

Management Practices of School Managers in Relation to the Secondary School Teachers' Instructional Competence

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between school managers' management practices and teachers' instructional competence in public secondary schools in the Division of Isabela. Anchored on the Human Relations Theory and the Instructional Leadership Framework, the study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. Data were collected from 360 teachers and 35 school managers using validated questionnaires based on OPCRF and IPCRF indicators, and were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including weighted mean, Kruskal-Wallis test, Z-test, and Pearson correlation. Findings revealed that school managers demonstrated consistently outstanding performance and highly effective management practices, particularly in building connections and focusing on teaching and learning, although financial management emerged as a relative weakness. Teachers likewise exhibited very high instructional competence across all domains, with strengths in classroom management and content delivery, while ICT integration and inclusive strategies showed comparatively lower performance. Despite these high levels, the relationship between management practices and instructional performance was generally weak and statistically insignificant, indicating that teaching competence is largely independent and influenced more by individual skills and experience. The study concludes that targeted and practical professional development is necessary to address specific instructional gaps, particularly in ICT use and inclusive education. The study supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) by promoting improved teaching effectiveness and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by strengthening workforce readiness through enhanced teacher competence. It contributes to sustainability by supporting institutional and educational development through improved leadership practices, professional growth, and evidence-based policy directions that enhance long-term school effectiveness and community outcomes.

Keywords: Educational Leadership; Instructional Competence; Management Practices; School Managers; Secondary Education; Secondary School Teachers; Teachers' Performance

1. Introduction

Education plays a critical role in national development, with school leadership and teacher competence serving as key determinants of educational quality. Guided by the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, school managers are expected to function as both instructional leaders and administrative managers, fostering environments that enhance teaching effectiveness. This study examines how school managers' management practices relate to the instructional competence of secondary school teachers in the Public Secondary School Division of Isabela, addressing gaps in localized empirical evidence and contributing to improved educational outcomes.

1.1 Background of the Study on School Management Practices and Teachers' Instructional Competence

The Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 mandates school heads to serve as instructional leaders and administrative managers, emphasizing their role in achieving quality education. Effective collaboration between school leaders and teachers is essential in high-performing schools. School management practices including planning, supervision, professional development support, communication, and performance monitoring create conditions that significantly influence teachers' instructional competence. Instructional competence involves the ability to design lessons, deliver instruction, assess learning, and manage classrooms effectively (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2018). Research shows that school leadership directly impacts teacher performance and student achievement. Effective management practices such as instructional supervision and teacher empowerment enhance professional growth and classroom performance (Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins, 2020), while instructional leadership strongly influences teaching quality and school outcomes (Bush, 2019). In the Philippine context, school managers who provide feedback, mentoring, and professional learning opportunities promote instructional excellence (Santos, 2021).

1.2 Themes and Insights from Related Literature on Management Practices and Teaching Effectiveness

Literature consistently highlights that school management practices significantly influence instructional competence. Effective leadership fosters collaboration, professional growth, and improved teaching outcomes (Lessa, Spier and Felipe, 2018; Giami and Obiechina, 2019). Management practices such as supervision, communication, decision-making, and motivation create supportive environments for teachers. Modern school managers are expected to function as instructional leaders rather than purely administrative figures, aligning leadership practices with teaching and learning improvement (DepED Order No.42, s. 2007; Chow, Ph and Learning, 2013; Krug, 2004). Instructional leadership has been shown to positively influence teachers' teaching competency and professional development (Esa et al., 2017; Sarikaya & Erdoğan, 2016; Chemers, 2016; Hilton et al., 2015; Saleem et al., 2020; Kim & Lee, 2020; Hallinger et al., 2019; Sebastian et al., 2016). However, challenges such as administrative workload limit principals' ability to supervise instruction effectively (Dr. Nwite Onuma, 2016; Dibia, 2013; Nnamdi and Nwite, 2014). Professional development opportunities, including in-service training, are essential for enhancing both managerial and instructional competencies.

1.3 Local, National, and Global Context of School Leadership and Instructional Competence

Globally, educational systems emphasize effective school leadership as a driver of teaching quality and student performance. Instructional leadership plays a key role in improving teacher competence and learning outcomes. Nationally, Republic Act No. 9155 reinforces the responsibility of school heads to lead instructional and administrative functions, ensuring quality education delivery. Locally, studies highlight that school managers influence teacher productivity, commitment, and instructional competence (Mallari Nesther P 2022; LAndawe, Shirley A., et al. 2024; Vicera 2019). However, contextual challenges in regions such as Isabela including resource constraints and administrative demands affect the implementation of effective management practices. Limited localized studies further restrict understanding of how these practices influence instructional competence within specific school divisions.

1.4 Theoretical or Conceptual Basis on Management Practices and Instructional Competence

This study is anchored on the Human Relations Theory by Elton Mayo and the Instructional Leadership Framework by Hallinger (2011). These frameworks emphasize that effective management involves both administrative efficiency and interpersonal support, fostering teacher motivation and collaboration. The conceptual framework identifies school managers' management practices such as Leading Strategically, Managing School Operations and Resources, Focusing on Teaching and Learning, Developing Self and Others, and Building Connections as independent variables. Teachers' instructional competence, measured through performance indicators such as content knowledge, instructional strategies, communication, and inclusive practices, serves as the dependent variable. The framework posits a direct relationship between management practices and instructional competence.

1.5 Research Gaps and Rationale on School Management Practices in Isabela

Despite extensive research on leadership and teacher performance, there is limited empirical evidence examining the direct relationship between school managers' management practices and teachers' instructional competence in the Province of Isabela. Existing studies often focus on leadership styles rather than specific managerial functions such as supervision, communication, and professional development. Additionally, most research is conducted in developed contexts, with limited focus on local or resource-constrained environments. There is also a methodological gap, as many studies rely on qualitative approaches rather than quantitative correlational designs. Addressing these gaps will provide evidence-based insights to improve management practices and enhance instructional competence in secondary schools.

1.6 Alignment with Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This study aligns primarily with SDG 4 – Quality Education, as it seeks to enhance teachers' instructional competence through effective school management practices, thereby improving the quality and inclusiveness of education. It also supports SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, as strengthening teacher competence contributes to a more skilled and productive workforce, and SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals, as effective school leadership fosters collaboration among teachers, administrators, and stakeholders. By examining how management practices influence instructional competence in the local context, the study contributes to sustainable improvements in educational systems and equitable learning outcomes.

1.7 Importance of the Study to Multidisciplinary Sustainability

This research contributes to educational sustainability by strengthening instructional practices and promoting continuous teacher development. It supports socio-economic sustainability by improving educational outcomes that influence workforce readiness and national development. The study also contributes to institutional sustainability by enhancing school management systems and leadership practices. Furthermore, it promotes community sustainability by fostering collaboration among educational stakeholders. By linking management practices with instructional competence, the study provides a foundation for policy development, leadership training, and sustainable educational improvement.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to describe existing conditions and examine relationships between variables. This design enables the researcher to define attitudes, opinions, and behaviors while mapping circumstances and events to explain what has occurred (McNabb, 2008). A survey method was adopted as it is appropriate for gathering data from large samples (Babbie, 2007) and is widely used in studies addressing social and educational issues (Fink, 2009). It also allows the description of relationships among variables (Creswell, 2003). The design was applied to determine the relationship between school managers' management practices and the performance of secondary school teachers.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the Public Secondary School Division of Isabela, covering Legislative Districts 1 to 6. The selected sites included two large public secondary schools from each district, chosen based on population size and accessibility. The geographical distribution across six districts ensured representation of diverse school contexts within the province. The map of the legislative districts illustrates the spatial coverage of the study, showing that the selected schools were distributed across all districts, providing a comprehensive representation of the research locale.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents consisted of secondary school teachers and school managers, including school heads, teachers-in-charge, head teachers, and master teachers employed in the Division of Isabela during School Year 2025–2026. A total of 360 teachers and 35 school managers participated in the study. The teachers were evenly distributed across the six legislative districts, with 60 respondents from each district, while the number of school managers varied slightly per district. This composition ensured adequate representation of both instructional and managerial perspectives in the analysis.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was used to select two large public secondary schools in each legislative district based on accessibility and population size. Within these selected schools, complete enumeration was employed, wherein all available teachers and school managers were included as respondents. This approach ensured comprehensive participation while maintaining feasibility in data collection.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study utilized structured questionnaires adapted from the Key Result Areas of the Office Performance Commitment Review Form (OPCRF) for school managers and the observable objectives in the Individual Performance Commitment Review Form (IPCRF) for teachers. The questionnaire for school managers included demographic information such as age, sex, OPCR rating, years in service, and number of management-related trainings, as well as items measuring management practices based on OPCR indicators. The questionnaire for teachers assessed instructional performance using IPCRF-based indicators and gathered their perceptions of school managers' management practices. The instrument underwent expert validation to ensure content validity, clarity, and relevance. A pilot test was conducted among non-participating teachers to assess reliability and identify issues. Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, confirming that the instrument was reliable. Ethical standards were observed, including approval from the Institutional Ethics Review Board (IERB) and ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation of respondents.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, approval was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Schools Division Office (SDO) Isabela. Permission was then secured from school principals of selected schools. Consent letters were distributed alongside the questionnaires to inform respondents of the study's purpose and ensure confidentiality and voluntary participation. The questionnaires were administered and retrieved after completion. The collected data were subsequently organized, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe respondents' demographic profiles. Weighted mean was applied to determine the performance of school managers based on OPCR indicators and to assess teachers' perceptions of management practices. Inferential statistics included the Kruskal-Wallis H Test to determine differences in management practices based on variables such as age, educational attainment, position, and training, as it is suitable for non-parametric and ordinal data. The Z-test was used to identify differences based on sex. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed to determine the relationship between school managers' management practices and teachers' instructional performance. Interpretation of results followed defined rating scales, where higher numerical values indicated stronger agreement or higher performance levels, and OPCR ratings were categorized from poor to outstanding based on specified ranges.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Performance and Profile of School Managers

3.1.1 Performance of School Managers

All 35 school managers obtained an “Outstanding” rating based on their OPCRf results, representing 100% of the respondents. The mean score of 4.92 indicates performance that is very close to the maximum rating, with no variation across performance categories. This result suggests a consistently high level of effectiveness among school managers. The absence of lower ratings reflects strong adherence to performance standards and achievement of key result areas. The near-perfect mean further implies that school managers not only met but exceeded expectations, demonstrating exemplary management practices.

3.1.2 Profile of School Managers

The majority of respondents were female (29 out of 35), with only 6 males. Most were aged 50–59, indicating a mature workforce, while very few were aged 60 and above. In terms of educational attainment, most held a Master’s Degree or higher qualifications. A large proportion had attended 8 or more trainings, and many had over 11 years of service. These findings indicate that school management is largely composed of experienced, highly educated, and professionally developed individuals. The dominance of older age groups and longer years of service suggests accumulated expertise, while high levels of training and postgraduate education reflect continuous professional growth, which likely contributes to their high performance.

3.2 Management Practices of School Managers

3.2.1 Self-Assessment of Management Practices

School managers rated their management practices highly across all domains, with strongest performance in Building Connections and Focusing on Teaching and Learning. The highest-rated indicators included strengthening relationships and improving classroom management. The lowest score was observed in financial management, although it still remained within a positive range. These results indicate that school managers prioritize relational leadership and instructional support. Strong performance in communication and teaching-related domains reflects a focus on school climate and academic outcomes. However, relatively lower scores in financial management suggest potential areas for improvement, particularly in resource management and budgeting efficiency.

3.2.2 Teachers’ Perception of Management Practices

Teachers rated school managers’ practices very highly, with all mean scores falling within a narrow and consistently high range. The highest ratings were observed in teaching and learning, as well as relationship-building domains. This suggests strong confidence among teachers in the leadership of school managers. The fact that teachers rated managers higher than the managers rated themselves indicates a pattern of modest leadership. Such self-awareness may contribute to continuous improvement and stronger professional relationships, reinforcing positive perceptions among teachers.

3.3 Teachers’ Instructional Performance

3.3.1 Overall Instructional Performance

Teachers demonstrated very high instructional performance across all domains, with mean scores ranging from 3.69 to 3.92. The strongest performance was observed in maintaining a conducive learning environment, while ICT integration showed relatively lower scores. These findings indicate that teachers are highly competent, particularly in classroom management and content delivery. Strong performance in communication, motivation, and content knowledge reflects effective teaching practices. However, slightly lower ICT-related scores suggest a need for enhanced technological integration and targeted training in digital teaching tools.

3.4 Relationship Between Management Practices and Instructional Performance

3.4.1 Leading Strategically and Instructional Performance

Most relationships between strategic leadership and instructional performance were weak and not statistically significant. However, some significant negative correlations were observed, particularly in ICT use, inclusive strategies, and learner accountability. This implies that strategic leadership does not directly translate into improved instructional performance. The presence of negative relationships suggests possible misalignment between managerial priorities and classroom practices, indicating that strategic initiatives may not effectively influence teaching outcomes.

3.4.2 Managing School Operations and Resources and Instructional Performance

The majority of relationships were weak and non-significant, with some significant negative correlations in interdisciplinary teaching, ICT use, and inclusive strategies. These findings suggest that operational management practices have limited direct influence on teaching performance. The negative correlations may indicate that administrative demands could detract from instructional focus, highlighting a potential disconnect between management functions and classroom needs.

3.4.3 Focusing on Teaching and Learning and Instructional Performance

Most correlations were weak and non-significant, although some negative relationships were identified in literacy strategies, inclusive practices, and learner accountability. This indicates that even direct instructional leadership does not significantly impact teacher performance. The results suggest that teaching effectiveness is largely shaped by individual teacher competencies rather than managerial interventions, emphasizing the need for more targeted instructional support strategies.

3.4.4 Developing Self and Others and Instructional Performance

The relationships between professional development practices and instructional performance were mostly non-significant, with some negative correlations in literacy and inclusive strategies. These results suggest that general professional development initiatives may not effectively translate into classroom practice. This highlights the need for more focused, practical, and context-specific training approaches to improve instructional outcomes.

3.4.5 Building Connections and Instructional Performance

Most relationships were weak and non-significant, except for significant negative correlations in inclusive teaching strategies for gifted learners. This suggests that while relationship-building is important for school climate, it does not directly enhance instructional performance. The negative correlations may indicate that efforts in strengthening external and internal connections are not effectively aligned with classroom instructional needs.

3.5 Differences in Management Practices

3.5.1 Differences According to Sex

Both male and female school managers demonstrated similarly high levels of management practices, with no statistically significant differences observed. This indicates that sex does not influence management effectiveness. Leadership competence appears to be independent of gender, emphasizing that professional skills and experience are more critical determinants of effective school management.

3.5.2 Differences According to Age

School managers across all age groups showed consistently high management practices, with no significant differences found. This suggests that age does not significantly affect leadership effectiveness. Management competencies are likely influenced more by experience and professional development rather than age alone.

3.5.3 Differences According to Educational Attainment

Management practices remained consistently high across all levels of educational attainment, with no significant differences observed. This implies that while higher education contributes to professional growth, it does not necessarily result in significant variation in management practices. Practical experience and continuous training may play a more important role.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that school managers demonstrate consistently outstanding performance and are highly effective in relational and instructional leadership, particularly in building connections and focusing on teaching and learning, although financial and operational management remains a relative weakness. Teachers also exhibit very high instructional performance across all domains, especially in maintaining a conducive learning environment, while areas such as ICT integration and inclusive strategies require further improvement. Despite high performance on both sides, the relationship between school managers' management practices and teachers' instructional performance is generally weak and statistically insignificant, indicating that teaching competence operates largely independently and is more influenced by individual skills, knowledge, and experience. Additionally, management effectiveness is not significantly affected by demographic variables such as sex, age, educational attainment, or position, but shows partial influence from training and years of service, highlighting the need for more targeted, specialized, and practical support systems to address specific instructional gaps.

It is recommended that the Department of Education provide targeted and specialized training for school managers, particularly in financial and budget management, to address identified weaknesses, while also strengthening professional development programs for teachers in ICT integration and inclusive instructional strategies. School administrators should prioritize practical, classroom-based training, coaching, mentoring, and collaborative planning to ensure that professional development translates into improved teaching practices. Furthermore, continued and enhanced management-related trainings should be sustained to support leadership effectiveness, alongside strengthened monitoring and evaluation systems to regularly assess the impact of management practices on instructional performance.

The study is limited to public secondary school managers and teachers within selected districts in Isabela, using a descriptive-correlational design and self-reported data gathered through questionnaires, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings and limit the ability to establish causal relationships between management practices and instructional performance. The scope of the study also focuses only on selected management domains and instructional indicators, which may not fully capture all factors influencing teaching performance and school effectiveness.

Compliance with ethical standards

The authors declare no conflict of interest and confirm that this study received no external funding. The researchers extend their gratitude to the participating public secondary school teachers and school managers in Isabela for their cooperation and support. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection, which was conducted using non-invasive survey questionnaires. All data were treated with strict confidentiality, and no identifying information of the participants was disclosed.

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