



# BRAVING THE WAVES: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL HEADS ASSIGNED IN ISLAND SCHOOLS

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## Abstract

### Braving the Waves: Lived Experiences of School Heads Assigned in Island Schools

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This descriptive phenomenological study focused on analyzing and scrutinizing the lived experiences of school heads assigned in the island schools of the Schools Division of Siargao. This study is geared towards articulating the leadership practices and characteristics of school heads assigned in the island schools.

The participants for this study were the 5 (five) school heads assigned in the island schools of the Schools of Division of Siargao who already have 3 (three) years and above experience in handling a school. The participants were chosen by purposive sampling. The methods utilized in this study include: direct observation, interview and document review. Also, important in this study was the utilization of triangulation. Mertler (2006) describes triangulation as an invaluable aspect of qualitative research, allowing the researcher to connect various sources of data and establish trustworthy findings with as little bias as possible.

This study was guided by a grand tour question with three research questions. The first question divulged the lived experiences that school heads encompass in leadership practices. The second question revealed the personal and professional characteristics of the school heads and the last was able to expose the emerging themes that can be drawn from the prevailing codes of the lived experiences of the successful school heads.

The researcher identified seven thematic patterns that were relevant to the research topic. The seven predominant themes that emerged were collaboration, cultural-sensitivity, camaraderie, capacity-building, clarity and transparency, community-based engagement, and continuous improvement.

Based on the findings, school heads may consider the emerging themes that were drawn from this study to be applied in their respective administrations. These themes were claimed effective by the seasoned school heads participants hence they are believed to be reliable and significant. Moreover, future research could also be conducted which will replicate this study that would determine how well the findings of this study hold up under different demographic circumstances. It would be especially interesting to conduct a similar study in an area of the country with a larger sample size to allow future researchers to gather richer, varied, and comprehensive data of successful school heads.

*Keywords: Island Schools, Lived Experiences, School Heads, Phenomenological*

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## **Introduction of the Research**

School leaders are tasked with a multitude roles and functions daily. Hence, the school's culture and climate are contingent on the leadership styles and practices of the school heads. The morale of the teachers and stakeholders is impacted by the personal and professional characteristics of the school heads. Relatively, successful school leaders require to be flexible and dynamic to be functional in a rapidly changing and challenging educational organization.

Building relationships with all school stakeholders must be given greater emphasis regardless of the unique culture and values of the school community. Thus, school heads assigned in the island schools must be able to balance those elements while being aware of what impacts the climate of a school to meet demands and expectations.

School heads assigned in the island schools are faced with different issues and concerns. The poor academic performance of students, ongoing observations, addressing parental and teacher concerns, handling discipline issues, and the like are the commonly identified adversities. Such, these school heads must cross the wavy oceans and brave the strong winds by boat in reporting to their stations. Consequently, how a leader responds to these challenges not only affects the leader's performance but also the performance of those being led.

School heads as the forerunners of schools also deal with various problems concerning the various aspects of school leadership. The new trend of the learning arena, the composition of the teaching force, the challenges of management and administration have been considered as major problems among school heads (Morales, 2020). School leaders nowadays face the challenges of forerunning the school in making it relevant to the needs of learners and the community. However, challenge is usually related to the ability of the school versus the demands of the society. People could not easily understand the challenges faced by the school leaders. Most of them observed the physical situations of the school and usually ignored the internal

operations undertaken by the school leaders just to be able to serve the school and the community (Day, 2016).

Moreover, as articulated in Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 32 s. 2010, the National Competency - Based Standards for School Heads (NCBS-SH), school heads shall be competent, committed, and accountable in providing access to quality education for all through transformational leadership and high degree of professionalism. Likewise, the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) clearly articulates the professional practice and behavior expected of quality school heads. On the other hand, DepEd has adopted the Result Based Performance System (RPMS) wherein they need to accomplish their Office Performance Commitment and Review (OPCR) with the means of verifications attached to assess quality, efficiency, and timeliness.

NCBSH and PPSSH offer clear-cut pictures of what school heads are expected to know, be able to do, and value along well-defined career stages of professional development continuum, which they need to embed in their practice gradually and meaningfully. With the underlying challenges, island school heads must observe and perform the set of standards mandated by DepEd. As such, effective school leaders find a way to balance their obligations while simultaneously setting the focus, culture, and direction of the school (Sigford, 2005). Being a school leader is a challenging profession (Sheninger, 2011).

Despite the standards set by DepEd, school heads especially those assigned in the island schools been struggling in discovering ways to make school community an ideal learning environment for clientele and stakeholders. Corollary, in the study of Williams and Cunnings (2005), they pointed out that principals are far less likely to receive training for their management functions at the beginning of their career. This suggests that some school leaders are not

adequately prepared to cope with the complex issues pertaining to management and teaching-learning needs of their respective schools.

In the study conducted by (Jomelego,2016), opportunities to lead the school is one of the major goals of educators who may look after the school and exert effort to cater quality education that may also be contributory to the development of the education system. School heads have also been prepared to face the ever - changing society where the views of people towards school heads have also been changed.

Research is required to determine how school heads decide to acclimate their leadership habits, and how aspiring leaders can best learn to do so (Klar & Brewer, 2013). While leadership practices and style have been studied extensively, there is a gap in exploring the leadership attributes, style, and practices of school leaders assigned in the island schools in the context of the study.

Stoltz (2008) stressed the importance of conducting research among school leaders to find out how they respond to different issues that are carried along with their responsibility and role as school managers. This means that the way the school heads deal with the adversities brought about by both external and internal factors could greatly affect their multifarious role as school managers which could result in inability of fulfilling their potential which in consequence, lowers their performance in terms of resourcefulness, adjustment to change with new ideas, problem-solving, decision-making, optimism, and healthiness.

Principals who are successful must develop skills to cope and thrive as new roles and responsibilities are placed on them through laws and accountability expectations (Faklaris, 2013). In the local context, school heads are provided with the position competency profile stipulating their duties and functions before they assume responsibilities to their respective stations. Hence, school leadership has long been the focus of Western research but in the local context, no studies

have been extensively done that explored the professional development needs of the school heads (Khan, 2010).

Finally, the researchers arrived at this study to gain knowledge and understand the lived - experiences of school heads assigned in the island schools by exploring their leadership practices and characteristics as basis for education reforms. Also, this study will give a clear understanding of the lived experiences of those in the field to guide future training as well as school heads development opportunities for existing leaders.

### *Significance of the Study*

The results of the study are relevant to the school administrators, teachers, stakeholders, and DepEd officials.

To the school administrators, the findings will help them discern the ideals and principles of school leadership. Thus, the outcome of this study would also provide a springboard to enhance their leadership competencies as school managers.

To the teachers, the end results would offer them with rich and substantial pieces of information for them to fully understand the professional and personal life experiences of school leaders as they journey towards leadership. Hence, this will give them inspiration and motivation as they continue realizing their future career path.

To the stakeholders, the results of the study would help them realize how indispensable and contributory their roles are in shaping the future of the school through their commitment and strong partnership with the school leaders. This could lead them to deeply understand the school administrators, thereby, encourage them to continuously support the school to improve the system and the organization at large.

To the DepEd Officials, this would serve as baseline information in improving programs and projects to address the professional development needs of school leaders. Also, this would help them design an enhanced Division Monitoring, Evaluation and Adjustment (DMEA) tool for school administrators in the provision of technical assistance.

### *Definition of Terms*

For the purpose of clarity, the following terms are defined theoretically and or operationally.

*Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).* Interpretive phenomenological analysis involves the detailed examination of the lived experiences of individuals (Lichtman, 2012). In this study, IPA is used in interpreting and analyzing the documents and direct observation results.

*Lived experiences.* Lived experiences in a phenomenology, are experiences described by participants that lead to the essence of the experience (Lichtman, 2012). In this study, they refer to the experiences and practices of school leaders in their respective stations.

*Phenomenology.* Phenomenology is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identified the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants (Creswell, 2009).

*Qualitative research.* Qualitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner (Creswell, 2008). In this study, qualitative research uses an in-depth interview with the participants wherein responses are transcribed and later classified according to themes.

*School leader.* School leader is a school administrator charged with leading our nation's schools and school districts" (Levine, 2005). In this study, school leaders refer to the identified school heads assigned in the island schools in the Division of Siargao.

*School leadership.* School leadership refers to a process of enlisting and guiding the talents and energies of teachers, pupils, and parents towards the achievement of common educational aims. It is also viewed as a strategic, forward-looking process that involves the development and communication of a strong vision and attendant goals or objectives, along with a relevant plan for implementation, monitoring, and review (Smith & Riley, 2012). In this study, it refers to the leadership skills, practices and attributes of the school heads assigned in the island schools which are being manifested in their day-to-day routines.

*Themes.* Themes are also known as categories; similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database (Creswell, 2008). In this study, they refer to the common practices and characteristics commonly manifested by the school heads taken from their responses and discourses.

## Literature Review

This section presents the literature and studies on the concepts and models of leadership practices of school heads. It also contains the theories used as anchorage to the leadership practices revealed by the school heads themselves. The discussions were carefully arranged and organized according to the degree of relatedness to the present study.

### *On Leadership*

Leadership is a process of combining efforts and a subtle process of mutual influence fusing thoughts, feelings, and actions to produce cooperative effort in the service of purposes and values embraced by both the leader and the led (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Contrastingly, management and leadership are not different concepts since the jobs of the managers are operation-oriented, whereas the jobs of leaders are vision-oriented (Memon & Bana, 2005).

Accordingly, good leadership can certainly contribute to school improvement by supporting motivation, participation, and coordination of the teachers. This concept is relevant to the present study since leadership practices of school heads regarding coordinating with the teachers and stakeholders to participate in decision-making and in realizing school's vision and mission are being explored.

Moreover, effective educational leadership is very essential to school effectiveness and improvement (Ololube, Egbezor, Kpolovie, & Amaele, 2012). Most leaders want to do things that matter, to inspire others to do it with them and to leave a legacy once they have gone (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). School heads' approaches in sustaining the performance of the school are also explored in this phenomenological study. To sustain educational leadership, leaders must develop sustainability on how they approach, commit to, and protect teaching and learning in schools. Also, school heads in the island schools should sustain themselves and followers around

them to promote and support teaching and learning; how they sustain their vision and avoid burning out; and how they consider the impact of their leadership in school management.

Marzano (2005) identifies core practices of successful leadership practices as those that recognize and reward individual accomplishments and demonstrate awareness of personal aspects of staff. Planning the various tasks and activities provides a sense of purpose and direction of the school. It is also important because it outlines the kind of tasks they will be performing, and explains how their activities are related to the overall goals of the school (Oosterlynck, 2011). School leadership practices which include working together with the stakeholders and drawing plans to guide implementation of the goals; mission and vision including its personnel are manifestations of the school heads' management roles and functions explored in this study.

Similarly, Goodstein and McDonnell (2011) agree that planning is a basic function of leadership and provides vital information to guide monitoring and evaluation. It is prerequisite to other leadership functions (Goodstein, 2011). It becomes the basis for monitoring and evaluating actual performance (McDonnell, 2011). Therefore, school plans should be mutually agreed among stakeholders to ensure effective outcomes (Lunenburg and Irby, 2006; Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2008). To attain this goal the school heads must work with all stakeholders to create an environment of professional learning development (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2010).

In the local context, school heads involve the stakeholders in the crafting of the 3-year School Improvement Plan (SIP). During the crafting of the SIP, school heads together with the representatives from the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), Barangay Government Unit and Supreme Student Government (SSG) plan and agree on the priority needs of the school that should be placed in the plan. In this manner, stakeholders may have the knowledge on the different various programs and projects that the school will be undertaking for the next three years.

In short, school planning is not the sole responsibility of school heads but is a collaborative effort among the stakeholders.

School heads need to understand the potentials of human resources at their disposal so as to acquire and develop their potential and establish patterns and networks to achieve the goals and objectives of the school (Argyris 2011). The school heads must communicate the goals to staff and motivate the entire school community towards the attainment of the school goals (English, 2008). In the local setting, the development programs given to teachers which include their attendance to trainings and graduate studies provide the researcher with the better understanding of the managerial functions of the school heads. The professional needs of the teachers were addressed based on Individual Performance Commitment Results (IPCR) development plans accomplished by teachers. With this, school heads ensure that the type of trainings to be given to teachers will overcome their weaknesses and enhance their strength as far as realizing the school goals and objectives is concerned.

On the other hand, monitoring is the responsibility of every school head. It may simply consist of walking around the building to see how things are going, talking to students, visiting classrooms, talking to faculty, or it may involve designing sophisticated information systems to check on the quality of performance, but it must be done if the school head is to be successful (Blankstein, Houston & Cole, 2010). School heads conduct routinely monitoring activities which include window observations, roaming around the campus to check whether the school is clean and talking to teachers and students with regards to the performance of the students in their respective classes.

#### *On School Heads' Leadership Practices*

O'Donovan (2020) describes the vision statement as what the organization will become in the future. It is a broad and inspirational statement intended to engender support from

stakeholders. Bennis (2019) defines mission statement as how the organization differentiates itself from other organizations in its industry. It is more specific than the vision statement and is intended to show how stakeholders' needs will be satisfied. The values statement defines how people in the organization should behave. It provides a guideline for decision making.

As pointed out by Kustigian (2017), in schools, mission is the purpose of education. The mission is the reason why schools exist, and the mission statement should reflect the purpose of schooling. The mission needs to be the cornerstone of every aspect of decision making. It is primarily the leaders who are responsible for communicating the mission, but mission permeates through successful schools from the highest administrator to the ground level worker. Perfetto (2017) also said that every aspect of curriculum, instruction, and assessment should be linked to the school's mission statement describing schools without mission as, "a home for freelance tutors of subjects". If a school does not have a mission, it will lack direction and purpose.

According to McKinsey & Co. (2018), developing a vision for the school is an important part of being an effective school leader. Hence, island school heads have developed and promote vision for the school. Barber, et.al (2018) posits that it is important that the vision unites stakeholders around the school's journey of improvement. A school where community members and the school leader disagree will be an unhappy place where much energy is wasted rather than focusing on the key purpose of improving learning for the learners. Batra (2016) states that if stakeholders are to support the school's development, they need to be involved in understanding and developing the school's vision. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the school leader to inform and support their development. This may be challenging, especially if the vision involves improvement that is different from what has been historically provided. In one context, it may be right for the school leader to be quite directive and this may be appreciated by the school community; in a different context, such an approach may be resented and lead to problems.

As what Myung, et. al. (2020) said that continuous improvement engages the knowledge and know-how of multiple stakeholders to discover, implement, and spread evidence-based changes that work locally to improve outcomes for students. Data on changes are regularly collected and reviewed to ensure that changes are indeed improvements and, if not, to make adjustments to practice. Thus, as Elgart (2017) claimed, an effective continuous improvement system in a school system emphasizes the learner's experience, stakeholder engagement, and data collection and analysis to guide and inform both planning and executing a school's improvement journey. teaching and learning".

Furthermore, in a study of McKinsey & Co. (2018) that examined a number of educational systems across the world to see what factors led to improvement, it was found that 'almost all school leaders say that setting vision and direction' are among 'the biggest contributors to their success'.

Covaleskie (2016) pointed out that schools clearly cannot do the total job of moral formation, but they are more likely to be successful in fostering the virtues of democratic citizenship if they are themselves clear and consistent in their practice of democratic virtues. So, if schools are to be morally normative communities, the first two tasks they face are to (1) be welcoming and (2) demonstrate consistent moral clarity. Thus, as cited by Bond (2015) the school leaders must fulfill professional responsibilities with honesty and integrity. They must support the principle of due process and should protect the civil and human rights of all individuals.

As posited by Shechtman (2016), democratic education and citizenship understanding will not develop without strong democratic leadership. This is supported by Lynch (2020) when he said that is not fallacious to say that education is pivotal to the preservation of democracy. In fact, democracy and education go *pari passu*. The extent to which democracy succeeds in any country

is a function of its level of education. Therefore, the continuous utilization of education will lead to a more perfect level of democracy in our country.

Effective leadership is not a dramatic, one-time event, but rather an everyday affair that requires the "ability to communicate, listen intently, and maintain an empathetic disposition that builds trust and understanding" (Maudling et al., 2015). According to Brearley (2014), research studies characterize effective leaders as leaders who turn schools into emotionally and socially intelligent schools. The emotionally intelligent school is a school where leaders lead learning; where influence replace authority; where dialogue replaces yelling; and reflection replaces punishment. Ford (2016) explains that the school head controls the tone and flow of interpersonal communication in the school setting. Therefore, if school heads do not demonstrate strong interpersonal communication skills, this will negatively affect the confidence and trust that teachers and stakeholders have in them. In the case of the island school heads, they maintain the highest standards of professional conduct and they hold high expectations of themselves and the school community to ensure educational professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice and fairness in accordance with and beyond their professional responsibility as school leader. The school community expects that their behavior exemplifies ethical and moral integrity. They serve as role models who should recognize that their conduct, both on and off the job, can profoundly impact their professional image.

It is the leadership of the school head that sets the tone of the school, the climate for teaching, the level of professionalism and morale of the teachers, and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become (Dinham, 2017). If a school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centered place, if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost always point to the school head's leadership as the key to success. One highly successful public school administrator stated that in building relationships with teachers and the whole community, he gets to know them on a professional, yet personal

basis. This approach enables him to build a personalized school system, one in which all staff members pull in the same direction.

As stressed by Duncan, et.al (2017), the development of healthy, meaningful relationships with all stakeholder groups is instrumental in helping school leaders successfully manage the complex contexts in which today's schools exist. Research supports the importance of school administrators building relationships with all people involved in the school community. If trusting relationships are built, the school will be a learning community with a positive school culture that leads to increased student achievement.

As pointed out by Heifetz and Linsky (2017), it is important that educational leaders at all levels exercise adaptive leadership to allow those perspectives to come to the fore. The multiple and sometimes competing viewpoints and ideas are required to examine complex issues from new angles. Robertson and Webber (2017) called for educational leaders to "move past the practices that were successful in an industrial model of education to address the ambiguity and complexity of working in a rapidly changing, diverse society". There is a need, as outlined by Kelly and Peterson (2015), for school heads to have both problem finding and problem solving skills in order to address not only routine challenges, but also unique emergent issues.

Cunliffe (2019) posited that pursuing a graduate program allows the school leader the opportunity to learn as much as he/she can about his/her area of interest through focused education, expanding on his/her technical abilities, honing his/her skills, and essentially becoming an expert in the field of education. In the case of the island school heads, enrolling to graduate program have helped them to gain more flexibility in their current work, and helped them prepare you for a bigger career transition.

According to Salazar (2017), today's school heads need to grow and learn throughout their careers to adapt to the changing needs of students and schools. The technical, conceptual

and public skills demanded of educational leaders have increased dramatically over the last decade. With the widespread acceptance of the need for schools to improve, it is impossible to ignore the critical needs of school leaders to be more effective at their work. They must receive professional development aiming at helping them to be more effective, knowledgeable and qualified to facilitate continuous improvement.

Educational leaders who participate in professional development programs update and extend their knowledge and improve their performance on the job by applying new knowledge and skills to implement the best educational practices in schools (Şenol, 2019). Thus, professional development of school leaders should continue and be sustainable after they have been appointed to their schools.

Barth (2016) pointed out that among educational policy makers, researchers and practitioners, there is an emerging consensus that teacher professional development is vitally important to educational reform. In fact, it seems trite to assert that teacher professional development is critically important to school improvement focused on enhanced student learning outcomes. Nevertheless, there continues to be a need to communicate the importance of continuous learning and development for educators, individually and collectively, to people in and out of schools.

In the study conducted by Bredeson (2016), he found out that when teachers are engaged in the design, delivery and content of professional development, the outcomes are much more likely to meet teachers' needs, and have a significant influence on teacher thinking and classroom practices. School heads are key actors in helping build teacher capacity as autonomous learners and practitioners.

According to Bayler (2017), teacher empowerment involves investing teachers with the right to participate in the determination of school goals and policies as informed by their

professional judgment. By empowering teachers, teachers can discover their potential and limitations for themselves as well as developing competence in their professional development. This makes teacher empowerment a crucial issue.

The findings of Schwartz (2017) is similar as he pointed out that distributing leadership when done well will create a community of people on the same page, working hard toward defined goals. And when teachers feel valued and trusted, they are more likely to trust and empower their learners. And when students are empowered to lead, they not only learn to trust their own capabilities -- they also produce their best work.

When island school heads feel a greater sense of control and ownership over their own lives, they tend to have better relationships with management and are able to leave work issues at work and home issues at home. As cited by Barth (2016), balanced employees tend to feel more motivated and less stressed out at work, which thereby increases company productivity and reduces the number of conflicts among coworkers and management.

Schwartz (2017) mentioned that schools who gain a reputation for encouraging work-life balance have become very attractive to teachers and staff. These schools also tend to enjoy higher employee retention rates, which results in less time-consuming training, more loyalty, and a higher degree of in-house expertise.

The study conducted by Crozier-Durham (2017) finds individual school head's agency, energy, mastery and efficacy is important to achieving work/life balance and that managing the workload is the fulcrum of that balance. It identifies a range of actions or strategies that appear to be important in effecting a satisfactory balance between work and personal life.

As emphasized by Rashida (2017), a good school management system facilitates transparency in school administration and creates an environment where parents can closely

monitor their child's performance, teachers can collaborate more efficiently and leakages in school budgets can be identified & prevented.

Managing school operations and resources is the part of leadership that is more the administrative or science aspect that can be taught, learned, and mastered over time. Appropriate resources allocation demands that they school leader be in tune with every aspect of the school's operation. Managing resources and operations must be done with diligence and accountability but we can never forget the blueberries (Alberta Education, 2019).

In the study of Olguin and Keim (2019), the importance of the active participation of the students, parents, community, and administrators in the planning and execution of the different school processes are highlighted. Smith and Goodwin (2016) claimed that when stakeholders are active in creating the plan for improvement, there are greater possibilities to carry out the plan. Thus, stakeholders of the island schools play a crucial role for the betterment of the school. Bruns et al. (2011) confirm, involvement and participation of multiple stakeholders contribute to a better management of schools.

Ice, et al., (2015) cited that collaboration between the school and community members is encouraged to support the school improvement. Furthermore, Tobergte and Curtis (2016) stated that accountability positively affects stakeholders' perceptions, expectations and discipline in the school environment. Theoretically, enhancing the bridging of stakeholders with the school foster trust and further increases the level of community involvement in school. In other words, community involvement in school may serve as a springboard in developing an additional form of community involvement in schools.

It should not be forgotten that besides the worries emerging from human beings, there are natural risks as well. The geographical conditions of the location of schools, the natural sources, and threats around should be well known, and plans should be made accordingly (Öznacar,

2017). Because the origin and size of natural and human-oriented dangers and threats cannot be foreseen in advance, island school heads prepared protective and preventive measures which are needed to be taken to minimize any harm.

According to Eduflow (2017), when leaders make tough decisions that cannot be foreseen in advance, they must be willing to accept the risks and challenges that ensue, and still press on with their decisions. They have to do what is best for the learners and the school community. to make unpopular decisions for the sake of continuous improvement.

In continuously improving systems, change occurs both quickly and incrementally, as organizations learn from experience while testing and refining strategies to produce better results. In education, continuous improvement can refer to a school, district, or other organization's ongoing commitment to quality improvement efforts that are evidence-based, integrated into the daily work of individuals, contextualized within a system, an iterative (Park et al., 2013).

#### *On School Heads' Personal and Professional Characteristics*

School Head is a multifarious professional where he/she dominantly is expected to deal with people. The hardest part indeed is to hearten the teachers and stakeholders, to abreast with them and to make them dedicated to providing quality education and educational services which shall benefit the clientele and the community at large.

Quality leadership involves using the heart, the hand, and the head. The heart of leadership is what the person believes, values, and dreams, and the commitment or personal vision of the leader. Leadership is the person's interior world and the foundation of reality. The hand of leadership is charting the data-gathering portion. Leadership, in its entirety, is not defined solely by the heart and hand; the head of leadership develops over time with experience, which allows for reflection and development of style (Sergiovanni, 1992).

With the changing educational organization brought about by new initiatives and political divisiveness, school leadership must go beyond student outcomes and should therefore focus on relationship with the stakeholders within the school community (Pryrtd, 2004). Comparatively, successful school environment can be likened to the environment of a good restaurant which offer high quality food, just as good schools do more than impart skills and knowledge (Hoerr, 2014). Such, stakeholders, teachers, and other members of the school community want to work when principals focus on the hospitality piece, and creating a positive atmosphere, teachers begin to believe that their school is successful (Sergiovanni, 2000).

Building relationships does not mean a lack of focus on the work being done, it means looking at all aspects of schoolwork and according to Bonnici (2011), principals must “maximize the positives; minimize the negatives. The most successful teachers have a positive, comfortable relationship with their principal (Adoegun and Olisaemeka, 2011).

Strong relationships in the school building are afforded when the principal accepts, respects, and dignifies employees, which means all employees are accepted for the value they bring to the building. The relationship is about the person and not the person’s personality (Toll, 2010). Principals act according to the unique culture of their schools. When school leaders focus on creating an atmosphere conducive to school success, the school is perceived by the teachers and students as being successful (Sergiovanni, 2000).

In the study of Toll (2010), he contended that school heads should support the teaching-learning community by giving attention to six areas, namely: expectations, demonstrations, hospitality, possibility, Inquiry, and the whole learner. Moreover, the core of hospitality which includes support, friendliness, a welcoming demeanor, and acceptance of everyone in the school community must be practiced and observed by school heads. However, in the present study school heads assigned in the island schools have articulated that these attributes and

characteristics are imperative in leading the school community, viz: *courageous and determined, optimistic, visionary, patient and understanding, approachable, democratic, and gender-fair sensitive.*

Courageous school leaders recognize that there is a wide variety of circumstances—some favorable, some adverse, and some neutral—that affect the functioning of an organization. The key to courageous leadership is how one responds to what arises during the journey, rather than whether individual circumstances are defined as good, bad, or indifferent. Courageous leaders are those who foster an increased alignment of the organization with its true values, purposes, and potential; provide greater momentum toward a revitalized vision and a renewed sense of the group's purpose; strengthen morale among employees; infuse new ideas and recalibrate outdated structures and processes; and facilitate more authentic, dynamic, and effective communication (Anfara, et al, 2008).

Powerful acts of courage include (a) providing honest input and counsel, (b) presenting and being responsive to outside the-norm ideas, (c) sharing alternative viewpoints, (d) speaking up, and (e) not settling for the status quo. Undoubtedly, many other acts of courage depend on an organization's culture and operational norms (Anfara, et al, 2008). In the study of Blankstein, (2004), Goldring (2005), Kessler (2001) they noted that courageous leadership develops from a true sense of vision and a commitment to that vision. It is this vision that sustains a leader through the fear that precedes courage. In short, at the heart of leadership is the courage to do the right thing.

Another characteristic of a school head in the island is being optimistic. Nasreen (2019) posited that being optimistic can create an inspired and involved teachers, motivated parents, encouraged students, and a respectful learning environment. Negativity brings negativity and

spoil the whole school culture. Positive attitudes of principals broaden their consciousness and encourage innovative, wide-ranging, and exploratory thoughts and actions.

Vision involves the clear thought process behind goals that are shared among stakeholders. This gives credence to decisions that are made in order to effectively provide the best resources and people that are needed ( Rolon, 2017). Regardless of the leadership style, Herbert (2011), believes "...a school administrator must be able to articulate a vision for success, inspire others to embrace the vision, and have the ability to make the necessary changes happen".

Leithwood (2008) found that almost all successful school leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices. These are (1) building a vision and setting directions; (2) understanding and developing people; (3) redesigning the organization; and (4) managing the teaching and learning the program. Also, formulating a vision and communicating it to the stakeholders of the school provides a framework for making decisions (Farina & Kotch, 2008).

Rajbhandari (2010) on driving leadership style expressing that leadership must maintain a role of understanding people in the organizational setting. There is more of a desire for social harmony within the school than student achievement. Principals act according to the unique culture of their schools.

Democratic Leadership unlike authoritarian leadership, democratic leadership (also known as participative leadership) is based on reciprocal appreciation and collaboration. Gill (2014) informed his readers that democratic leaders are willing to distribute responsibilities among team members. Moreover, input from all stakeholders is encouraged and valued for decision-making processes.

Harris and Chapman (2002) which found that many effective educational leaders utilize democratic leadership. They explained 'democratic style' as working with all the stakeholders to run the school and discussing matters with the teachers and the members of the school managing

committee before making important decisions. Such a focus on the sharing of decision making indicates a 'participative' style of leadership (Coleman & Earley, 2005). Likewise, a democratic leadership style is one that communicates effectively and allows for teacher input (Inandi, Tunc & Gilic, 2013).

Gill (2014) recommended democratic leaders take extreme caution to avoid becoming overly influenced by the thoughts and ideas of others. Moreover, effective school leaders recognize the value of democratic leadership, and they realize how impactful it is to collaborate and share ideas among the group. Furthermore, when leaders involve people in the decision-making processes and encourage creativity in problem solving, morale is enhanced (Choi, 2007).

When it comes to school leadership, there is 'a general belief that equity issues for women are no longer a problem (Coleman 2005). In the study of Grogan (2014), he claimed that in education research, particularly in the educational leadership discourse, the nexus between gender and leadership appears to be less interesting than it was previously—not surprisingly – since the prevailing attitudes among many women and men is that gender is irrelevant.

However, this trend is seen by (Grogan, 2014) as unjustified, yet gender seems to matter just as much today as it always has. Against this backdrop of seeming general indifference toward gender differences within the educational leadership context, the current study undertook an in-depth qualitative investigation of possible differences between men and women practicing instructional leadership.

### **Research Questions**

The grand tour question of this study aimed at exploring the lived experiences of school heads assigned in the island school for SY 2019-2020 in the Schools Division of Siargao.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the leadership practices manifested in their lived experiences as a school head assigned in the island?
2. What are the professional characteristics exhibited by the school heads assigned in the island schools?
3. What are the emerging themes that can be drawn from the prevailing codes of the lived experiences of the school heads assigned in the island school?

### **Scope and Limitation**

This study gathered data from the five (5) school heads assigned in the island schools of Consolacion National High School, Dagohoy National High School, La Januza Elementary School, Lanit-ag Elementary School, and San Miguel Elementary School. School heads with 5 (five) years and above experience as school leaders were chosen in this study. Purposely, the number of years was carefully investigated in this study because experienced school leaders can provide deep expression of rich and realistic experiences as far as leadership practices are concerned.

The participants of the study were delimited to five school heads. This sample size certainly is small. However, this study is phenomenological in nature. The present study used a more rigorous data gathering procedure since it involves methods of triangulation. Data came from an in-depth interview, document review and direct observation. This is one way of establishing validity in gathering the data.

#### *School's Profile*

The study was conducted at the three (3) elementary schools and two (2) secondary schools of the Schools Division of Siargao. The following schools' profiles are described below.

#### ***Lanit-ag Elementary School***

Lanit-ag Elementary School is a multi-grade elementary school that caters the children of Sitio Lanit-ag, Barangay N. Sering, Socorro, Surigao del Norte. The school was established through the recommendation of Superintendent Mamerto D. Galanida for the main reason that the parents of the learners could not afford to send their children to the schools of the neighboring barangays or even in Barangay N. Sering proper due to the extreme poverty of most of the families.

Lanit-ag ES is considered the smallest elementary school in Socorro East District, Socorro, Surigao del Norte, Schools Division of Siargao. Presently, it has a total enrolment of 36 from Kindergarten to Grade 6, and has 3 total number of teaching personnel. The school is being managed by a School Principal II. She is a cluster principal because she has also managed another 1 neighboring coastal school; N. Sering Elementary School.

For a long period, the school has only one existing school building shared by five grade levels and one make-shift structure shared by two grade levels. It was too difficult for the teachers to handle the situation in such a manner that the little space was not enough to do the daily activities of the pupils inside, and voices of teachers and children from one side to the other greatly affect the concentration of learners, making learning at stake. But their difficulty for quite a several years was already given remedy when just recently the 2-classroom school building provided by DepEd was finished after almost 3 years of waiting.

The rest of the structures are from donations and school's MOOE. Most of the pupils were regularly reporting to school because they are accompanied by supportive parents especially the little ones to ensure their safety. After all, the path to going to school is too risky since it is located on top of the mountain. Most of the teachers of Lanit-ag ES are neophytes. Despite the distance, the geographical situation of the school, and the challenges that they encounter in going to school every day, the perseverance and the energy within them to share the best education with the school children are evident.

The school is located about 2 nautical miles from the town proper. Preferably the school head and teachers report to school by boat but it can be reached also through a single motorcycle; trailing the slippery, muddy path when the weather is not good. Be that as it may, the school administrator and the teachers ensure that quality education through quality services will be provided to the school children come what may.

### ***Dagohoy National High School***

Dagohoy National High School (DNHS) is an annex school of Dapa National High School catering and offering the need for accessible quality education for the four far-flung neighboring barangays of Dapa, Surigao del Norte, namely: Barangay Dagohoy, Barangay Cabawa, Barangay Corregidor, and Barangay Montserrat. The school is settled at Barangay Dagohoy since it is the center of the four barangays, and is situated in Dagohoy Elementary School site.

The commencement of Dagohoy Integrated School was quite humble. It was made through a joint resolution of the local LGU and the Division of Siargao to open an annex school; thus, opening an opportunity for the residents to experience secondary education that is accessible and affordable. The school was launched in the school year 2012-2013 with 46 enrollees only. The enrolment had distinctively increased in the next school year with 68 enrollees. For the school year 2015-2016, the enrolment had increased to 96 and 107 respectively. It was noted that enrolment of the school is increasing until now.

In previous years, there were only two classrooms utilized by the four-year levels. The school was in its crucial stage of surviving since facilities, equipment, books, references, and most importantly teachers were notably lacking. Nonetheless, the school has still managed to cater to the needs of the learners despite the scarcity of resources and was able to survive the challenges that marred its way.

Recently, the school has received Yolanda-type classrooms which bring joy and inspiration to every learner.

Dagohoy Integrated School is one of the developing schools of the Schools Division of Siargao; nevertheless, the school strives to serve the best education it can offer. The geographical location of the school and the scarcity of its resources do not hinder the teachers and the administrator to deliver quality education to the learners. Innovatively, they implemented different programs and projects with the strong support of the parents, BLGU, and other stakeholders. They continuously find ways and every possible means of attaining the needs of the learners, linking the gaps and open doors of opportunities to all students to help them maximize their full potentials and nurture them to be God-fearing individuals.

For seven years of existence as one of the public secondary schools, Dagohoy Integrated School constantly seeks every possible way to grow and learn from its lapses and mistakes. Undeniably, it is still in its peak of coping things that could help improve its performance, but with the strong support from the stakeholders, needed necessities especially in the making of the make-shift classroom are answered.

With the joint efforts of the school administrator, the teachers, the parents, and other stakeholders, the school has done remarkably in creating and promoting a child-friendly, gender-sensitive, safe, and motivating environment.

### ***San Miguel Elementary School***

San Miguel Elementary School is one of the ten schools of Dapa West District, Schools Division of Siargao. It is composed of 8 permanent teachers and a school head who work collaboratively to put the school in the right perspective. It is a complete non-central school with a total learning population of 152. The school was organized in the year 1945 through Tax Declaration of Real Property no.07-07-2604746 with Property Index no. 048-07-026-02-00, with a total land area of 5514 sq.m. donated by prominent people of the barangay. It is located at the

heart of the eastern part of Barangay San Miguel with lot numbers 3262, 3264, and 6264. The school has 8 functional classrooms, 1 H.E. building, 1 school head's office, and 1 unfinished covered court which serves as a multi-purpose hall. Undeniably the school still has countless needs specifically the school facilities.

San Miguel ES is approximately 4 nautical miles away from the Municipality of Dapa, Surigao del Norte, and can be reached only via motorboat, that is why reporting to school during the wavy season and not good weather condition is very challenging for the commuter school head and teachers. The parents and the BLGU are very particular about the attendance of the children in school that is why the administrator and teachers have been very strict also in monitoring the attendance of the learners. They have collaborated with the PTA to make sure that learners' attendance to classes would be given enough attention and that they would get the kind of teaching and learning they deserve. Of this initiative, the daily attendance of learners is highly commendable.

With the strong desire of the school to provide quality education to produce quality and competitive learners, the administration and staff are very much concerned with the performance of the children inside the classroom. For the last 3 years, the school has sustained its good practice and used it to promote all children to the next grade level. Both promotion and graduation rates are 100%. Because of the school's different interventions, initiatives, and the collaborative efforts of the school community to uplift the performance of the learners, the school was able to garner numerous distinctive awards of recognition both in academic and non-academic competitions in the district as well as in the division level.

### ***La Januza Elementary School***

La Januza Elementary School is located in Barangay La Januza, General Luna, Surigao del Norte. It is situated approximately 3.6348 nautical miles away from the municipality with its

estimated elevation of 13.0 meters or 42.7 feet above sea level. It shares a common border with Barangay Suyangan and it can be reached only via motor Banca. The school has only 45 enrollees from K-6, four regular teachers, and one school head. Three teachers are handling combination/multi-grade classes and one teacher is handling monograde classes. Amid the too taxing subject assignments, they are still able to attend different training, seminars, and workshops relative to their teaching needs.

The school is equipped with four classrooms with functional toilets and one room used as the office of the school head. There are enough seats to accommodate all pupils. It has also enough Science equipment, a laptop, and a projector to be utilized by the pupils and teachers during ICT-related classes.

The school has implemented a daily intervention/enrichment program which allows all pupils to learn the lesson more and to understand the part where they got low points/scores. La Januza ES in partnership with the parents and other stakeholders in the community is dedicated to creating a safe and nurturing environment conducive to learning.

The stakeholders are very supportive of the school programs and projects, and **90%** of them are always present during meetings and other school activities. It has been said that school is the place for change and development of learners where they can be nurtured into responsible and potential individuals. However, because of the scarcity of books, references, and other relevant learning materials, especially materials for this new normal setting, teachers found it hard to cope with the demands of today's education. Nevertheless, hard as it is, they still do their best to give their all to the learners for them to understand and learn well.

### ***Consolacion National High School***

Consolacion National High School was known as Dapa National High School – Consolacion Annex from June 1994 to November 09, 2009. It was created through the efforts of noble people namely Brgy. Captain Oscarlito C. Jovero Sr. and his Brgy. Councilors. The

establishment of Consolacion NHS was made through an SB Resolution Number 56 series of 1992, held on October 26, 2008, requesting the officials of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports and Dapa National High School to extend the first-year classes in Barangay Consolacion, Dapa, Surigao del Norte for the education and welfare of the school children who were interested to pursue Secondary Education since the nearest High School which is Dapa National High School is approximately 5 nautical miles away and it is too risky for the students in crossing the channels separating Middle Bukas and the mainland Dapa especially when the northeast monsoon occur from June to December. Another Resolution Number 23 series of 1994 from the excerpt of the minutes of the Sanguniang Bayan Members held on May 2, 1994, requesting the Honorable Governor Francisco T. Matugas to open the first-year class to be manned by a qualified teacher. Such resolution was forwarded to Dr. Sol F. Matugas, DECS Asst. Regional Director of Region X, Cagayan de Oro City. On May 30, 1994, the First Endorsement from the Regional Director Dr. Diamar P. Kadon, CESO III was received by the Schools Division Superintendent of Siargao Division, Dr. Mamerto D. Galanida as a response to resolution number 23, s. 1994, requesting the opening of first-year extension class in Barangay Consolacion, Dapa, Surigao del Norte based on provisions of DECS Order No. 5, s. 1989.

The request of the barangay officials was granted and approved by the Schools Division Superintendent of Siargao Division, Dr. Mamerto D. Galanida. The establishment and operation of Consolacion NHS started last S.Y. 1994 – 1995 as an Annex of Dapa National High School. Mr. Charlie P. Durero was designated as the first School – In – Charge who led the operation of the school.

Last September 22, 1994, the Deed of Donation of the school site was legally approved and signed by Oscarlito C. Jovero, Brgy. Captain as Donor, and Dr. Mamerto D. Galanida, Schools Division Superintendent of Siargao Division as Donee. Fifteen years later, Consolacion National High School became an independent school through Republic Act No. 97621, an act separating

Consolacion National High School-Annex from Dapa National High School legalizing it as an independent school.

Consolacion National High School is operating for twenty-six (26) years now. It implements the K to 12 Curriculum and offered both Junior High School and Senior High School with General Academic Strand (GAS). It is manned by a Head Teacher II. It has (12) teachers in Junior High and four (4) teachers in Senior High.

The school has 9 school buildings: 4 buildings for classrooms with two sections per grade level; 1 building utilized as Junior High School Computer Laboratory, 1 building for Senior High School Computer Laboratory, 2 story-building utilized as classrooms for Senior High School, principal's office and faculty office; 1 building as Science Laboratory; 1 building for Library/LRMDS and a 1 small room building utilized as semi-functional School Canteen.

The school campus is secured with a concrete twenty-five (25) percent perimeter fence; interlink wire; a steel gate and 20% temporary drainage construction for flood protection. With the joint efforts of the school head, teachers, parents, and stakeholders, the administration can operate the school successfully amid the many challenges along the way.

### *Profile of the Participants*

Four elementary school heads and two secondary school head of the Schools Division of Siargao were selected as participants of this study. All the participants of this study are described briefly to better understand their experiences of their school leadership practices and functions. The researchers gave an invented identity to the participants to maintain utmost confidentiality and anonymity of the responses and revelations.

The participants are revealed with the following profiles:

#### *School Head A*

School Head A is now 41 years old. She is happily married to a self-employed husband and is blessed with three children. To track her educational background, she finished Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education (BSEE) in 2000 at San Nicolas College, Surigao City. Aiming to enhance her knowledge and to seek a higher position in DepEd, she continued to study for a master's degree at Bukidnon State University and acquired 45 MA units.

For School Head A, being a principal is a matter of destiny, a product of a circumstance. At first, it was only her plan to be a teacher throughout her entire life she had been teaching in elementary Socorro Central Elementary School for 11 years already before an opportunity knocked at her door when she was given the chance to take the principals' exam and passed in the year 2017. That was her break to manage a school as a Principal I at Del Pilar ES for 3 years. When reshuffling of school heads was ordered by the Schools Division Superintendent, she being a full-pledged Principal II already, was assigned to lead two coastal schools. She had no choice but to take the challenge and abide by the order. She is managing the two clustered schools for 1 year and 8 months now.

She also shared stories of regrets about accepting the assignment of being the principal of two remote island schools because of their insufficiency of school facilities and learning resources and their geographical location. It needs enough courage and zeal to report to the office especially during rainy and wavy seasons, but according to her, fate brought her there, and eventually, she can love the place, the people, and especially the learners who need her utmost care and attention that is why amid her very busy schedule, she teaches Math subject to the learners whenever the teacher is out of the station for a call-up or a training.

Principal A preferred the most democratic and authoritative styles of leadership because she believes they are most fitting and effective. Coping with the demands of 21st-century education and portraying the role of a school leader based on the standards reiterated in PPSSH is now her greatest challenge.

### *School Head B*

School Head B is 57 years old and has been in the service for 16 years and 7 months. She shared that she never had any hesitation or regret accepting the role of a school administrator because she believed that she was qualified and had enough experience as a teacher. She further revealed that she was also encouraged by her friends and relatives who were already in the position of handling schools.

School Head B started teaching on August 2, 2004, as a high school teacher and taught English subjects. She finished her bachelor's degree in education in the year 1995 at Northeastern Mindanao Colleges (NEMCO). She continued her Master of Arts in Education at Saint Paul University- Surigao, and has earned .45 units in the year 2002.

After having been a plain classroom teacher assigned in Consolacion ES for 11 years, School Head B had been promoted to Head Teacher II position through the Equivalency Reclassification Form (ERF) in 2017 and was assigned to Libertad National High School for 4 years and 6 months. She was again promoted to Head Teacher III and was transferred to Dagohoy National High School for 1 year now. As a headteacher, she was able to attend various seminars like the school heads development program and accountability training.

Challenges and difficulties are indispensable for a school head assigned in island school specifically, financial for the daily expenses of fare, gasoline, and provision, and the daily trips back and forth especially during the wavy season and unpredictable bad weather condition which sometimes struck at the middle of travel; these are some things to be scared and stressed of. Nevertheless, she believed that she was born a teacher because all these trials do not hinder her to do better if not best in her quest of delivering quality basic education at the very doorsteps of the learners. As of now, she is reviewing for the National Qualifying Examination for Schools Heads (NQESH) for her to get the item as a full-fledged principal hopefully after the Covid-19 pandemic is over.

*School Head C*

School Head C is 47 years old, single and a resident of Dapa, Surigao del Norte. He became a teacher because of his love for children and became a school head because of his love to lead and manage teachers. He asserted that education is the key to change the world and teachers are the key players of social change.

He obtained his Bachelor in Elementary Education (BEED) at Siargao Institute of Technology (SIIT) in 2000-2001 and has earned his 39 units in Master of Arts in Educational Management in Saint Paul University- Surigao City campus. He served as a classroom teacher at San Miguel ES for 5 years and at Dapa Central Elementary School (DCES) for 7 years before he became a cluster school head in Dagohoy ES and Can-uyan Primary School, Dapa East District for 4 years and 4 months.

Presently, he is the Head Teacher of San Miguel Elementary School, Dapa West District for 1 year and 8 months now. According to him assigned to two island schools requires extra patience and never-ending sacrifice because one will be facing big challenges, to name a few; no regular transportation from Dapa proper to Barangay San Miguel that with his meager compensation, he always need to hire a pump boat going to and fro, poor internet connectivity that hinders his internet-related works, scarcity of learning materials and school facilities, parents who are reluctant to support and participate school activities that he needs to always talk and encourage them to better their understanding of supporting their children.

Amid the challenges and sacrifices he is experiencing; he believes that all are paid off knowing that he can do his noble share of touching the lives of the school children.

*School Head D.*

School Head D is 38 years old, married and a father of two. He took his Bachelor of Science in Physical Education at Mindanao State University (MSU) and graduated in 2006. Driven by his desire to grow professionally and hopefully seek a greener pasture in the future, he proceeded

with his Master of Arts in Educational Management in Saint Paul University-Surigao and acquired 21 units in 2012. After years of teaching, he aimed to become a school head and his intent was granted when he was given an order to handle a school. First in Consuelo ES for 15 days only due to some changes in the assignment, he was assigned as cluster school head in Suyangan ES and La Januza ES for 4 years, and was transferred again to Jamoyaon ES for 5 years now.

As a school leader, he preferred most the democratic style of leadership because he firmly believed in a consultative way of leadership where everybody has a chance to express and defend his opinion. Democratic as it is, the school community is still always reminded to work following the guidelines, directives, and laws of the Department of Education. So far so good of his 4 school assignments as school head, this leadership is already proven effective and viable.

Manning a school is very challenging for him especially on his assignment in cluster island schools. Many trials and difficulties tested his momentum; the difficulty in reporting to school and attending to urgent call-ups of the Division Office especially during the wavy season and bad weather condition, financial because there is no regular trip back and forth that he often hire banca in reporting to school, the insufficiency of school facilities and resources, the lack of teachers, the inadequacy of financial resources for school operations and more, that most of the time would sadden him that sometimes he would think of quitting. However, his negative thoughts do not pin him down, but somehow drive him to continue serving for the love and concern of the school children.

### *Principal E*

Principal E is 50 years of age and shared that distance is not a barrier to fulfilling one's dream in life. Hence, it was her drive to pursue her education. She took up BSEd Biology-Chemistry at MSU-Main Campus and graduated in the year 1994. She took up her Master of Arts in Educational Management at Saint Paul university-Surigao and acquired 39 units. She became an elementary teacher on July 8, 1996, and had taught elementary learners for several years.

With her educational qualifications, experience, and confidence, she has given more opportunities in DepEd-Siargao. She started handling school and presently she is the Head Teacher of La Januza Elementary School, La Januza, General Luna, Surigao del Norte. She has served DepEd for 24 years and 8 months now.

In her years as school head, she is challenged with many difficulties; financial matters especially on her assignment that is very far away from home, extra budget is needed, facing the fear brought about by the scary big waves and strong winds passing the islets especially during bad weather condition, financial assistance for school improvement and other school needs especially during emergencies like this time of the pandemic, and a lot more. Nevertheless, she has learned to embrace all the challenges that marred her way for the love of serving the children and the school community in general.

## **Research Methodology**

This section covers the methodology of the study including a description of the research design, participants, selection and recruitment of the participants, research locale, data gathering procedures and data analysis.

### *Research Design*

The researchers of this study selected a qualitative research design specifically phenomenology because the study deals with individuals serving as school heads assigned in the island schools. The study employed the phenomenological approach developed by Amedeo P. Giorgi (2009). As espoused by Giorgi, bracketing is encouraged to discuss the phenomenon by separating one's experiences to the informants being studied.

Phenomenology is known as an educational qualitative research design (Ponce, 2014; Creswell, 2013, Marshall & Rossman, 2010). It is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by the participants. This description culminates in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon.

Using phenomenology this study sought to explore the experiences, perceptions, insights, and opinions of the school heads assigned in the island. Creswell (2008) identified the major procedures for conducting a phenomenological study that includes identifying the common experience shared by several individuals, acknowledging the philosophical assumptions of the phenomenological tradition, collecting data, analyzing the data, and writing a report.

As such they are powerful for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivation and actions, and cutting through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom. Pure phenomenological research seeks essentially to describe rather than explain and to start from a perspective free from hypotheses or preconceptions (Faklaris, 2013).

#### a. Sampling

The participants for this study were the five (5) school heads assigned in the island schools of the Schools Division of Siargao who already have 3 years and above experience in handling an island school. The participants were chosen using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is characterized by the incorporation of specific criteria met by the participants at the moment of selection (Diaz, 2015).

The researcher deliberately selected the participants who could bring richness and depth to an understanding of the phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2007). The researchers chose the participants based on their experiences as to the number of years being assigned in the island

schools, location of the schools they were handling, and the distance of the schools from their residences.

Participants were personally approached while others were called by phone to solicit their approval to be part of the study. After they signified their interest, an informed consent and permission letter approved by the Schools Superintendent was given to them. Upon receipt of the letters, they promise to give their full cooperation and support to the researcher for them to be able to gather comprehensive data and information.

Phenomenological research typically involves a small number of participants (Boyd, 2001). It is maintained that the five participants are acceptable sample size of this study to effectually excavate the lived experiences from very common events to the most delicate secrets and victories of the school heads. Table 1 shows the summary of their demographics.

Table 1. Demographic information of the selected participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Years of Experience as School Head
SH A	F	41	4 yrs and 8 months
SH B	F	57	5 years and 6 months
SH C	M	47	6 yeas and 2 months
SH D	M	38	5 years
SH E	F	50	8

#### *Selection and Recruitment of the Participants*

Creswell (2008) posed that all the participants must have experienced the phenomenon that is being studied and be able to explain their experiences in detail. According to Vegafria

(2014), the selection of participants who would provide key information to help the researcher successfully answer the research questions is a critical part of a research study. For this purpose, a small sample of five were selected using the purposive sampling procedure. Maxwell (2005) supports the use of purposive sampling by describing it as a strategy in which particular individuals are selected deliberately to provide information that cannot be collected from other subjects.

The researcher followed the requirement for conducting research with human beings as participants by abiding to ethical considerations of recruiting each with voluntary involvement. They were formally asked to join the subject through a consent letter approved by the superintendent stating the purpose and the instruments used in the conduct of the study. Aside from the letter, the researchers personally talked to the participants to express gratitude and assured them that their participation in this study will be treated with utmost confidentiality and that results will be solely utilized for the purpose of the study in general.

#### *Research Locale*

The study was conducted at the five island schools in the Schools Division of Siargao namely, San Miguel Elementary School, Lanit-ag Elementary School, La Januza Elementary School, Dagohoy National High School, and Consolacion National High School. The said division is among the three divisions in the Province of Surigao del Norte, Caraga Region . Its main office is located at Dapa, Surigao del Norte. Figure 1 shows the political map of Siargao Island.

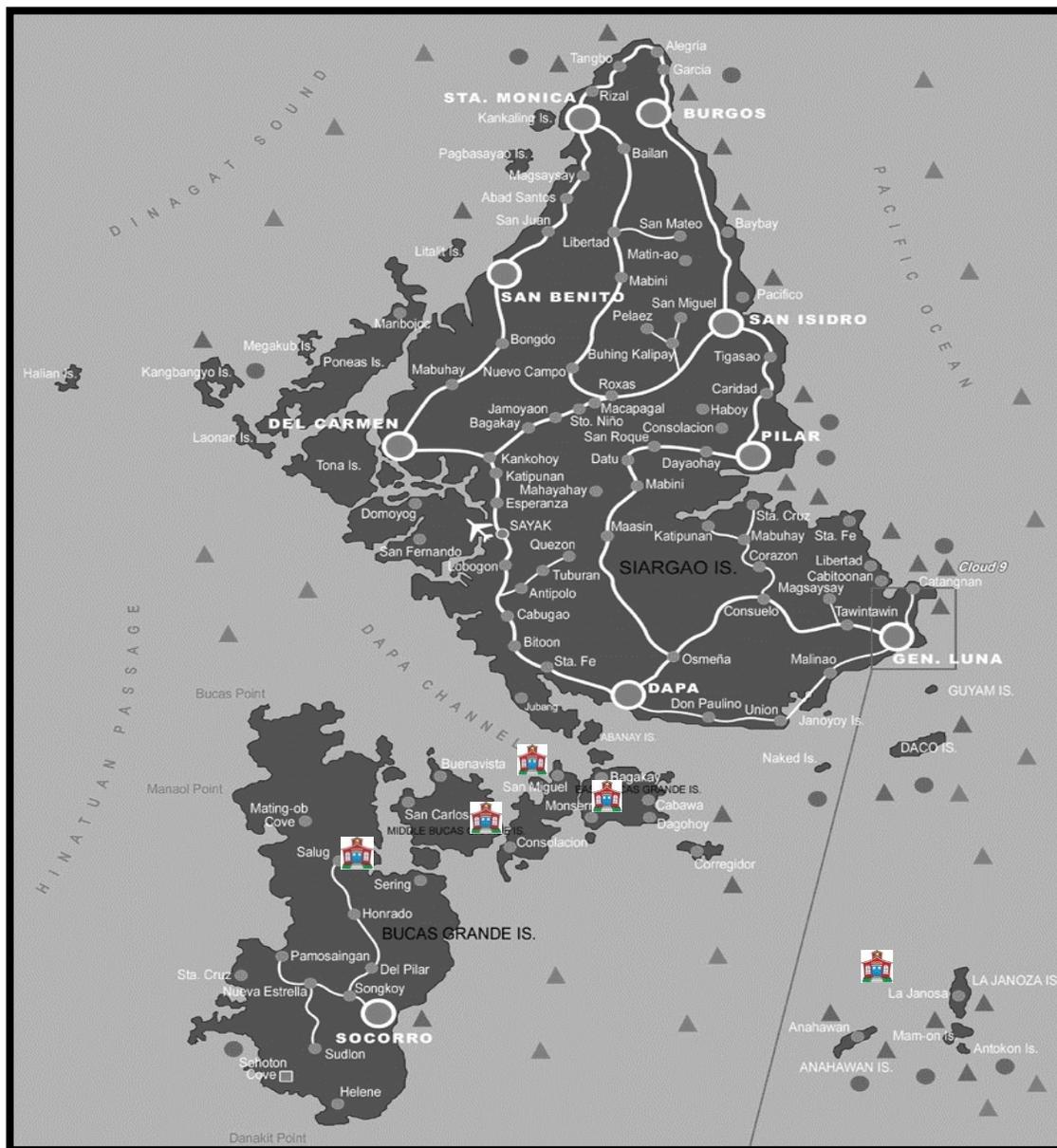


Figure 1. The Political Map of Siargao Island with the location of the five School heads assigned in the island schools

Legend:  Setting of the study

## b. Data Collection

### Instruments

Since the study is qualitative in nature, researchers prepared sets of open-ended questions from the grand tour question. Vegafria (2014) recommended that a grand tour question should commence a qualitative research procedure to lay the foundation of a research topic with respect to interviewing.

### Data Gathering Procedures

Data collection is a deliberate, conscious, systematic process that focuses on both data and process of the research activities so that others may comprehend how the study was performed and can judge its adequacy, strength and ethics (Rossman, 2003). The researchers asked permission to conduct this study from the Schools Division Superintendent of Siargao Division. They met the subject-participants, discuss about their participation in the said study and arrange the schedule for the observations and interview.

The method utilized in this study includes an in-depth interview and direct observation. Thus, the interview procedures according to Giorgi (2009) will be followed to ensure that the process will be achieved.

### Interview

To minimize the impact on the school heads' busy schedules, researchers offered the school heads the flexibility of selecting the most convenient time for the interview. The researchers visited the school in the morning to observe how the school started the day before the students came to their respective classes.

The validity of the sets of questions was verified through content validation. The researchers approached five Education Program Supervisors who are well-experienced in the principal position to comment and check the research questions. They reviewed the constructed questions describing the lived experiences of the school heads assigned in island schools in the interview instrument. Creswell (2009) describes this procedure as a substantial validation method to guarantee the reliability of the data.

The most appropriate data collection strategy for a phenomenological research is the profound interview. Existing literature (Kyale & Brinkman, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2010) coincides in that the phenomenological interview should be open or semi-structured. These two types of interviews allow the researchers to address the phenomenon profoundly, providing a space of aperture for the informants to express their experiences in detail, approaching reality as faithfully as possible. The detailed descriptions or interpretations brought by the participant in the profound-phenomenological interview should be as representative of the experienced reality as possible.

The focus of the phenomenological interview is the description of the meanings of the phenomena (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). These authors point out that is recommended to carry out some additional interviews to verify the information obtained, allow the participant the opportunity to provide further detail or expand on the information offered and, lastly, for the participant's final approval. As exposed, phenomenological interview is complex and requires a great deal of time to scrutinize the studied phenomenon with the necessary depth. It is therefore vital for the researcher to have excellent skills and/or competency in interviewing.

#### Recording of Data

Data collected during the interviews were recorded using a cell phone recorder. Precautions were taken to ensure that the audio tapes will be coded to preserve the confidentiality

of each participant. Once the interview is concluded, each audio tape was transcribed verbatim in an effort to ensure accuracy. Handwritten notes and photographs were also be taken for the purpose of adding depth and clarifying questions. These would also serve as the researcher's personal notes for further inquiry. As with the audio recordings, the photographs and handwritten notes were coded to preserve the confidentiality of each school head. The audio tapes, transcriptions, field notes, artifacts, other documents and data collected were reviewed as needed during the analysis and interpretation phases of this study. All audio tapes, transcriptions, field notes, artifacts, other documents and data collected that are related to this study were erased or shredded after the conclusion of the study.

Subsequent to reviewing all of the data sources, the material (interview transcripts and follow-up notes, observational notes and any physical artifacts) were manually coded by the researchers. To ensure immersion in the data, the researcher read and re-read the transcripts multiple times (Creswell, 2008). The data analysis was drawn identifying patterns and themes. This technique allowed the researcher to determine conceptual explanations of the phenomenon.

#### Direct Observations

The process of observation in the qualitative methods provides researchers with rich sources of data and places the researchers "where the action is, in a place where they can see what is going on" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Series of direct observations in different settings in order to filter out those subtle and covert communications that are often difficult to notice were conducted. Such direct observations helped researchers get a deeper understanding of the topic at hand. Yin (2003) claims that the process of observation in the case study method provides additional information about the case under review.

In this study, direct observations were conducted in the following settings and situations: the principals' office; faculty meetings, the principals' classroom visits; and the principals'

interactions with teachers and non-teaching staff. Schools were visited more frequently to capture the different behaviors and situations. Observations were expressed through field notes and journal writings.

### Data Analysis

This study used phenomenology to reveal the informants' lived experiences. It uses the descriptive phenomenological method, five-step method where procedures were processed based on its corresponding concept and meaning. The statements were transcribed and the text was given meaning units, concepts, and structure. Psychological implication further developed at the end of this research study.

Step 1: Assume the phenomenological attitude. The researchers' attitude is being separated from the phenomenological world to avoid contamination of the data. Presuppositions, experiences, theoretical concepts, and cultural background are put aside to see its content without any putting data from the researcher. This becomes true to describe further the consciousness of the informants' perspectives.

Step 2: Read entire written account for a sense of the whole. The second step in the data analysis requires the researcher to read the entire "native description" to get a sense of the whole experience (Giorgi, 2009; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Critical reflection is needed to give meanings to the transcriptions to present the data naturally.

Step 3: Delineate meaning units. The third step in the data analysis is the demarcation of "meaning units" within the narrative so that the data can be dealt with in manageable portions (Giorgi, 2009; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

Step 4: Transform the meaning units into psychologically sensitive statements or concepts of their lived-meanings. This requires transforming the meaning units into psychologically sensitive descriptive expressions of each of them. Taking each meaning unit in its third person

form, the research transforms it into a statement that expresses its essential psychological meanings. Then, the general structure of the lived-experience is synthesized from the participants' transformations when taken generally together in a comparative view by the researcher (Giorgi, 2009). The general structure of the experience is a descriptive paragraph which explains the origin of the concepts and meaning units which lays out the lived-experience of the researched topic from a psychological approach.

Step 5: Synthesize a general psychological structure of the experience based on the constituents of the experience. The fifth step in the analysis is the synthesis of the general psychological constituents of the experience. Constituents differ from the concept of elements because they are context dependent (Giorgi, 2009). Constituents therefore cannot be independent of each other, but are necessarily part of the whole structure.

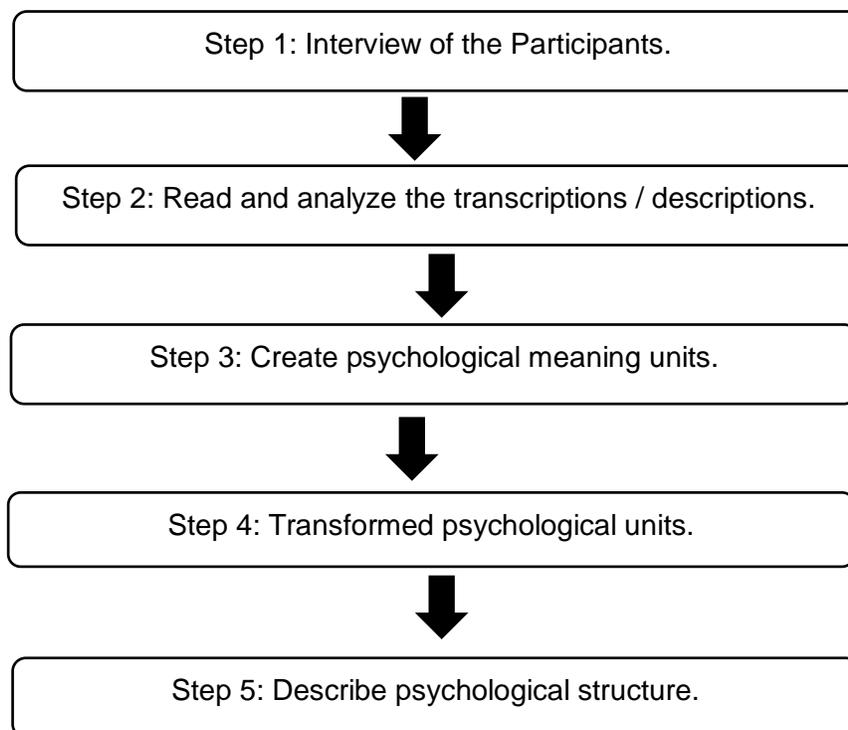


Figure 2: Data Analysis Process

### *Ethical Considerations*

Of prime importance in doing qualitative research, was strict compliance to ethical considerations (Creswell, 2010). Proper protocol was observed ranging from seeking the approval of the Schools Division Superintendent to conduct the study, to the district supervisor, and seeking the permission of all the school heads.

The researchers informed the participants of the schedule of the conduct of the interview. Proper etiquette and decorum were observed during the interview process. The participants were informed that all data where be recorded for purposes of proper transcription and analysis. They were informed also that anytime during the interview, they may opt not to answer the question or may even decide to stop participating in the interview.

After the interview, the recorded responses were played to give participants the time to listen and to decide whether to remove or extract portion or portions of the interview. Finally, to assume reliability and validity of the data, the participants were assured of confidentiality of their answers and that at the most proper time, all the data collected were destroyed to protect their identities. Transcripts and the translated versions were on the file and shall be made available upon request. This access to the inquiry's paper trail gives the readers and other researchers the ability to transfer conclusion of this inquiry to other cases, or to repeat, as closely as possible the procedures of this study.

## Discussion of Results and Recommendations

### *School Heads' Voice*

This chapter presents the analyses and interpretation of data on the the school heads' leadership practices and personal & professional characteristics exhibited manifested in their lived experiences in the island schools. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted for the purpose of this study. The interviews were bilingual in nature, conducted in both Surigaonon language and in English depending on the interviewees' ease and comfort with a particular language. All the formal interviews were audio tape-recorded, while a few informal conversations were recorded in the researchers' personal notebooks during and after the conversations. The data obtained were based on the transcription of the interviews which were subsequently coded.

### *Interviews*

*What are the leadership practices manifested in their lived experiences as a school head assigned in the island?*

### *Interview with the School Heads*

To answer this first grand tour question, three sub-questions were asked to explore the personal and professional characteristics exhibited by the school heads. In-depth questions were also employed so they can elaborate on their responses. They were given ample time to expound on their answers using their preferred language.

The first session of the interview was conducted to establish rapport with the participants and so that they will be confident in sharing their experiences especially their personal profile and

background experiences. Prompts in the second session of the interview were on the actual characteristics practiced in schools

Follow-up questions were also used to topics which require more clarifications and elaborations. During the interview process, each guiding question was pursued until the level of data saturation was achieved. Data saturation was realized when the participant's responses no longer provide any new information. During the interview data coding process, obvious themes emerged. Some themes were in line with specific questions and other themes were common across a variety of different questions. These emerging themes are presented in this chapter.

***Leadership Practice One: Collaboratively develop, advocate and enact a shared Vision, Mission and Core Values***

Leadership practice one portrays how the school heads collaboratively develop, advocate, and enact a shared vision, mission and core values of high quality education and academic success and social and emotional well-being of each learner. O'Donovan (2020) describes the vision statement as what the organization will become in the future. It is a broad and inspirational statement intended to engender support from stakeholders. Bennis (2019) defines mission statement as how the organization differentiates itself from other organizations in its industry. It is more specific than the vision statement and is intended to show how stakeholders' needs will be satisfied. The values statement defines how people in the organization should behave. It provides a guideline for decision making.

Table 1 presents the first leadership practice which emerged from different categories, concepts and psychological transformed meaning units.

Table 1: *Leadership Practice One: Collaboratively advocate and enact a shared Vision, Mission and Core Values*

REFERENCE NUMBER	PSYCHOLOGICAL TRANSFORMED MEANING UNITS	CONCEPTS	CATEGORIES	THEME
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<b>A18</b>	The school head dreams to have a school site for Senior High School.	Dreaming for a school site	Advocating & enacting collaboratively a mission	Collaboration
<b>B27</b>	The school head wants some physical changes of the school.	Wanting to improve the school's physical plant	Advocating & enacting collaboratively a mission	
<b>C21</b>	The School Head wants the school to be academically performing.	Wanting the school to perform academically	Advocating & enacting collaboratively a mission	
<b>D15</b>	The School Head is collecting and soliciting ideas from the teachers and staff when it comes to decision-making.	Collaborating with the members of the school community	Advocating a vision for the school, in collaboration with the school community	
<b>E15</b>	The School Head dreams the school to perform academically, lead in all curricular activities and will have a conducive learning environment.	Dreaming the school to be one of the leader island barangay school.	Advocating & enacting collaboratively a mission	
<b>A23</b>	The School Head and external stakeholders plan for the improvement of the school.	Practicing shared governance	Developing a shared understanding of and commitment to the VMV	
<b>B31</b>	The School Head has vision for the school to be implemented.	Aiming to be a visionary leader	Advocating & enacting collaboratively a mission	
<b>C24</b>	The School Head wants the school to be physically improved.	Envisioning the school to become a conducive learning environment	Advocating & enacting collaboratively a mission	
<b>D18</b>	The school community implements functional and sustainable projects.	Applying continuous improvement in the implementation of PPAs	Using CI collaboratively to achieve the VMV	
<b>E19</b>	The School Head considers the	Collaborating with the	Advocating a vision for the school, in	

	external stakeholders as partners in implementing the school's projects.	members of the school community in implementing the school's projects	collaboration with the school community	
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The island school heads *collaboratively advocate and enact a mission for the school to promote the academic success and social and emotional well-being of each learner*. Since direction-setting in the school environment is an essential aspect of instructional leadership, framing and communicating the school's goals through a mission statement is the perfect way to communicate the direction and focus of the school environment. Clear, measurable and time based goals are at the heart of the island schools experience. An informant candidly said, "Five to 10 years from now...the school will be one of the leader island barangay schools in the division. It would be a performing school academically and in all curricular activities. In terms of the physical aspect, the school also will have a conducive learning environment (E15)." Another informant was spontaneous when she said, "And when it comes to academic, I want that CNHS we will be academically performing C21)."

Island school heads have mission statement, and it is a powerful tool that helps them to codify and give direction to the enthusiasm, passion and expertise that they bring to the school. Two informants expressed their mission in these statements: "My dream is to have a school site ...to offer senior high school ...according to the parents it is better for the children to stay rather than going to Dapa because it is risky for their children ...so that they can look after their children and minimize expenses (A18)." Secondly, "So ang akong gajung gitan-aw nga ang eskwelahan gwapa na and mga building and I am very happy nga gidungog nas Ginoo ang akong mga pangandoy nga ang eskwelahan, ang 5 classrooms girepair na, major repair, nalipay nako...kay ang sa una, dilapidated nga mga buildings nga nagkahuyog-huyog na ang mga ceilings (C24)." An informant who expressed herself in a more general paradigm said "Of course, you have to

show that you are a leader nan isa ka institution, a leader who is visionary, having core values especially in the island school because we set as a role model in the community (B31).” They believe that good goals, good mission statements that are well articulated and actively communicated, offer the possibility for radical change and success. As expressed by another informant, “... I wanted to have some physical changes (B27).” The positivity of their missions can surprise, inspire, and transform the school and the community as well. It provides a clearly stated purpose of the school and the goals they have for succeeding.

Island school heads have unique blend of collaboratively advocating and enacting these missions to promote the academic success and social and emotional well-being of each learner. As pointed out by Kustigian (2017), in schools, mission is the purpose of education. The mission is the reason why schools exist and the mission statement should reflect the purpose of schooling. The mission needs to be the cornerstone of every aspect of decision making. It is primarily the leaders who are responsible for communicating the mission, but mission permeates through successful schools from the highest administrator to the ground level worker. Perfetto (2017) also said that every aspect of curriculum, instruction, and assessment should be linked to the school's mission statement describing schools without mission as, "a home for freelance tutors of subjects". If a school does not have a mission, it will lack direction and purpose.

Moreover, island school heads *promote the vision and mission for the school, in collaboration with members of the school community, on the successful learning and development of each child and on instructional and organizational practices that promote such practices*. Vision as defined by West-Burnham J. (2016), is a clear statement of what the school is trying to achieve so that all stakeholders – teachers, students, their families and community members – are working together. It is about looking forward and seeking to motivate and unify everyone to achieve the very best for the students. The vision needs to capture the aims of a school in its particular context, and guide and inform the preparation of a school development plan. According to McKinsey &

Co. (2018), developing a vision for the school is an important part of being an effective school leader. Hence, island school heads have developed and promote vision for the school. An informant expressed these thoughts aptly when she said, “Maybe as a school head, I’m not too strict, but then whatever they need, I call their attention to what’s best for the school—for example, decision making. I will not impose myself, but I am more of collecting and soliciting ideas to come up with the best thing to do or the priority areas. I ask them first (D15).” More expressions of collaboration in leading by island school heads are echoed in these statements, “Of course, sir...they are our immediate partner in implementing the projects of the school ...without them nothing will happen to the project of the schools ...their support is indeed important (E19)” which implies that, they are collaborating with the members of the school community in realizing their vision.

*Developing a shared understanding of and commitment to the mission, vision, and core values within the school and the community* is strongly exhibited by the island school heads. In the words of one informant, “For the teachers ...since I am new, and I can feel that they are all good to me including the barangay officials. We talk about our plans for the school (A23).” Shared understanding of and commitment to the mission and vision possessed by the school community embody the values of the community and is the foundation for actions that will lead to school improvement.

In most cases, the development of the school vision will be led by the school leader but this is not always the case: the island school heads came to their schools and found that the community has a clear vision for the school, based on their understanding of the school and community over time. Barber, et.al (2018) posits that it is important that the vision unites stakeholders around the school’s journey of improvement. A school where community members and the school leader are in disagreement will be an unhappy place where much energy is wasted rather than focusing on the key purpose of improving learning for the learners. Batra (2016) states

that if stakeholders are to support the school's development, they need to be involved in understanding and developing the school's vision. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the school leader to inform and support their development. This may be challenging, especially if the vision involves improvement that is different from what has been historically provided. In one context, it may be right for the school leader to be quite directive and this may be appreciated by the school community; in a different context, such an approach may be resented and lead to problems.

*To achieve the vision, fulfill the mission, and promote the core values of the school, the island school heads use methods of continuous improvement.* Despite the challenges in leading an island school, school heads embrace the processes of continuous improvement. It is evident when one informant said, "I introduced Project SPICES - Strengthening Partnership in the Community and Engagement of the Stakeholders ...a very functional and sustainable project... (D18)." These principles of continuous improvement help them ensure that programs, projects and activities in the school improvement plan do not become a check-the-box approach but a strategy that targets specific needs of individual schools thus, achieving the vision, fulfilling the mission, and promoting the core values of the school. They coordinate with the members of the school community as to CI implementations for they believe that without them their projects will not be sustained.

As what Myung, et. al. (2020) said that continuous improvement engages the knowledge and know-how of multiple stakeholders to discover, implement, and spread evidence-based changes that work locally to improve outcomes for students. Data on changes are regularly collected and reviewed to ensure that changes are indeed improvements and, if not, to make adjustments to practice. Thus, as Elgart (2017) claimed, an effective continuous improvement system in a school system emphasizes the learner's experience, stakeholder engagement, and

data collection and analysis to guide and inform both planning and executing a school's improvement journey. teaching and learning”.

Furthermore, in a study of McKinsey & Co. (2018) that examined a number of educational systems across the world to see what factors led to improvement, it was found that ‘almost all school leaders say that setting vision and direction’ are among ‘the biggest contributors to their success’.

### ***Leadership Practice Two: Act ethically and in accordance with Professional Standards***

As expected of the school leaders, the island school heads who are also leaders in their communities and models of leadership for teachers, learners and stakeholders maintain the standards of exemplary professional conduct.

Table 2, illustrates the sample of the second leadership practice which emerged from different categories, concepts and psychological transformed meaning units.

Leadership practice two reveals that island school heads act ethically and in accordance with professional standards to promote each student's academic success and social and emotional well-being.

Table 2: Leadership Practice Two: Act ethically and in accordance with Professional Standards

<b>REFERE NCE NUMBE R</b>	<b>PSYCHOLOGIC AL TRANSFORME D MEANING UNITS</b>	<b>CONCEPTS</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>THEME</b>
<b>A29</b>	An island school head needs to be optimistic in dealing with the members of the school community.	Promoting the values of positivity, responsibility and culture	Safeguarding and promoting positive values	Cultural sensitivity
<b>B34</b>	The School Head listens to his teachers and practice	Promoting the values of democracy and individual freedom	Safeguarding and promoting positive values	

	democracy in the school.			
<b>C28</b>	The School Head calls the attention of the teachers and listens to their issues and concerns.	Understanding all staff members' background and cultures	Leading and understanding all staff members' backgrounds and cultures	
<b>D30</b>	The School Head gives importance on listening to the teachers' concerns.	Giving importance to teachers' voices	Leading and understanding all staff members' backgrounds and cultures	

The island school heads *safeguard and promote the values of democracy, individual freedom and responsibility, equity, social justice, community, and diversity*. They are practicing the process of moral formation that requires their schools to become morally normative communities in which there is a core set of commitments that define them. "...Since I am in the island school, we need to be positive, especially in dealing with the teachers and the people there with unique character compared to the mainland (A29)" was an honest confession of an informant. Due to the fact that island school heads have a daily influence on the lives of the learners, they are often held to high standards. In the midst of all of the responsibilities, they are required to serve as strong role models and demonstrate ethical behaviors as they interact with learners, teachers, parents and the whole community. In addition, developing and following a professional code of ethics helps them to make sure they act in a professional and ethical manner at all times.

Covaleskie (2016) pointed out that schools clearly cannot do the total job of moral formation, but they are more likely to be successful in fostering the virtues of democratic citizenship if they are themselves clear and consistent in their practice of democratic virtues. So if schools are to be morally normative communities, the first two tasks they face are to (1) be welcoming and (2) demonstrate consistent moral clarity. Thus, as cited by Bond (2015) the school

leaders must fulfill professional responsibilities with honesty and integrity. They must support the principle of due process and should protect the civil and human rights of all individuals.

Another informant said "...Democratic Ma'am. I should say democratic because I know how to listen to my teachers especially if they ask na ma late sila gamay ... I consider their situation... (B34)" which implies that democracy is "a way of life" and is based on faith in the dignity and worth of every single individual as a human being. The object of a democratic education is, therefore, the full, all-round development of every individual's personality. As posited by Shechtman (2016), democratic education and citizenship understanding will not develop without strong democratic leadership. This is supported by Lynch (2020) when he said that is not fallacious to say that education is pivotal to the preservation of democracy. In fact, democracy and education go *pari passu*. The extent to which democracy succeeds in any country is a function of its level of education. Therefore, the continuous utilization of education will lead to a more perfect level of democracy in our country.

The island school heads also *lead with interpersonal and communication skill, social-emotional insight, and understanding of all staff members' backgrounds and cultures*. They build interpersonal and communication skills, social-emotional insight, and understanding of backgrounds and cultures to foster the leadership capacity of teachers and stakeholders. One informant said, "It is important Sir to listen because kay ug dili ka mamati dili man pud ka nila pamatian ...dili man sab sila mosugot kun naa kay mga hangyo...whenever I ask their favor mosunod cla...kay nanay man lagi ako (D30)." School leadership is described as "people intensive" which means that school leaders are constantly listening and interacting with someone. Another informant shared, "It depends upon the situation sir...like for example sir I need their attention tapos they will not follow that is the time na mo change ko into other style. Sometimes I also use consultative... I call their attention in my office and ask them why this happened (C28)."

Effective leadership is not a dramatic, one-time event, but rather an everyday affair that requires the "ability to communicate, listen intently, and maintain an empathetic disposition that builds trust and understanding" (Maudling et al., 2015). According to Brearley (2014), research studies characterize effective leaders as leaders who turn schools into emotionally and socially intelligent schools. The emotionally intelligent school is a school where leaders lead learning; where influence replace authority; where dialogue replaces yelling; and reflection replaces punishment. Ford (2016) explains that the school head controls the tone and flow of interpersonal communication in the school setting. Therefore, if school heads do not demonstrate strong interpersonal communication skills, this will negatively affect the confidence and trust that teachers and stakeholders have in them. In the case of the island school heads, they maintain the highest standards of professional conduct and they hold high expectations of themselves and the school community to ensure educational professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice and fairness in accordance with and beyond their professional responsibility as school leader. The school community expects that their behavior exemplifies ethical and moral integrity. They serve as role models who should recognize that their conduct, both on and off the job, can profoundly impact their professional image.

### ***Leadership Practice Three: Cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive School Community***

All members of the school community are born out of and live in relationships. Island school heads recognize that relationships which are fundamental and intrinsic part of being since we cannot separate our existence from our relationships.

Leadership practice three highlights the community of care and support for learners. This leadership practice spells out how the island school heads cultivate an inclusive, caring and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and the social and emotional well-being of each student.

Table 3, illustrates the sample of the third leadership practice which emerged from the different categories, concepts and psychological transformed meaning units.

Table 3: Leadership Practice Three: Cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive School Community

REFERENCE NUMBER	PSYCHOLOGICAL TRANSFORMED MEANING UNITS	CONCEPTS	CATEGORIES	THEME
<b>A35</b>	The School Head has the courage to adapt to the stakeholders as B3efficiently as possible.	Creating positive relationship with the stakeholders	Creating and sustaining positive and productive relationships	Camaraderie
<b>B38</b>	The School Head must be approachable, kind and understanding.	Possessing positive and productive relationships with the stakeholders	Creating and sustaining positive and productive relationships	
<b>C38</b>	The School Head should have a positive and harmonious relationships with the people in the barangay.	Having a positive and harmonious relationship with the stakeholders	Creating and sustaining positive and productive relationships	

The island school heads *create and sustain positive, collaborative, and productive relationships with stakeholders and members of the learning community*. It is said that behind every great school stands a great school head. Although this common denominator has withstood the test of time, the characteristics associated with greatness are easily identified. These characteristics transcend any school setting, public or private, and generally begin with the school head.

“First and foremost, ma’am the positive attitude of the school head must be approachable syempre if kung dili kaw approachable sa imo kaibanan simay moduyod nimu...kind sab kaw kinahanglan kabalo pud kaw mosabot. They can right away go to you and they can call me anytime through my cellphone. If they have questions and doubts...mga things nga dili nila

masabtan they can contact me anytime (B38)” were the words verbalized by an informant. Thus, in order to build the relationships, they need to have positive relationship with them. They created teams, and gained an in-depth knowledge of each and every member of the school community. This is supported by these statements shared by the second informant, “Then, another one is, you should have a positive or harmonious relationships with the people in the barangay. So that whenever you have your programs and projects, they are very willing to extend their hands for help in the implementation of your projects (C38).”

It is the leadership of the school head that sets the tone of the school, the climate for teaching, the level of professionalism and morale of the teachers, and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become (Dinham, 2017). If a school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centered place, if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost always point to the school head’s leadership as the key to success. One highly successful public school administrator stated that in building relationships with teachers and the whole community, he gets to know them on a professional, yet personal basis. This approach enables him to build a personalized school system, one in which all staff members pull in the same direction.

As stressed by Duncan, et.al (2017), the development of healthy, meaningful relationships with all stakeholder groups is instrumental in helping school leaders successfully manage the complex contexts in which today’s schools exist. Research supports the importance of school administrators building relationships with all people involved in the school community. If and when trusting relationships are built, the school will be a learning community with a positive school culture that leads to increased student achievement.

One informant also shared, “As a school head, I must have the courage to adapt to them as efficiently as possible. So whatever positive character they have, I will go with them rather than insist that I will be the one to lead them. Maybe, those are the characteristics I should possess

(A35).” Island school heads adapt to their present situation in the island together with the members of the school community. They embraced the adaptive leadership style. There is no disputing that the adaptive leadership process “is uncomfortable, as it challenges our most deeply held beliefs and suggests that deeply held values are losing relevance, bringing to the surface legitimate but competing perspectives or commitments” (Australian Public Service Commission, 2015).

As pointed out by Heifetz and Linsky (2017), it is important that educational leaders at all levels exercise adaptive leadership to allow those perspectives to come to the fore. The multiple and sometimes competing viewpoints and ideas are required to examine complex issues from new angles. Robertson and Webber (2017) called for educational leaders to “move past the practices that were successful in an industrial model of education to address the ambiguity and complexity of working in a rapidly changing, diverse society”. There is a need, as outlined by Kelly and Peterson (2015), for school heads to have both problem finding and problem solving skills in order to address not only routine challenges, but also unique emergent issues.

***Leadership Practice Four: Develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel***

Building individual leadership capacity in the island schools will impact on teams throughout the school and beyond. The appropriate culture is set by the island school head and is maintained by taking a personal and constant interest in the individual development of each personnel.

This particular leadership practice shows that the island school heads, in collaboration with stakeholders, are developing the professional capacity and practice of all school personnel to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.

Leadership practice four stresses that the measure of a leader’s success is the number of leaders he or she has developed or grown, and the number who have moved on to take up

leadership roles. Growing leaders is not just about picking out the willing and able; it is also about leadership engagement; that is, ensuring all personnel are engaging in leadership activities at some level or another.

Table 4, illustrates the sample of the fourth leadership practice which emerged from the different categories, concepts and psychological transformed meaning units.

Table 4: Leadership Practice Four: Developed the professional capacity and practice of school personnel

<b>REFEREN CE NUMBER</b>	<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL TRANSFORMED MEANING UNITS</b>	<b>CONCEPTS</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>THEME</b>
<b>A49</b>	The School Head attends leadership trainings in the national, regional and division levels.	Attending professional development activities	Tending to their own learning and effectiveness	Capacity-building
<b>B45</b>	The seminar on leadership and management helps the School Head in leading her subordinates.	Considering seminars as great help in leading the school	Tending to their own learning and effectiveness	
<b>C55</b>	Despite the challenges encountered in studying Master of Arts, it helps the School Head to grow professionally.	Growing professionally by enrolling graduate studies	Tending to their own learning and effectiveness	
<b>D52</b>	The School Head learns a lot from the School Head Development	Learning from professional trainings	Tending to their own learning and effectiveness	

	Program (SHDP).			
<b>E59</b>	Most of the topics presented during the SHDP really play significant part in his role as a school head.	Considering SHDP as the most important training program for school heads	Tending to their own learning and effectiveness	
<b>A63</b>	The School Head emphasizes the significance of being an MA graduate or studying graduate studies.	Emphasizing the importance of continuous learning and improvement	Empowering and motivating teachers and staff to the highest levels of professional practice	
<b>B58</b>	The School Head trusts and believes the capacity of the teachers.	Believing her teachers' capacity	Empowering and motivating teachers and staff to the highest levels of professional practice	
<b>C67</b>	The School Head encourages the teachers to enroll graduate studies and attend series of seminars.	Encouraging the teachers to grow professionally	Empowering and motivating teachers and staff to the highest levels of professional practice	
<b>D64</b>	The School Head delegates the teachers and staff and solicits ideas from them as to planning the school's improvements.	Empowering and motivating the school community	Empowering and motivating teachers and staff to the highest levels of professional practice	
<b>E76</b>	The School Head cites the importance of	Promoting professional health	Promoting the work-life balance of faculty and staff.	

	finishing graduate studies.			
<b>A75</b>	The school head displays positive thinking with proper grooming and disposition.	Displaying and promoting positive work-life balance	Promoting the work-life balance of faculty and staff.	
<b>B69</b>	The school head is stretching his patience.	Practicing positive attitude & professional health	Promoting the work-life balance of faculty and staff.	

Island school heads *tend to their own learning and effectiveness through training, study, and improvement*. In today's educational arena, challenges can arise at any time, and to be an effective school leader, school heads need to be able to respond to those challenges with intelligence, strategy, and expertise. If the school leader is having difficulty responding to unanticipated challenges, or if the school leader simply interested in improving his/her leadership skills, the school leader should strongly consider attending in some leadership trainings. This is evident in the island school heads as one of the informants shared her happy feeling saying, "I have leadership trainings. I have attended training on the national level as well as in the region about leadership. For most of them, I have learned how to be a leader. It helps me a lot since I am now three years of being a leader. I've learned those things with my school, especially being with the teachers for me it's not kung pwede the teacher must be intelligent, not the basis, but the character of the teacher is more important and in dealing with them (A49)."

Leadership trainings have helped the island school heads in teaching them the essential skills and techniques they need in order for them to look at challenges from a different perspective. One informant agreed as he says, "Seminar on leadership and management...it helps me much in leading my subordinates ...it enhances my knowledge and be updated (B45)." Thus, doing so can add clarity in dealing difficult situations, and also promotes wisdom and facilitates self-confidence.

Leadership training courses attended by the island school heads taught them the skills they need to lead effectively, including the often tricky skills needed to persuade and influence people- even those over whom they have little direct authority. An informant narrated, “The last professional training I have attended was SHDP School Head Development Program. I have learned a lot from the practice, which is very useful for me as SH. There are many things I have gained from that training which I do not know kung wala pa ako ng SHDP yet (D52).”

Another informant also declared, “I think most of the topics presented during the SHDP really play significant in my role as a school head Sir and if I would have to choose among the KRAs being presented, I think that’s all about the financial aspects of being a school head should be one of the areas that really give me ahh...that I learned how to manage well the finances of the school so that operations would go smoothly. Another one is on instructional leadership, how I am going to give technical support and how I am going to deal with my teachers so that all of us will grow together (E59).” Hence, leadership training programs allowed the island school heads to study how leadership ideas have emerged and changed over time, helping them make sense of the often conflicting ideas about leadership that cause so much confusion. They also got the opportunity to network with other leaders, and to draw on their experiences.

Despite the distance and geographical location of their station, the island school heads believed that enrolling to graduate studies can help them gain the skills, knowledge and values to do their best work and better position for more opportunities for advancement in their career. An informant shared, “Yes, ma’am it also helps me to grow professionally ...i already have 45 units... I wasn’t able to finish it because of the struggle of waking up early and travel by sea from Consolacion to Dapa then to the City only to attend my Saturday Classes. There is really a problem on the distance (C55).”

As posited by Cunliffe (2019), pursuing a graduate program allows the school leader the opportunity to learn as much as he/she can about his/her area of interest through focused

education, expanding on his/her technical abilities, honing his/her skills, and essentially becoming an expert in the field of education. In the case of the island school heads, enrolling to graduate program have helped them to gain more flexibility in their current work, and helped them prepare you for a bigger career transition.

According to Salazar (2017), today's school heads need to grow and learn throughout their careers to adapt to the changing needs of students and schools. The technical, conceptual and public skills demanded of educational leaders have increased dramatically over the last decade. With the widespread acceptance of the need for schools to improve, it is impossible to ignore the critical needs of school leaders to be more effective at their work. They must receive professional development aiming at helping them to be more effective, knowledgeable and qualified to facilitate continuous improvement.

Educational leaders who participate in professional development programs update and extend their knowledge and improve their performance on the job by applying new knowledge and skills to implement the best educational practices in schools (Şenol, 2019). Thus, professional development of school leaders should continue and be sustainable after they have been appointed to their schools.

*Empowering and motivating teachers and staff to the highest levels of professional practice and to continuous learning and improvement* are practiced by the island school heads in their schools. Another informant shared, "It is a good help for a leader, and if you are a graduate, you can learn more about leadership and management. I am not a graduate though I have master units...but then for me, it is not necessary pero it is good enough if the leader can do whatever best for the school not only for the teachers, the students but the whole schools (A63)." Amidst challenges of the island school heads, still, he/she is the curator and custodian of the school's vision, missions and core values. As a result, he/she should provide the inspiration to achieve the school's vision and missions, grow people to achieve the school's vision and missions, thrive on

change to lead the school towards its chosen destination, and collaborate with different interest groups to achieve the school's vision and missions.

Island school heads also encouraged their teachers as to professional development to address their specific roles and responsibilities. As narrated by an informant, "For the teachers, I really dream them to professionally grow, that is why I am always encouraging them to enroll masteral courses and attend series of seminars for them to improve professionally kay kung ato ng himoon, makatabang gajud nato, to deliver instructions to the best that we can, mao na sila nga ako gajung gi-encourage kay kana naang arang gajud pud kalisud if 20 years na but Teacher 1 ra gihapon sila kay wala ilang ikasupport nga documents (C67).

Barth (2016) pointed out that among educational policy makers, researchers and practitioners, there is an emerging consensus that teacher professional development is vitally important to educational reform. In fact, it seems trite to assert that teacher professional development is critically important to school improvement focused on enhanced student learning outcomes. Nevertheless, there continues to be a need to communicate the importance of continuous learning and development for educators, individually and collectively, to people in and out of schools.

In the study conducted by Bredeson (2016), he found out that when teachers are engaged in the design, delivery and content of professional development, the outcomes are much more likely to meet teachers' needs, and have a significant influence on teacher thinking and classroom practices. School heads are key actors in helping build teacher capacity as autonomous learners and practitioners.

The island school heads trusted and believed in the capacity of the teachers and personnel. "You just have to give your trust, believe in the capacity of your teachers but in most cases we should have to inculcate to them that what's best for the children would really give you

back blessings in life so permi gajud nahu sila ingnon nga kumbaga ... although in some cases I imposed rules and regulations but not that in a strict way (B58),” another informant shared.

“Well, I think ...by delegating, I am balanced ... I am understanding and being open ...we must be honest as they say many heads are better than one... every time I have plan... there should be soliciting ideas from them and being consultative... same with the parents, (D64)” posits by one informant. Hence, distributed leadership, the idea that no one person at the top of the hierarchy makes all the decisions that will affect the work lives of the school community. Instead, the school head empowers teachers and staff to run crucial aspects of a school, such as admissions, professional development and new teacher mentoring.

According to Bayler (2017), teacher empowerment involves investing teachers with the right to participate in the determination of school goals and policies as informed by their professional judgment. By empowering teachers, teachers can discover their potential and limitations for themselves as well as developing competence in their professional development. This makes teacher empowerment a crucial issue.

The findings of Schwartz (2017) in his study is similar as he pointed out that distributing leadership when done well will create a community of people on the same page, working hard toward defined goals. And when teachers feel valued and trusted, they are more likely to trust and empower their learners. And when students are empowered to lead, they not only learn to trust their own capabilities -- they also produce their best work.

*Promoting the personal and professional health, well-being, and work-life balance of faculty and staff* is being practice by the island school heads. Promoting professional health is emphasized by one informant as she shared, “Yes, ma’am, very much important for a school head. I think no school head does not have masteral units. I only have master units. Next year I am planning to finish because I already have 39 units ... I must finish my graduate school aside

from promotion...with graduate school, I will become a knowledgeable school head, especially on the managerial aspect of the school head (E76).” As educational leaders, island school heads have been undergoing many changes in the era of globalization due to diverse needs and expectations of the stakeholders of education. With this, the need to promote professional health of educational leaders to fulfill their roles is crucial.

One informant proudly says, “Well, am. Positive attitude to display as a school head of course I must set my mind with positive thinking with proper grooming and disposition, keep on smiling para maaliwalas ang araw mo kailangan kahit may mga problema...smile pa rin. Another is proper planning to be prepared to be guided with the daily routine and to be systematic (A75).” Thus, positive work-life balance is also displayed and promoted by the island school heads as they seek to change things in accordance with changes in their own priorities, physical, psychological or both. Another informant agreed as he says, “...I must stretch my patience I have to sustain. I also met teachers who are tardy most of the time ...do not know how to follow instructions, and very complaining teachers. I just keep on reminding them of their duties and responsibilities, but if she/he is the cause of the delay ...then, I have to give the assignment to other teachers (B69).”

When island school heads feel a greater sense of control and ownership over their own lives, they tend to have better relationships with management and are able to leave work issues at work and home issues at home. As cited by Barth (2016), balanced employees tend to feel more motivated and less stressed out at work, which thereby increases company productivity and reduces the number of conflicts among coworkers and management.

Schwartz (2017) mentioned that schools who gain a reputation for encouraging work-life balance have become very attractive to teachers and staff. These schools also tend to enjoy higher employee retention rates, which results in less time-consuming training, more loyalty, and a higher degree of in-house expertise.

The study conducted by Crozier-Durham (2017) finds individual school head's agency, energy, mastery and efficacy is important to achieving work/life balance and that managing the workload is the fulcrum of that balance. It identifies a range of actions or strategies that appear to be important in effecting a satisfactory balance between work and personal life.

More studies have shown that school leaders who have a positive work-life balance do a better job at work, so promoting this balance is beneficial to individuals and the school.

### ***Leadership Practice Five: Manage school operations and resources***

This leadership practice stresses that the island school heads manage school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Leadership practice five shows that the island school heads act responsibly and in an ethical manner with the school's monetary and nonmonetary resources, engaging in effective budgeting, spending and accounting practices.

Table 5, illustrates the sample of the fifth leadership practice which emerged from the different categories, concepts and psychological transformed meaning units.

Table 5: Leadership Practice Five: Managed school operations and resources

REFERENCE NUMBER	PSYCHOLOGICAL TRANSFORMED MEANING UNITS	CONCEPTS	CATEGORIES	THEMES
<b>A89</b>	The school head taps the stakeholders in mobilizing school resources.	Tapping & engaging the school community in managing the resources	Acting responsibly with the school's monetary and nonmonetary resources	Clarity and Transparency
<b>B84</b>	Knowing the minimal amount of the MOOE, the school head creates initiatives by tapping the stakeholders when it comes to financial resources to solve the issues and concerns of the school.	Creating initiatives to address the priority improvement areas of the school	Acting responsibly with the school's monetary and nonmonetary resources	
<b>C73</b>	The school head practices transparency and accountability especially as to financial resources.	Practicing transparency and accountability	Acting responsibly with the school's monetary and nonmonetary resources	

As pointed out by Alberta Education (2019), the school head effectively plans, organizes and manages the human, physical and financial resources of the school and identifies the areas of need. He/she ensures that school operations align with legal frameworks such as: provincial legislation, regulation and policy; as well as school authority policy, directives and initiatives and

the school head utilizes principles of teaching, learning and student development to guide management decisions and the organization of learning.

An informant shared with honesty saying, "Sometimes, since MOOE is already not enough... Sometimes, we solicit to stakeholders. Sa una pwede mi mka fund raising but now dili na walay mga kwarta ang mga tao. There are some we ask from abroad actually we are given hundred reams of bond paper but not like before that we can ask from the PTA actually, we have yearly fund raising event and we able to have project with its proceeds but now mag lisod jud mi bisan mag labor lang (A89)." The statements imply that the stakeholders of the island schools have a hand and a greater stake in providing assistance to the education of the young learners as they are the agents in the community with the most suitable and adequate resources, and this involvement spells a change. Their role is necessary to cater the total development and improvement of the school through collaboration and shared responsibilities.

To help solve the budget mismatch of the school, island school heads are engaging their external stakeholders, the BLGU and LGU to gather ideas and opinions to help them shape financial decisions because they believe that this approach has distinct advantages over the traditional approach of the school leaders developing a budget-cutting plan. One of the informants narrated, "And then knowing these mga problems that truly need attention and knowing the amount of the MOOE allocated to operate the school, it cannot really suffice Sir, Maam. So you need to have an initiative on how to meet or to address these problems in school. So, kinahanglan ka mo-tap especially the BLGUs, the LGUs or whoever generous persons that could help you to solve these problems so that the learning environment will be positive for the teachers and for the learners. So dapat naa kay initiative kinsay imng duolon, how to solve these problems knowing the minimal amount of the MOOE (B84)."

To prevent the conflicts, doubts or serious administrative complaints, the actual utilization of the school MOOE and other financial resources is disclosed by the island school heads to the

internal and external stakeholders of the school. Another informant said, “For the donors I am also very transparent to them, reports ug unsay mga donations nga among nadawat from the stakeholders (C73),” hence, all stakeholders wanted to be guaranteed that public funds are properly utilized for what it is intended for –the public service.

Transparency board which shall display the liquidation report of school funds are posted in conspicuous places within the school premises. Reports are clear, easy-to-read, accessible and up to date. Cash Disbursement Register (CDR) of the schools were validated by the School Principal, School Disbursing Officer, Division Accountant, and the Schools Division Superintendent.

As emphasized by Rashida (2017), a good school management system facilitates transparency in school administration and creates an environment where parents can closely monitor their child’s performance, teachers can collaborate more efficiently and leakages in school budgets can be identified & prevented.

Managing school operations and resources is the part of leadership that is more the administrative or science aspect that can be taught, learned and mastered over time. Appropriate resources allocation demands that they school leader be in tune with every aspect of the school's operation. Managing resources and operations must be done with diligence and accountability but we can never forget the blueberries (Alberta Education, 2019).

***Leadership Practice 6: Engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal and mutually beneficial ways***

Island school heads also engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student’s academic success and well-being. Thus, the quality of education offered by the island schools can be considered a factor on stakeholders’ involvement.

Table 6, illustrates the sixth leadership practice which emerged from the different categories and psychological transformed meaning units.

Table 6 Leadership Practice 6: Engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal and mutually beneficial ways

<b>REFERENCE NUMBER</b>	<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL TRANSFORMED MEANING UNITS</b>	<b>CONCEPTS</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>THEMES</b>
<b>A98</b>	The school head involves the parents especially in the implementation of programs, projects and activities.	Engaging the stakeholders in the PPAs' implementation	Engaging the school community	Community-based engagement
<b>B94</b>	The school head listens to the voices of the school community in the decision-making of the school.	Engaging the school community in addressing the PIAs	Engaging the school community	
<b>C82</b>	All members of the school community coordinate with each other in addressing all the issues and concerns of the school.	Engaging all members of the school community in addressing all issues and concerns	Engaging the school community	

To implement shared governance and in order to properly connect the available community's resources with the public school need, island school heads involved in the community, conducted regular assessments, and provided the mechanism for the involvement to occur. An informant proudly says, "Parents? The same way ... every time we have a quarter meeting, though we are presenting our projects supposed to be done for example...then we will

call the parents' and other stakeholders' attention, and we solicit reactions...if agreed by everybody, then we will come up with a consensus (A98).

According to the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, the Department of Education (DepEd) promotes shared governance through School Based Management (SBM). SBM is the government's strategy to decentralize education decision making by increasing parental and community involvement in schools (World Bank, 2008). Further, it enables active participation by empowering the key stakeholders in school communities for the continuous improvement of schools towards the attainment of students learning outcomes (DepEd, 2012). In this endeavor, the islands school heads involve the parents and stakeholders especially in the implementation of programs, projects and activities of the school.

An informant also shared, "School head must have maximum tolerance ...of course maam ...kung ipairal jud nimu nga school head kaw imo gusto ang matuman tapos dili baja sila gusto ...make sure nga mosabot pud ka sa ila stand...you should also be willing to listen. For example, if I will present a proposal and then they have their suggestions, I am willing to listen (B94)." It implies that the island school heads listen to the voices of the school community in the decision-making of the school.

In the study of Olguin and Keim (2019), the importance of the active participation of the students, parents, community, and administrators in the planning and execution of the different school processes are highlighted. Smith and Goodwin (2016) claimed that when stakeholders are active in creating the plan for improvement, there are greater possibilities to carry out the plan. Thus, stakeholders of the island schools play a crucial role for the betterment of the school. Bruns et al. (2011) confirm, involvement and participation of multiple stakeholders contribute to a better management of schools.

"So with that, we shared our ideas, and opinions on how to come up with a solution to the problem and all are working hard just really to fulfill the project, to finish the project, other teachers

niadto sila sa mga parents for the support aron magamay-gamayan ang labor for the project...nga silay magbungkal adtong juta sa likod so other teachers also tap the BLGU officials for additional funding unja ang PTA ug resolution nga nagrequest sa BLGU ug LGU for the funding of the project (C82),” another informant narrated. Thus, stakeholders of the island schools show consistent support in school in order to give back to them. The willingness of stakeholders to provide the resources needed was evident. The willingness of these stakeholders to provide support in the different programs, project and activities of the island schools was observed.

Ice, et al., (2015) cited that collaboration between the school and community members is encouraged to support the school improvement. Furthermore, Tobergte and Curtis (2016) stated that accountability positively affects stakeholders’ perceptions, expectations and discipline in the school environment. Theoretically, enhancing the bridging of stakeholders with the school foster trust and further increases the level of community involvement in school. In other words, community involvement in school may serve as a springboard in developing an additional form of community involvement in schools.

Being clear with all the stakeholders of the island schools about what the goals are and the direction where the school is going to can inspire them and will surely open the opportunity for active participation and support. Transparency, accountability and shared governance should be the culture in every school, and the most important person who could lead the school in attaining this culture is a transformational island school leader.

### ***Leadership Practice 7: Act as Agents of Continuous Improvement***

Leadership practice seven shows that the island school heads manage uncertainty, risk, competing initiatives, and politics of change with courage, resilience and perseverance. They act as agents of continuous improvement.

Table 7 presents the seventh leadership practice which emerged from different categories, concepts and psychological transformed meaning units.

Table 7: *Leadership Practice Seven: Act as Agents of Continuous Improvement*

<b>REFERE NCE NUMBE R</b>	<b>PSYCHOLOGIC AL TRANSFORME D MEANING UNITS</b>	<b>CONCEPTS</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>THEMES</b>
<b>A95</b>	The school head needs to be courageous enough to cross the ocean with the giant waves during unfavorable weather condition.	Being courageous to cross the ocean	Managing uncertainties with positivity for continuous improvement	Continuous Improvement
<b>B89</b>	The school head ensures that she can cope with the deadlines of the reports needed by the SDO despite limited internet connection in the island and limited boat for transportation to and fro.	Ensuring proper management of the school despite limited resources, risks and uncertainty	Managing uncertainties with positivity for continuous improvement	
<b>C76</b>	The school head needs to be patient and be positive in dealing with uncertainties.	Managing uncertainties with courage and perseverance	Managing uncertainties with positivity for continuous improvement	

The island school heads are courageous enough to cross the vast ocean especially during unfavorable weather condition. An informant shared, “First, I'm afraid of the waves since I am not used to traveling the area. So the courage to cross the ocean with the very big waves and times in the middle of the sea...hanginon karajaw then shaking... so hard to understand if kaya ba jud nako ni cya kung always all the time ingun ani, (A95)”

There is no doubt that an island school head requires courage. School leaders create the learning environment and school culture by their daily actions or inaction. Island school heads must demonstrate courage daily especially in crossing the ocean to perform the key result areas expected of them or they will become ineffective and this ineffectiveness will lead to low standards of performance and lack of commitment throughout the school. Teachers, learners and the school community will be affected.

They ensured that the school is properly managed despite limited resources, risks and uncertainty. One of the informants said, “Sometimes kanang I make sure na makaapas ko ug pakyaw ug mga sakayanan to cope with the deadline especially nga kana na area walay internet, dapat I online sometime mao jud na ma delayed. Still, I need to go back to the area nga naa signal para makaapas sa deadline, (B89)” Developing technology and continuous improvement of the processes in the island school yield several risk factors for island school heads. These factors are psychological worries, bad and imaginary environment and technology which are successfully handled by the island school head.

Another informant narrated, “Sometimes, I already have my papers, but then I cannot catch on because there is no possible transportation that I can use, of course patience and be positive na dili ma suko ang people nga akong submittan, (C76)” which shows that island school heads managed uncertainties with optimism, courage and perseverance.

It should not be forgotten that besides the worries emerging from human beings, there are natural risks as well. The geographical conditions of the location of schools, the natural sources, and threats around should be well known, and plans should be made accordingly (Öznacar, 2017). Because the origin and size of natural and human-oriented dangers and threats cannot be foreseen in advance, island school heads prepared protective and preventive measures which are needed to be taken to minimize any harm.

According to Eduflow (2017), when leaders make tough decisions that cannot be foreseen in advance, they must be willing to accept the risks and challenges that ensue, and still press on with their decisions. They have to do what is best for the learners and the school community. to make unpopular decisions for the sake of continuous improvement.

In continuously improving systems, change occurs both quickly and incrementally, as organizations learn from experience while testing and refining strategies to produce better results. In education, continuous improvement can refer to a school, district, or other organization's ongoing commitment to quality improvement efforts that are evidence-based, integrated into the daily work of individuals, contextualized within a system, and iterative (Park et al., 2013).

Continuous improvement has proven useful and effective in the island schools. Incorporating continuous improvement into their work as island school heads have shown promising results. Hence, island school heads act as agents of continuous improvement.

*What are the personal and professional characteristics exhibited by the school heads assigned in island schools?*

Quality leadership involves using the heart, the hand, and the head. The heart of leadership is what the person believes, values, and dreams, and the commitment or personal vision of the leader. Leadership is the person's interior world and the foundation of reality. The

hand of leadership is charting the data-gathering portion. Leadership, in its entirety, is not defined solely by the heart and hand; the head of leadership develops over time with experience, which allows for reflection and development of style (Sergiovanni, 1992).

The second grand tour question explored on the personal and professional characteristics exhibited by the school heads assigned in island schools. Transcription and analysis of the data gathered from in-depth interviews were employed to answer the question. Follow-up questions were also asked to achieve the level of saturation from the responses of the participants.

When asked on their personal and professional characteristics they must possess in dealing with stakeholders in the island schools they boldly said in an interview that School Heads must be *courageous and determined, optimistic, visionary, patient and understanding, approachable, democratic, and gender-fair sensitive*.

***School heads who exhibit courage and determination amidst risk and consequences.*** Courageous leaders are those who foster an increased alignment of the organization with its true values, purposes, and potential; provide greater momentum toward a revitalized vision and a renewed sense of the group's purpose; strengthen morale among employees; infuse new ideas and recalibrate outdated structures and processes; and facilitate more authentic, dynamic, and effective communication.

School Head participants were in consensus in saying that they must be brave and courageous to whatever challenges that they met not only in dealing with their respective stakeholders but also in reporting daily their stations especially when they are challenged with big waves and strong winds brought by unpleasant weather condition. There is a need for a school head to be vested with courage and determination towards their profession to be able to survive the daily ordeals brought by bad and unpleasant weather conditions. Most of the school heads of this study believed that they should possess these attributes amidst the consequences and

discomfort in travelling to and from their stations for them to deliver the key deliverables expected of them. Excerpts from the conversation are manifested below:

*“As a school head in the island school, I think the best attitude I possess is **courage, especially in traveling in wavy areas** going to the islet. There must be the courage to go every time, especially during bad weather”[sic]*

*“Being assigned in the island school, a school head **must be determined enough to face whatever consequences**, whatever inevitable circumstances that might occur during your travel because there are things that must have to consider...”[sic]*

*As a school head, **I must have the courage to adapt** to them as efficiently as possible. So, whatever positive character they have, I will go with them rather than insist that I will be the one to lead them. Maybe, those are the characteristics I should possess. [sic]*

The above responses were supported by the studies on conducted by Blankstein, (2004), Goldring (2005), Kessler (2001) which noted that courageous leadership develops from a true sense of vision and a commitment to that vision. It is this vision that sustains a leader through the fear that precedes courage. In short, at the heart of leadership is the courage to do the right thing.

***School heads who imbibe optimism for harmonious relationship.*** School leaders must lead with a style that sets a positive tone to provide a positive, quality education for students (Bonnici, 2011). Consequently, changing moods and emotions effect school heads work environment. However, the positive emotions of school heads can create a perfect balance of an optimistic school leader, inspired, and involved teachers, motivated parents, encouraged students, and a respectful learning environment. Positive emotions motivate others to work. It broadens School Heads consciousness and encourage innovative, wide-ranging, and exploratory thoughts and actions.

In this particular portion, school heads were able to express how optimism and positive attitude would help them in managing people with unique and varied personalities. Listed below

are the annotated exemplar taken from the responses of the school heads assigned in the island schools.

*“Since I am in the island school, **we need to be positive**, especially in dealing with the teachers and the people there with unique character compared to the mainland.” [sic]*

*“I need to **possess a positive attitude in managing our school** with my co-teachers, parents and the learners. Well, am. Positive attitude to display as a school head of course I must set my mind with positive thinking with proper grooming and disposition, keep on smiling para maaliwalas ang araw mo kailangan kahit may mga problema...smile pa rin.” [sic]*

*“Then, another one is, you should have a **positive or harmonious relationship with the people in the barangay**. So that whenever you have your programs and projects, they are very willing to extend their hands for help in the implementation of your project.” [sic]*

The above responses are consistent with the study of Nasreen (2019) which posited that positive attitudes of a principal can create a perfect balance of an optimistic principal, inspired, and involved teachers, motivated parents, encouraged students, and a respectful learning environment. Negativity brings negativity and spoil the whole school culture. Positive attitudes of principals broaden their consciousness and encourage innovative, wide-ranging, and exploratory thoughts and actions.

**School heads who envision of translating dreams to reality.** Vision involves the clear thought process behind goals that are shared among stakeholders. This gives credence to decisions that are made in order to effectively provide the best resources and people that are needed (Rolon, 2017). Regardless of the leadership style, Herbert (2011), believes “...a school administrator must be able to articulate a vision for success, inspire others to embrace the vision, and have the ability to make the necessary changes happen”.

School Heads described themselves to be visionary in leading the school to serve as role model in the school among the members of the school community. On the other hand, they aspired that most of the island schools will become academically performing five to ten years from

now. They also dreamed of having conducive to learning environment with upskilled and reskilled teaching staff who obtained Masters' Degree, and schools. Such, school heads constantly encouraged their teachers to enroll in MA classes during Saturdays and Sundays despite the struggles in crossing the ocean and the financial problems. One principal also expressed that it would be better that Senior High School will be offered in the island so that parents will no longer send their children to the nearby town which for them costly and risky.

Moreover, school heads' articulation of their dreams was inspired on the challenges and experiences they have. Perhaps, the inadequacy and limitations they have felt gave them the motivation to dream for far better and equal opportunities for the islanders and the school in general. They envisioned to translate their dreams into reality such that their respective assigned island schools will be as competitive and performing like the other schools in the Schools Division of Siargao. These aspirations are shared in the responses of the school heads as explicated below:

*“Of course, you must show that you are a leader nan isa ka institution a **leader who is visionary**, having core values especially in the island school because we set as a role model in the community. [sic]*

*“My dream is to have a school site ...to offer senior high school ...according to the parents is better for the children to stay rather than going to Dapa because it is risky for their children ...so that they can look after their children and minimize expenses.” [sic]*

*“**Five to 10 years from now ...the school will be one of the leader island brgy schools in the division. It would be a performing school academically and in all curricular activities. In terms of the physical aspect, the school also will have a conducive learning environment.**” [sic]*

*... I wanted to have some physical changes. And when it comes to academic, I want that CNHS we will be academically performing. [sic]*

*“For the teachers, **I really dream them to professionally grow**, that is why I am always encouraging them to enroll masteral courses and attend series of seminars for them to improve professionally kay kung ato ng himoon, makatabang gajud nato, to deliver instructions to the best that we can, mao na sila nga ako gajung gi-encourage...” [sic]*

*“In fact, I always encourage the teachers nga bahalag gamay ra ta, dili ta moingon nga dili ta makahatag ug participants sa mga competitions in the districts and divisions, in fact, it is a challenge for us nga bisag gamay ra nga school, we can still participate to different competitions, that still we can produce quality products.” [sic]*

These responses are supported by the study of Leithwood (2008) which found that almost all successful school leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices. These are (1) building a vision and setting directions; (2) understanding and developing people; (3) redesigning the organization; and (4) managing the teaching and learning the program. Also, formulating a vision and communicating it to the stakeholders of the school provides a framework for making decisions (Farina & Kotch, 2008).

***School heads who sustain patience and understanding to the limits.*** Another personal and professional was revealed within the course of the interview was being patient and understanding. Along the way, school heads will meet different teachers and stakeholders, of different outlooks and personalities. It cannot be denied that there are times teachers and stakeholders of the learning community may not perceive or accept things positively. Ambivalent teachers who display negative attitude towards work and less supportive stakeholders surfaced to be common issues in the school which definitely create a problem.

School heads believed that the best way to conquer this is by sustaining ones' patience and understanding to create harmonious and open communication. Hence, it is necessary to lead school with a great deal of patience and understanding for smooth and regular school operations. Also, they shared that they need to strengthen their ability on maximum tolerance as an effective mechanism to strengthen communication.

This trait is revealed in their responses below:

*...I must stretch my patience I have to sustain. I also met teachers who are tardy most of the time ...do not know how to follow instructions, and very complaining teachers. I just keep on reminding them of their duties and*

*responsibilities, but if she/he is the cause of the delay ...then I must give the assignment to other teachers. [sic]*

*“School head must have maximum tolerance ...of course ma’am ...kung ipairal jud nimu nga school head kaw imo gusto ang matuman tapos dili baja sila gusto ...**make sure nga mosabot pud ka sa ila stand**...you should also be willing to listen.” [sic]*

Excerpts from the interview are synonymous to the definition of Rajbhandari (2010) on driving leadership style expressing that leadership must maintain a role of understanding people in the organizational setting. There is more of a desire for social harmony within the school than student achievement. Principals act according to the unique culture of their schools.

***School heads who exemplify approachable demeanor to win people’s heart.*** School heads communicated that to be a school leader one must be approachable. Being approachable is perceived as a leader who can be reached not only in the office but even a call away whenever his/her colleagues have something to say or ask for. He/she can be contacted anytime especially if they have questions relative to their work. Also, school heads believed that to win the hearts of the people in the school community and the people in the island one must be approachable and lenient that even locals can invite them during special occasions in the community.

Being approachable gives opportunities for the teachers and the stakeholders to speak out their minds on matters relative to school. Such, this attribute would most likely provides an avenue for school head and stakeholders to discuss and to meet ideas without any feeling of fear and hostility so that school issues will be properly addressed. Approachable school heads will have the ability to establish an open communication as a mechanism in solving the most prevalent problems of an island schools. These ideas are reflected in the responses of the school heads below:

*“First and foremost, ma’am the attitude of the **school head must be approachable** syempre if kung dili kaw approachable sa imo kaibanan simay moduyod nimu...kind sab kaw kinahanglan kabalo pud kaw mosabot. They can right away go to you and they can call me anytime through my cellphone.*

*If they have questions and doubts...mga things nga dili nila masabtan they can contact me anytime.” [sic]*

*With regards to the stakeholders, we must be ahh...**lenient to the people around the community** so that...you must win the hearts of the people of the island. [sic]*

Being approachable is synonymous to relationships in that the core of hospitality includes support, friendliness, a welcoming demeanor, and acceptance of everyone in the building (Toll, 2010). The overall disposition of the school leader runs parallel with student and teacher performance (Thompson & Crank, 2010).

Moreover, Hoerr (2014) compares a school environment to the environment of a restaurant, “Really good restaurants do more than offer high quality food, just as really good schools do more than impart skills and knowledge” (p. 88). Teachers want to work in a highly successful school, and when principals focus on the hospitality piece, and creating a positive atmosphere, teachers begin to believe that their school is successful (Sergiovanni, 2000). Strong relationships in the school building are afforded when the principal accepts, respects, and dignifies employees, which means all employees are accepted for the value they bring to the building. The relationship is about the person and not the person’s personality (Toll, 2010).

***School heads who advocate democracy for fair decision-making.*** Democratic Leadership unlike authoritarian leadership, democratic leadership (also known as participative leadership) is based on reciprocal appreciation and collaboration. Gill (2014) informed his readers that democratic leaders are willing to distribute responsibilities among team members. Moreover, input from all stakeholders is encouraged and valued for decision-making processes.

As divulged by the school heads themselves, being democratic will encourage members of the school community to be confident to share their ideas and views. If school heads are democratic, they will be able to find ways on how to make decision that would be fair and just for

everyone. As cliché goes, two heads are better than one is still applicable in a democratic school as a niche of professionals.

This idea of leadership is being asserted by School Heads when they said:

*“Actually, since we are living in a democratic country, **we’ll be using a democratic leadership**...so I am just giving them time to express and do whatever requirements, what are their responsibilities, and then I’ll have to check...and during my monitoring, I do not have ...I did not actually give them strict criticism...”[sic]*

*“In most cases, **I applied the democratic type of leadership** wherein there is a consultation from the subordinates especially regarding decision-making in things related to the improvement of schools. Usually, I seek for ideas for I believe that more minds, more ideas.” [sic]*

These responses are supported in the research findings of Harris and Chapman (2002) which found that many effective educational leaders utilize democratic leadership. They explained ‘democratic style’ as working with all the stakeholders to run the school and discussing matters with the teachers and the members of the school managing committee before making important decisions. Such a focus on the sharing of decision making indicates a ‘participative’ style of leadership (Coleman & Earley, 2005). Likewise, a democratic leadership style is one that communicates effectively and allows for teacher input (Inandi, Tunc & Gilic, 2013).

Gill (2014) recommended democratic leaders take extreme caution to avoid becoming overly influenced by the thoughts and ideas of others. Moreover, effective school leaders recognize the value of democratic leadership, and they realize how impactful it is to collaborate and share ideas among the group. Furthermore, when leaders involve people in the decision-making processes and encourage creativity in problem solving, morale is enhanced (Choi, 2007).

***School heads who embrace diversity and uniqueness through gender-fair sensitivity.*** A few researchers explored how gender shapes male versus female principals’ performance of instructional leadership (Kis and Konan 2014; Krüger 2008) were proven true by

the participants when they contended that there were no differences being a male or female in as far school leadership is concerned. School heads were in consensus in saying that gender is not an issue in leading the island schools if SHs know how to establish rapport with their teachers and proper coordination with the stakeholders. Another school head expressed no issue with gender if only you have the courage to deal with the situation especially in handling the stakeholders. These personal and professional attributes were highlighted in the excerpts hereunder:

*“There is **an equal capacity of man and woman in managing** the school because this is not about masculinity, but this is all about the strategies...the relationship between the teachers and how are you going to deal with the reports with the teachers, the coordination and how are you going to coordinate with the stakeholders. It talks about your relationship...it talks about your attitudes inside and outside the school.” [sic]*

*“**I do not see a difference whether you are a man or a woman** as long as you have the courage to cope with what is there in that area, especially to the parents, for example. I can sense that some parents are opposed to me.” [sic]*

*“Well for me am...actually there are no differences ...for me it is better to have a school head who is single like me because we can travel, we can go anywhere because I don't have family na kay kailangan hingian mo pa nang permiso so anytime I can go...**It doesn't if you are female or male as long as you have the heart** to serve the community and the children.” [sic]*

*“I don't think so ...for me tingali ...**depende sa imo style or depende sa imo kakayahan as a school leader** kay kung ma babaje kaw nya dili kabayo modala ...same...same sa laki ...so maybe pareha ra depende sa situation.” [sic]*

*“**I think gender is not an issue.** The issue is more of the financial capacity. I was not able to finish my graduate school because of financial constraint.” [sic]*

When it comes to school leadership, there is 'a general belief that equity issues for women are no longer a problem (Coleman 2005). In the study of Grogan (2014), he claimed that in

education research, particularly in the educational leadership discourse, the nexus between gender and leadership appears to be less interesting than it was previously—not surprisingly – since the prevailing attitudes among many women and men is that gender is irrelevant.

However, this trend is seen by (Grogan, 2014) as unjustified, yet gender seems to matter just as much today as it always has. Against this backdrop of seeming general indifference toward gender differences within the educational leadership context, the current study undertook an in-depth qualitative investigation of possible differences between men and women practicing instructional leadership.

*What are the emerging themes that can be drawn from the prevailing codes of the lived experiences of the school heads assigned in the island school?*

The last research question is answered through careful transcription and analysis of the data. Phenomenology reduces rich descriptions of human experience to underlying common themes. The themes are short description in which every word accurately depicts the phenomenon as described by the study participants (Blodgett-McDeavit, 1977) as cited by Faklaris (2013). The data were analyzed and the experiences of the study participants were organized into dominant themes that emerged during the study. In the phenomenological data analysis, the invariant constituents of the phenomenon were clustered into themes that represent the various dimensions of the phenomenon.

### **Thematic Map of the Study**

Table 8 presents a summary of the themes and the corresponding categories per theme which evolved from the analysis of the study.

Table 8. Thematic Map of the Study; Themes and Categories

THEMES	CATEGORIES
Theme 1. <b>Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing collaboratively a mission</li> <li>• Developing and advocating a vision for the school, in collaboration with the school community</li> <li>• Developing a shared understanding of and commitment to the VMV</li> <li>• Using CI collaboratively to achieve the VMV</li> </ul>
Theme 2. <b>Cultural-sensitivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding and promoting positive values</li> <li>• Leading and understanding all staff members' backgrounds and cultures</li> </ul>
Theme 3. <b>Camaraderie</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating and sustaining positive and productive relationships</li> </ul>
Theme 4. <b>Capacity-building</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tending to their own learning and effectiveness</li> <li>• Empowering and motivating teachers and staff to the highest levels of professional practice</li> <li>• Promoting the work-life balance of faculty and staff.</li> </ul>
Theme 5. <b>Clarity and transparency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acting responsibly with the school's monetary and nonmonetary resources</li> </ul>
Theme 6. <b>Community-based engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging the school community</li> </ul>

Theme 7. <b>Continuous improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing uncertainties with positivity for continuous improvement</li> </ul>
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Focusing deeply and exploring further, seven themes emerged from the different categories, concepts and psychological transformed meaning units. The researchers coined the seven themes as 7Cs – Collaboration, Cultural-sensitivity, Camaraderie, Capacity-building, Clarity and transparency, Community-based engagement and Continuous improvement.

The *first theme “Collaboration”* implies that collaborative leadership is practiced by the island school heads. As collaborative or participative leaders, they stressed the decision making processes of the group. They collaboratively develop a vision and mission for the school to promote the academic success, social and emotional well-being of each student. The internal and external stakeholders of the school shared understanding of and commitment to the vision, mission and core values of the school. Moreover, they were also using the continuous improvement methodology to achieve the vision, mission and core values of the school.

With schools facing increasingly complex situations, uncertainty, ambiguity, and high expectations for innovation and reform, Murphy and Hallinger (2019) concluded that school leaders needed to adopt more collaborative forms of leadership, which involve parents, teachers, students and other stakeholders in the process. Educational reform efforts such as site-based management were established on the idea that teachers, principals, and other stakeholders working together, rather than in isolation, could bring about positive changes for student learning. Goldring (2015) found that teachers in schools with a culture that encourages collaboration are more positive about their profession, have higher expectations for their students, enjoy their jobs more, and have greater confidence and commitment to improvement.

Additionally, school effectiveness and productivity increase, communication is improved, and what is important and valued come into sharper focus. Researcher Fullan (2017) identified

mutual trust, effective communication, active empathy, access to help, lenience in judgment, and courage as the elements necessary to the formation of collaborative organizations. Additionally, creative problem solving and conflict management skills have been added to this list.

**“Cultural sensitivity”** which is the **second theme** that emerged shows that the island school heads practiced culturally responsive leadership. To move their school toward cultural proficiency stewarded by culturally responsive leadership, island school heads built the framework through culturally responsive pedagogy, which begins with the process of critical self-reflection. Island school heads understand their own multiple identities (individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, social and political contexts, and other elements) before they build cultural responsiveness within their teachers, learners and the school community.

As stressed by Vogel (2017) culturally responsive building leaders ensure that they hire culturally responsive teachers, encourage teachers to use culturally responsive pedagogical and classroom management strategies, ensure they are trained in using these strategies, and hold them accountable to do so.

Culturally responsive leaders tend to have qualities such as a sociopolitical consciousness, positive views of the members of the school community from diverse backgrounds, responsibility for and the capability to bring about educational change (Villegas and Lucas, 2014).

Aside from building one’s own cultural proficiency and responsivity, and encouraging teachers to adopt and use culturally responsive practices, as culturally responsive building leader, the island school heads also facilitated a positive school climate and nurture positive relationships with the community surrounding the school. The island school heads created a positive climate and culture by intentionally promoting inclusivity and positive They explored innovative ways to reach the surrounding community, especially families, to utilize their strengths, keep them better

informed, and involve them in creating and sustaining a positive climate and culture relations among learners, among teachers and staff, and between learners and adults on site.

The ***third theme “Camaraderie”*** posits that island school heads recognized that relationships are a fundamental and intrinsic part of being. Hence, leadership activities that focus unduly on the technical and bureaucratic elements of an organization were devoid of meaning. This theme portrays educational leaders who acknowledge that human interactions are basic to our lives, to the creation of meaning, and to the development of understanding are more likely to take full account of the why, who, what, where, and when of schooling.

School leadership today demands knowledge, skills, and dispositions very different than those required a short time ago. “The school principal should be a keeper of a collective covenant, rather than the custodian of the status quo. She or he must be a builder of relationships among a number of constituents including teachers, students, parents and the community at large” (Sorensen & Machell, 2016). Witmer (2015) added relationships as the fourth R in education. She contended, “Reading, ‘riting, ‘rithmetic, and relationships are the foundations of an effective educator”.

The best administrators spend an intense amount of time developing, improving, and investing in relationships. Positive relationships are the heart of what makes a school extraordinary. The best leaders build environments of trust, respect, professionalism, caring, compassion, collaboration, teaming, advising, caring, and nurturing (Connors, 2018). In order for a principal to build relationships with people and positively shape school culture, it is necessary for the school leader to be visible in the school and community (Rieg, 2017).

In her 2016 article, Shields suggested, “Relationships are not merely the beginning, but indeed the foundation of the educative endeavor”. She noted that leading must be based on relationships of respect and absolute regard and therefore, leadership should be built on that

same foundation--modeling, encouraging, and demonstrating the importance of relationships and positive interactions.

In the case of the island school heads, they could balance the “big picture with finer detail” and could multi-task. They are authentic leaders who knew when to consult and when to be courageous, and exhibited the values, professionalism and behavior they expected of others.

The **fourth theme “Capacity-Building”** stresses that the island school heads play a huge role in the national movement toward accountability and instructional improvement in the public education arena. Island school heads capacitate themselves on the necessary knowledge and skill sets to manage the school. Professional development needs to provide island school heads with “know how” they need to be successful instructional leaders.

According to Senol (2019), schools need new generation of instructional leaders who can transform schools. Educational leadership influences not only the school effectiveness but also the performance of students in four pathways as organizational, rational, emotional, and familial. This effect is greater if they focus on teaching and learning. Principals directly affect the academic capacity of schools and influence the growth of students indirectly. Professional development of school principals should continue and be sustainable after they have been appointed to their schools

As what Mulford (2013) mentioned, the key relationships in the ways school leaders strengthen teacher recruitment, development and retention were shown to include factors such as teacher satisfaction, school effectiveness, improvement, capacity, teacher leadership, distributive leadership, organizational learning, and development. School leaders can be a major influence on these school-level factors as well as help buffer against the excesses of the mounting and sometimes contradictory external pressures. A skilled and well-supported leadership team in

schools can help foster a sense of ownership and purpose in the way that teachers approach their job.

Thus, conferring professional autonomy to teachers will enhance the attractiveness of the profession as a career choice and will improve the quality of the classroom teaching practice. Teachers who work together in a meaningful and purposeful ways have been found to be more likely to remain in the profession because they feel valued and supported in their work. All of these are evident in the respective island schools which are part of this study.

Throughout the professional development process, island school heads gain new knowledge and understanding by participating in workshops alongside teachers but perhaps more importantly through their varied interactions with teachers in their schools, which result from this participation. Their enhanced knowledge leads to a deeper understanding of the ways in which they can support teachers.

**“Clarity and transparency”**, the **fifth theme** shows that the philosophy of transparency and clarity, is being practiced in the island schools. Clarity and transparency go hand-in-hand and are held as statutory obligations of the island school heads. The transparency in school administration was not taken lightly. Island school heads believe that if a school is transparent, people can be held accountable for their actions.

As pointed by Schwartz (2014), to meet the challenges of teaching in an increasingly connected world, school leaders, educators and community members could benefit from building a culture of transparency and connectivity, creating a culture of sharing around the successes and struggles of teaching and learning.

Transparency in people management aims essentially to promote perceptions of justice and fairness (Klein, 2012)) and to avoid any kind of discrimination.

As to the transparency of financial resources, the island schools, in accordance with RA 9485 (Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007), have a transparency board on School MOOE posting all school expenditures using the allocated funds. Procurement activities were all posted. They updated it regularly.

DepEd Order 8, s. 2019 mandates all principals to declare all sources of funding of the school which include school MOOE allocation, outline the intended utilization of all sources of funds, post the information on the sources in the transparency board that must be publicly accessible and updated every three months and using the school report card, formally communicate the sources and uses of school funds to the following stakeholders: faculty and staff of the school, PTCA, SGC, and active partners among local stakeholders.

Island school heads' capability on the administration of DepEd MOOE is evident. As what are expected from them, they use school resources in the best possible manner and increase the success of the school.

The ***sixth theme "Community-based engagement"*** portrays community-oriented leadership. It is well-manifested on the responses of the island school heads that the major stratagem towards effective management and leadership of school is to apply the system of shared governance to build strong relationship and partnership with the parents and the stakeholders and to seek their help in solving the big problem of the school.

Jordan & Wilson (2017) describes how school leaders build relationships with families, engage in public school–community organization partnerships, and address community goals with school resources. Sanders and Harvey (2012) conducted a case study that examined an urban elementary school and identified four factors to successful partnerships: the school's commitment to learning; the principal's support for community involvement; the school's receptivity and openness to community; and the school's willingness to engage in two-way

communication. Khalifa (2012) found an urban school leader increasing student achievement and garnering trust by establishing a strong community presence, creating opportunities for parents to come into the school, and participating in community-based advocacy. More recently, Green (2019) showed how a principal supported school reform and community involvement by: (a) positioning the school as a social broker in the community; (b) linking school culture to community revitalization projects; and (c) connecting instruction to community realities.

Stronger partnerships and collaboration between the island schools and the communities improve family engagement, which is critical to bridging home and school cultures. Additionally, these partnerships increase the sense of trust between students, families and schools, which in turn improves student connectedness to school and feelings of inclusiveness.

**“Continuous improvement”** which is the **seventh theme** emerged stresses on the island school heads practice a philosophy of continuous improvement. They are proactive. Instead of waiting for problems to occur, island school heads regularly work on perfecting and updating their practices and procedures, no matter how well they are working. Essentially, island school heads are always trying to be better. They are monitoring the situation or process, and watching for possible signs that it needs to be improved.

An effective continuous improvement system in a school system emphasizes the learner’s experience, stakeholder engagement, and data collection and analysis to guide and inform both planning and executing a school’s improvement journey. My organization defines continuous improvement as “an embedded behavior within the culture of a school that constantly focuses on the conditions, processes, and practices that will improve teaching and learning” (Elgart, 2017). Moreover, principles of continuous improvement help ensure that school improvement does not become a check-the-box approach but a strategy that targets specific needs of individual schools.

Hence, principals’ continuous improvement and learning is important for student and

teacher learning, policy implementation, and cultivating healthy and supportive school communities.

### *Findings*

The data indicated that school heads assigned in the island schools had employed leadership practices in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Also, this study attempted to determine the educational leadership practices of the school heads regarding school management duties and responsibilities. Straight from their responses, the following leadership practices were articulated: **(1) Collaboratively advocate and enact a shared Vision; Mission and Core Values, (2) Act ethically and in accordance with Professional Standards; (3) Cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive School Community; (4) Develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel; (5) Manage school operations and resources; (6) Engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal and mutually beneficial ways; and (7) Act as Agents of Continuous Improvement.**

This study also explored the personal and professional characteristics of the school assigned in the island schools. The following characteristics were categorized as: **(1) School heads who exhibit courage and determination amidst risk and consequences. (2) School heads who imbibe optimism for harmonious relationship, (3) School heads who envision of translating dreams to reality, (4) School heads who sustain patience and understanding to the limits, (5) School heads who exemplify approachable demeanor to win people's heart, (6) School heads who advocate democracy for fair decision-making, and (7) School heads who embrace diversity and uniqueness through gender-fair sensitivity.**

Lastly, the researcher identified seven thematic patterns that were relevant to the research topic. The seven predominant themes that emerged were **collaboration, cultural-sensitivity,**

***camaraderie, capacity-building, clarity and transparency, community-based engagement, and continuous improvement.*** Related studies with similar and contrasting findings are herein presented to provide support to the analysis of each theme.

### *Conclusions*

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. School heads' lived experiences encompassed mixed leadership practices as far as their duties and responsibilities are concerned.
2. School heads assigned in the island school displayed ideal characteristics of an effective school leaders.
3. The seven predominant themes emerged were collaboration, cultural-sensitivity, camaraderie, capacity-building, clarity and transparency, community-based engagement, and continuous improvement.

### *Recommendations*

Based on the findings, researchers strongly recommend the following:

1. School heads assigned in the island schools should explore more educational leadership practices through research-based and proven effective practices which are applicable in their own context with the new normal setting brought about by COVID 19 pandemic.
2. The findings of the study revealed that school leaders did not sufficiently practice self-assessment with stakeholders before the development of School Improvement Plan. But, SIP which is developed without undergoing self-assessment with responsible stakeholders may face a great challenge during implementation. Therefore, it is advisable that school heads need to aware and convince responsible bodies such as SIP committee, parents, teachers, students through continuous discussion and work with them. The

DepEd officials should visit the school in a sustainable manner and discuss with school leaders, identify problems, and give technical support including training where it is necessary.

3. School Heads need to search for mechanisms which will enable them to generate their own schools' income rather than waiting for supports extended by the external stakeholders in the island relative to the pressing conditions of COVID 19.
4. A finding revealed that school leaders were fairly and economically using the available resources. But the result from interview revealed that still, many schools had a scarcity of financial resources. The result from observation also revealed that some sampled schools had a scarcity of school facilities. Therefore, school leaders in collaboration with proactive stakeholders need to identify problems in the school and should allocate available budgets for the school so that the schools will be successful in realizing a physically conducive to learning environment.
5. As the finding revealed, school heads seem to lack adequate leadership core competencies and skills which hinder them to lead the school properly. But school leaders should be competent, skillful, and flexible to use different leadership styles in different situations. Therefore, it is also advised that Human Resource and Development (HRD) should identify the gap and give sustainable training either in online and limited face to face engagement that will capacitate school leaders with competency-based leadership practices.
6. Future research could also be conducted which will replicate this study that would determine how well the findings of this study hold under different demographic circumstances and the new normal situation. It would be especially interesting to conduct a similar study in an area of the country with a larger sample size to allow future researchers to gather richer, varied, and comprehensive data of successful school heads.

7. Education officials should consider the findings of this study as valid baseline information in the crafting of local policy on educational management and administration especially for island schools under the new normal.
8. It is confirmed from the study that the world of the principal is uncertain and constantly changing. They face diverse issues in managing their schools. Therefore, it is recommended that special training on school management should regularly be conducted to enhance principals' skills, knowledge and abilities.

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## Annex 1: Declaration of Anti-Plagiarism

Declaration of Anti-Plagiarism**DECLARATION OF ANTI-PLAGIARISM**

1. We, **FERNANDO A. DONES, JR. REGEMIE A. ALBURO, GEMMA L. OCON** understand that plagiarism is the act of taking and using another's ideas and works and passing them off as one's own. This includes explicitly copying the whole work of another person and/or using some parts of their work without proper acknowledgment and referencing.
2. I hereby attest to the originality of this research proposal and has cited properly all the references used. I further commit that all deliverables and the final research study emanating from this proposal shall be of original content. I shall use appropriate citations in referencing other works from various sources.
3. I understand that violation from this declaration and commitment shall be subject to consequences and shall be dealt with accordingly by the Department of Education and (insert grant mechanism).

PROPONENT: FERNANDO A. DONES, JR

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: January 15, 2021

PROPONENT: REGEMIE A. ALBURO

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: January 15, 2021

PROPONENT: GEMMA L. OCON

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: January 15, 2021

## Annex 2 : Dissemination and Advocacy Plans

Learning and Development Intervention	Objectives	Inclusive Dates	Delivery Mode	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Resources
Presentation of BERF Funded Research Output in the Division and Regional Research Congress and publications	Present BERF Funded Research in the scientific community through various research congress and publications	TBA		Research published and presented	Financial Resources, Internet
Communication and Dissemination of the BERF Funded Results to the Education Leaders and Officials	Disseminate and communicate findings and recommendations of the BERF Funded Research to Education Leaders and Officials as basis for policy making and development	TBA	Blended	Research Presented	Financial Resources, Internet
Orientation-Seminar on Research-based School Leadership Practices in the Island Schools	Capacitate school heads in the island school with the proved effective research-based leadership practices, styles, and approaches in leading island schools	2 <sup>nd</sup> week of April 2022	Blended	No. of School Heads Trained and Capacitated	Financial, Technology
Effective Approaches in the Crafting of an Island Community-based School Improvement Plans	Orient school heads with the proven effective ways and means in engaging proactive stakeholders in the crafting of the School Improvement Plans	TBA	Blended, Simulation Activities	No. of School Heads and Stakeholders Trained and Capacitated	Financial, Technology
Seminar Workshop on Action Research focusing on Social Mobilization and Networking	Introduce and capacitate school heads with the scientific approaches in	TBA	Blended, Simulation Activities	No. of School Heads and Stakeholders Trained and Capacitated	Financial, Technology

	establishing community linkages				
Crafting of Customized Policy for Development among School Heads assigned in the Island Schools	Craft and customize policies for development for school heads assigned in the island schools	TBA	Blended, Simulation Activities , Writeshops	No. of School Heads and Stakeholders Trained and Capacitated	Financial, Technology

## Financial Report

## Basic Education Research Fund

## SUMMARY OF EXPENSES

Date	OR/Invoice Reference	Particulars	AMOUNT
8/27/2019	7285	Passenger Ticket	300.00
	7635	Passenger Ticket	300.00
	7332	Passenger Ticket	300.00
8/29/2019	7022	Passenger Ticket	300.00
	7162	Passenger Ticket	300.00
	8071	Passenger Ticket	300.00
9/3/2019	9305	Passenger Ticket	250.00
	10538	Passenger Ticket	250.00
	10540	Passenger Ticket	250.00
9/5/2019	003663	Passenger Ticket	250.00
	003665	Passenger Ticket	250.00
	003666	Passenger Ticket	250.00
9/9/2019	7435	Passenger Ticket	100.00
	11747	Passenger Ticket	100.00
	6412	Passenger Ticket	100.00
9/11/2019	10539	Passenger Ticket	100.00
	8168	Passenger Ticket	100.00
	12874	Passenger Ticket	100.00

Amount Downloaded: P 24, 000.00

Prepared by:

**FERNANDO A. DONES, JR.**  
Researcher

**REGEMIE A. ALBURO**  
Researcher

**GEMMA L. OCON**  
Researcher

