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ReTranS Leadership: A Qualitative Case Study on Post-Pandemic School Leadership Practices in Bulacan

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Abstract

The post-pandemic era has significantly impacted educational environments, demanding adaptive leadership from school administrators. This study aimed to investigate school administrators' leadership approaches in the Division of Bulacan, with the objective of developing a reframed leadership framework for this context. A qualitative exploratory case study design was employed, gathering data through interviews with 10 secondary school administrators, 10 faculty presidents, 10 student government presidents, 3 Municipal Mayors, and 1 Educational District Chairman. Key findings indicate that administrators exhibited responsive, transformative, and strategic leadership, despite struggles with new norms and systemic challenges. They successfully fostered resilience and inclusive practices, often supported by Local Government Units, though resource limitations were noted. The research culminated in "The Post-Pandemic Leadership Framework – ReTranS (Responsive, Transformative and Strategic) Leadership for Navigating and Bridging Problematic Educational Environments." This framework is recommended to guide school administrators in effectively navigating future crises and educational transitions.

Keywords: Reframed Leadership, Post-Pandemic Leadership, Leadership Challenges, School Condition

Introduction

Leadership, specifically effective project leadership, particularly for school principals, involves efficiently executing educational leadership duties. Leadership entails maintaining a clear vision, promoting team cohesion, and employing pragmatic approaches to manage risks and overcome challenges. Its main responsibilities include empowering teachers, building and developing individual potentials, creating organizational learning environments, responding to the changing social and economic environment, integrating many leadership styles to improve the school, individuals, information technologies, and instructional capacity.

School principals bear diverse responsibilities that collectively contribute to achieving institutional objectives. School leaders strengthen teacher development, school effectiveness, improvement capacity, teacher leadership, distributive leadership, organizational learning, and development. School leaders can be a major influence on these school-level factors (Mulford, 2013).

Implementing a leadership framework grounded in proven methods has demonstrated success, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the Philippines, the public basic education system's primary goal is to prepare Filipinos for lifelong learning and well-rounded contributions to society, with the Department of Education (DepEd) continuously striving to enhance its services.

Education must continue amidst the pandemic by reframing the leadership approaches of school administrators or educators. During the Education Policy Reforms Dialogue 2020 (OECD, 2020), delegates agreed that the COVID-19 crisis had accelerated both thinking and action in education, substantially shifting attitudes within education systems in key areas of longer-term change. The leadership attributes and skills required of school leaders are fundamentally different from those generally required as part of the normal school environment. Strong leadership positions typically serve the school for the future and support and empower staff and students to pursue teaching and learning excellence.

School leadership practices have changed considerably and, maybe, irreversibly because of COVID-19. As a result of the pandemic, school leadership had shifted on its axis, underlining that the principles of good leadership were constantly having a clear vision, developing others, managing people, and building capacity. The evidence also points towards the importance of context-responsive leadership, implying a shift in school leadership practices because of COVID-19 (Leithwood, as cited by Harris et. al., 2020)

There was a need to reframe school leadership approaches to support diverse community members and promote school equity (Carrington, 2022). School improvement was viewed as a system-wide phenomenon, and a systemic perspective is necessary to capture the complexity and dynamics of continuous school improvement (Slegers, 2023). The complexity of school leadership requires a systems view, and the Holistic School Leadership approach presents a

systems-thinking framework for educational leaders (Shaked & Schechter, 2017). The traditional ways of thinking about leadership and management limit the understanding of the work, and a distributed framework that focuses on interactions among leaders and followers and the context is needed. The need to reframe the approach to school leadership and management was to overcome limitations in current thinking and focus on the practice of leading and managing (Greig et al., 2021; Spillane, 2009).

Transforming education in the post-pandemic era required shifting practices and approaches at every system level. This study was the first in the Province of Bulacan to examine post-pandemic educational leadership. This research is not only innovative and timely but also instrumental in shaping future leadership practices. It lays the groundwork for building stronger, more adaptive, and contextually relevant leadership frameworks that can empower school administrators to lead with vision, empathy, and strategy during times of crisis and transition. These circumstances prompted the researcher to conduct qualitative research that presents the exploratory case study of school administrators in Educational District VI of the Schools Division of Bulacan. From school administrators' approaches and adaptive skills, a post-pandemic leadership model was crafted to guide educators.

Methodology

The qualitative exploratory case study method was utilized in this study since this is the most appropriate method for capturing school administrators' experiences, decision-making, and leadership approaches in times of crisis. Johnson and Christensen (2014) explained that they used a wide and deep-angle lens to examine human choice and behavior as it occurs naturally in all its detail. Particularly, the study employed an exploratory case study method of research. The best source of data was those involved in the situation. The chosen topic was rooted in the human factor of school leadership, which makes the qualitative approach the most logical way to facilitate the exploration of school leadership attributes within rapid change caused by a crisis (Alomair & Fernandez, 2021).

Results and Discussion

Part 1. Condition of School Leadership

Theme 1. Responsive Leadership with compassion and empathy (Current Condition of School Leadership Focusing on Role and Practices

The generated theme on the current condition of school leadership, particularly in the wake of unprecedented challenges like the pandemic, demands an approach that balances responsiveness with compassion and empathy. These attributes were essential in addressing the multifaceted needs of students, staff, and the broader school community. Responsive leadership, characterized by its adaptability and proactive stance, when coupled with compassion and empathy, creates an environment where individuals feel valued, understood, and supported. The responses note the role and practices of school administrators in embodying these principles to foster a positive and resilient school culture.

As claimed by SA1 and SA8 in their response to their current condition and theme, responsive leadership focuses on having a positive culture, effective and constant communication. SA8 narrated that, “My responsibilities typically include managing the school's day-to-day operations, sustaining discipline due to the pandemic students' behavior change, guaranteeing academic quality while having learning losses, nurturing a positive school culture, and communicating with various stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers, and the community.” SA8 added, “At present, the condition of my school leadership focuses on creating a positive culture and ensuring effective operations despite challenges like scarce resources.

The current condition of school leadership, particularly in the context of the numerous challenges brought about by recent global events, highlights the critical need for responsive leadership grounded in compassion and empathy. School administrators who embody these principles can effectively address the diverse needs of their communities, fostering a supportive, inclusive, and resilient educational environment. Through open communication, professional development, student-centered approaches, community engagement, wellness programs, and a commitment to equity and inclusion, school leaders can navigate the complexities of modern education while ensuring that all members of the school community feel valued and supported. Moreover, compassion and empathy in leadership enhance its effectiveness, which made the pandemic bearable as school heads foster diversity and inclusivity (Zivkovic, 2022).

Theme 2. Transformative Leadership for Organizational Empowerment (Current Condition of School Leadership Focusing on Approach to School Administration)

The informants characterized transformative leadership as they have and use their ability to inspire and motivate other teachers to achieve their highest potential and to exceed their expectations. The analysis showed that school leaders have been fostering a culture of innovation and empowering others to contribute to achieving the school's organizational goals. As described by the school leaders, transformative leaders are change agents who challenge the status quo, promote continuous learning, and encourage a collaborative and inclusive environment. Transformational leadership also empowers people, which is significant to an institution. Improving this leadership style ensures the continuation of the operations and tasks of the school regardless of the challenges faced (Al Saed & Al Saed, 2023).

Four informants claimed that transformative leadership includes including others – students, parents, teachers, and staff in decision-making and empowering the organization. SA1 revealed that “My leadership style helps me to mold my colleagues in a peaceful and happy workplace. I involve my teacher in decision-making and let their opinion be heard by all so that there is a shared responsibility.” Same with SA3 said that, “Also, I allow my teachers to contribute to the decision-making as well as stakeholders, parang shared planning and decision making.” Likewise, for SA4 stated that, “I can directly say that I always listen and weigh things out. A leader without an ear and a heart- it is too difficult to reach and understand your people.” And lastly, SA6 admitted that, “I always used to share with my HTs all of the tasks, processes, and administrative decisions for them to be trained as school administrators.”

Transformative leadership was a powerful approach to school administration that fosters organizational empowerment through visionary thinking, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. By developing a shared vision, promoting collaboration, empowering teachers and staff, fostering a growth mindset, and creating a supportive environment, transformative school leaders can create a dynamic and inclusive educational culture that drives continuous improvement and excellence. This form of leadership is a more comprehensive approach, especially in the context of education (Penell, 2023).

Characterizing leadership style or approach to school administration as transformative means committing to these principles and practices. It involves being a change agent, inspiring and empowering others, and fostering an environment where everyone can thrive. In doing so, transformative leaders enhance students' educational experience and create a vibrant, supportive, and innovative community for teachers and staff. This approach ultimately leads to

a more resilient and successful school organization, capable of adapting to new challenges and seizing opportunities for growth and improvement, as well as a way to work together for the same goal (Sparks 2021).

Theme 3. Strategic Management and Empowerment in Education (Current Condition of School Leadership Focusing on Leadership Style in Action within the School)

Strategic management and empowerment in education are crucial for fostering an inclusive, innovative, and supportive school environment. By focusing on collaborative resource allocation and support, and integrating technological innovation for educational enhancement, school leaders can effectively address the diverse needs of their community. Specific examples, such as implementing a school-wide technology initiative, developing comprehensive professional development programs, and establishing student-centered support systems, illustrate how strategic leadership practices can drive positive change and empower educators, students, and the broader school community. Through these efforts, school leaders created a dynamic and resilient educational environment that prepares students for the future while supporting the growth and development of all stakeholders. Furthermore, the duty of the school principal is not only limited to management but also to ensure that the teachers provide quality education and maintain the good academic performance of learners (Mosoge & Mataboge, 2021).

SA6, SA7, and SA8 had the same concept and process of imposing strategic management about collaboration and empowering staff. SA6 stated that, "I designated my other HTs to serve as OICs in those campuses for proper monitoring, supervision, and coordination." SA7 said, "We always have a lot of time for lac session and brainstorming in every action that we are doing." While SA8, "In terms of student-centered approach, I consistently encourage and initiate student-led activities in collaboration with school clubs and organizations. Students assume leadership roles in various initiatives,"

As SA1 tackled the essence of budget management, one informant said, "Budget management also successfully introduces and implements where teachers can receive support for their needs in reproducing their modules."

SA5 answered, “Observing and understanding the needs of every teacher and student. Technology serves as a tool to effectively deliver knowledge to students. We create a studio wherein teachers can record or create AVP for their learners. I also decided to utilize the school’s resources to equip each classroom with a television, enabling interactive lessons. The school also provided lapel microphones to each teacher.”

Part 2. Challenges Encountered by the School Administrators

Theme 4. Leading Through Uncertainty: Addressing Adaptive, Transitional, and Technological Challenges in Post-Pandemic School Administration"

Adapting to the new norms in the post-pandemic era has presented school administrators with unique challenges. Ensuring health and safety, addressing learning loss, supporting technological integration, and enhancing communication and engagement have required strategic planning, resource allocation, and collaborative efforts. By embracing these new norms and adopting a proactive, inclusive approach, administrators have demonstrated resilience and adaptability, ultimately creating a more supportive and effective educational environment.

Seven (SA1, SA2, SA3, SA6, S7, SA8, and SA10) out of 10 informants mentioned the challenges they had experienced in the post-pandemic. The need to navigate the transition to a post-pandemic guaranteed health and safety, improved the psychological and psychosocial status, improved innovations, addressed learning gaps, improved facilities, and maintained a peaceful environment and disciplined students.

They said, “As a school administrator, the significant challenges in the post-pandemic era are adapting again to traditional learning, managing staff morale, addressing learning gaps, guaranteeing health and safety protocols, and navigating changes in education policies. These problems necessitate resilience, adaptability, and proactive leadership to ensure educational continuity and the well-being of the school community.”

One of the most immediate and pervasive challenges faced by school administrators during the COVID-19 pandemic was ensuring the health and safety of students, staff, and the school

community. The shift to remote learning during the pandemic created significant learning gaps, exacerbating educational disparities. Addressing these issues has been a critical challenge for school administrators. One of the many challenges the teachers faced is the learners' poor school engagement and readjustment (Clores et al., 2023)

Navigating educational transitions amidst societal challenges has recently become a defining theme for school administrators. The multifaceted nature of these challenges—ranging from health and safety concerns, addressing learning loss, dealing with socio-political and economic disparities, integrating technology, to enhancing community engagement—requires a strategic, adaptive, and inclusive approach.

SA1 admitted that students experience difficulties adapting to learning styles, resulting in learning loss. To address it, he mentioned that, “Teachers switch to different strategies that fit the learners' needs so that even slowly they can adapt to the new normal”.

SA3 also pointed out that to improve the learning process, transition to foundational skills is necessary, “Kapansin–pansin na kailangan talagang bumalik sa basic at yung mga foundational skills, lalo na sa reading and comprehension.”

In addition, to navigate educational transitions, having limited support from the stakeholders, SA6 encountered, “We rarely received support from the LGU due to political issues. I have to minimize the use of rooms to have areas/facilities for administrative concerns and functional offices.”.

Moreover, SA8 and SA10 navigated to provide students access to education and services by distributing printed learning materials at home despite needing access to technology. Also, providing targeted interventions and support systems that improve academic performance. They said, “As a result, we have to devise creative solutions, such as distributing printed modules to support learning... As a school administrator, implementing targeted intervention programs such as one-on-one tutoring, small group instruction, or after-school remediation sessions is needed to help struggling learners.”

Part 3. Causes of Leadership Challenges of School Administrators

Theme 5. Unraveling the Roots of Leadership Struggles: Understanding the Impact of Educational Instability, Systemic Pressures, and External Influences in the Post-Pandemic Era"

Problematic educational environments significantly contributed to the leadership challenges encountered by school administrators. To recall, the long-term effects of the abrupt closure of schools and transition to distance learning have made administrators and schools face different challenges and problems (Takona, 2023). These challenges include but are not limited to socio-economic disparities, inadequate resources and infrastructure, technological hurdles, and shifting societal expectations, creating complex conditions that require innovative, resilient, and adaptive leadership. Administrators navigated these challenges while striving to provide a high-quality education and supportive student environment. Six (SA1, SA2, SA6, SA7, SA8, and SA9) out of 10 informants experienced the same educational problem, which needs more communication and support from external partners. These pertained to the local government unit and parents. SA3 said, "Too many competencies, mismatch of activities and programs, lack of instructional materials, lack of instruction monitoring and evaluation."

Systemic and external factors significantly contribute to school leaders' leadership challenges, particularly peer and community influences. Peer influence affects professional relationships, expectations, and support networks, shaping the internal dynamics within the school. SA8 and SA10 believed it was crucial to address those systemic factors to improve the overall effectiveness of school leadership in the post-pandemic. They believed that "Addressing systemic factors is crucial for improving the overall effectiveness of school leadership in the post-pandemic era. These factors impact equity, adaptability, collaboration, resource allocation, and policy alignment, all of which are essential for supporting student success, fostering teacher development, and promoting community engagement." To mitigate this, community-driven programs were initiated so that everyone is involved in implementing and supplementing the school's educational needs (Iyengar, 2021). Moreover, community influence encompasses the local community's expectations, support, and socio-economic context, impacting the external environment in which school leaders operate. The need to sustain social mobilization should be undertaken to build long-term community resiliency (Sowada, 2024).

Seven (SA1, SA2, SA3, SA4, SA5, SA6, SA7) out of 10 informants believed this was important. They believed that "All issues and concerns, big or small, need to be addressed as soon as

possible for the organization to meet and reach the goal.”School administrators' leadership challenges were crucial, impacting all aspects of the educational experience. These challenges shape schools' overall functioning and success, from student achievement and teacher morale to resource management and stakeholder engagement. Addressing these challenges required a comprehensive approach that includes strategic resource allocation, effective policy implementation, and active stakeholder engagement. Moreover, distributed leadership, which pertains to all school community members, positively impacts student achievement and teacher performance (Fu, 2022).

By acknowledging the significance of leadership challenges, school leaders developed strategies to navigate them effectively, ensuring that their schools provide high-quality education and support for all students. In doing so, they created positive, equitable, and inclusive educational environments that foster academic success and personal growth. Thus, recognizing the importance of accommodating a variety of strategies and approaches to meet the diverse, crucial, and important needs of the school community promotes inclusivity and equity on a wider scale (Tampubolon et al., 2024)

Part 4.1 Responses to Teacher and Student Needs

Theme 6. Leading with Purpose and Compassion: School Administrators' Strategic Responses to Support Teacher and Student Needs for Resilient, Safe, and Empowered Learning Communities in the Post-Pandemic Era

In this study, the resiliency theory was relevant because school administrators focused on several fundamental components aligned with being resilient. Firstly, it emphasized adaptive coping mechanisms, highlighting the ability of individuals or systems to adjust and respond to adverse circumstances. These mechanisms include problem-solving skills, emotional regulation, seeking social support, and maintaining an optimistic outlook.

Five (SA1, SA3, SA4, SA6, and SA8) out of 10 informants responded to the needs of their teachers and students by showing support to people through the difficult times associated with care. SA1 expressed, “I traditionally have a democratic leadership because, above all, a leadership style having open communication, listening to your people, and sharing love makes

every person around you work better than what you expect. All you need to do is to love your people before you lead them, so your leadership will be guided by love and concern.”

SA3 stated that, “Prioritize teacher and student welfare, ensure school facilities are functional, provide sufficient learning resources, innovate with technology, and realign budgets.”

In addition, SA4 was interested in knowing the status of the people under her and prioritizing their safety. She said, “Moreso, I also value the importance of communication, knowing the condition of my teachers and students. How they are doing.”. While SA6 strongly addressed that, “I thoroughly follow the rules, guidelines, and procedures set by the department. I don’t want to sacrifice the safety and life of my staff, teachers, and students.”

By building resilient systems and fostering compassionate communities, schools navigated the challenges of the pandemic and laid the groundwork for continuous improvement. Moreover, resilience means the capacity to do things despite adversities (Ye et al., 2021). Hence, they focused on empathy, support, and collaboration, ensuring that the educational experience remained meaningful and inclusive, addressing the holistic needs of all stakeholders. As schools continued to evolve in the post-pandemic era, the principles of resilience and compassion remained central to their efforts to create nurturing and supportive educational environments. Thus, resilience is the system’s capability to endure and effectively recover from the pandemic’s effects and maintain the school leaders’ core function in their respective school communities (Atef et al., 2024).

In the post-pandemic period, addressing learning loss, continued professional development, and rebuilding school communities remained critical. Schools safeguarded excellence by empowering educators through inclusive decision-making, access to resources, fostering professional learning communities, and creating a supportive and dynamic educational environment. Teachers perceived these efforts as vital in navigating the challenges posed by the pandemic and ensuring continuous improvement in education. As schools continued to evolve, empowerment, adaptability, and compassion principles remained central to supporting teachers and students effectively. Interestingly, Dela Cruz et al. (2024) found that to reduce learning loss and continue the improvement of education, tutoring through face-to-face or mobile phones has significant positive effects on student learning.

Seven (F1, F2, F3, F5, F7, F8, and F10) out of 10 informants disclosed that their school administrators respond to the needs of the teachers focusing on professional development and support by providing opportunities through participation in various workshops, seminars, training sessions (In-Service Training Program, Departmentalized Learning Action Cell (DLAC), Research Congress and others. Also, it provided technical assistance on pedagogies and technologies to be applied in implementing the curriculum.

Four informants, namely F2, F5, F6, F8, and F10, respond to the needs of the teachers by crafting, planning, and implementing policies and processes that align with the DepEd mandate and standards.

On the other hand, four informants (F3, F4, F5, and F10) mentioned that they responded to the needs of the teachers, focusing on providing adequate supplies and materials. As mentioned, the school administrators ensured adequate allocation of resources such as teaching materials, classrooms, and medical supplies. Specifically, F5 provided each department a projector, and several teachers were given DepEd laptops, flash drives for storage, and NEAP sim cards with monthly data to be utilized during classroom instructions.

Schools emphasized continuous growth by expanding access to resources, supporting holistic development, and facilitating continuous feedback and improvement. Students perceived these efforts as crucial in helping them navigate the complexities of the pandemic and maintain their educational progress. Schools that effectively fostered comprehensive learning environments created resilient, empowered, and well-rounded students who were better equipped to thrive in their academic and personal lives. The availability and access to educational resources were measured by the responses of the school administrators from five informants (S1, S4, S5, S6, and S7) as perceived by the students. They stated that, “The situation really tested the ability of school administrators and teachers in all sorts of ways to teach us. I couldn’t realize before that it is possible.”

Five (S2, S6, S8, S9, and S10) out of 10 informants expressed that their administrators respond regarding student holistic support and resilience building. School administrators organized extra-curricular activities and organizations to promote holistic growth and student social

interaction. They also provided scholarship opportunities, tutoring, and mentoring programs to support students in achieving their academic and personal goals.

Part 4.2 Initiative or Strategies Implemented to Address Teacher and Student Needs

Theme 7. Strategic Educational Leadership for Holistic Recovery: Empowering Teachers, Supporting Students, and Strengthening School Communities through Empathy, Innovation, and Wellness

One of the most significant challenges during the pandemic was the emotional toll that it took on teachers and students. Recognizing this, school administrators prioritized empathy as a core component of their leadership strategy. They focused on understanding the emotional and psychological needs of their staff and students, often through surveys, one-on-one meetings, and open forums for discussion. By actively listening to concerns and providing support, administrators helped to create a school culture rooted in compassion and care. This empathetic approach was crucial in fostering trust and building a sense of community, which was particularly important during times of uncertainty. School administrators noted that prioritizing emotional well-being maintained morale and motivation among teachers and students, positively impacting their engagement and performance. Since the spread of COVID-19 caused a drastic change in many teachers' and learners' emotional, mental, social, and financial status, it is very crucial to build programs that support health and well-being issues; yet many grappled in the dark due to challenges that confronted the school leaders (Nurunnabi et al., 2021). Seven informants (SA1, SA4, SA5, SA6, SA8, and SA9) confessed to expressing empathy and collaboration. Specifically, SA1 stated that, "As a leader, you need to listen to your people because through listening you can trace all the things needed." The informants also pointed out that being vigilant and soliciting suggestions contributed to the institution's attainment of expected outcomes.

As schools continued to evolve in the post-pandemic era, the principles of teacher empowerment and community involvement remained central to creating holistic learning environments that support the comprehensive development of students. Five informants (F1, F3, F5, F9, and F10) perceived that teacher support and development contribute to teacher empowerment. They emphasized that school administrators provide psychological guidance to ensure the teacher is in a normal capacity to return to teaching. They also offered workshops

and technical assistance to improve their teaching, especially on digital and online platforms and technology integration. F6 and F10 promote fostering partnerships with family and community organizations to support students' and teachers' being. As they mentioned, "Administrators collaborate with families and community organizations to support students' academic and emotional needs, ensuring a holistic approach to addressing learning gaps."

In response to the heightened stress and anxiety experienced by students during the pandemic, schools placed a significant emphasis on mental health support. It includes providing access to counseling services, mental health workshops, and peer support groups. Schools recognized that students were facing unprecedented challenges, from the isolation of remote learning to the uncertainty about the future, and took proactive steps to ensure that mental health resources were readily available. Since Baltà-Salvador et al. (2021) highlighted that many students were not satisfied with distant education during the pandemic, it is advisable to improve the student learning environment, experiences, and emotional state. Six informants (S1, S3, S4, S7, S9, and S10) expressed the importance of counseling or mental health services. S1 and S3 stated that, "Schools prioritize the mental health and well-being of students and staff by providing access to counseling services, support groups, and other resources."

On the other hand, S9 claimed that implementing school clubs that include peer counseling and some organizations helped the students cope with the new lessons through peer tutoring to enhance students' skills while also tutoring others to learn.

Part 4.3 Outcomes or Impacts of Responses on the Teachers and Students

Theme 8. Transformative Impacts of Strategic Leadership: Advancing Empowerment, Resilience, and Inclusive Growth Among Teachers and Students in Post-Pandemic Education

Administrators recognized that teachers were at the forefront of adapting to new teaching methods, particularly with the shift to remote and hybrid learning. To support them, administrators facilitated opportunities for collaborative planning, peer mentoring, and professional development. By encouraging teachers to work together, share best practices, and engage in continuous learning, administrators empowered them to feel more confident and capable of navigating the challenges of the new educational environment. This collaborative

approach not only improved the quality of instruction but also fostered a sense of unity and shared purpose among teachers, which was critical in maintaining morale during difficult times. In addition, when positive change and self-empowerment are developed for teachers, they also acquire 21st-century abilities to meet the demands of the times (Soipimai & Sanrattana, 2023).

Four informants (SA1, SA4, SA6, and SA10) evaluated the impact of their responses as school administrators to the need for teachers and students, to align with communication and collaboration. SA1 mentioned, "Listening and sharing love to make school organization work.". SA4 and SA6 shared that, "Communication is evident and possible conflicts, problems, and other concerns are easily addressed. It builds a strong relationship between the school and community."

Furthermore, by empowering students to take on leadership roles, encouraging accountability through personalized learning, and advancing inclusive and flexible educational practices, schools have created environments where students can thrive. These changes have fostered a sense of agency, responsibility, and resilience among students, preparing them for future success in an ever-changing world. Three informants (S1, S9, and S10) evaluated the response of their school administrators to student needs by allowing students to take leadership roles through various clubs and organizations and spearheading activities to foster leadership responsibility and accountability. S1 expressed, "It contributes to us to learn personally and work professionally as student leaders." S10 shared that, "higher student participation in extracurricular activities created a more collaborative atmosphere for teachers and strengthened bonds with their pupils."

The emphasis on leadership, accountability, and self-guided learning has also laid the foundation for lifelong learning, where students are equipped with the skills and attitudes needed to navigate the complexities of the 21st-century landscape. As education continues to evolve, the lessons learned during the pandemic will remain crucial in shaping the future of teaching and learning, ensuring that all students can succeed and make meaningful progress in their educational journeys. Five informants, S2, S4, S5, S6, and S8, promoted independent learning through self-guided learning or personalized learning pathways that increase academic performance. They said, "It increases the academic performance of the students... It makes learning meaningful and satisfying."

Part 5. Support of Local Government Units and Other Partners/ Stakeholders

Theme 9. Strengthening Educational Recovery Through Multi-Stakeholder Support: Advancing Capacity, Equity, and Safe Learning Amid Resource Constraints

The role of local government units (LGUs) in supporting schools is pivotal, particularly in sustainable development and promoting health and safety. In the post-pandemic era, the responsibilities of LGUs have expanded to address the pressing needs of educational institutions by implementing sustainable development initiatives and promoting health and safety within schools. These initiatives ensure schools' continued operation and improvement and empower educators, students, and the broader community to thrive in a rapidly changing environment. LGU1 shared, “We have implemented several support mechanisms to assist school administrators in recovering from the pandemic crisis... Training and Capacity Building: LGUs have organized training sessions and capacity-building programs for school administrators to adapt to new teaching methods, utilize online learning platforms effectively, and implement health and safety protocols in schools.”

The initiatives undertaken by local government units have profoundly impacted the promotion of collaboration and equity in education and the assurance of effective learning environments and preparedness within schools. Through these initiatives, LGUs have played a crucial role in fostering collaboration among educational stakeholders, advancing equity to provide all students with access to quality education, creating safe and supportive learning spaces, and enhancing the preparedness of schools to navigate current and future challenges. Obligar et al. (2021) emphasized the significant role of the LGUs in aiding the educational system as the schools grapple with the challenges brought about by the pandemic. They also assisted in different education sectors and cooperated with schools.

LGU 1 and LGU 3 admitted that, “Limited funding and budget constraints. Limiting the amount of funding available for supporting schools' recovery efforts. As a result, schools may not receive sufficient resources to address their needs adequately, particularly in areas such as infrastructure upgrades, technology investment, and teacher training.” One of the significant challenges LGUs encounter in fulfilling this role is the limited resources, primarily due to restricted funding. This financial constraint hampers the ability of LGUs to provide adequate and sustained support to

schools, particularly in times of crisis or during periods of significant educational transformation, such as the post-pandemic era. This discussion explored the challenges that limited resources pose to LGUs and the subsequent impact on their capacity to support educational initiatives effectively. It is common for adequate funding to be a must to have smooth operations in the community and schools. It called for prioritizing resource allocation and devising ways to maximize available resources (Ondong, 2024). But LGU1 and LGU3 generously imposed financial assistance to schools through resource funding to improve school infrastructure and facilities, and to help cover additional expenses incurred due to the pandemic in purchasing supplies.

Part 6. The Post-Pandemic Leadership Framework – ReTranS Leadership for Navigating and Bridging Problematic Educational Environments

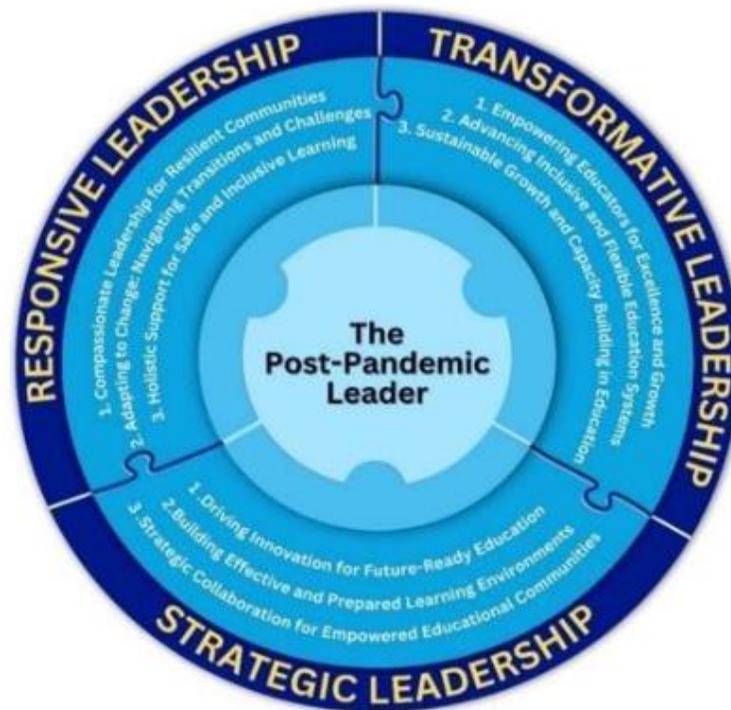
The pandemic has affected the education system as it has affected all other areas of life in the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only affected students' lives but has also affected education, teaching and learning environments and methods, and school leadership. The job of a school leader is relentless. It is fast-paced, ever-changing, and increasingly subject to accountability measures. A typical school leader needs to be skilled in instructional leadership, human resources, conflict resolution, child development, and psychology, while also able to play the role of inspirational cheerleader and to be the face of the school for staff, students, and the community.

The post-pandemic landscape has fundamentally changed the way schools operate, making it essential for leaders to adopt a responsive, transformative, and strategic approach. This triad of leadership qualities ensures schools can not only recover from disruptions but also build a future-ready foundation.

Leaders who are responsive, transformative, and strategic can effectively navigate post-pandemic complexities, setting a positive trajectory for students, staff, and the community. By adapting to immediate needs, driving meaningful changes, and planning strategically, these leaders create a resilient, inclusive, and innovative educational environment. This holistic approach positions schools to better prepare students for the future, making education more adaptive, equitable, and impactful.

Figure 1

ReTrans Leadership for Navigating and Bridging Problematic Educational Environments



The pandemic served as a wake-up call for educational leadership. It made clear that traditional models are insufficient in addressing the complex, rapidly evolving challenges schools face today. A post-pandemic leadership framework that integrates responsiveness, transformation, and strategic thinking is essential for school administrators to successfully navigate times of crisis and transition.

Responsive leadership ensures schools can react effectively to immediate challenges with empathy and clarity. Transformative leadership drives deep, lasting change that reimagines education for equity and innovation. Strategic leadership prepares schools for long-term success, building resilient systems capable of sustaining progress through uncertainty.

Together, these leadership dimensions empower school administrators not just to survive crises, but to emerge stronger and more prepared for the future. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, the need for this comprehensive leadership approach will only grow more critical.

Leaders should also make sure that whether it is old or new normal, in education, one must embody inclusivity, care, and equity (Xiao, 2021). Hence, a post - pandemic leadership can be responsive, transformative, and strategic, as they foster continuous professional learning and student success (Francisco & Nuqui, 2020). New normal leadership signifies new ways and processes in making the education relevant and accessible. A post – pandemic leadership encompasses the ability of the school administrators to think critically and systematically. The framework encompasses the holistic leadership approaches in the post–pandemic in a puzzled circular shape that represents meaningful aspects that contribute to how to become an effective post–pandemic leader. The color blue symbolizes education.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study focuses on the leadership approaches of school administrators in the post–pandemic era, wherein school leadership practices were responsive with compassion and empathy. After the pandemic, the leaders prioritize adaptability, proactivity, and creating a working environment where the teachers, staff, and students feel valued. Transformative leadership has played a crucial role in inspiring and motivating teachers to work hard. Strategic management was also seen as essential in enhancing the instructional quality, as leaders set long-term goals and suitable policies for resource allocation and support systems.

The challenges met by school administrators in the post-pandemic period tested their abilities primarily in adapting to the new norms. To ensure the health and safety of the students and teachers, they were required to follow strict health protocols. There was also a considerable learning loss, especially among vulnerable learners. As they transitioned back to in-person classes, school leaders had to navigate technological integration and address student engagement through intervention programs. The resistance of stakeholders was also one that challenged the school leaders, which complicated efforts. These struggles emphasized the need for inclusive and adaptable leadership to meet the varied needs of the school and community.

The abrupt transition to distance learning caused the struggles faced by the school administrators due to the pandemic. The school closure had led to socio-economic disparities, a lack of resources, and technological challenges, which tested their innovative and resilient leadership. Community influences also complicated the leaders' roles, which added layers to the complexities of their existing responsibilities.

To respond to the needs of teachers and students, school administrators adopted resilience and empowerment strategies to nurture compassionate communities that focus on safety, resilience, and improvement. They implemented proactive measures like emotional support, professional development, and collaborative planning. They prioritize mental health and empathy.

The support of Local Government Units (LGUs) had played a crucial role in supporting school administrators during the transition period with initiatives on sustainable development and occupational health and safety. They support areas like capacity building and empowerment, where training and resources are made available to enhance the leadership and instructional capabilities of schools. LGUs also implemented health and safety programs, establishing health protocols and medical and psychological support.

The study also proposes the ReTrans (Responsive, Transformative, and Strategic) Leadership for Navigating and Bridging Problematic Educational Environment. By embracing these three dimensions, leaders can foster resilience and quality education while navigating the complexities of the post-pandemic world. This approach not only positions organizations to weather future crises but also to thrive in a rapidly evolving landscape. A leader's impact should never be underestimated.

Based on the findings, school administrators should provide resources and services for both students and teachers and encourage them to actively participate in school activities and take advantage of available mental health resources and counseling services.

The school administrators and teachers may engage into professional development to keep up with the new teaching modalities and technological advances. They may also collaborate with colleagues and share best practices and support to address the needs of varied learners.

The school administrators may implement strategic plans for resource allocation and cultivate a culture of empathy and support the school environment, focusing on the emotional well-being of employees and students.

The school division superintendents may facilitate collaborative initiatives among schools within their division to share resources and practices during the recovery period. They may also invest in training programs for school administrators to enhance their crisis management skills.

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