mahas-has tanan imong mga materials so with that sa teachers sa pag implement sa plan namo medyo mangita mi ug other sources kay kato na materials is didto na tanan gikaltas naman sa improvement plan. Other thing is sa school organization sa akoa sa mga responder, gusto sa mga bata muapil pero ginalimit nako it's because naa man pud laing organizations nga muapil, unya isa pa sa budget pud ana mao to wala kaayo ko naga conduct ug mga activity sa responder."

(One challenge we face during AIP implementation is the lack of available materials, since most of them are already consumed or planned for in the initial proposal. As teachers, we're often left to find alternative sources just to push through with the activities. Another issue I encounter in managing a student organization is that many learners want to join, but I must limit membership not only because there are already multiple organizations in school, but also because of budget limitations. That's why I don't get to organize many activities for the group.)

Issues in the implementation process affect the overall success of the annual improvement plan even if the plan is well-designed. IDI-03 experienced uncertainty about whether a proposed program will push through, whether it will be supported by school leadership and if there will be enough budget for its implementation. He explained that it is important for program owners to be visionary, flexible and adaptable.

"From the crafting itself we are very doubtful if this program would be implemented or if it is implemented if it has support from the school leaders. In terms of budgeting, are there funds allocated with it or are there enough budget considering that there are also programs going to be conducted by the school. As a program owner we should be adaptable, flexible, and we should be very visionary so whatever the result if it is going to be approved or not or it has budget or not."

(From the start, we already sensed uncertainty about whether the program would push through, especially if school leadership would truly support it. Budget constraints were also a concern if there was funding set aside, and would it be enough given there are other ongoing school initiatives. As program owners, we need to remain flexible, adaptable and visionary regardless of whether the program gets approved or funded, we have to be prepared to adjust and move forward.)

The effective facilitation of budget management plays a vital role in ensuring the successful implementation of programs. Proper budget management allows for the efficient allocation and utilization of resources, minimizing the risk of overspending, delays or cancellations. When budgets are well-planned and monitored, it becomes easier to adapt to financial challenges, prioritize essential activities and achieve targeted outcomes.

Experiencing Fulfillment on the Program Implementation

In the context of educational development programs, head teachers feel frustrated when the programs and activities are not successfully achieved. On the other hand, there is also a sense of achievement and satisfaction when they successfully carry out planned activities and realize intended outcomes.

For instance, IDI-01 expresses a deep sense of fulfilment not just from the planning phase but particularly during implementation of the projects. He gives a specific example of a repair project particularly repairing of classroom doors where the successful completion of this task brought satisfaction because it meant that the plan was followed accurately, and the intended results were achieved.

"I felt most fulfilled when the stipulated budget there in the AIP was realized so for example in the repair, so doon sa AIP namin may nakalagay doon na repair for the month of February meron kaming mga classroom doors repair so pag ma-accomplished na yong project na yun so I felt fulfilled because 100% accomplished yung nakatalaga yung naka stipulate doon sa AIP."

(I felt most fulfilled when the budget outlined in the AIP was realized. For example, there was a repair project scheduled for February, specifically for classroom doors. When that project was completed, I truly felt fulfilled because it was accomplished as stipulated in the AIP.)

In addition, IDI-02 also felt fulfilled when the plans or programs were put into action. It emphasizes the moment when a program is finally implemented. It gives a deep sense of achievement because all the time, effort and hard work have led to real results.

"Kung most fulfilled, once you implemented your program. Fulfilled na gyud na siya na-accomplished nimo."

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(You feel most fulfilled once you've implemented your program. That's when you truly feel a sense of fulfillment.)

The same feeling with IDI-03, as program implementer, he feels a sense of fulfillment when their plans and objectives are successfully carried out as intended. This fulfillment comes from seeing the efforts and knowing that the purpose of the program was met, the goals were realized, and the outcomes were meaningful.

"When program implementors feel there is a fulfillment when obviously when our objectives, our plans will go as it is."

(Program implementers feel a sense of fulfillment when the objectives and plans are carried out as intended.)

Moreover, FGD-04 feels deep fulfillment when the program they planned goes as expected, without major problems or setbacks. Fulfillment comes from seeing everything flow smoothly, from the preparation stage all the way to the implementation. It becomes even more meaningful when the people involved in the program, such as the participants or target groups, respond positively or benefit from it.

"Para sa akoa ma'am, when we say we are most fulfilled of course, if the program is successful, nga walay mga kakulian so, if the program runs smoothly of course you are fulfilled. The respondents and the program itself is successful wala kaayo'y kakulian so you're fulfilled about the program or imohang ginaplano and it turns out well."

(We feel most fulfilled when the program is successful and runs smoothly without major issues. When everything goes as planned, the respondents participate well, and the overall implementation is effective, that is when you truly feel fulfilled seeing your plans turn out well.)

Fulfillment doesn't just come from successfully finishing a program, but also from the positive feedback of those who joined. FGD-06 shared that when participants express that they are happy and satisfied with the activity, it adds to the feeling of success. Their shared insights, especially when they mention that they learned something new or gained knowledge, show that the program had a real impact.

"After the program additional pud nga you will feel fulfilled is during the insights pud na gehatag sa mga participants nga satisfied sila and they're happy nga ma conduct na nga activity because naa silay mga knowledge nga ilahang nakuha from the activity."

(Another moment when you feel fulfilled is during the sharing of insights when participants express that they are satisfied and happy with the activity. It is fulfilling to know that they gained new knowledge and learnings from the program.)

According to FGD-01, approved and supported programs lead to pleasant surprises which make teachers feel appreciated and happy and this shows that their needs are being considered. When initiatives that involve teacher development or support are carried out using allocated budgets, which they were not initially expected, teachers are often pleasantly surprised.

"Pero ang teacher programs na carried as plan malipay pud mga teachers. Naa diay ni naapil diay ni, naa diay tay mga ingon ani nga mga activity or programs so masurprised pud sila, magiging happy pud sila labi na kung naa pud mga resources nga ma-avail pud nila."

(As for the other programs, especially those that involve teachers, when that is carried out as planned, the teachers are also happy. They are pleasantly surprised to see that certain activities or programs were included, and even more so when there are available resources they can benefit from.)

Overall, the sense of fulfillment experienced by head teachers and program implementers reflects the meaningful impact of well-executed educational programs. This fulfillment goes beyond completing tasks it seems from seeing plans into actions, achieving intended goals and receiving positive feedback from participants, teachers, students and parents. Whether through successful project implementation, smooth program delivery, these experiences validate the hard work invested in planning and execution.

Experiencing Delays and Cancellations of the Proposed Program and Projects

In the pursuit of continuous school improvement, educational institutions carefully lay out plans that reflect their goals for better learning environments and enhanced student outcomes. These plans are often filled with well-intentioned programs and projects aimed at addressing specific needs within the school community. However, while the vision is clear and the intentions are strong, the journey from planning to implementation is not always smooth. Along the way, various circumstances, some expected others unforeseen, begin to influence how and when these initiatives take place.

According to IDI-02, problems arise when there are delays in the approval process. Any activities that were scheduled earlier are either delayed, cancelled or become problematic to execute. On top of that, every activity requires an activity design document detailing the purpose, process and budget of the activity which also needs division-level approval. This approval process can be time-consuming especially if revisions are required. Without the finalized approval and released funds, schools are left in a tough spot. If they go ahead and implement activities without formal approval, they may have to personally shoulder the expenses, which isn't ideal or sustainable.

"Dili jud siya ma-implement tanan labi na kung ang imong annual implementation plan is nahimo nimo June na-approve siya pagka-July or August so meaning nahuman na ang isa ka quarter so unsaon tong mga activity nimo before ana nga mga month, maulahi siya kay maghimo pag activity design, pa-approve pa na sa division, ana siya. Kung dili pa jud na ma-approve balikbalikon na nimo so kung i-implement nimo na siya daan ang activity, meaning mutapal jud ka daan ohh ana na siya ohh kay ang budget wala pa man siya nagawas."

(Not everything in the plan gets implemented, especially if the AIP is created mid-year and approval comes much later. By then, some scheduled activities are already outdated. You still need to prepare documents, wait for division approval and sometimes go through several revisions. If you decide to push through with an activity before the budget is officially released, you end up covering the expenses in advance just to make things happen.)

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Another thing is about administrative issues in implementing school programs due to minor clerical errors on the approval process. IDI-01 describes how a simple mismatch between the title of an activity in the submitted design and the one in the original approved school improvement plan led to rejection of the activity design by the division office. Even when attempts were made to correct the mistake, the revised version was still not accepted, resulting in the failure to secure approval for the planned activity.

"Frustrated naman for example, may mga pagkakataon talaga na hindi ma-implement yung program for the reason of number 1, nangyari na sa amin yung meron lang clerical error sa school AIP namin na hindi matanggap, hindi ma approve yung isa-submit namin doon na activity design kasi yung title ng activity design does not match kay may clerical error man yung doon sa original SIP na approved na tapos pagpasa ng activity design, ni-rerevise kasi yun ang tama. Hindi na yun pwede so hindi na ma-approve doon sa division yung activity design"

(It can be frustrating, especially when a program cannot be implemented just because of minor issues. For example, there was a time we couldn't push through with an activity simply because of a clerical error in our approved SIP. The title in our activity design didn't exactly match the one in the SIP, so even though we tried to correct it during submission, the division wouldn't accept it anymore. That meant the activity design couldn't be approved, and the whole program was put on hold.)

Not just that, program owners feel frustrated when efforts don't yield the desired results or goals and objectives of a certain program are not met. However, according to IDI-03, instead of giving up or remaining stuck in that frustration, he emphasizes the importance of taking proactive steps such as being creative, flexible and adaptive to changing situations. In addition, the idea of compromise does not mean lowering standards recklessly but rather finding practical solutions that balance quality with the limitations present.

"In opposing to that when we do not act, but when we cannot achieve the objectives that we try to obtain that is how we feel frustrated. We should click other ways think, be resourceful, be adaptive to situation."

(On the other hand, when we fail to achieve the goals we've set despite our efforts, that is when frustration sets in. In those moments, we need to explore other options, be resourceful and adapt to the situation.)

Also, FGD-O1 describes how teachers lose interest and feel discouraged when their proposed programs and activities were not implemented. This usually happens because they have already experienced submitting plans many times before, but those plans were either not approved or not implemented. Over time, this repeated experience of being ignored or overlooked makes them feel that their hard work and suggestions are not being valued.

"Ang uban mangluod na ang mga teachers, the moment they will be asked to prepare for the PPMP they will no longer respond because as they said kanunay raman mi magapasa but eventually dili ma-approved, ma cancel or dili ma push through."

(Some teachers become disheartened; the moment they are tasked to prepare the PPMP, they no longer respond because, as they say, they keep submitting it but often end up not being approved, cancelled or not implemented at all.)

Furthermore, FGD-05 points out that there are some initiatives which are either scaled down or entirely put on hold, causing delays in achieving the intended outcomes of the program. This is because of the limited resources provided in school which leads to delays or even cancellations of planned activities even when there is evident interest and willingness from students to participate.

"Other thing is sa school organization sa akoa sa mga responder, gusto sa mga bata muapil pero ginalimit nako it's because naa man pud laing organizations unya isa pa sa budget pud ana mao to wala kaayo ko naga conduct ug mga activity sa responder."

(Another concern is the school organization I handle the responders. While many students are interested in joining, I have had to limit participation because there are already several other organizations, and budget limitations are also a factor. That is why I haven't been able to hold many activities for the group.)

The delays and cancellations of the proposed programs and projects have significantly hindered the achievement of development goals and the delivery of essential services to the community. It is crucial for stakeholders to strengthen project management practices, ensure transparency and foster accountability throughout the implementation process. By doing so, future programs and projects can be executed more efficiently and effectively ultimately contributing to sustainable progress and community development.

Establishing Collaboration among Internal and External Stakeholders

In promoting effective leadership and governance, it is essential to recognize the value of establishing strong collaboration among internal and external stakeholders. These stakeholders play a crucial role in enhancing the educational experience and outcomes for learners. Their willingness to support, respond and align with the school's mission reflects a unified commitment to holistic development.

IDI-03 underscores that actively engaging with various sectors such as non-government organizations, religious groups and local business leaders, fosters a shared sense of responsibility and support for its goals and initiatives.

"The leadership and governance that we should extend our services to the community beyond the to the school. We try to reach the non-government organization, the different group of people, The religions, the businessmen and when we try to reach them, they are very supportive, they're very accommodating, they're very responsive with our aims with our goals here in school that's one thing that we are very fulfilled."

(Leadership and governance also mean extending our services beyond the school and into the wider community we try to reach out to various groups or the non-government organizations, religious sectors, businesspeople and when we do, they are often very supportive, accommodating and responsive to our

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goals for the school. That is one of the things that gives us a strong sense of fulfillment.)

In connection, IDI-01 describes collaboration by consulting teachers to identify and prioritize their most urgent needs. Before finalizing and submitting the annual improvement plan to the division office for approval, the school collaborates with the teacher first to address their questions and concerns.

"So ang ginawa namin sa ngayon ay ganon parin hingan sila kung ano yung priority nila. So yun ang ginawa ko pagkatapos before e sa-submit yung AIP sa division for approval ipapakita namin yung sa lahat ng teachers bigyan bibigyan namin sila ng ng soft copy so interpret namin yung mga questions nila pag ma pag ma-address na is so during the implementation, wala na silang wala na silang problema kasi ng ana solve na in advance. "

(What we did was to continue asking them about their priorities. So before submitting the AIP to the division for approval, we made sure to show it to all the teachers. We gave them a soft copy and explained things to address their questions ahead of time. That way, by the time of implementation, there would be no more issues since their concerns were already resolved in advance.)

In terms of the students and parents, IDI-02 describes how they cause no trouble as they heavily rely on school which denotes that school leaders should take initiative in building strong communication and collaboration.

""Wala man kaayu problema sa mga students ug parent's kay nag-agad ra man gud na sila sa school."

(There weren't really many problems with the students and parents because they mainly depend on the school.)

On the other hand, FGD-02 values the insights from the feedback of students, and parents who participated in school-based programs. Students frequently express enjoyment and appreciation for the learning opportunities provided, while parents show eagerness to participate in parenting sessions that enhance their understanding as they gain knowledge and increase their involvement. However, one recurring observation is the disappointment from students outside targeted grade levels who wish to be included.

"Akoang madungog nga feedback so far for example, I will conduct this to a certain grade level unya sa ilahang nakita sa activity is kanang very enjoy, naenjoy sila and nakita nila nga daghag learnings sa mga bata. Naa pud uban nga mga grade level na muingon nga kami wala lage mi naapil nasayangan sila they are hoping that matagaan pud sila ana nga activity. Okay raman pud ang mga parents' pud so far, they support, sa mga parenting activities. Malipay sila nga mahatagan sila ug mga activities mahatagan pud silag additional knowledge. Murespond gyud pud sila ug ipatawag sila as participants."

(The feedback I've heard so far has been positive. For example, when I conduct an activity for a certain grade level, the teachers observe that students really enjoy it and they see that the children are learning a lot. There are also other grade levels who say they feel left out and wish they were included in similar activities. As for the parents, they've also been very supportive, especially during parenting activities. They're happy to be given opportunities like this because it adds to their knowledge. They really respond positively when they are invited to participate.)

Furthermore, FGD-03 recognized a shift mindset among teachers, where they are becoming more proactive and engaged in initiating their own activities and programs. This growing awareness and participation help create a more coordinated and aligned environment within the school.

"Maybe sa karon man gud kay aware naman gud ang mga teachers na. maghimo pud sila naa pud silay ilahang activity so angay-angay nalang. Daghan naman silag mga programs pud nga i-implement"

(Maybe now, it's because teachers are already aware that they also need to create or implement their own activities, so they just try to align with what's appropriate. There are already many programs being implemented.)

Indeed, the successful implementation of school programs greatly depends on the establishment of strong collaboration among internal and external stakeholders. By maintaining open communication and engagement with stakeholders further strengthens the support system for school programs and actively involving teachers in the planning process ensures that voices of those directly engaged in daily educational activities are heard and valued. This collective effort fosters transparency, builds trust and ensures initiatives are aligned with actual needs of the community. Nurturing strong stakeholder relationships is essential for achieving shared goals and maximizing overall impact in school.

Coping Mechanisms of Head Teachers as Program Owners in Implementing School Annual Improvement Plan

Table 2 presents the major themes and core ideas that capture the coping mechanisms employed by head teachers as program owners in implementing the school's annual improvement plan. It emphasizes how they navigate challenges and sustain achievements throughout the implementation process. There were a total of five (5) themes that were categorized accordingly which includes: a) establishing supportive leadership; b) planning and preparing strategically; c) allocating resources; d) facilitating task management; and e) cultivating interpersonal qualities.

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Table 2
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Coping Mechanisms of Head Teachersas Program Owners in Implementing School Annual Improvement Plan

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Establishing Supportive Leadership	• finding ways where school heads can address the needs • helping where school head handles the paperwork • overcoming budget challenges through the support of others • providing strong support from school leaders • overcoming challenges through the help of co-workers • consulting and collaborating more with co-teachers and supervisors
Planning and Preparing Strategically	• following the standard procedures • preparing enough time for implementation • demonstrating visionary leadership by anticipating both positive and negative outcomes • ensuring that resources needed listed during crafting of the plan • considering untoward incidents • establishing contingency planning
Allocating Resources	• willing to offer teachers some help financially • considering the allocated budget to implement the program • allowing immediate implementation of programs when budget is available • merging activities when the budget is limited • gaining support from the PTA and administration
Facilitating Task Management	• following up on paperwork helps keep on track • assigning a committee to each task • rescheduling of activities due to sudden memorandum • considering teachers attending seminars • distributing work to stakeholders
Cultivating Interpersonal Qualities	• communicating effectively with teachers and school head • accomplishing projects and dealing with stakeholders patiently • being resourceful in making it happen • staying positive and avoiding negative thoughts

Establishing Supportive Leadership
In environments where demands are high and expectations continuously evolve, leaders who foster encouragement, collaboration and trust can create a climate where challenges are met with collective strength and determination. Establishing supportive leadership is a fundamental element in navigating the complexities of organizational growth and development and becomes a vital strategy for sustaining morale and driving meaningful progress.

According to FGD-02, the school head plays an active and supportive role, particularly when a program owner encounters challenges. Rather than leaving the issue solely to the individual in charge, the school head will step in to help or find a solution.

"Pero ang school head mu help man gyud pud labi na ug sa program owner naa kay problem, problema unsaon ni siya so there are times nga mangita man gyud pud ug paagi si school head unsaon niya paghelp sa imoha nga ma-solve na nimo or ma attend imohang need."

(The school head really steps in to help, especially when the program owner encounters problems. There are times when the school head actively looks for ways to support and help address those concerns or respond to your needs.)

IDI-01 describes how school heads help in successfully carrying out the plans by working their task which is to manage paperwork and resource allocation. He also mentioned that correct procedure is an essential component in strengthening relationships.

"Nakakatulong talaga yung collaboration with the program owner of course yung nagdala ng papership is ang school head. So, nakakatulong to overcome challenges. How, so by following right procedures."

(Collaboration with the program owner is truly helpful, especially since it is the school who handles the paperwork. This teamwork contributes to overcoming challenges by ensuring that proper procedures are followed.)

This strategy is also supported by FGD-01, where teamwork and collaboration help when facing difficulties such as limited resources. He emphasized that achieving goals or implementing plans is often not possible when working alone, particularly when financial constraints are present.

"Collaboration play a very important role in overcoming these challenges kay without the participation from other we cannot pursue our plan kay kung limited lang ang budget mu offer man pud ang other."

(Collaboration plays a very important role in overcoming these challenges because without the participation of others, we cannot carry our plans. If the budget is limited, others can also offer support.)

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However, FGD-04 experienced lack of support from school leaders which can discourage the involvement of activities especially when resources are limited. She emphasizes that even in challenging situations, when a leader expresses confidence and encouragement, it creates a positive influence that fuels motivation and initiative among others.

"Kung si leader dili mu support ana nga activity wala jud poy mabuhat. Pero kung si leader maskin pag magkinaunsa na siya diha ug mussuport gyud siya kanang i-push lang gyud ka sa imohang activity bisan na ug lisod gane. Makahatag gehapon sa imoha ug motivation nga mu-push through sa imohang gusto buhaton."

(If the leader does not support an activity, then nothing can really be done. But if the leader stands firm and shows support no matter what happens, it really pushes you to continue with your activity even if it is difficult. That kind of support gives you motivation to push through with what you want to accomplish.)

Moreover, IDI-02 emphasizes that maintaining the quality of work or activity should be the top priority and this can be made possible through the collaboration and support of co-workers. This implies that teamwork and mutual support in addressing and overcoming difficulties and relying on a strong support system remains a key strategy for success.

"So, ma-overcome nimo ni nga mga challenges as program owner through sa help pud sa imohang through sa imohang co-workers. So, kailangan gyud nimo ang ilahang tabang."

(The support from your co-workers is very essential to overcome the challenges as a program owner.)

On the other hand, IDI-03 values the importance of seeking guidance and collaboration when faced with new and unfamiliar activities. He admits that managing major school programs for the first time, there are times that he is unprepared and did not initially seek advice. Later, he realized that he should have consulted his co-teachers and supervisors earlier to gain insights and strategies for effective implementation.

"I should consult more with my co teachers with my supervisors regarding with the implementation of the programs because for example for me it is my first time in handling those big programs here in school that I did not anticipate dapat mangunsulta sa diay ko daan."

(I realized that I should have consulted with my co-teachers and supervisors earlier about the implementation of the programs, especially since it was my first time handling major school activities. I didn't anticipate the challenges, so I should have sought guidance beforehand.

Head teachers face a variety of challenges in implementing the school annual improvement plan, from limited resources to unexpected responsibilities. Their ability to cope effectively often depends on the presence of clear guidance, open communication and a collaborative environment. As such, fostering environments where these practices are encouraged plays a vital role in ensuring the successful implementation of school initiatives.

Planning and Preparing Strategically

A well-crafted plan serves as a roadmap that guides the entire school towards continuous improvement and long-term success which involves setting clear goals, identifying priorities and aligning resources and actions to achieve desired outcomes. In this context, involvement of stakeholders is needed as their insights and frontline experiences contribute significantly to the relevance and effectiveness of the plan and this promotes a collaborative environment and ensures that the strategies developed are practical, responsive and aligned with the actual needs of the school.

In fact, IDI-01 emphasizes the importance of strictly following standard procedures to successfully implement a project. He says that if a school wants to implement a project under the AIP, it must first follow formal procedures and secure approval from higher authorities to ensure proper planning and execution.

"Unang-una is of course we follow the procedures kasi by following the right procedures it is easy to implement the AIP. Anong procedure pinagbabasehan natin kailangan before the said project be implemented, your activity design, your program of work, should be already approved from the division."

(First of all, we make sure to follow the proper procedures because doing so makes it easier to implement the AIP. The procedures serve as a guide before a project can be carried out, the activity design and program of work must already have approval from the division office.)

FGD-03 highlights that enough time for preparation is important to properly implement the program. He shared that due to overlapping schedules, some activities are overlooked until the last minute, forcing them to rush to meet deadlines.

"Unya dako pud kaayo dako pud kayo ug factor diha ang time. There are programs nga less lang ang financial niya naay mga ingon ana nga gamay lang gyud but ang maka kuan gyud ug maayo ang time.Kay sa tong giistorya nga overlapping naay mga time nga i-implement na diay ni karon so ingon ana mag-apas na mani."

(Time also plays a big role. There are some programs that do not need much funding, just minimal resources, but time becomes the real challenge. Like we mentioned earlier, because of overlapping schedules, sometimes you only realize an activity is already due, so you end up rushing to catch up.)

Another experience from FGD-05 where he describes how planning and implementation was done. He notes that during the preparation phase, everything is planned carefully with the teachers. However, during implementation, resources are often depleted which then affects the teachers' ability to follow through with a plan which underscores a common gap between planning and execution.

"During the meeting with my teachers in crafting the PPMP, didtoa na gipangbutang tanan but as said a while ago na during sa AIP mahas-hasan tanan imong mga materials so with that affected si teachers sa pag implement sa plan."

(During meeting with my teachers in crafting the PPMP, that's when everything was placed or planned out. But as I said a while ago, during the AIP, all your materials get used up. So,

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with that, the teachers are affected when it comes to implementing the plan.)

On the other hand, IDI-03 values the importance of visionary leadership in program planning and implementation. He emphasizes that a program owner should be a visionary leader, someone who does not only focus on immediate results but also considers the long-term impact of the programs.

"One skill should possess the program owner is he or she is a visionary leader he has plans; he sees the long-term effects of the programs. He expects the positive and the negative challenges positive and negative outcomes regarding with implementation. We should possess that because that's how adaptive and that is how flexible we are."

(A key skill a program owner should have is being a visionary leader, someone who plans and considers the long-term impact of programs. They anticipate both the positive and negative outcomes of the implementation, which shows how adaptive and flexible they need to be.)

FGD-01 underscores the significance of a thorough and proactive planning in the execution of any program. He emphasizes that during the planning phase; it is crucial to anticipate potential issues or untoward incidents.

"A thorough planning gi-anticipate gina consider nimo ang mga untoward incident. Well planned activity leads to a successful implementation to your program."

(Thorough planning means anticipating and considering possible problems or unexpected incidents. When an activity is well planned, it increases the chances of successfully implementing the program.)

In the same way, FGD-04 emphasizes the value of forward-thinking and having contingency plans. She believed that planning ahead is crucial, and relying on just one plan is not enough. By preparing multiple alternatives it ensures that if one approach fails, there are other options to fall back on.

"Para sa akoa no! plan ahead, and kaning you have to plan A, B, C and D ana gyud siya nay mga Plan AB, Plan ABC and D daghanon jud nimo."

(For me, it is important to plan ahead and prepare multiple back up plans. You really must come up with several options to be ready for anything)

Above all, effective program implementation relies heavily on proactive and strategic planning. Thorough planning not only helps structure programs efficiently but also equips implementers to handle untoward incidents that may arise. Additionally, creating multiple backup plans enhances flexibility and readiness, making it easier to adapt to unexpected challenges. These practices contribute to a more organized, resilient and successful execution of programs.

Allocating Resources

In the dynamic landscape of educational leadership, head teachers play a crucial role in steering schools toward achieving their goals, particularly through the effective implementation of the school annual implementation plan. However, this task often presents a myriad of challenges, ranging from limited financial resources and inadequate infrastructure to insufficient manpower and evolving educational demands. In response to these obstacles, head teachers have developed various coping mechanisms, among which the strategic allocation of resources stands out as a key approach.

IDI-02 appreciates the generosity of colleagues who are willing to lend money without expecting interest or repayment conditions, especially in urgent situations. However, she also explains that relying solely on official funds like the MOOE can be limiting, as the actual amount received is often less than the approved budget due to deductions such as taxes and other fees.

"So maka-overcome jud ka ani kung naa juy mutapal, naa juy muingon ba nga "gamita lang ni akong kwarta. Labi na naay mga kauban nimo nga willing gyud sila nga mu pahiram. Walay mga tubo wala tanan. Naa man gud mi ana pud diria nga pahiram lang jud siya."

(So, you can really overcome this if someone is willing to step in and help, especially when you have colleagues who are truly willing to lend without interest or conditions. In our case, we actually have people like that here who just lend out of goodwill.)

Another experience from IDI-03, which emphasizes the importance of budgeting which points out that without sufficient funding, programs can't proceed effectively. He also implies that financial constraints directly impact how program owners make decisions and carry out activities. The presence or lack of funds influences their ability to plan, execute and sustain initiatives.

"Of course, we cannot implement any program activities here in school without budget that is the one thing you always consider if there are budget how much is the budget being allocated with it."

(Program implementation in school is not possible without a budget. That's always a primary consideration whether there are funds available and how much has been allocated for the activity.)

FGD-01 viewed that financial resources are the primary challenge in implementing programs. The limited budget restricts not just the activities but also affects the availability and efficiency of personnel. Time is another constraint that adds to the difficulty especially when a staff member is stretched thin. However, he emphasizes that with readily available funding, program implementation becomes much easier and more effective.

"For me, kay number one is the financial resources mao gyud na limited kayo then ikaduha ang personnel unya ang time pud. Affected ang amoang mga personnel direa kung ang budget gyud. Murag ang number one gyud direa kay ang budget maka-move gyud ang implementation sa program kung available dayun ang budget."

(For me, the main challenge is the limited financial resources, followed by the lack of personnel and time constraints. Our staff are really affected, especially when there's no budget. Budget is the number one factor once it's available, program implementation can really move forward.)

Due to limited resources, FGD-02 describes a practical strategy used in schools when facing budget limitation. Instead of

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cancelling or compromising activities due to financial constraints, they combine similar or related events into one. She emphasized that merging of events allows them to pool resources from different program owners or departments, maximizing the available budget.

"Ingon ana ang atoa usually ginabuhat if ever limited ang budget naga merge para maisa lang ang budget ma'am. Gina-isa ang activity kay akong budget ug budget ni other program owner maisa ingon ana ang usahay like yung Buwan ng Wika and Acquaintance giisa nalang siya para ang budget isa."

(That's usually what we do when the budget is limited, we merge activities so we can combine our budgets. For example, we consolidate events like Buwan ng Wika and the Acquaintance Party into one, so we only need to allocate a single budget.)

Despite these challenges, head teachers manage to continue school activities amidst limited government funding from the MOOE. FGD-05 emphasizes the importance of seeking additional financial support from the PTA, which helps fill in the budget gaps. This collaboration allows programs to proceed successfully even with limited official funds.

"Limited man ang budget for the sa MOOE of course with the help of PTA didtoa mi makakuan ug other sources of budget so with that strategy maka push through gehapon mi sa amoang activities maski limited lang gehatag sa MOOE. So good iyang outcome it's because with the help also with the admin, kay dako man jud factor ang admin in implementing the said program."

(Since the MOOE budget is limited, we tap other sources like the PTA for additional funding. With that strategy, we're still able to push through with our activities despite the limited MOOE allocation. The outcomes turned out well, mainly because of the strong support from the school administration, which plays a significant role in implementing the program.)

The strategic allocation of resources serves as a vital coping mechanism for head teachers in addressing the numerous challenges they face in implementing the school 's annual improvement plan. By effectively managing limited financial, human and material resources, head teachers can prioritize key initiatives, address urgent needs and ensure that school improvement goals remain attainable despite various constraints. Furthermore, proper resource allocation enables collaboration among stakeholders, promotes transparency and sustains the momentum of school development efforts.

Facilitating Task Management

As educational leaders, head teachers are often burdened with multifaceted responsibilities, ranging from administrative duties to instructional leadership. These demands can become overwhelming, especially when coupled with limited resources, time constraints and varying levels of stakeholder engagement. Effective task management provides a structured approach to organizing, prioritizing and executing these responsibilities, enabling head teachers to remain focused and goal oriented.

IDI-01 explains a common challenge in their workflow: the delay in processing activity designs due to the review process. Previously, he described the burden of following up on these submissions fell on the program owners, which added to their workload. However, with the recent appointment of an administrative officer, this responsibility has shifted, potentially improving efficiency.

"*So ang ang problema lang talaga is yung pag follow-up kasi hindi naman pwedeng submit ka lang ng activity design kinabukasan pwede ng makuha yung activity design kay e-che-check pa man nila. Sa ngayon, meron na kaming administrative officer yung ADAS siya na yung maka-follow-up so before kami na program owner kami pa ang magpa- follow-up may case pa na binalik yung activity design kasi may correction."*

(The real challenge is the follow-up process. You can't just submit an activity design and expect it to be approved the next day; it still needs to go through checking. Right now, we already have an administrative officer who handles the follow-ups. Before, it was us program owners who had to do it ourselves. There were even instances when the activity design was returned for corrections.)

Another thing is about managing team members, particularly those assigned to committees within a program. According to IDI-03, when certain individuals fail to carry out their responsibilities effectively it creates a difficult situation for the program owners. Despite recognizing the problem, he finds it challenging to confront or correct the people involved due to cultural or personal discomfort with giving criticism or feedback.

"For example, they are committee assigned a specific task and and they do not do their task very well or they or they are neglecting unsa ba napabayaan ilang task. For example, kana ilang committee sa food unya wala kay nila natarong or wala kayo nila na do ilang task. So, it is challenging for me for the program owners, it is challenging for us to tell to people na kay maulaw baya ta mangasaba, maulaw pud ta maghatag ug suggestion or comments and so mao to ang isa sa mga struggles."

(For example, if a committee is assigned a specific task but fails to fulfill it properly like a food committee that didn't handle their responsibilities well it becomes a challenge for us program owners. It's difficult to address because we sometimes feel embarrassed to correct them or give suggestions or comments. That's one of the struggles we face.)

In addition, FGD-04 also describes a common scenario within the Department of Education where personnel at the ground level, such as teachers or school coordinators, carefully plan and organize activities in advance; however, despite their efforts, official memos or directives from higher offices can override their plans.

"Ang time mao na siya ma reschedule, nay activity nga ingon ani kay kasagaran man gud sa DEPED pirte na nimong hawoda gikamada na nimo ug maayo unya pagkahuman kay naa dayun memo from region, from division."

(Time is another challenge because activities often get rescheduled. In many cases, even if you've already prepared everything thoroughly, a memo from the region or division suddenly comes up, disrupting the plans.)

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Moreover, FGD-05 encourages understanding of individuals who are part of the personnel such as teachers and highlights that they are also engaged in other tasks like attending seminars.

"Sa personnel man gud naa poy uban like teachers nga naay seminar, pinaabtik nga seminar or mga activity. So, so mao gyud hinungdan o isa sa mga factors nga dili sila makatabang"

(*When it comes to personnel, there are times when some teachers are attending seminars or are involved in other urgent activities. That becomes one of the factors why they're unable to help*.)

IDI-02 encourages others to ask for help and assistance and assign the task to someone who is more capable, especially when someone lacks experience in a particular area which emphasizes teamwork and the distribution of duties.

"Muingon dayun ka murag distribution of work ba for example collaboration man gyud na, Ma'am tabangi ko ani mam kanang sa food prep ba dili ko kabalo unsaon nko ni, pilay gasto ani. Didto na pud sa pikas kanang sa Hall prep ba kanang dili man ko kabalo sa decoration ani. So kanang mu-tap gyud ka mao ng naay collaboration."

(It is really about the distribution of work and collaboration. For example, someone would say, ma'am, can you help me with this? I don't know how to handle food preparation. How much will it cost? Then another would say, I don't know how to handle the decorations for the venue. So, you really have to reach out to others, that's why collaboration is important.)

The ability to maintain structure and clarity in the face of demanding responsibilities is essential for leadership. Developing a consistent approach to managing responsibilities not only supports smoother operations but also strengthens one's capacity to adapt evolving demands. By employing effective task management strategies head teachers can better manage their workload and reduce the stress associated with their demanding roles.

Cultivating Interpersonal Qualities

Implementing a school annual improvement plan often presents a range of challenges that require more than just strategic planning and administrative execution. The dynamic nature of school environments characterized by diverse personalities, varying levels of commitment and shifting priorities, demands adaptive and responsive mechanisms to ensure sustained progress. As stakeholders work together to align efforts and meet shared goals, it becomes essential to foster a supportive atmosphere that encourages collaboration, reduces conflict and enhances motivation.

IDI-03 values the strategy of clear and structured communication which helps in the successful implementation of school programs. He also discussed that for a program to run smoothly, everyone involved, especially teachers and program implementers, must communicate openly and effectively. One key point is the need to follow proper protocol, which includes consulting with the school head before making decisions related to planning, budgeting and scheduling.

"Also, how we communicate with other teachers, how we communicate with other people involved in the implementation of the said program so that we could have a smooth flow of the programs being implemented. As a protocol we should approach first the school head regarding the arrangement or the preparation for example the budgeting the scheduling of the activities the implementation of the activities."

(It is important how we communicate with fellow teachers and other stakeholders involved in implementing the program to ensure its smooth flow. As part of the protocol, we should first coordinate with the school head regarding plans such as budgeting, scheduling of activities and the actual implementation so everything is well-organized.)

Another strategy shared by IDI-01 which values the importance of patience when facing emotional challenges like irritation or frustration which hinders productivity and project completion. He emphasizes that progress requires perseverance, especially in bureaucratic settings where processes may seem inefficient. The ability to set aside personal frustration and continue fulfilling responsibilities is essential to ensure successful execution of planned activities.

"Patience kasi ni minsan mairita ka so kung mairita ka hindi ka gagawa ng ano yung kino-comply nila so walang mangyari sa project mo. Hindi ma-accomplish yung project na nakapaloob doon sa AIP so kailangan mo ng pasensya."

(Patience is important because there are times when you might feel irritated. And if you let that irritation affect you, you might refuse to work on what you are supposed to comply with, which would stall the progress of your project. As a result, the project included in the AIP may not be accomplished. That's why patience is necessary.)

In the same way, IDI-02 also values the importance of certain personal qualities when dealing with people or challenging situations. She highlights patience, understanding and open-mindedness as essential traits possibly in a specific context like relationships, work or service where not everyone will agree with you or be satisfied with your actions, no matter how well-intentioned.

"Siguro patience and understanding ang qualities nimo dapat ani open minded dapat gyud ka ani, kay kailangan gyud kag taas nga pagsabot, pasensya, kay dili baya tanang tao kanang ma please nimo."

(Perhaps patience and understanding are the key qualities you need. You really have to be open-minded because you need a lot of understanding and patience, since you cannot please everyone.)

In addition, FGD-01 emphasizes the importance of maintaining a positive mindset, especially when dealing with challenges. He highlights resourcefulness as the ability to find alternative solutions when the original plan doesn't work. This mindset includes optimism and motivation which helps in actively seeking out possible ways to resolve problems rather than giving up.

"Positive lang jud siya kumbaga pagiging resourceful mao gyud. Kay kung wala siya other options pud nay mga alternatives so mao na pagiging resourceful and then optimistic in looking for possible solutions to the problem."

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(Staying positive and being resourceful are important. If something is lacking, you find other options or alternatives. And at the same time, you stay optimistic while searching for possible solutions to the problem.)

On the other hand, FGD-04 describes that having an idealistic mindset means you have big dreams or high hopes for how things should be. However, it's not enough to just imagine or wish for the best outcomes. You still need to put in the work to make those ideas happen. It takes effort, planning and especially resourcefulness to turn ideals into reality. And the ideal situation isn't supported by enough resources or perfect conditions, so you have to find creative ways to make things work.

"Kanang idealistic ka pero you have to work on it and resourcefulness gyud."

(It's good to be idealistic, but you also need to put in the work and be resourceful to make those ideas happen.)

Furthermore, FGD-05 stressed the importance of a positive mindset especially when facing difficulties rather than focusing on the negative aspects, he recommended to stay hopeful and be proactive. Instead of focusing on what could go wrong, it helps to stay calm and look for solutions. This kind of thinking allows a person to keep moving forward despite setbacks.

"Work on it in a positive way. Ana gyud, avoid negative thoughts nga ma-push through positive lang jud siya. Bisag naa gud siyay problema."

(Approach things in a positive way. That's how it should be, avoid negative thinking and focus on pushing through with a positive mindset, even when there are challenges.)

Indeed, successfully carrying out a school annual improvement plan requires more than policies and procedures; it demands a strong foundation of mutual understanding and cooperative effort. As schools strive to meet their objectives, the ability of individuals to adapt, connect and work through challenges together becomes vital. In today's interconnected world, interpersonal qualities are not just valuable; they are necessary for personal growth and career advancement. The continuous development of these traits leads to greater emotional intelligence, stronger connections with others, and a more harmonious and productive environment.

Insights of Head Teachers as Program Owners in Implementing School Annual Improvement Plan

Table 3 shows the major themes and core ideas reflecting the insights of head teachers as program owners in implementing the school's annual improvement plan, emphasizing their reflections on strategic approaches, decision-making processes, and adaptive measures that ensure effective implementation and continuous improvement. There were a total of five (5) themes that were categorized accordingly which includes: a); data-driven planning b) leadership resilience; c) supportive leadership; d) funding strategies; and e) effective communication and collaboration.

Table 3
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights of Head Teachers as Program Owners in Implementing School Annual Improvement Plan

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Data-driven Planning	• plan and study the details of the program carefully • review thoroughly the data in crafting the AIP • plan must be aligned in the annual plan • plan and prioritize to effectively allocate the budget • proper preparation and provide alternatives
Leadership Resilience	• implement programs by exercising strong leadership, generosity and willingness • take initiative and be resourceful in finding ways • demonstrate perseverance and dedication • exercise patience to frequent revisions and varying standards • stay positive and persevere through challenges
Supportive Leadership	• allow teachers to list their needed supplies and activities • contributes when they approve the program to be implemented • show support by giving permission for a program to be conducted • provides words of encouragement • provide consistent support and reminders
Funding Strategies	• shoulder the expenses for program implementation • find alternative funding sources to support unplanned or urgent programs • prioritize resources and budget properly to address competing needs • seek support from external sources for the unapproved activities • find other funds to support the program to be implemented on specific date
Effective Communication and Collaboration	• seek input from program owners to align expectations and goals • collaborate with PTA to support school programs • communicate teachers by giving a copy of the AIP • remind program owners to prepare for a timely implementation of programs • offer students and teachers a program for improvement

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Data-driven Planning

In the pursuit of meaningful and sustainable progress within schools, head teachers are the one who translate vision to action through well-informed decision making. As they implement the initiatives outlined in the school annual improvement plan, their ability to draw insights from concrete evidence becomes essential in identifying priorities and allocating resources.

IDI-01 emphasizes the importance of carefully studying and determining the number of participants when planning a program or activity. From the start of the planning process up to the final implementation, the number of people involved must be clear and justifiable.

"Kailangan talaga ng pag-aaral kung ilan ba ang participants, mula sa objectives mo hanggang doon sa pinakadulo kasi yun ang sa paggawa mo ng activity design makikita mo yung mga rationale mo, yung mga purpose mo doon."

(It really requires careful planning knowing exactly how many participants there will be, starting from your objectives up to the very end, because in creating your activity design, that's where you'll clearly see your rationale and your intended purpose.)

For instance, IDI-02 describes the importance of thoroughly reviewing the annual improvement plan multiple times to ensure details are accurate and consistent. If there are discrepancies in the number of participants, it could raise serious issues which may lead to the disapproval of the activity design since the plan must be data-driven and well-justified.

"Mag-umpisa sa crafting the AIP, e-re review mo ng review hindi lang siguro tatlong beses kasi pag may discrepancy sa figure, may discrepancy sa number of participants, number of students involve, malaking problema na yun pwedeng hindi ma-approve yung activity design mo yan"

(You start crafting the AIP, and you have to review it repeatedly because if there's any discrepancy in the figures, in the number of participants or the number of students involved, it can become a big problem and may cause your activity design to not be approved.)

Another experience from FGD-03 where she emphasizes that one of the most important starting points in implementing any activity is securing approval. No matter how well-prepared or meaningful a plan may be, it cannot move forward without proper authorization. In many cases, a proposal must also be in line with the school's annual plan. If the activity is not reflected in that official document, it is unlikely to be prioritized or supported.

"Mao na siya ang pinaka-pirmero kanang pagpa approved sa mga activity. Sometimes pud kinahanglan ang imohangplano aligned pud siya sa annual plan kung wala didtoa sa annual plan, plano raka kutob."

(That's really the first step in getting the activities approved. Sometimes, your plan also needs to be aligned with the annual plan, because if it is not included there, it will remain just a plan and won't move forward.)

FGD-04 is in favor of the idea about conducting a thorough planning in implementing such programs. It implies that planning should not be rushed or superficial but instead thorough and well-thought. She added that in creating a detailed plan, there must be a clear scheduling of tasks and proper prioritization of projects. Identifying the most urgent and essential needs ensures that limited resources are directed toward the most critical areas.

"Thorough plan, ana gyud siya, thorough planning tapos kanang schedule unsay priorities nimo. Unsa gyud ang pinaka need para, para ma-apil sa budget."

(It really has to be a thorough plan along with a clear schedule of priorities. You need to identify the most essential needs so they can be included in the budget.)

Moreover, FGD-01 also values the importance of a thorough and well-organized preparation for any event or undertaking. When things are properly planned out, it greatly increases the chances of success because all aspects have been considered ahead of time. It also stresses the need for flexibility; not everything may go exactly as intended, so having alternatives or contingency plans is crucial.

"Tama nga preparation well planned more likely ang success pud sa event ma-achieve gyud diretso. Kumbaga dili gyud ingon nga ipit kaayo naay mga posibleng kadaganan kung dili mahitabo, naay mga alternatives."

(With proper and well-planned preparation, the success of the event is more likely to be achieved smoothly. There should always be possible options and alternatives if things don't go as planned.)

The successful implementation of the school annual improvement plan relies heavily on the ability of head teachers to interpret and act on meaningful data. Through data-driven planning, they gain valuable insights that allow them to make informed decisions, monitor progress and respond proactively to emerging needs. By grounding their strategies in evidence-based, head teachers foster a culture of continuous improvement, where initiatives are guided by clarity, accountability and a commitment to measurable outcomes.

Leadership Resilience

The implementation of a school annual improvement plan demands not only strategic thinking but also a high level of resilience from head teachers. As they face shifting priorities, resistance to change, and unforeseen challenges, their ability to remain focused, adaptable and committed becomes essential.

According to IDI-02, personal attributes are considered essential as she emphasizes the importance of being resilient and determined, especially in the role of a program owner. She mentioned her willingness to shoulder the expenses in implementing the program and activities and the qualities of a selfless attitude and genuine willingness to help others to ensure things run smoothly.

"Most important qualities gyud para mahimong successful imohang implementation strong ka as program owner, willing pud ka nga siguro mutapal para mahimong successful imong implementation. Giver, generous ka naa jud kay heart ana nga mutabang kung unsa man imohang kailangan ana para mahimong successful imohang program implementation."

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(The most important qualities for a successful implementation are being strong as a program owner and being willing to contribute whatever is necessary to ensure its success. You must be a giver, generous and have the heart to help in whatever way is needed for the program to be successfully implemented.)

Aside from that, to have successful leadership, IDI-03 points out the importance of having initiative, mature mindset that enables someone to act even when things deviate from the original plan.

"The program owner should have also an initiative, naa siyay sense of maturity when it comes to problems arise kabalo siya unsay buhaton naa siyay initiative na bahalag wala siya sa plano wala na implement ang plano pero naa siyay other way of solving that problems."

(The program owner should also have initiative and a sense of maturity when problems arise. They should know what to do and take the initiative, even if the original plan wasn't implemented, by finding alternative ways to solve those problems.)

FGD-07 often experiences setbacks in the implementation of programs such as limited funds however, behind those challenges, she still manages to continue to ensure success of a program even if it may even require going beyond one's official role such as using personal resources to meet the needs that the official budget cannot cover.

"Usahay man gud as program owner labi na ug limited imong budget maluya jud ka. Ang dapat maging perseverance gyud ka nga push through gyud. There are times nga makakuot gyud sa ug personal money nimo so that maging successful lang gyud ang imohang activity."

(Sometimes, as a program owner, especially when the budget is limited, you can feel discouraged. But you need to persevere and keep pushing through. There are times when you even have to use your personal money just to ensure the success of the activity.)

Another thing is experiencing inconsistency in document review and approval where it teaches how important patience is for program owners or anyone handling paperwork. FGD-03 encounters challenges about the repeated revisions and resubmissions because of different reviewers of his document who each apply their own standards. For him, this is exhausting and frustrating but maintaining patience is essential to navigate the system effectively.

"Importante patience kay sometimes ang imong papelis didto mabalik sigeg kabalik ba maglagot nalang kadugayan kay lahi man gud ang mag check didto, mga revisions kay sometimes siya ang nag check karon lahi iyahang standard sunod lahi napud ang nagcheck lahi napud ang standard balik napud."

(Patience is important because sometimes your documents keep getting returned for revisions. It can be frustrating over time since different people review them, and each one has different standards, so you end up revising and resubmitting repeatedly.)

More importantly, FGD-06 delivers a strong note of encouragement, especially to those involved in planning and executing school activities. She acknowledges that facing difficulties is a normal part of the process but stresses the value of staying positive and persevering despite obstacles.

" Be positive lang gyud, normal gyud na nga maka experienced ug challenges but still katong mag-persevere lang gyud ka gehapon, conduct activity napud for the next school year."

(Just stay positive as it is normal to experience challenges, but if you keep persevering, you can still move forward and conduct activities again for the next school year.)

The theme highlights that the role of program owners requires the capacity to withstand pressures, adapt to unexpected obstacles and maintain a positive outlook despite challenges. This also ensures that improvement efforts are sustained, guided by vision and responsive to the evolving needs of the school community. In this way, leadership resilience directly influences the effectiveness and success of school improvement initiatives.

Supportive Leadership

A program owner not just needs personal qualities to obtain success but guidance and support from the different stakeholders in school who share common goals which is to drive school improvement and student success. Program implementers need supportive leaders who build strong interpersonal relationships, show empathy, offer encouragement and be responsive to the needs and concerns of others.

According to IDI-01, collecting input directly from teachers shows supportive leadership where decision-making is based on actual needs identified by the teaching staff.

"Mag-gather ka ng mga yung mga data sa lahat ng teachers, sa lahat ng teachers kung ano yung mga kakailanganin talaga nila mula sa supplies, hanggang sa activities"

(You need to gather data from all the teachers about what they really need, from supplies to activities.)

On the other hand, IDI-02 expresses her view on how higher authorities can contribute with the educational programs and it is when a program is approved for implementation. She also added that when a program receives such approval, it allows the school to proceed with planned activities.

"Kanang ma-approve sila nga ma-implement kani nga program, gi approve nga i-implement sa school, so mao nay dako nil nga natabang since. So, ang district, dili gyud na makahatag ug kwarta, meaning ang district mu-support lang na sila to implement such program."

(When the program is approved for implementation in the school, it becomes a big help. However, the district cannot really provide funding, they only give support for the implementation of the program.)

According to IDI-03 that no matter how well-intentioned or beneficial a program may be, it cannot proceed without formal permission from the relevant authorities. He explained that without their approval no program or activity can be implemented.

"Schools or districts can be very supportive when they permit us. Naa silay go signal naa silay permission for us to conduct

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because we cannot conduct here if they did if they will not sign."

(Schools or districts can be very supportive when they give us the go signal or permission to conduct activities, because we cannot proceed if they don't approve or sign.)

Another experience from FGD-01 which emphasizes the importance of providing words of encouragement even when challenges like budget cuts arise, the people involved are motivated to keep moving forward. He denotes that those managing programs feel empowered to look for alternatives and keep their initiatives alive.

"Schools or districts create a more supportive environment by pushing us na Go lang ng go. Padayun lang despite sa mga challenges nga na encounter then the budget nga na cut down we will looking for mga options nga ma push through among mga plans. So, with their encouragement, the program owners will still survive gehapon, makapadayun gehapon pagpa-implement sa mga programs."

(Schools or districts create a more supportive environment by encouraging us to just keep going. Despite the challenges encountered and even when the budget is cut down, we look for options to push through with the plans. With their encouragement, program owners can still endure and continue implementing the programs.)

FGD-03 acknowledges that employees or program owners may sometimes feel demotivated or fatigued; however, the presence of supportive leaders plays a crucial role in keeping the progress going by regularly following up and reminding their teams about responsibilities.

"There are times nga maluya ka but with the support of the heads unya pursige jud siya, i-implement gyud nimo because naa naman sa annual plan so, permanenti gyud ang head nga mu-remind."

(There are times when you feel discouraged, but with the support of the school heads and their persistence, you still implement the program because it's already part of the annual plan. The head constantly reminds and encourages you to push through.)

The theme discusses the importance of supportive leadership to all program owners who have major responsibilities in carrying out the initiatives that are outlined in the school annual improvement plan. It also highlights the challenges, support and guidance of head teachers they experience upon the implementation of the different programs and activities in schools.

Funding Strategies

Knowing the strategies applied by head teachers in achieving school development goals are important. Head teachers are challenged to be innovative and strategic in sourcing funds from government subsidies to community partnerships and stakeholder consultations. This theme will discuss the experiences of head teachers which demonstrate resourcefulness and strategic planning in mobilizing resources to support priority programs.

According to FGD-07, there are some situations where making a planned activity requires more than what the available budget can cover. He emphasizes that when this happens, program owners who are deeply committed choose to spend their own personal money to fill in the gaps.

"There are times nga makakuot gyud sa ug personal money nimo so that maging successful lang gyud ang imohang activity."

(There are times when you really have to use your own personal money just to make sure your activity becomes successful.)

Similarly, IDI-02 also experienced limitations of school funding and is one of the challenges she experienced. Finding alternative sources of funds is needed because those budgets provided by the government which is the MOOE are often not enough to cover all a school's operational and emergency needs. She mentioned that their school canteen serves as a fallback financial resource in times of need, the same with the PTA which contributes a limited amount to sustain the needs in school and also conducts fundraising to sustain and support the school.

"Mangita ug other funds nga pwede ba if incase naay mga mga emergencies. Usually, makakuha mi sa canteen, ang canteen namo dako kaayu na siya nga tabang para sa skwelahan. Isa pud na nagatabang pero gamay raman gud kayo ang atoang PTA, dili gyud sya makasuffice sa kailangan gyud sa school ba. Even ang M.O. bahinon pana gyud na sya sa kadaghan pud sa mga activity. So, mao na dapat naa gyud tay other funds. Pareha anang atoang kandidata."

(We look for other funds that can be used in case of emergencies. Usually, we get support from the canteen, which really helps a lot for the school. The PTA also helps, but their contribution is quite small and cannot fully meet the needs of the school. Even the MOOE has to be divided among many activities. That's why we really need other sources of funds, like those we raise from events such as pageants or fundraisers.)

FGD-03 points out proper budgeting and financial management, especially in contexts where resources are limited, and demands are high. He also emphasized that it's not just about having a budget, but also about setting clear priorities and deciding what needs to be addressed first based on urgency and importance.

"Ang imohang financial ma budget gyud ug mayo dapat naay prioritizing gyud, priority gyud ka kay daghan man jud ug needs."

(Your finances should be properly budgeted, and there must be clear prioritization because there are really many needs to address.)

Another thing FGD-02 emphasizes, is the delays in the approval of activity designs wherein even if there is a set of schedules for implementation, the activity cannot officially move forward if it hasn't been approved. She clarified that activities without approval from higher offices are not entirely banned and can still be implemented as school-based; however, activities won't be eligible for funding from the MOOE. And if you really want to implement the said program you must seek alternative funding sources to support the activity.

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"Naa kay target na date pero dili pa ma approved ang activity design so mao na siya isa sa challenges nga ma experienced as program owner. Dili bawal jud siya i-conduct pero pwedi ra siya pero dili ka makakuha ug budget sa MOOE. Mahulog lang siya'g school-based pero you will get other budget dili sa MOOE sa PTA pwedi."
(You may have a target date, but the activity design is not yet approved, which is one of the challenges a program owner faces. It is not really prohibited to conduct the activity, but you won't be able to get a budget from the MOOE. It will just be considered school-based, so you'll need to source the budget elsewhere, like from PTA.)

Furthermore, IDI-01 points out that certain school activities, such as World Teachers' Month Culmination, are time-bound and must be held on a specific data set and if there is no available budget, schools must find alternative ways to fund these events since rescheduling isn't an option. He suggested that one way is to seek local funding sources, like donations or community contributions, instead of using the school's official operating budget.
"Pero naay specific activity for example, culmination for world teacher's month, kana siya nga activity dili mana siya pwede i-move nimo kay naa mana siya specific date. Pwede i-conduct kung mangita ug mga local funds nga dili na mugamit sa MOOE."
(But there are also specific activities, for example, the culmination of World Teachers' Month. That activity cannot be moved because it has a fixed date. It can still be conducted if you look for local funds that won't use the MOOE budget.)

Understanding the experiences of head teachers in funding strategies provides valuable insights into how leadership and resource management contribute to achieving school development goals. They often adopt a multifaceted approach, including maximizing government allocations, engaging stakeholders for support and forging partnerships with local government units. Funding strategies allow program owners to maintain continuity, respond to challenges and ensure their initiatives deliver meaningful and measurable impact

Effective Communication and Collaboration
This theme offers insight into the experiences of head teachers who frequently encounter challenges such as resistance to change or miscommunication, but they also recognize the value of building trust, promoting open dialogue and encouraging participative leadership to accomplish plans. These experiences underscore that effective communication and collaboration are not merely administrative tasks, but dynamic processes that drive meaningful progress and sustainable development in schools.

In fact, IDI-03 emphasized the importance of two-way communication between schools and supervisors or district leaders. While schools regularly submit reports and are under the supervision of the district, he believes that supervisors should also engage in dialogue with the schools. Instead of merely visiting schools to observe without context, they should communicate their intentions, goals and criteria for evaluation ahead of time.

"As to my part with the schools or district they should also seek information from us na mangutana pud sa amoa because they are our supervisors we send report to them they supervise us here so dapat pag mangutana pud sila, Ma'am ani among gusto ma expect sa inyuha when we visit you ani among criteria, I think there should be a clear communication with the program owners and the school leaders."
(As for my part, the schools or districts should also seek information from us and ask us questions because they are our supervisors. We send reports to them, and they supervise us here, so they should also clarify things. I think there should be clear communication between the program owners and the school leaders.)

Additionally, IDI-02 values the importance of effective communication and collaboration in school governance especially when there are programs which are not budgeted under schools Maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE). She emphasized that collaboration with the PTA greatly helps to address the issue of school-based programs which need implementation, especially programs whose activity design is not approved.
"Mahulog lang siya'g school-based pero you will get other budget sa dili sa MOOE sa PTA pwedi."
(It will just be considered school-based, but you can get another source of budget, not from the MOOE, like from the PTA, which is allowed.)

IDI-01 emphasizes the importance of timely coordination and communication among school personnel regarding budget matters. He points out that having an updated and approved annual improvement plan distributed to all relevant stakeholders, particularly program owners, is essential so that they can prepare and submit their activity designs on time. He mentioned that without awareness of the schedule, implementation can be delayed. He also added that it is the role of the principals in ensuring that requests for MOOE funds are submitted promptly to the division office. If the division receives the request late, the release of funds will also be delayed, which can halt the implementation of planned programs.
"Una bigyan sila ng kopya ng approved AIP para alam nila kasi minsan yung yung program owner hindi yan nila makakaligtaan nila ma-delayed yung submission of activity design ni program owner. Si principal maka-support siya sa pamamagitan ng updated niya na pag pag-submit doon sa division ng request for MOOE kasi minsan rin delayed si division mag-release ng MOOE budget sa school kasi natagalan din si school head or si principal mag-submit ng request for MOOE."
(Provide them with a copy of the approved AIP so they're aware, because sometimes program owners forget or delay submitting the activity design. The principal can help by promptly submitting the MOOE request to the division, since delays at the school level can also cause the division to delay releasing the MOOE budget.)
Furthermore, FGD-03 values the importance of the active role of the school head in monitoring program implementation and ensuring that deadlines are met. The school head reminds program implementers to act, preventing delays that could result in lapses. This fosters a collaborative environment where

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everyone stays informed and engaged and ensures tasks are accomplished on time and that resources are used efficiently, strengthening teamwork and promoting shared responsibility.

"Permanenti gyud ang head nga mu-remind, "Ohh kinsa tong mga program owner, lihok na" kay naa man gyud siya'y usahay mag lapse man gud naa may time frame nga ginatan-aw."

"The school head constantly reminds the program owners to take action because there are times when delays happen, and they always need to consider the set time frame.)

For instance, IDI-02 emphasizes the importance of having programs that support growth and improvement of both students and teachers. She mentioned that for students, the focus should be creating activities that foster their development and learning. Meanwhile, teachers benefit from the seminars, workshops and training which can contribute to their professional development.

"Dapat naa gyud tay mga programs nga e-implement nga para pud sailaha, maka-improve sa ilaha, as well as maka-improve pud sa teachers, para sa students. Peraha anang maghimo ta ug mga activity nga maka-tabang sa studyante, mga programs nato nga madevelop sila. Sa mga teachers, i-apil sila sa mga seminars, mga workshops maka-develop mana sya sa mga teachers."

(We need to implement programs that contribute to the growth and improvement of both students and teachers. For students, we can organize activities that support their development, while for teachers, seminars and workshops can enhance their skills and professional growth.)

In reflecting on the experiences of head teachers, it becomes clear that the path to successfully implementing school annual improvement plans is greatly influenced by how well individuals within the school community connect and work together. Head teachers often observe that when communication is open and collaboration is strong, teachers feel more involved, goals are better understood, and challenges are addressed more effectively. By involving the program owners early, keeping good contact and reminding each other of important deadlines, schools can successfully implement activities that benefit both students and teachers. Strong teamwork and clear communication are key to making sure programs run well.

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher worked through a detailed analysis of the emergent themes and connections to the literature and viewpoints of various authors. The researcher also probed the potential implications of educational practice offering possible pathways for future research based on the findings from this study. The intent of this study was to better understand the distinct perspectives of head teachers as program owners who were implementing the school 's annual improvement plan through data from in-depth interviews and focus groups with the use of validated questionnaires.

The Lived Experiences of Head Teachers as Program Owners in Implementing School Annual Improvement Plan

The head teachers were chosen as the participants of the study, as they shared their experiences about being a program owner in implementing the school 's annual improvement plan. From their honest answers, five (5) major themes emerged, namely: a) making consideration on educational priorities; b) difficulty in budget management; c) fulfillment of the program implementation; d) experiencing delays and cancellations of the proposed program and projects; and e) establishment of collaboration among internal and external stakeholders.

Making Consideration on Educational Priorities

Effective school planning aims to deliver quality education, achieve excellence, and maintain sound governance; however, the practical realities encountered by head teachers who serve as program owners often complicate the implementation process. One of the major challenges identified is the need to balance various educational priorities within limited resources, constrained timelines and a shortage of personnel. It also points to the emotional impact and logistical challenges for schools dealing with unexpected circumstances and scheduling; often, complete rearrangement of the educational program and use of resources are required. For this reason, head teachers actively acknowledge the value of flexibility, coordination, and clear communication in addressing the challenges that arise; while the ability to adjust, find alternatives, and continually reprioritize is an equally important factor in achieving delivery of educational programs.

Kalman (2020) studies the perceptions and experiences educators hold regarding school improvement, highlighting the effect of contextual factors, including the behaviors and practices of staff members, budget, the educational system, and socio-economic status of the surrounding context. On the other hand, time constraints and conflicting schedules emerged as the most prominent barriers to the successful implementation of school programs. Overlapping of program activities, training sessions and school events create confusion, reduce participation and compromise the quality of implementation (Pabriaga, 2025). Thus, issues in scheduling conflicts can be addressed through the integration of multi-skilled workers into scheduling processes which offers considerable advantages, particularly in enhancing operational flexibility, optimizing workforce allocation and improving overall productivity within organizations (Afshar-Nadjafi, 2021).

Having Difficulty in Budget Management

Ineffective management of the budget is another ongoing issue for the head teacher and implementers of programs, which tremendously influences the successful implementation of school programs included in the annual improvement plan. There is careful planning at the preparation stage but during the implementation stage, issues arise such as budget cuts, clerical problems, no availability of resources or delayed fund disbursement that limit the successful execution of planned activities. For example, one of my participants stated that he was frustrated because of the disparities between what he expected to receive and what he actually received through the budget, resulting in some compromises in the form of

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downsizing programs, looking for external assistance, or using personal money. The consolidation of programs at the school level is also an issue because consolidations lead to budget cuts due to inadequate resources and competing priorities.

A study in Uganda examined how financial management can improve learning environments significantly. Schools that undertake sound financial management have larger reserves or surplus funds which can be used to pay for infrastructure, ratios of teacher-student, and the supply of teaching and learning resources. The study also confirms the value of strategic financial planning, clear systems of budgeting, and the use of community funds and partnerships in maximizing limited educational resources (Katureebe et al. 2023). Further, effective financial management also elevates curriculum plans and supports student outcomes in vocational schools in Indonesia. It investigates how the processes of financial budgeting are incorporated into learning goals to address student diversity. Moreover, they raise the importance of transparency and accountability with respect to financial operations as foundational processes to promote inclusive education, efficient use of resources, and innovative approaches to teaching (Novianti et al., 2025).

Experiencing Fulfillment on the Program Implementation

Head teachers experience a sense of accomplishment when projects are completed as planned, particularly when these projects address the needs of the school. This sense of fulfillment serves as a strong indicator of effective planning and implementation. Similarly, satisfaction among stakeholders such students and parents are often gauged through the absence of complaints and negative feedback, which is interpreted as contentment with the services rendered. Nonetheless, when their suggestions are approved and implemented, it boosts their morale and engagement. Fulfillment in program implementation is achieved when there is alignment among objectives, timelines and budgets, resulting in stakeholder satisfaction and positive impacts on the school community.

A study of Wariza and Montero (2023), discussed how teachers felt fulfilled and satisfied with their work about the performance of students in school. It is believed that work fulfillment, like feeling happy and satisfied with the job, is something that develops over time, like a journey. When teachers feel good about their jobs, this can lead to schools running better and students doing well in their studies. Conversely, students also express their satisfaction in school services which means that academic and emotional support systems in place are functioning well and meeting the needs of the students, contributing positively to their academic experience. However, not all services met student expectations. Key suggestions included allocating more budget to improve and upgrade physical facilities especially laboratory and canteen which would enhance the learning and campus life experience (Patalinghog et al., 2021).

Experiencing Delays and Cancellations of the Proposed Program and Projects

In schools, effective planning and timely execution of programs are key to achieving goals and improving students; however, when the approval of an annual improvement plan is delayed, it causes delays in releasing the needed budget and preparing the activities that were planned. This becomes a major problem for teachers and program implementers who rely on the approved plan and funding to start their work. Without the approval they cannot move forward, and the timelines they set at the beginning of the year are no longer followed. As a result, some activities are postponed or completely cancelled due to lack of time and resources. These delays disrupt the smooth flow of school programs and create confusion and stress among those responsible for carrying out. It is difficult for them to stay motivated when well-thought out plans cannot be executed especially after spending time and effort preparing them. When program goals are not met due to delays, it feels like all hard work has gone to waste and it becomes disheartening when their proposals are not given attention or are ignored without explanation.

Whereas the issue of insufficient budget also causes delays in the implementation of programs, for instance the need for faster and more reliable delivery funds prevents the school feeding program from running smoothly in school which results in the delay of starting and continuing the meal services offered to the students. It was found that when schools do not receive enough financial support or when the funds are not delivered on time, it becomes very difficult for them to plan, prepare and consistently provide meals to students (Habyarimana et al., 2023). Not just that, teachers also struggle in the well-being of the students because their time is consumed by other priorities and the scheduling of various extracurricular activities. These demands limited the opportunities they had to build meaningful connections with students and support their overall welfare (Koh et al., 2023).

Establishing Collaboration among Internal and External Stakeholders

This theme views establishing strong collaboration among internal and external stakeholders in ensuring effective school leadership, governance and program implementation. Meaningful partnerships with various sectors such as non-government organizations enhance the capacity of the school to fulfill its mission and extend its impact beyond the classroom. Internally, involving teachers in the planning and decision-making processes, particularly in crafting the annual improvement plan, promotes inclusiveness, transparency, and shared accountability. Teachers who feel heard and see their suggestions implemented are more motivate ed and supportive of school initiatives, resulting in a more unified and proactive school environment. Transparent interactions with stakeholders, including parents and the wider community, facilitate the development of trust and clarity regarding the alignment of school programs, and the appropriate needs and aspirations of learners. Collaboration as a result creates a sense of ownership and shared responsibility, which is critical for the efficacy and sustainability of educational programs.

The research conducted by Banashree (2020) indicates the significance of collaborative leadership for heightened innovation in education. It emphasizes that all stakeholders share responsibility for decision-making, mutual respect, open communications, and mutual responsibility, including all teachers, administrators, students and community members. It

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also demonstrated that collaborative leadership promotes authentic teaching practice transformation, supports the strengthening of productive relationships among stakeholders, and has a positive impact on learners. Another study also points out that schools who embrace collaborative leadership also often implement initiatives that inform and engage groups that reflect the distinct needs and perspectives of learning stakeholders and the community (Hafeez & Akhtar, 2022). Teamwork and open communication played a big role in the success of these plans where teachers and staff worked together, supported each other and regularly checked their progress to see if they were meeting their goals. Involving also the people connected to the school made the planning process more effective because when everyone works together and knows what the school is trying to achieve, it's easier to make progress and solve problems (Nugraha et al., 2020).

Coping Mechanisms of Head Teachers with the Challenges they Encountered in Implementing School Annual Improvement Plan

Based on the shared experiences of head teachers, they also provide coping mechanisms on the challenges they encountered in implementing the school 's annual improvement plan. In this study, five (5) themes were extracted, namely: a) establishing supportive leadership; b) planning and preparing strategically; c) allocating resources; d) facilitating task management; and e) cultivating interpersonal qualities.

Establishing Supportive Leadership

This theme highlights the need for supportive leadership in the successful implementation of school programs and activities. The difficulties encountered by program implementers are addressed when leaders exhibiting collaborative and responsive leadership. All participants highlighted the critical nature of leaders who work with program implementers, teacher leaders, and teachers who engage in the implementation process. This type of leadership cultivates an environment in which everyone is working together in a collaborative manner, sharing in the responsibilities of the work. This is particularly important in reform efforts that stress limited resources, and time demands that school leaders experience. Collaboration was a prominent coping strategy for school leaders and teachers. It suggests that supportive leadership should be grounded in collaboration, clear communication and active engagement is instrumental in navigating the complexities of school program implementation and fostering a resilient and motivated school community.

Effective school leadership is significant as it enhances teacher efficacy contributing to a more stable, motivated and effective teaching workforce which in turn, reduces the financial burden and disruption. Educators who perceive their leaders as supportive tend to experience higher levels of overall wellness and are more inclined to speak positively about their schools to prospective families and fellow educators (Lee & Swaner, 2023). Additionally, supportive leadership affects job satisfaction of the employees especially in educational institutions in Indonesia. It found out that it really does help increase job satisfaction meaning when leaders are kind, helpful and encouraging, employees tend to feel better about their jobs (Mala et al., 2022).

Additionally, supportive leadership plays a vital role in fostering a positive and productive school environment. Creating a peaceful and fair workplace encourages collaboration and mutual respect, while constructive feedback helps teachers grow professionally without feeling demoralized (Erturk, 2023). Moreover, when teachers feel supported through meaningful gestures, acknowledgement of their hard work, and opportunities for professional growth, they are more likely to remain in their roles. This emphasizes that school leaders play a vital part in creating a healthy and motivating workplace that strengthens the sense of belongingness and dedication of teachers (Ismail & David, 2024).

Planning and Preparing Strategically

Head teachers illuminated that having a well-structured plan set clear goal, identifies priorities, and aligns available resources to desired outcomes. Involvement of stakeholders was found to be a key factor in making plans more relevant to and responsive, as their insights help shape strategies that reflect the actual needs of the school community. It also emphasized the need to strictly follow established procedures, particularly securing approvals for activity designs and programs of work from higher authorities before implementation. Moreover, visionary leadership also emerged as a significant theme where it anticipates both positive and negative outcomes, considers the long-term impact of programs and demonstrates adaptability and readiness which are essential qualities and increase the likelihood of successful implementation. Preparing multiple contingency plans is also strongly discussed to ensure that alternative solutions are readily available in case the initial plan fails.

The development of strategic planning within the education system is becoming increasingly urgent to build effective schools where daily operations and decision-making are aligned with clear and well-structured plans. To make this process more effective, schools must be adaptive to shifts in their strategic direction and demonstrate openness to risks which emphasize the importance of being proactive and responsive to change and challenges that may arise (Hidayat & Nurmila, 2024). Additionally, strategic planning is conducted by creating an annual work plan aligned with the school's vision, mission, and goals established at the beginning of the school year. This involves forming a school development team, carrying out planning in accordance with educational procedures, and utilizing development and coaching outcomes to effectively achieve the set objectives (Priyambodo & Hasanah, 2021).

Moreover, a study conducted in Portugal which assesses the effectiveness of school planning processes includes indicators such as alignment of proposed actions with school goals, the feasibility and specificity of activities, the adequacy of resource allocation, and the presence of clear monitoring and evaluation. They suggested that planning for school improvement should not just be seen as a task to complete, but as an important and thoughtful process that can truly help schools grow and succeed (Carvalho, 2022).

Allocating Resources

Another coping mechanism employed by the head teachers is the proper allocation of resources as they experience financial

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limitations and other operational constraints in implementing the initiatives. Across the interviews and discussions, financial scarcity emerged as the primary challenge, with participants consistently highlighting how insufficient budget allocations impact their ability to execute programs as planned. Despite these financial hurdles, head teachers exhibit creativity and resilience by maximizing available resources and adopting adaptive strategies to ensure activities continue. To mitigate these challenges, innovative strategies such as merging similar activities were cited which enables pooling of resources from different program owners or departments ensuring efficiency and continuity without compromising the quality of activities. Another thing is the support from the PTA and school administrators where their contributions help bridge finding gaps, allowing programs to proceed and produce positive outcomes despite limited government support.

One of the secondary schools in China describe challenges in allocating resources due to uneven distribution or poor management. There are also factors affecting efficiency of resource allocation such as school administration practices which determines how well the resources are utilized at the institutional level. To address this issue, it is suggested that policies should make resource management clearer, fairer and better planned which includes improving government oversight and encouraging schools to use resources wisely (Zhu, 2024). Another study conducted in Cambodia, where they also point that in many cases, resources were not equally shared. They emphasize that when resources are fairly and effectively distributed it has impacts on students' academic performance. Also, schools with better teaching staff, more learning materials, and a good learning environment showed better academic results (Keo et al., 2021).

To ensure fairness and effectiveness, schools are encouraged to adopt approaches that are inclusive, meaning that they consider the voices of all the key stakeholders such as administrators, teachers, parents and even students. Also, by aligning resources with clear goals and involving different perspectives, schools can avoid waste, address inequities and create lasting improvements (Jafari et al., 2024). Furthermore, when schools allocate resources strategically, they are better able to meet diverse learning needs, provide a supportive environment and ensure access to quality instruction. Proper resource management can reduce educational inequalities, enhance teaching effectiveness and create opportunities for students to excel academically and personally. In essence, the way resources are utilized directly influences the overall quality of education (Leon-Ramirez, 2025).

Facilitating Task Management

To navigate the complex and multifaceted responsibilities inherent by head teachers in educational leadership they must possess an effective management skill. Head teachers are confronted with a combination of duties in the administrative, instructional, and logical dimensions, while managing their leadership responsibilities with restricted resources, time constraints, and switching priorities, they can operate with an organized, transactional and collaborative style to create efficiencies and manage stress. Head teachers have developed strategies which focus on collaboration, shared decision making, and clear communication with staff and stakeholders that allow them to develop more insight regarding the individual limitations and allow them to assign the skilled tasks to staff who are completing work to create a level of confidence and quality in the outcomes. The findings suggest that task management can facilitate efficiencies while creating opportunities for engagement, ownership and resilience from school staff.

In turn, there are cognitive, and behavioral dynamics associated with individuals engaged in managing multiple tasks with varying levels of complexity and significance. This demonstrates the importance of developing more effective task prioritization, such as revising any number of arrangements of work environments, and tools that support task management with attention to aligned goal achievement (Rusou et al., 2020). Also the use of task management systems tools enhanced productivity and efficiency across a wide array of professional and personal settings. This supports task management and allows for the user to organize and prioritize which support improved workflow management and enhanced team coordination as well as allows individuals to focus on those high priority activities (Singh, 2024).

Cultivating Interpersonal Qualities

Head teachers underscore that technical skills and formal planning must be complemented by personal traits such as patience, open-mindedness, adaptability and effective communication skills. These qualities are essential in navigating the complexities of human interaction within a school setting, where diverse personalities and expectations can lead to conflict, miscommunication or disengagement if not properly managed. Consistent and organized communication was found to be an essential strategy in engaging with teachers, program implementers, and school leaders. Additionally, emotional resilience in the form of patience and empathy was often highlighted as necessary when feeling frustrated with routines of bureaucracy and personal frustration. Resourcefulness and flexibility were noted as key attributes, particularly when things are not happening to one's desired level or stage. Furthermore, interpersonal qualities enable educators and leaders to work collaboratively, overcome challenges with empathy and creativity and build a school culture that is both productive and emotionally supportive.

Strong interpersonal skills create a more supportive and productive environment that positively impacts both teaching and learning. Given this, it is essential for head teachers to be trained and well-equipped with a wide range of interpersonal skills which include showing respect toward teachers and staff, practicing active and effective listening, understanding the diverse personalities and needs of their team members, showing empathy and promoting cooperation and teamwork (Balama & Ambakisye, 2023). Moreover, another study where different roles in a project require interpersonal skills such as clear communication to avoid misunderstandings, collaboration to coordinate efforts and problem-solving abilities to handle issues as they arise while, strategic thinking was found to be more prominent in certain roles especially for project owners who are heavily involved during early planning and decision-making stages (Shiferaw, 2024).

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Similarly, Perveen and Nawaz (2021) value more the importance of communication skills by head teachers to maintain high team morale and address conflicts before they escalate. Strong communication skills are a strong and reliable predictor of a positive climate. That's why schools led by head teachers with these skills tend to have a more supportive, safe and academically focused environment. According to Musheke and Phiri (2021), effective communication positively affects organizational performance which means that good communication practices contribute to better organizational outcomes.

Insights of Head Teachers with the Challenges They Encountered in Implementing School Annual Improvement Plan

In this study, the researcher uncovered and documented four (4) key themes that reflect how head teachers hope and wish that the problems they've encountered in implementing the school annual improvement plan will be addressed. Five (5) major themes emerged from the concrete answers of the participants: a) data-driven planning; b) leadership resilience; c) supportive leadership; d) funding strategies; and e) effective communication and collaboration.

Data-Driven Planning

Head teachers, as key implementers of the school annual improvement plan, demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the importance of basing decisions on systematic, collaborative, and evidence-aligned planning process. They consistently emphasized that the effectiveness of school programs is not solely dependent on individual initiative, but rather emerges through collective engagement, shared decision-making, and adherence to institutional protocols and policy guidelines. Their responses revealed that key components of effective implementation include meticulous planning, structured scheduling and the prioritization of institutional needs. Moreover, head teachers highlighted the necessity of timely documentation to ensure the smooth approval of initiatives and the timely release of resources. They also acknowledged the significance of flexibility and responsiveness when navigating unforeseen challenges, thereby underscoring the critical role of contingency planning in sustaining program delivery and adapting to dynamic school environments.

Building on this foundation of strategic and collaborative planning, the institutions that utilized a data driven strategic tool improved the alignment of their strategic goals with the actions they took to achieve them. Incorporation of data into planning allowed institutions to better inform their decision making, increase transparency, and develop accountability in their goal setting and resource allocation activities. By using data, as opposed to assumptions, schools were better positioned to determine key areas for improvement, monitor their progress over a period of time, and adjust strategies in a timely manner as indicated (O'Connor et al., 2023). However, there are numerous barriers preventing schools from progressing in effective data use for planning purposes. They include but are not limited to, data unavailability, a low capacity and competence level of school staff in data analysis and interpretation, and a lack of support systems from appropriate stakeholders. Although schools are involved in a variety of planning stages in decision making, the actual data used to inform and improve teaching and learning practices remains limited (Nurzen, 2022).

Expanding further, the shift toward data-driven decision making has gained significant importance in education as policymakers increasingly emphasize the need for the field to be grounded in evidence rather than solely on tradition, personal experience or intuition. By integrating data and research findings into the decision-making process, educators can better understand student performance, identify learning gaps and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional strategies which allows schools to allocate resources more strategically, implement targeted interventions and continuously improve teaching practices based on measurable outcomes (Mandinach & Schildkamp, 2021).

Leadership Resilience

For any school improvement plan to be effectively implemented, resilience emerges as a critical attribute among head teachers and program implementers. These individuals often contend with constrained resources, ongoing evaluations and the demands of multitasking. Their capacity to remain committed and forward moving, despite these challenges, reflects the essence of resilience. This trait is not solely about recovery from setbacks but encompasses proactive initiative, a willingness to assume calculated personal risks and the readiness to make sacrifices in pursuit of meaningful program outcomes. Also, emotional self-regulation is essential when navigating bureaucratic hurdles, such as recurrent document revisions and prolonged approval processes. Ultimately, resilience is perceived through sustained commitment, purposeful action and a sense of altruism all of which enable program owners to remaun focused on the long-term objectives of school improvement.

Building upon this understanding of resilience in the context of school leadership, the more elaborate works of Bertsia and Poulou (2023), offer an extensive theory on resilience and show how and in what contexts resilience is applicable. Resilience is conceived as a developmental process which results from a continually evolving configuration of individual personal characteristics and the external world. Teachers are a significant protective factor in resilience development through warm, responsive, consistent interactions with students. From another study done in Indonesia we learn that the development of school resilience policies is deliberate and an on-going and active process and requires schools to remain planned and proactive in their approaches. In fact, the outcome of the implementation of resilience policies greatly depends on the school's ability to identify and manage those factors that support or hinder such goals. Supporting factors can include strong leadership support, a sense of community, funding and access to training programs or technical expertise while hinders may entail limited resources, lack of knowledge or awareness and prohibitive bureaucratic factors (Dwiningrum et al., 2022).

Furthermore, resilience is also seen as the foundation upon which effective leadership is built, enabling leaders to remain

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adaptable and composed in the face of challenges. By cultivating personal resilience, leaders can better manage stress, recover from setbacks and maintain a positive outlook, which in turn strengthens their capacity to practice compassionate leadership and model constructive interpersonal behaviors (Grimes et al., 2022). Similarly, resilience is a crucial quality in leadership as it enables leaders to remain composed, adaptive and solution-focused during organizational crises. Leaders who demonstrate resilience not only navigate challenges effectively but also inspire confidence and stability among their followers, fostering a collective ability to recover and thrive in difficult circumstances (Eliot, 2020).

Supportive Leadership

Supportive leadership is about integrating the personal attributes of empathy, perseverance and responsiveness with structured institutional practices which is pivotal in enhancing the capacity of program owners to perform their responsibilities effectively. Such leadership is reflected not only in administrative actions, such as granting formal permissions and providing ongoing guidance but also in fostering informal encouragement, collegial collaboration, and sustained professional dialogue. By promoting initiatives like seminars, workshops, and student-focused activities, school leaders cultivate a shared vision that aligns teacher growth with student achievement, thereby reinforcing a collective sense of purpose. This approach nurtures long-term interpersonal relationships, strengthens trust within the school community, and positively shapes the motivation and productivity of program implementers. Beyond the mere exercise of authority, supportive leadership operates as a transformative force that mentors, inspires and mobilizes stakeholders toward achieving common educational goals.

According to Dayanti et al., (2022), supportive leadership is characterized by leaders who are approachable, empathetic, and attentive to the needs and well-being of their followers. Such leaders foster a positive and inclusive work environment, which can lead to enhanced employee satisfaction and performance. The study identifies several antecedents to supportive leadership, including acute stress, creative organizational culture and leader workload which can influence the extent to which leaders adopt supportive behaviors. Additionally, supportive leadership impacts teacher resilience and enhances job resources such as feedback, autonomy, opportunities for development and social support. For instance, opportunities for development were found to be a significant mediator across all dimensions of resilience, while autonomy and social support played roles in specific resilience aspects. This suggests that if school leaders want to enhance teacher resilience, they must aim to enrich job resources that provide teachers with autonomy, opportunities for professional development, and a supportive workplace (Bagdžiūnienė et al., 2022).

Supportive leadership not only benefits teachers, but school leaders play an important role in fostering the social and emotional well-being of the students by shaping a supportive and inclusive school environment. By modeling empathy, creating policies that address emotional needs, and providing access to counseling and wellness programs, leaders cultivate a culture where students feel safe, valued and understood (Daly, Resnikoff & Litke, 2025). When school leaders provide clear expectations, encourage collaboration and empower teachers, they indirectly nurture motivation, confidence and engagement in the studies of the students. A leader who prioritizes open communication and emotional support helps build a sense of belonging and security which allows students to focus on their academic goals (Hussein & Ochieng, 2024).

Funding Strategies

Effective funding strategies are crucial for achieving school improvement goals, particularly amid constrained government allocations. Head teachers exhibit resourcefulness through strategic planning, seeking alternative financial sources beyond the MOOE which may involve forging partnerships with local government units, parent-teacher associations and private organizations which serve as vital lifelines during emergencies or funding shortfalls. Moreover, proper budgeting, prioritization and financial discipline, alongside the willingness of program owners to supplement costs when necessary, ensure the continuity of initiatives. Thus, adaptive leadership combined with proactive financial management and stakeholder engagement emerges as essential in sustaining school programs and driving meaningful improvement.

In Nigeria they are faced with financial constraints that threaten the quality and continuity of secondary education. Because of this, school principals are actively forging partnerships with a variety of community stakeholders including local businesses, parent teacher associations and influential community members. These partnerships often result in financial donations, material support, or collaborative projects that contribute to school development. It implies that seeking external funding and assistance from non-governmental organizations really helps a lot which enables us to maintain and even improve educational quality despite the challenges posed by limited government allocations (Eneji et al., 2025). Another key issue experienced by the school was a frequent delay in disbursing government funds, which disrupted planned activities and created cash flow problems as well as the lack of capacity of the staff in financial management based on performance outcomes, indicating a need for improved skills and knowledge in this area. To address these issues, they recommend strengthening school-based management practices by empowering the school community to take a more active role in financial decision making (Rahmattullah, 2025).

To address these challenges, Nkedishu and Onyekwe (2024) describe that funding strategies are vital for ensuring the sustainability and smooth operation of both public and private schools. By diversifying financial resources such as seeking support from individual and corporate donors, organizing fundraising initiatives and leveraging parent-teacher associations. Beyond securing funds, strong financial management practices like budgeting, forecasting, expense control, financial reporting and internal auditing maximize the impact of available resources. Thus, engaging in well-organized fundraising activities allows universities to tap into contributions from alumni, corporate partners, and the wider community, creating a steady flow of support for academic and infrastructural development (Okolo et al., 2020).

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Effective Communication and Collaboration

One of the key elements in ensuring the success of school programs and development plans is the presence of strong communication and collaboration among members of the academic community. Head teachers point out that maintaining clear and consistent communication with supervisors helps align goals and expectations, which often leads to more effective implementation. Simple practices such as providing timely reminders about schedules and tasks, allow all involved to remain organized and prepared. In addition, engaging in conversations with peers and fellow school leaders can lead to better decisions and prevent common mistakes. These interactions also contribute a culture where learning from one another is valued. When schools prioritize open communication and collaborative efforts, they tend to operate more cohesively, with a clear understanding of their shared objectives. As a result, educational programs are more likely to be delivered smoothly and in ways that genuinely support both teaching and learning.

In educational institutions, where teamwork, shared goals, and interpersonal relationships are crucial to success, further evidence underscore that effective communication from leaders helps to align staff, students, and stakeholders with the vision and mission of the school. Communication is not just a tool but a fundamental leadership competency that shapes relationships, fosters trust and influences organizational culture (Manoharan & Ashtikar, 2024). Additionally, communication builds credibility and trust which are two pillars of effective leadership. Leaders who communicate clearly and consistently are more likely to gain the confidence of their followers. Effective communicators confront issues openly and strategically. She reinforces that communication is not just a leadership skill, but it is the foundation upon which leadership is built (Banwart, 2020).

Complementing this emphasis on communication, a study about collaboration highlights the importance of fostering inclusive and supportive school environments through structured teamwork. The introduction on the use of building blocks framework promotes a more inclusive, dynamic and supportive environment where teachers, administrators, support staff, families and even students must work in unison toward common educational goals (Griffiths et al., 2020). Furthermore, when stakeholders believe in the integrity and commitment of one another, they are more likely to collaborate openly and constructively. This enables schools to overcome barriers, build consensus and work more efficiently toward shared objectives (Mashuri, 2022).

IMPLICATIONS IN ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE

Head teachers who are program owners must manage tasks like strategic planning, resource allocation, stakeholder collaboration and adaptive management because schools face many challenges and have limited resources, administrators need to be strong, flexible and good leaders to meet the goals of the school. Their responses during interviews and discussions share important practices based on the experiences and ideas during the implementation of the annual improvement plan.

First, a key practice is careful planning and preparation before starting any programs or activities. Head teachers need to use data and facts when making AIP and it is helpful to use previous AIP documents to guide their plans and focus on what the school needs most, think ahead about possible problems, and make sure to provide back up plans to handle changes. This way, they can manage disruptions like schedule changes or new orders from higher authorities.

In addition, programs or events can be hard for school leaders who cannot respond to cuts, they may have to find alternative funding therefore getting money from the PTA or find a way to combine events or activities to reduce expenses, alternatively, to keep the event whole they may just not be able to offer complete experience use personal funds as personal funds. This is achievable if school leaders engage in good budget planning that aligns with the school's mission and priorities - this action can save them the dilemma of what to do if the program or initiative does not work. Ultimately, if they use limited resources wisely, they will keep their programming successful, despite having less resources to work with.

Moreover, managing competing demands on the finite resource of time is another task of the head teacher, they delegate tasks to staff members where possible to share the workload and ownership of the task. Furthermore, a head teacher often must check on the timelines for, generally management, ensuring that they progress as planned, they need to deal with ontogeny individuals, who often do not have time referenced decision making that leads to effective action (DiVincenzo, 2009). It is the intersection of teacher timetable management and school activities often problematic for school, managing an event that requires foresight to facilitate an organized event, or alternatively managing a flexible event in order to execute all items. Collaborating efforts also helps influence the collaborative agenda away from conflict or barriers, as one or the other progresses through the activities and events. Effective management of transition experiences can also help in easing stress for all, ultimately improving enjoyment of programs and events.

Furthermore, strong and supportive leadership is very important to keep everyone motivated and solve problems. School heads moral support, advice and patience to help program owners handle delays, changes and lack of resources. Being kind, patient and open encourages teamwork and makes everyone feel involved. This kind of leadership helps the whole schoolwork together towards their goals, even when problems come up.

Finally, using data and good communication helps make better decisions during AIP implementation. Head teachers should properly collect and study data to decide which activities are most important and fit the budget. Clear and timely communication between school leaders, program owners, teachers and parents help everyone understand what to expect and join in actively. Involving teachers in planning and asking for their opinions builds support and keeps people accountable.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the lived experiences and insights of program owners and head teachers, numerous challenges persist that hinder the effective implementation of AIP initiatives while this research

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emphasizes the importance of planning, budgeting and stakeholder engagement in school improvement efforts, there is a notable gap for further research into how the role of organizational culture shapes the effectiveness in AIP implementation, impact of external stakeholder engagement, psychological impact of program implementation to school leaders, and designing strategic models that are contextually responsive to challenges experienced by the program owners.

First, future research may look at how the underlying organizational culture within schools shapes the effectiveness of AIP implementation which includes leadership styles, communication practices and shared values among teachers and administrators. Understanding these barriers can help cultural barriers or enablers in program delivery.

Second, research may assess extent and quality of involvement from external stakeholders and other community partners in supporting AIP initiatives. These partnerships can play a critical role in resource mobilization, program sustainability and community trust. Studies could explore how stakeholder expectations, communication mechanisms and roles are defined and maintained throughout the implementation process and how best practices build effective school-community alliances.

Third, it is important to study the emotional and mental health aspects of school heads and program implementers who manage AIP related challenges. Frequent disruptions, limited resources, and high expectations can contribute to stress, burnout and feelings of inadequacy among school leaders. Research could explore the coping strategies used to determine whether institutional support systems are available. Understanding these psychological impacts can lead to more holistic support mechanisms for educational leaders.

Fourth, further studies may explore the development of strategic planning models for schools which incorporate flexibility, risk management and inclusive stakeholder engagement. Potentially researchers could trial these models in a small number of schools to explore how effective they are in improving school outcomes with the planning of the AIP and to explore how the models might be expanded and utilized within the planning processes of the Department of Education.

CONCLUSIONS

As I reflect the journeys shared by the head teachers who were owners of programs when developing the school annual improvement plan, I realize that they have to do a great deal more than just monitor action items; they also have to be leaders who encounter similar challenges of budget restrictions, time constraints and how to keep building for improvement. My research has highlighted the importance for school leaders to be resourceful, plan their work and engage in collegial collaboration to build and improve their school programs.

I was impressed by the stories I heard to see how these leaders' used teamwork, collaboration and creative problem solving to manage and move their programs forward in the face of obstacles. They do not just carry on following procedures and basic approvals; they think ahead, plan contingencies, mobilize parents, teacher colleagues and their community to further develop their objectives. I learnt about the significance of persistence, communication and commitment to improve a school program.

I would like to acknowledge and give special thanks to program owners and head teachers that willingly shared their experiences with me. The candor with which they expressed their actual experiences demonstrated the difficulty and challenges they faced; assumptions about their difficulties like prolonged budget approvals and the negotiation of working with other groups. As a researcher, it has become apparent that improving schools involves more than creating a great implementation plan; it requires exceptional leadership, advocacy and commitment on behalf of the leaders and their stakeholders in the best interest of the school community.

The Department of Education, school leaders and local stakeholders need to engage in the realities of considering the challenges when implementing the school annual improvement plan such as budgets and potential construction requirements or scheduling conflicts. Success in overcoming these limitations has the potential to be managed successfully through negotiated clarifications, clear communications and serviceable leadership. The program owners and head teachers have shown that engaging in resilience processes and purposeful planning will enhance the prospects. Collaborative improvement within school programs requires a commitment to collective responsibilities and how to behave in an adaptable and flexible manner will enable a school to meet its priorities and raise its profile. The articulation of priorities among committed stakeholders that are communicating together will ensure that every program delivery maintains a focus and that all actions improve the student and/or wider school community.

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