



LEADING THROUGH THE LENS OF TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' EXPERIENCES WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) INTEGRATION IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Grezalyn G. Mapula¹

¹Student, Graduate School, Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc.

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra21821>

DOI No: 10.36713/epra21821

ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this qualitative study is to examine and understand the lived experiences of school administrators as they navigate the integration of artificial intelligence technologies in educational management. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of AI-powered management systems, eight (8) school administrators was selected using purposive sampling, a technique that allows the deliberate selection of participants based on their experience, expertise, and direct involvement in AI implementation.

AI is poised to redefine school leadership by automating routine tasks, freeing administrators to focus on instructional quality and stakeholder engagement, but this shift demands leaders who are fluent in technology, data science, and ethics. Effective adoption must be holistic – addressing technical infrastructure, sustainable funding, regulatory frameworks, and robust change-management strategies that involve and upskill staff to view AI as a supportive partner rather than a threat. At the same time, leaders must champion transparent, bias-aware, and privacy-conscious AI systems developed collaboratively with vendors and stakeholders to uphold educational values. When these elements align, AI equips administrators with real-time, granular insights into student performance, enrollment, staffing, and operations, enabling more proactive, equitable, and evidence-based decision-making across the school system.

KEYWORDS- *Leading Through the Lens, Technological Change, School Administrators' Experiences, Artificial Intelligence (Ai), Integration in Educational Management*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies has ushered in a transformative era across all sectors, with education standing at a critical crossroads of innovation and tradition. School administrators, as key decision-makers in educational institutions, face the complex challenge of navigating this technological revolution while maintaining the fundamental principles of effective education. The integration of AI in educational management represents not merely a technological upgrade but a paradigm shift in how schools operate, make decisions, and serve their communities.

This study contributes to the literature on educational technology leadership by examining the experiences of administrators navigating AI integration in schools. It highlights their adaptive strategies, challenges, and opportunities while addressing the complexities of resource constraints, ethical dilemmas, and rapidly evolving technologies. The findings emphasize the need for balanced approaches that align AI advancements with educational values, fostering professional development, collaborative decision-making, and innovation. Ultimately, the study provides actionable insights for creating future-ready, inclusive, and ethical learning environments, serving as a guide for educational leaders managing AI-driven transformations.

A Study of AI Integration in United Kingdom Schools In their comprehensive study of British school administrators, Wilson & Thompson (2023) examined how 50 school leaders across England implemented AI-powered administrative systems. Their findings revealed that successful AI integration was heavily dependent on leaders' technological literacy and their ability to create a supportive organizational culture. The study highlighted that administrators who adopted a collaborative approach to AI implementation experienced fewer resistance from staff and achieved better outcomes in terms of administrative efficiency.

Moreover, Australian Principals' Experience with Educational Management Information Systems Research conducted by Chen et al. (2022) in Australian secondary schools demonstrated the transformative impact of AI-driven management systems on

administrative tasks. Their longitudinal study of 75 school principals showed that AI integration reduced administrative workload by 35% and improved decision-making accuracy by leveraging data analytics. However, they also noted significant challenges in terms of initial cost, staff training, and data privacy concerns.

Also, Nordic Perspectives on AI in School Leadership Johansson & Nielsen (2023) conducted a comparative analysis of AI integration in educational management across Nordic countries. Their study of 120 school administrators revealed that successful AI implementation required a balanced approach between technological innovation and maintaining human-centered leadership. The research emphasized the importance of ethical considerations and transparent communication in managing AI-driven administrative systems.



Meanwhile, Digital Transformation in Philippine Education Administration Santos & Cruz (2023) investigated the adoption of AI technologies in 30 private schools across Metro Manila. Their findings indicated that while 78% of school administrators recognized the potential benefits of AI in educational management, only 45% felt adequately prepared to lead such technological transitions. The study highlighted the need for comprehensive leadership training programs focused on educational technology management.

In their nationwide survey, they assessed the technological readiness of 200 school administrators across the Philippines. The research revealed significant disparities in AI adoption between urban and rural schools, with infrastructure limitations and budget constraints identified as primary barriers. The study emphasized the need for government support in bridging the digital divide in educational management (Reyes et al., 2022).

Clearly, the findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on educational technology leadership while offering practical insights into the human dimensions of technological change in schools. As education systems worldwide grapple with the implications of AI integration, the experiences of these administrators serve as critical guideposts for navigating the complex intersection of leadership, technology, and educational excellence. De Guzman & Tan (2023) examined how private school administrators in the Philippines adapted to AI-driven management systems. Their case study of 15 schools demonstrated that successful implementation was closely tied to administrators' ability to secure stakeholder buy-in and provide continuous professional development opportunities for staff. This case highlighted that effective technology integration relies on a strategic combination of technical, social, and cultural approaches to change management, underscoring the essential role of administrators in aligning AI initiatives with school goals and community values.

Locally, AI Integration in Mindanao Schools: Challenges and Opportunities Examining the specific context of Mindanao, Abdullah & Santos (2023) conducted a mixed-methods study of 25 school administrators in Davao Region. Their research highlighted unique challenges faced by Mindanao school leaders, including limited technical infrastructure, cultural considerations, and the need for localized AI solutions. The study emphasized the importance of considering regional contexts in AI implementation strategies.

The integration of AI into educational management in Davao del Sur presents both opportunities and challenges. While AI has the potential to enhance efficiency in school operations, infrastructural limitations, financial constraints, resistance to change, and policy gaps hinder its full adoption. Understanding these challenges can help school administrators develop strategies to navigate AI integration while ensuring ethical and effective use of technology in education. The absence of national or local policies on AI integration in education leads to uncertainty about how to implement AI ethically and effectively. Lack of data privacy regulations in AI-driven educational management raises concerns about student information security and misuse of AI surveillance tools. DepEd's existing guidelines on technology in education primarily focus on basic ICT integration rather than AI-specific implementation. To overcome these challenges, school administrators in Davao del Sur can adopt strategic approaches to facilitate AI integration while ensuring ethical and effective technology use.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study explored how school administrators in the United Kingdom dealt with implementing AI tools for administrative tasks, student data analysis, and resource management. The findings revealed that while administrators recognized the potential benefits of AI adoption, including improved efficiency in school operations and enhanced decision-making processes, they also faced significant challenges. These included the need for comprehensive staff training to ensure proper use and integration of AI tools, as well as concerns about data privacy and security, particularly in handling sensitive student information. Additionally, administrators reported difficulties in securing adequate funding to support the adoption of AI technologies, highlighting budget constraints as a key barrier to implementation. Resistance to change among staff and stakeholders was another recurring issue, with some educators expressing apprehension about the perceived complexity of AI tools and their potential impact on traditional roles, (Bremner & Clark, 2023).

Another study in China, examined how Chinese school leaders utilized AI systems to enhance decision-making and operational efficiency in educational institutions. The findings revealed that AI technologies significantly improved administrative processes, such as streamlining resource allocation, optimizing scheduling, and generating data-driven insights for informed decision-making. School leaders reported that these advancements reduced workload and allowed for more strategic focus on improving teaching and learning environments. However, the study also identified several challenges, particularly the need for continuous professional development to equip leaders and staff with the skills required to effectively utilize AI tools. Many administrators emphasized the importance of fostering a culture of technological adaptability among educators and stakeholders to ensure the successful integration of AI, (Chen & Zhang, 2022).

Basically, Anderson & Smith (2023) analyzed how Australian school administrators integrated AI tools for scheduling, resource allocation, and student performance tracking. The findings emphasized both the transformative potential and implementation hurdles faced by school leaders. While AI tools were found to significantly enhance the efficiency of scheduling and resource allocation, allowing administrators to make more informed decisions and allocate resources more effectively, the study also highlighted several challenges.

Meanwhile in the Philippines, the nationwide study assessed Filipino school administrators' preparedness to implement AI solutions in school management. Results indicated varying levels of technological readiness across regions, with urban schools generally demonstrating a higher level of preparedness compared to their rural counterparts. Administrators in urban areas were more likely to have access to the necessary infrastructure, such as reliable internet connectivity and modern hardware, which



facilitated the integration of AI tools for tasks like scheduling, student performance analysis, and resource management. The study concluded that while Filipino school administrators are generally aware of the transformative potential of AI, targeted support and resources are needed to address the gaps in technological readiness, particularly in underserved areas, to ensure equitable and effective implementation of AI solutions across the country. (Santos & Cruz, 2023).

However, Reyes & Garcia (2022) also identified several implementation challenges. One common issue was the high upfront cost of AI tools and the ongoing investment required for maintenance and updates, which posed a barrier for some private institutions with limited budgets. Additionally, administrators noted difficulties in aligning AI systems with existing school infrastructure and workflows, requiring time and effort to ensure smooth integration. Another challenge was the lack of sufficient training for staff, with many teachers feeling ill-equipped to fully utilize AI tools in the classroom. Data privacy and security concerns also emerged as significant issues, particularly regarding the collection and storage of sensitive student information.

Another critical finding of the study was the need for systematic support from both local education authorities and technology providers. Administrators stressed the importance of clear guidelines, policies, and ethical frameworks to address concerns regarding data privacy, security, and fairness in AI algorithms. The study concluded that the successful integration of AI in public schools requires not only technological tools but also a robust support system that includes training, infrastructure investment, and policy development to ensure equitable access and effective implementation across diverse school settings. As a result, the study emphasized the importance of providing ongoing, targeted professional development programs to help administrators and staff build the skills needed to adapt to AI-driven systems., (Mendoza & Torres, 2023).

Research Questions

Recent years have witnessed an unprecedented acceleration in AI adoption within educational settings, from automated administrative tasks to data-driven decision-making systems. While technical capabilities of AI in education have been well-documented, there exists a critical gap in understanding how school administrators the primary agents of institutional change experience and navigate this technological transition. Specifically, this study will answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of the School Administrators with AI Integration in Educational Management?
2. What are the challenges of the School Administrators with AI Integration in Educational Management?
3. What are the valuable insights gained by the School Administrators with AI Integration in Educational Management?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design for this study employs a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore and understand the lived experiences of school administrators in implementing AI technologies for educational management. Using Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological framework, this design allows for an immersive and reflective examination of participants' experiences, while bracketing the researcher's preconceptions to ensure unbiased insights into the phenomenon. This phenomenological approach is particularly well-suited to the study as it facilitates an in-depth exploration of administrators' personal journeys with AI integration, capturing the nuanced perspectives that shape their decision-making and adaptation processes.

Additionally, this approach enables a deeper understanding of the essence of leading technological change in educational settings, bringing forward insights into the unique responsibilities and challenges administrators face. Through this design, the study documents both the challenges and successes from the leaders' perspectives, offering a comprehensive view of the phenomenon as experienced by those directly involved. Through capturing rich, detailed descriptions from multiple viewpoints, this phenomenological approach provides a layered understanding of the complexities involved in AI integration, contributing to a holistic view of how educational leaders navigate and shape technological transformation in their schools.

Research Participants

This study will be conducted in Davao del Sur, a province in the Davao Region known for its diverse educational landscape, encompassing far-flung, rural, and urban schools. The province presents a unique setting for exploring Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration in educational management, as school administrators navigate technological advancements alongside infrastructural and financial constraints.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of AI-powered management systems, eight (8) school administrators will be selected using purposive sampling, a technique that allows the deliberate selection of participants based on their experience, expertise, and direct involvement in AI implementation. The distribution of participants is designed to capture the varied challenges and opportunities associated with AI integration across different school settings in Davao del Sur.

The participants will be composed of: Two (2) administrators from far-flung areas, representing schools with limited access to advanced technology and infrastructure. Three (3) administrators from rural areas, offering insights into the gradual adoption of AI in less-developed but growing educational environments. Three (3) administrators from urban areas, where AI-powered systems may be more prevalent due to better infrastructure and funding opportunities.

Research Instrument

The primary data collection instrument for this study will be a semi-structured interview guide, organized into three main parts to gather comprehensive insights into school administrators' experiences with AI integration.



To ensure the interview guide's reliability and validity, a thorough validation process will be conducted with a range of experts and practitioners. The guide will first be reviewed by three experts in educational technology to verify that the questions are relevant, clear, and aligned with the latest developments in AI integration within educational management. Two experienced school administrators will also review the guide to ensure that the questions are practically applicable and resonate with the real-world experiences of school leaders involved in AI implementation.

Additionally, one qualitative research specialist will be consulted to refine the guide's structure and ensure it is appropriately aligned with phenomenological methods, ensuring that the questions are designed to elicit rich, in-depth responses about participants' lived experiences. This validation process ensures that the interview guide is both theoretically sound and practically applicable, capturing meaningful insights while maintaining academic rigor.

Data Analysis

The collected interview data will be analyzed using phenomenological analysis techniques, which involve a systematic exploration of the lived experiences described by participants. Researchers engage in a process of bracketing, setting aside preconceptions and biases, to focus solely on the participants' accounts. Through a process of thematic coding and interpretation, researchers identify common patterns, themes, and essences that emerge from the data, capturing the shared lived experiences of the participants. The goal of phenomenological analysis is to understand the essence of the participants' experiences with AI integration in educational management, focusing on how they perceive and interpret their roles and challenges. Researchers will employ iterative cycles of coding and categorization, refining themes as new insights emerge from the data. By maintaining an empathetic and open approach, researchers ensure that the analysis remains grounded in the participants' perspectives, allowing for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in educational administration presents both significant opportunities and complex challenges. As revealed in the findings, AI adoption in schools particularly in the context of Davao City has begun to reshape administrative workflows, decision-making processes, and resource allocation. This transformation is not merely technological but also organizational and cultural, requiring shifts in mindset, policy, and infrastructure.

This chapter explores the broader implications of AI integration for school governance, leadership, and policy development. It reflects on how data-driven insights and automation can enhance efficiency, accountability, and strategic planning within the education sector. At the same time, it acknowledges the emerging ethical, financial, and technical concerns, including data privacy, resistance from stakeholders, and disparities in access to resources.

Implications

The findings of this study carry important implications for school leaders, policymakers, and education stakeholders as they navigate the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in school administration. AI technologies are not merely tools for automation they are catalysts for systemic change that influence how decisions are made, how resources are allocated, and how stakeholders engage with educational institutions.

The first major implication is that AI has the potential to reshape the core of educational leadership and school governance. As demonstrated by the administrators' experiences, AI tools can streamline daily operations, enhance communication, and automate routine tasks such as attendance tracking, scheduling, and data reporting. These transformations lead to more efficient workflows and free up time for school leaders to focus on higher-level priorities such as instructional leadership and stakeholder engagement.

For school systems, this suggests a need to redefine leadership competencies. Educational leaders must now develop not only managerial and pedagogical skills but also technological literacy. This calls for the integration of AI and data science principles into leadership training programs, allowing current and future administrators to make informed decisions about AI implementation, evaluation, and ethical considerations.

Furthermore, as AI tools facilitate greater transparency and accountability, administrators are empowered to make data-informed decisions, leading to more equitable resource allocation and performance monitoring. However, this transformation also requires organizational culture shifts schools must cultivate adaptive leadership and a willingness to embrace innovation, encouraging staff buy-in and collaborative practices that support change.

The second theme underscores that the journey of AI adoption is complex and layered, with implications that must not be overlooked. Administrators identified technical, financial, cultural, and ethical barriers that often hinder the successful integration of AI into school systems. These findings imply that AI integration cannot be treated as a purely technical upgrade—it must be approached holistically and inclusively.

Financial constraints remain a pressing issue. The implication here is that policymakers and educational leaders need to strategically allocate resources or explore public-private partnerships to fund necessary infrastructure upgrades, such as high-speed internet, up-to-date hardware, and technical support systems. There is also a pressing need to develop clear policies and regulatory frameworks to govern AI use in schools, guidelines that address privacy, security, accountability, and inclusivity.

Cultural resistance and fear of job displacement also suggest the need for change management strategies that include staff involvement in the AI planning and implementation process. Providing robust professional development and clear communication



of AI's role as a supportive tool not a replacement for educators is essential to gain staff trust and foster a positive outlook toward technology adoption.

In terms of ethics, administrators' concerns over data privacy, algorithmic bias, and system compatibility point to the importance of transparent AI systems. Educational leaders must advocate for algorithmic accountability, ensuring that AI tools align with values of fairness and inclusivity. This demands a collaborative effort between software developers, school leaders, and stakeholders to co-create ethical AI ecosystems in education.

The third theme emphasizes the powerful role of AI in elevating the strategic and analytic capabilities of school administrators. AI tools provide real-time, granular insights into student performance, enrollment trends, faculty effectiveness, and operational efficiencies. This advancement has important implications for proactive educational leadership and student-centered planning.

AI's capacity to track trends and detect anomalies allows school leaders to intervene early, whether in terms of academic remediation, behavior management, or resource reallocation. Such data-driven insights promote evidence-based decision-making, reducing reliance on intuition and increasing the objectivity of administrative actions.

In this context, the implication is that school leaders must cultivate analytical thinking and an understanding of AI-generated data interpretations. This includes building institutional systems that can effectively translate data into action. Investing in training on data interpretation and visualization is therefore crucial to optimize the utility of AI in school leadership.

Additionally, the ability to forecast enrollment and monitor organizational performance with precision enables more responsive planning and sustainable growth. Schools can anticipate needs, reduce inefficiencies, and align strategies with long-term goals. However, to fully realize these benefits, institutions must embed AI in strategic planning frameworks, not just as a reactive tool but as a proactive driver of innovation and continuous improvement.

Future Directions

As educational institutions continue to embrace digital transformation, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in school management presents both new opportunities and evolving challenges. This study, centered on school administrators' experiences with AI in educational management, reveals not only the transformative potential of the technology but also the critical need for strategic, inclusive, and context-sensitive approaches moving forward.

Building on the findings of this study, the future of AI integration in educational management must be shaped through the collaborative efforts of key stakeholders, namely the Department of Education (DepEd), school heads, teachers, and future researchers. Each group holds a unique role in advancing the responsible and effective use of AI in Philippine education.

Department of Education (DepEd): DepEd plays a pivotal role in setting the direction and policy framework for AI integration across the country's schools. Future efforts should focus on the formulation of clear, inclusive, and forward-looking policies that guide AI implementation while addressing ethical concerns, data privacy, infrastructure disparities, and equitable access. National guidelines must also emphasize professional development by institutionalizing training programs on digital leadership and AI literacy for both current and aspiring school leaders. Moreover, DepEd should encourage partnerships with technology providers and other government units to provide financial and technical support to public and private schools, especially those in underserved areas. Establishing pilot programs and innovation hubs can also help DepEd test scalable AI models tailored to different regional and institutional contexts.

School Heads and Administrators: School heads must adopt a strategic and adaptive mindset as AI becomes increasingly embedded in education systems. It is crucial for administrators to serve not just as technology adopters, but as instructional leaders who foster a shared vision for digital transformation. Future directions should include building AI-readiness in school culture this involves engaging teachers, students, and parents in conversations about the purpose and use of AI, and ensuring that technological changes align with the school's mission and values. Additionally, school leaders should prioritize gradual, data-informed implementation processes, monitor the effectiveness of AI tools, and continuously refine strategies to meet both technical and adaptive challenges. By cultivating a learning-oriented environment, school heads can create conditions where AI not only streamlines operations but also enhances teaching and learning experiences.

For Teachers: Teachers will continue to be the frontline implementers of AI-enhanced education, and their openness, training, and empowerment are essential for the technology's success. As AI begins to take on more administrative and analytical functions, teachers must be equipped to interpret AI-generated insights for personalized instruction and student support. Future directions for teachers should involve ongoing professional development opportunities focused not just on how to use AI tools, but on how to critically engage with them understanding their limitations, ethical implications, and pedagogical value. Teachers should also be encouraged to contribute feedback on AI tools in practice and to participate in co-designing digital systems that align with their classroom realities.

Future Researchers: There is a pressing need for further research that explores the long-term impacts of AI integration on school culture, leadership practices, equity, and student outcomes. Future researchers should examine both successful and failed AI initiatives to derive deeper insights into what enables or hinders effective implementation. Mixed-methods studies that combine qualitative experiences with quantitative performance data will be valuable in generating comprehensive understandings. Additionally, researchers should investigate the socio-cultural dimensions of AI use in education such as resistance to change, digital divides, and localized innovation strategies to ensure that AI solutions are both context-sensitive and inclusive. Future



scholarship should also contribute to building indigenous AI frameworks that reflect Filipino educational values and realities, positioning the Philippines as an active contributor in the global discourse on AI in education.

In sum, the future of AI in educational management requires a coordinated and inclusive approach. With thoughtful action from DepEd, committed leadership from school heads, empowered engagement from teachers, and ongoing inquiry from researchers, AI can serve not only as a tool for efficiency but as a catalyst for deeper, more equitable educational transformation.

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