

Transformative Leadership Practices of School Heads: Advancing Equity and Ensuring Access to Inclusive Education

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Abstract: This study investigated the transformative leadership practices of school heads in promoting equity and ensuring access to inclusive education in Bulan III District. Anchored on the Department of Education's Vision, Mission, and Core Values, the research utilized a mixed-method design combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Quantitative findings showed that transformative leadership practices were generally evident, with a high overall mean of 4.44 for equity-driven practices and 4.26 for promoting inclusive access. The most evident practices included equitable resource distribution, policy advocacy for equity, stakeholder empowerment, and enforcement of anti-discrimination measures. However, lower ratings were noted in creating professional development programs and providing facilities for differently abled learners, indicating areas needing improvement.

Qualitative results revealed five major themes: (1) commitment to equity and inclusion rooted in vision and mission, (2) translation of inclusive vision into daily practices, (3) stakeholder engagement in decision-making, (4) collaborative efforts to enhance inclusion, and (5) the importance of professional development. In vivo codes emphasized authentic actions such as celebrating diversity and communicating inclusively.

Despite strong implementation, challenges were identified, including a lack of trained personnel in inclusive education, limited professional development, unclear frameworks, insufficient funding, and inadequate assistive technologies. The study concludes that while transformative leadership promoting equity and access is evident, sustainability requires strengthened teacher training, clearer implementation structures, and improved infrastructure. Overall, the findings underscore the need for continuous leadership development and collaborative efforts to achieve equitable and inclusive educational environments.

Keywords: *Transformative Leadership, Equity, Inclusive Education, School Heads, Access, Professional Development.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

A renowned African leader, Nelson Mandela once spoke of education as the best weapon that one can wield. Education indeed can become an effective weapon to fight ignorance, to curb poverty or in bigger context, to achieving national growth and stability. Mandela's wisdom transcends for decades and races and could endure for all time and ages.

In developed countries, such as the United States, Canada, and Finland, transformative leadership practices have led to the implementation of policies that prioritize equity and inclusivity. These countries emphasize professional development for school heads, equitable resource distribution, and the integration of inclusive

curricula. Similarly, nations like Australia and New Zealand have adopted leadership frameworks that focus on cultural inclusivity, particularly for Indigenous and minority populations, ensuring equitable access to education. In contrast, developing countries face unique challenges in implementing inclusive education, such as inadequate resources, cultural stigmas, and a lack of trained personnel, The World Bank. (2018).

Transformative leadership practices in these contexts are vital for addressing systemic barriers and ensuring access to education for marginalized groups, including girls, children with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. For instance, in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, school leaders are adopting community-driven approaches and leveraging

partnerships to overcome resource limitations and societal biases. The global push for inclusive education highlights the critical role of school heads in driving change, promoting equity, and ensuring that no learner is left behind. By adopting transformative leadership practices, school heads worldwide are at the forefront of creating inclusive, equitable, and high-quality educational systems that address the diverse needs of their student populations, UNESCO, (2025).

In the Philippine Constitution, education was given premium as a basic principle and policy statement. As stated in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, “The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all” (1987 Philippine Constitution, Art. XIV, Sec. 1). Thusly, the state shall ensure access to quality and inclusive education for all Filipino citizens of school age.

In line with this constitutional mandate, Inclusive Education (IE) was adopted in the country through the Department of Education (DepEd). DepEd implemented inclusive education as support to several orders and laws, namely: the Inclusive Education Act (RA 11650), the Enhanced Basic Education Act (RA 10533), the Child and Youth Welfare Code (PD 603), the Policies and Guidelines in Special Education, the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act (RA 7610), and the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons amended by RA 9442 (RA 7277) (Child Rights Network, 2021) and Policy Guidelines on The Provision Of Educational Programs /and Services for Learners with Disabilities in the K To 12 Basic Education Program (DepEd order no. 44 s. 2021).

As defined by UNICEF, “inclusive education means all children in the same classrooms, in the same schools. It means real learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been excluded-not only children with disabilities, but speakers of minority languages too”. “Inclusive education allows all learners of all backgrounds to learn and grow side by side, to the benefit of all” as stated and likewise discusses about that at the school level, “teachers must be trained, buildings must be refurbished, and students must receive accessible learning materials ‘stigma and discrimination at community level must be tacked and individuals need to be educated on the benefit of inclusive education”. UNICEF further presented the importance of the alignment of government laws and policies in implementing such context in education, UNICEF, (2020). <https://www.unicef.org/education/inclusive-education>.

Along with the mandates, policies and laws on inclusive education, the position of school leaders play a crucial role in determining the nature and inclusivity of educational experiences. This is especially so in public schools, where different leadership practices have considerable effects on how equity and equal access to inclusive education are achieved. As these systems try to cater for the range of needs of all students, school heads are being assigned a more and more significant role in creating such climate that will enable every learner, irrespective of his/her context and/or disabilities, to excel.

The principles of equity and access form an essential basis for inclusive education, aiming at all learners getting equal treatment, chances and provision that is specific to their personal requirements. To apply these principles effectively in schools, effective leadership by school authorities is necessary because they have the duty of developing policies, fostering a friendly school atmosphere as well as matching teaching styles to the varied needs of the students.

The same legal framework provided under the 2025 Budget Priorities that the program in accordance with the President’s 8-Point Socioeconomic Agenda and the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028, under Human Capital Development through the education sector, the MATATAG Agenda shall be given utmost priority in terms of budgetary allocations which states that “Take good care of learners by promoting learner well-being, inclusive education, and a positive learning environment”.

The stipulations outlined in the law emphasize a far-reaching vision for education, defined by the terms “quality” and “inclusive”. The concept of inclusivity in education is inherently complex, encompassing a vast array of factors that continue to be debated even today. It’s not merely about providing basic education; it’s about ensuring learning opportunities for all. This commitment to inclusivity is echoed in the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which declares, “No one should be left behind”. This statement underscores the importance of inclusive growth and the reduction of inequality. By aiming to ensure that all individuals, particularly the most vulnerable, have the access to the benefits of progress and development, the agenda seeks to eliminate marginalization and exclusion, a principle directly applies to the realm of education.

Such is a tall task. The perennial challenge and along the context of *Parens Patriae*, this education shall be made accessible without gender discrimination and must include too the underprivileged and the poorest of the poor. The challenge requires courage and sheer dedication. For it's plain and obvious, that even with several legislations and innovations varied concerns remain on high tones. Strategies and multi-level approaches seem still not yet enough. There subsist problems on illiteracy and inclusivity faces.

As a result, the government adopted policies that encouraged, and supported private educational institutions, even delegated certain functions to local government units on the same time. Thus, the advent of the Local Government Code creating or allowing among others the Local School Boards, and Education committees on local Councils. They help program such outlay on Special Education, and symmetrically legislated for instance, on the integration of primary and secondary schools as a matter of course, or when need arises.

To achieve inclusivity, there were gender sensitive programs and Education for Children with Special needs modalities. Last Mile Schools also form integral part thereof if only to reach out even the farthest communities. Challenges on the equity and inclusivity in education likewise touched on

school dropouts, even of the learners who could barely afford a good meal for a day's time.

Various programs of the Department of Education are indeed already in place to level off the playing field. Matter of fact, school heads have been on it, fully diligent in their work, adopting positive responses as well as good paradigm and leadership. To highlight their unique strategies and responses, with end in view to assimilate ideas, models and guidance, this research adopted questions for school heads; took note of their answers, including their best practices and hints.

The study aligns with international goals such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education for all. As countries strive to achieve these objectives, the leadership practices of school heads play a pivotal role in overcoming systemic barriers that hinder equity and access to education. In many educational systems, policies advocating inclusivity and equity are in place, but their effective implementation depends heavily on the leadership within schools. This study seeks to evaluate how leadership practices translate policy into action, providing insights for policymakers to strengthen support systems and resources for inclusive education. The persistent disparities in educational access, particularly among marginalized groups such as students with disabilities, those from low-income families, and indigenous communities, underscore the need for research on leadership practices. By exploring the approaches school heads use to bridge these gaps, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on reducing inequalities in education. Effective leadership is critical for the successful implementation of inclusive education. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence on what constitutes effective practices in this area. The study will provide data-driven recommendations to enhance the capacity of school leaders in fostering an inclusive culture, UNESCO, (2024).

This research also explored how headmasters of public schools are leading in promoting fairness and obtainability of education that caters for all. It examined what practices have been employed by various school heads, their challenges as well as the successes they have made to provide relevant information on how leadership can be used to make education more inclusive. For all learners to flourish in an enabling and equal opportunity learning atmosphere, it is key that one grasps the knowledge behind these dynamics when formulating policies or putting them into practice.

II. OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to assess the leadership practices of school heads in promoting equity and access to inclusive education. It aims to identify the leadership approaches employed by school heads to foster inclusivity and ensure equal opportunities for all learners.

Additionally, the study seeks to determine the level of implementation of these leadership practices in addressing the needs of diverse student populations. Furthermore, it examines the significant relationship between the leadership practices of school heads and their effectiveness in ensuring equitable and inclusive education. The study also analyzes the challenges encountered by school heads in implementing inclusive education and aims to provide insights into overcoming these barriers. Finally, based on the findings, the study intends to propose effective leadership practices that can be adopted to enhance equity and access to inclusive education in schools.

III. METHODS

This study utilized a descriptive research design, which is appropriate for examining the leadership practices of school heads along equity and access to inclusive education. The research design was employed to examine the relationship between school heads' leadership practices and the level of implementation of inclusive education. By using correlation analysis, the study determined whether and to what extent the leadership practices of the school heads are associated with the successful implementation of inclusive education policies and practices in their schools. The study also explored whether there are any significant relationships between the leadership strategic employed and the challenges faced by the school heads in implementing inclusive education.

A complete list of school heads in Bulan III District, 14 from elementary schools, 2 secondary schools, and 1 from integrated school. Hence, a total of 17 school heads were utilized on this study. The data analysis methods for this study involve both quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively address the research questions and provided meaningful insights.

IV. RESULTS

A. *Transformative Leadership Practices Employed by School Heads to Promote Equity and Access to Inclusive Education*

This section presents the descriptive statistical analysis conducted to evaluate the transformative leadership practices of school heads in fostering equity and access within the context of inclusive education. The study employs the weighted mean as a primary statistical tool to derive a comprehensive measure of the respondents' assessments. Through this method, the degree of implementation of various transformative leadership practices is systematically quantified. The findings are organized into two principal dimensions—equity and access—to provide a structured interpretation of the data and highlight areas of emphasis in the school heads' leadership approaches.

Table 1. Transformative Leadership Practices Employed by School Heads to Promote Equity in Inclusive Education

Indicators	Mean	Description
Establishing policies that promote equity in an inclusive education, such as an enrolment process that is supportive of learners' diverse needs...	4.58	Evident
Advocating for marginalized learners (LSEN, Ips...) through child find /mapping activities	4.58	Evident
Ensuring that school resources are equitably distributed to support learners	4.67	Very Evident
Establishing anti-discrimination policies and a reporting mechanism	4.49	Evident
Empowering stakeholders (teachers, parents, community) in decision-making to promote equity	4.58	Evident
Creating professional development programs focused on promoting equity in inclusive education	3.75	Evident
Utilizing data-driven decision-making to address inequities	4.42	Evident

Based on the data presented in the table, the interpretation of transformative leadership practices employed by school heads to promote equity in inclusive education shows a generally strong and consistent implementation. The average mean score of 4.44 indicates that these practices are Evident across schools. Specifically, the highest-rated practice is ensuring that school resources are equitably distributed to support learners, with a mean score of 4.67, categorized as Very Evident, suggesting that school heads prioritize resource allocation to meet diverse learner needs.

Several other practices, including establishing policies that promote equity, advocating for marginalized learners, empowering stakeholders in decision-making, and establishing anti-discrimination policies, all received a mean score of 4.49 to 4.58, also falling under the Evident category. These scores reflect a strong commitment to inclusive and equitable education leadership.

However, the practice of creating professional development programs focused on promoting equity received the lowest score of 3.75, though still categorized as Evident. This suggests that while efforts are being made, there may be room for improvement in building the capacity of educators and staff through targeted training. The data reflects a positive trend in leadership practices that support equity in inclusive education, with most indicators rated as Evident, and one as

Very Evident, highlighting areas of strength and identifying opportunities for further development.

The bar graph illustrates the extent to which various transformative leadership practices are implemented by school heads to promote equity in inclusive education. The highest-rated practice is ensuring equitable distribution of resources, with a mean score of 4.67, categorized as Very Evident, indicating strong prioritization of resource allocation to support diverse learners. Several practices—including establishing equity-promoting policies, advocating for marginalized learners, and empowering stakeholders—all received a mean score of 4.58, reflecting consistent and evident implementation across schools.

Establishing anti-discrimination policies and utilizing data-driven decision-making also scored well, with mean scores of 4.49 and 4.42, respectively, showing that these practices are actively pursued. However, creating professional development programs focused on equity received the lowest score of 3.75, though still within the "Evident" range. This suggests a need for increased investment in capacity-building initiatives to strengthen inclusive education efforts. The graph supports the conclusion that transformative leadership practices are generally evident, with some areas showing exceptional implementation and others offering growth opportunities.

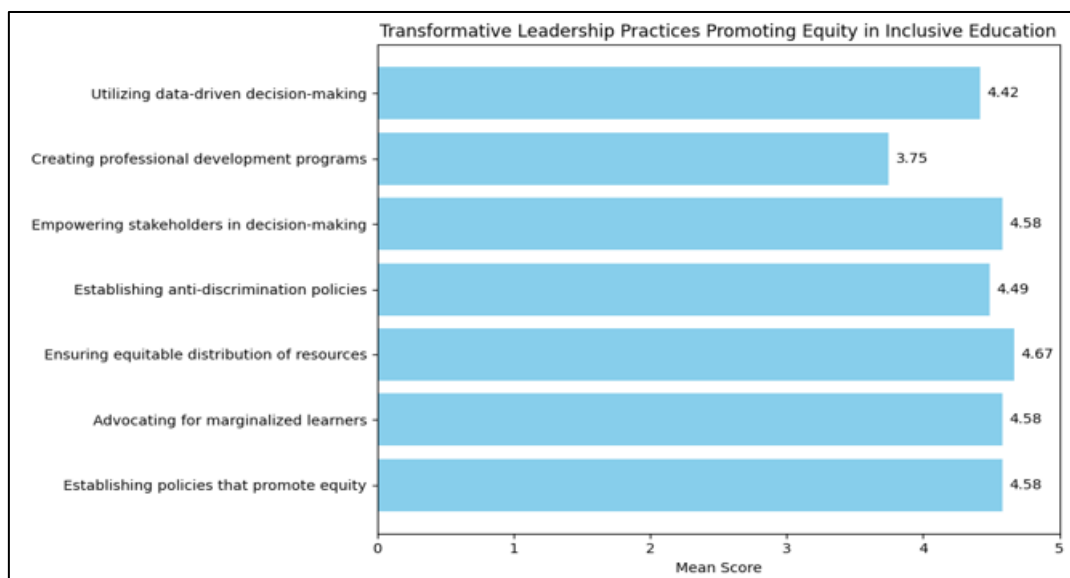


Fig 1: Visual Representation of the Mean Scores for Transformative Leadership Practices Employed by School Heads to Promote Equity in Inclusive Education

Figure 3 shows that the mean scores for transformative leadership practices employed by school heads to promote equity in inclusive education generally fall within the "agree" range ($M = 3.85\text{--}4.32$). The highest-rated dimension is ensuring equitable distribution of resources ($M = 4.67$), indicating that school heads strongly champion equal opportunities for all learners. Meanwhile, the lowest-rated practice is creating professional development programs ($M =$

3.35), suggesting that while school heads demonstrate commitment to inclusion, more support is needed in empowering teachers through training and mentorship. Overall, the figure reflects that school heads consistently apply transformative leadership to foster inclusivity, but targeted efforts in capacity-building could further strengthen equitable education practices.

Table 2. Transformative Leadership Practices Employed by School Heads to Promote Access in Inclusive Education

Indicators	Mean (x)	Description
Advocating for inclusive policies to accommodate all types of learners in school	4.58	Evident
Coordinating with stakeholders to mobilize resources to support inclusive education implementation	4.58	Evident
Empowering teachers through professional learning community, such as Learning Action Cells	3.75	Evident
Providing school facilities that cater to the differently abled learners (LSEN)	3.75	Evident
Engaging stakeholders in collaborative efforts to assist learners with special needs	4.50	Evident
Ensure the inclusion of LSEN data in the LIS and school profile for data-driven decision making	4.42	Evident
Average	4.26	Evident

Based on the table, the interpretation of transformative leadership practices employed by school heads to promote access in inclusive education reveals a generally positive implementation. The average mean score of 4.26 indicates that these practices are Evident, showing that school leaders are actively working to ensure that all learners, including those with special needs, have access to quality education.

The highest-rated practices—advocating for inclusive policies and coordinating with stakeholders to mobilize resources—both scored 4.58, reflecting strong efforts to create supportive environments and secure necessary resources for inclusive education. Similarly, engaging stakeholders in collaborative efforts and ensuring LSEN data is included in school systems scored 4.50 and 4.42, respectively, highlighting the importance of community involvement and data-driven planning.

However, two indicators—empowering teachers through professional learning communities and providing school facilities for differently abled learners—received the lowest scores of 3.75, though still within the Evident range. These scores suggest areas where further support and development may be needed, particularly in enhancing teacher capacity and improving infrastructure to better accommodate learners with special needs.

Overall, the table reflects a strong foundation of leadership practices promoting access, with clear strengths in policy advocacy and stakeholder engagement, and opportunities for growth in professional development and facility enhancement.

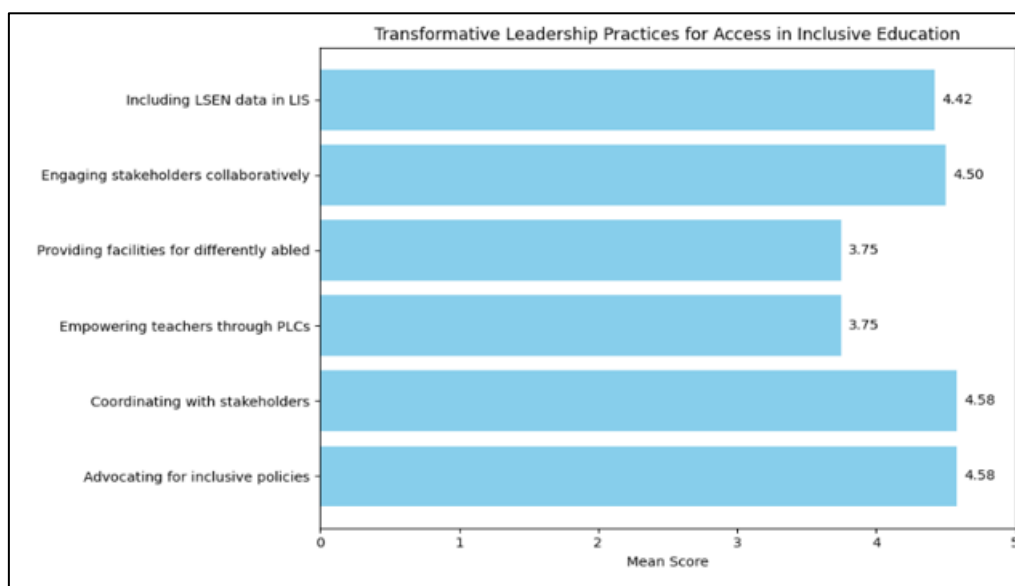


Fig 2: The Bar Graph Showing the Mean Scores of Transformative Leadership Practices Employed by School Heads to Promote Access in Inclusive Education

The graph presents the extent to which school heads implement transformative leadership practices to promote access in inclusive education. The highest-rated practices are advocating for inclusive policies and coordinating with stakeholders to mobilize resources, both with a mean score of 4.58, indicating that these efforts are Evident and consistently prioritized. Engaging stakeholders in collaborative efforts and including LSEN data in LIS for decision-making also received high scores of 4.50 and 4.42, respectively, reflecting strong support for inclusive planning and data-driven strategies.

In contrast, empowering teachers through professional learning communities and providing facilities for differently abled learners both scored 3.75, though still categorized as Evident. These lower scores suggest areas where further development and investment may be needed to enhance access, particularly in infrastructure and teacher capacity-building.

The average score of 4.26 confirms that transformative leadership practices promoting access are generally evident, with some practices showing stronger implementation than others. This highlights both the progress made and the opportunities for improvement in creating more inclusive learning environments.

B. How the Transformative Leadership Practices of School Heads Advance Equity and Ensure Access in Inclusive Education

This section presented themes to have further interpretation of the statement provided by the informants of the research. Using interview guides and responses of the informant the researcher garnered 5 themes.

➤ *Vision and Mission-driven commitment to equity and inclusion.*

Vision and Mission-driven commitment to equity and inclusion centers on the authentic expressions of school heads regarding their leadership practices.

The phrase “We ensure that all learners, regardless of ethnicity and social status, are respected, supported and provided equal opportunities” from Informant E serves as a powerful in vivo code. It reflects a leadership stance rooted in respect, support, and equal opportunity, which are core values embedded in the Vision, Mission, and Core Values (VMC) of both the school and the Department of Education. This statement highlights a deliberate effort to uphold equity by recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of learners, especially those from marginalized backgrounds.

Similarly, Informant A’s statement— “The school strives to create an inclusive environment where diversity is celebrated”—offers another in vivo code: “diversity is celebrated.” This phrase captures the proactive nature of inclusive leadership, where diversity is not only acknowledged but embraced as a strength. It suggests that the school head fosters a culture that goes beyond compliance, aiming to build a learning environment where every learner feels valued and included.

The codes— “respected, supported and provided equal opportunities and “diversity is celebrated”—illustrate a transformative leadership approach. School heads are not merely implementing policies; they are shaping inclusive school cultures through intentional, values-driven actions. Their commitment to equity is evident in how they align their leadership with the inclusive goals of the VMC, ensuring that no learner is left behind due to ethnicity, social status, or ability.

➤ *Communication and Implementation of Inclusive Vision in Daily Practice*

This theme—Communicating and Implementing the Inclusive Vision in Daily Practice—draws directly from the language of the informants to highlight how school heads embed inclusive values into everyday school life.

Informant B’s statement, “Regularly discuss the vision with students, teachers, and staff,” serves as a key in vivo code that reflects a leadership practice centered on shared vision and inclusive dialogue. This regular engagement ensures that the school’s commitment to equity and inclusion is not just a written statement but a lived experience. It shows that the school head fosters a culture where the inclusive vision is continuously revisited, understood, and internalized by all members of the school community.

Informant G’s remark, “School sends memos and broadcasts announcements in local dialects,” introduces another powerful in vivo code: “broadcasts announcements in local dialects.” This practice demonstrates linguistic inclusivity and cultural responsiveness, ensuring that communication reaches all stakeholders, especially those from indigenous or marginalized communities. By using local dialects, school heads remove barriers to participation and affirm the cultural identity of their learners and families.

The codes— “Regularly discuss the vision” and “broadcasts announcements in local dialects”—illustrate how transformative school leaders operationalize inclusive values through consistent communication and culturally sensitive practices. These actions reflect a deep commitment to equity, where every stakeholder is informed, involved, and respected. The integration of inclusive teaching strategies, fair discipline, and supportive learning spaces further reinforces the vision, making inclusion a visible and tangible part of daily school life.

➤ *Stakeholder Engagement in Inclusive Decision-Making*

This theme—Stakeholder Engagement in Inclusive Decision-Making extracted directly from the words of the informants to highlight how school heads foster inclusive governance and participatory leadership.

Informant B’s statement, “Engage students in planning and implementing events that celebrate diversity,” serves as a central in vivo code that reflects a leadership practice rooted in student engagement and celebrating diversity. This phrase captures the essence of inclusive decision-making, where students are not only participants but co-leaders in shaping school culture. Their involvement in planning diversity-

related events promotes ownership, leadership development, and cultural awareness—key elements of an inclusive school environment.

Informant E's statement, "Establish the SGC and conduct FGD with student organizations," introduces two more in vivo codes: "Establish the SGC" and "conduct FGD." These reflect the school head's commitment to inclusive representation and open dialogue. The formation of the School Governance Council (SGC) and the use of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are concrete mechanisms that ensure diverse voices are heard and considered in school planning and policy-making.

These codes—"Engage students," "celebrate diversity," "Establish the SGC," and "conduct FGD"—illustrate how transformative school leaders actively involve teachers, parents, and students in decision-making processes. Through inclusive representation in councils and committees, and feedback mechanisms like forums and surveys, school heads build democratic and culturally responsive school communities. These practices not only promote equity and access but also strengthen collaboration, transparency, and shared responsibility among all stakeholders.

➤ *Stakeholder-Driven Improvements in Inclusive Practices*

The theme—Stakeholder-Driven Improvements in Inclusive Practices—centers on the direct language used by the informants to highlight how community involvement contributes to inclusive school development.

Informant C's statement, "Stakeholders created a project like concreting the school playground," serves as a key in vivo code that reflects community-led infrastructure improvement. This phrase illustrates how school heads, through transformative leadership, empower stakeholders to take initiative in enhancing the physical environment of the school. Such improvements not only make the school safer and more functional but also demonstrate a shared commitment to creating inclusive spaces where all learners can thrive.

Informant D's statement, "Construction of gender-sensitive CR from PTA and alumni initiative," introduces another powerful in vivo code: "gender-sensitive CR." This reflects a leadership practice that responds directly to the diverse needs of learners, particularly in terms of gender inclusivity. The involvement of the PTA and alumni in this initiative shows how school heads mobilize community support to address structural barriers and promote dignity and safety for all students.

The codes—"concreting the school playground" and "gender-sensitive CR"—demonstrate how transformative school leaders foster shared responsibility, collaborative action, and inclusive infrastructure development. These practices go beyond policy implementation; they reflect a deep understanding that inclusive education requires both cultural and structural transformation. By listening to stakeholder feedback and enabling community-driven

projects, school heads build environments that are not only inclusive but also reflective of the values and needs of the communities they serve.

➤ *Professional Development for Inclusive Practices*

The theme—Professional Development and Capacity-Building for Inclusive Education—draws directly from the language of the informants to highlight how school heads support teacher growth and inclusive instructional practices.

Informant F's statement, "Training on adapting instruction based on individualized education plans," serves as a key in vivo code that reflects a leadership focus on individualized instruction and inclusive pedagogy. This phrase illustrates the school head's commitment to ensuring that teachers are equipped to meet the diverse needs of learners, particularly those with special educational needs. By prioritizing training on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), school leaders promote differentiated instruction and pedagogical equity, ensuring that every learner receives appropriate support tailored to their unique learning profile.

Informant D's statement, "LAC sessions and collaborative expertise among teachers," introduces another in vivo code: "collaborative expertise." This reflects the strategic use of Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions to foster peer learning, shared reflection, and professional collaboration. Through these sessions, teachers exchange best practices, co-develop inclusive strategies, and build collective capacity to address classroom challenges. This approach reinforces the idea that inclusive education is a shared responsibility, supported by ongoing professional development and a strong culture of collaboration.

The codes—"adapting instruction," "individualized education plans," "LAC sessions," and "collaborative expertise"—demonstrate how transformative school leaders cultivate inclusive teaching environments by investing in teacher development. These practices not only enhance instructional quality but also build a school-wide commitment to equity, inclusion, and continuous learning.

C. Challenges Encountered by the School Heads in Practicing Transformative Leadership in Inclusive Education

This section presents the challenges encountered by school heads in practicing transformative leadership within the context of inclusive education. The data reflect the frequency and corresponding rank of each identified challenge as reported by the respondents. These challenges highlight the key areas that hinder the effective implementation of transformative leadership principles in promoting inclusivity among learners with diverse needs. By analyzing the distribution of responses, the table provides valuable insights into the most pressing issues—such as limited teacher preparedness, insufficient stakeholder support, and lack of professional development opportunities—that affect the realization of equitable and inclusive educational practices.

Table 3. Challenges Encountered by the School Heads in Practicing Transformative Leadership in Inclusive Education

Challenges	Frequency	Rank
Lack of qualified teachers and school heads with sufficient ideas on strategies needed to support LSEN	11	1.5
Limited support from the stakeholders intended for differently abled learners	9	5
Limited professional development opportunities for school heads and teachers on inclusive education	11	1.5
Unclear or lack of concrete implementation frameworks for inclusive education	10	3
Increasing number of learners of varying needs	4	7
Limited fund support intended for the programs of inclusive education	9	5
Lack of assistive technologies or facilities and adaptive learning and assessment materials	9	5

The table presents a clear overview of the challenges encountered by school heads in practicing transformative leadership within inclusive education settings. The most frequently cited challenges—lack of qualified teachers and school heads with sufficient knowledge on strategies to support learners with special educational needs (LSEN) and limited professional development opportunities—both received a frequency of 11, and rank 1.5 indicating that capacity-building remains a critical concern. These challenges suggest that many educators are not adequately equipped to implement inclusive practices effectively, which can hinder the overall success of inclusive education initiatives.

The third most common challenge, with a frequency of 10, and rank 3 is the unclear or lack of concrete implementation frameworks for inclusive education. This points to a systemic issue where policies may exist but lack clarity or practical guidance, making it difficult for school leaders to translate inclusive goals into actionable strategies.

Three challenges—limited stakeholder support, insufficient funding for inclusive education programs, and lack of assistive technologies and adaptive learning materials—each received a frequency of 9, ranking fifth. These reflect resource-related constraints that affect the sustainability and effectiveness of inclusive education efforts. Without adequate support from the community and access to necessary tools, schools may struggle to provide equitable learning environments.

The least cited challenge, with a frequency of 4, ranking seventh is the increasing number of learners with varying needs, ranked seventh. While less frequently mentioned, this still highlights the growing diversity in classrooms and the need for adaptive teaching strategies and support systems.

The table underscores that the most pressing challenges are related to human resource limitations, professional development gaps, and systemic clarity, followed by resource constraints and stakeholder engagement issues. Addressing these areas is essential for empowering school heads to lead inclusively and transform their schools into equitable and supportive learning environments for all students.

D. Proposed District-Based Training on Transformational Leadership Practices for School Heads to Promote Equity and Access in Inclusive Education

Title: District-Based Training on Transformational Leadership Practices for School Heads to Promote Equity and Access in Inclusive Education

➤ *Rationale*

Inclusive education is a cornerstone of equitable learning environments, ensuring that every learner—regardless of ability, background, or circumstance—has access to quality education. In the current educational landscape, school heads play a pivotal role in shaping inclusive school cultures. However, many faces persistent challenges such as limited professional development, lack of clear implementation frameworks, and insufficient stakeholder support. These barriers hinder their ability to lead inclusively and respond effectively to the diverse needs of learners.

Transformational leadership offers a powerful approach to overcoming these challenges. It emphasizes vision-driven, collaborative, and equity-focused practices that empower school leaders to initiate meaningful change. By adopting transformational leadership, school heads can foster inclusive policies, promote stakeholder engagement, and create learning environments that celebrate diversity and support all learners. This leadership style is especially critical in addressing the needs of learners with disabilities, indigenous students, and those from marginalized communities.

Despite its potential, transformational leadership in inclusive education remains underdeveloped at the district level. Many school heads lack access to structured training programs that focus on inclusive leadership strategies. Without targeted capacity-building, they may struggle to implement inclusive practices consistently or to mobilize resources effectively. This gap highlights the urgent need for a district-based training initiative that equips school leaders with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to lead inclusively.

The proposed training program aims to address this need by providing school heads with practical, research-based strategies for promoting equity and access. It will cover key areas such as inclusive pedagogy, stakeholder collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and culturally responsive leadership. Through interactive sessions, peer learning, and

action planning, participants will be empowered to transform their schools into inclusive, learner-centered environments.

This training is not just a professional development activity—it is a strategic investment in educational equity. By strengthening the leadership capacity of school heads, the district can ensure that inclusive education is not only a policy goal but a lived reality in every school. This initiative will contribute to a more just and responsive education system, where all learners are respected, supported, and allowed to succeed.

Transformational leadership empowers school heads to lead with vision, inclusivity, and collaboration—qualities that are essential in today's diverse educational landscape. As schools increasingly serve learners with varied backgrounds, abilities, and needs, the role of the school head becomes more complex and critical. Inclusive education demands not only policy compliance but also a deep commitment to equity, cultural responsiveness, and stakeholder engagement. Transformational leaders are those who inspire change, foster inclusive school cultures, and build strong partnerships with teachers, parents, and communities.

This district-based training program is designed to equip school leaders with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to lead inclusively and effectively. It will focus on developing leadership competencies that promote equity and access, such as inclusive vision-setting, data-informed decision-making, and collaborative governance. Participants will explore practical strategies for supporting learners with special educational needs (LSEN), implementing differentiated instruction, and creating safe, welcoming learning environments for all students.

The training also responds directly to challenges identified in recent assessments and consultations with school heads. These include limited professional development opportunities, lack of inclusive infrastructure, and insufficient stakeholder support. By addressing these gaps, the program aims to strengthen the capacity of school leaders to implement inclusive education policies and practices with confidence and clarity.

Moreover, the training will emphasize the importance of continuous learning and reflective practice. Through workshops, peer learning sessions, and action planning, school heads will be encouraged to examine their current practices, share experiences, and co-develop solutions to common challenges. This collaborative approach not only builds leadership capacity but also fosters a district-wide culture of inclusion and shared responsibility.

This initiative seeks to transform schools into inclusive communities where every learner is respected, supported, and given the opportunity to succeed. By investing in the leadership development of school heads, the district affirms its commitment to educational equity and ensures that inclusive education becomes a lived reality in every classroom.

V. DISCUSSION

A. *Transformative Leadership Practices Employed by School Heads to Promote Equity and Access to Inclusive Education*

Based on the data presented, the findings reflect a generally strong and consistent implementation of transformative leadership practices among school heads in promoting equity in inclusive education. This is supported by the work of Shields (2017), who emphasized that transformative leadership is rooted in equity, inclusion, and social justice, and requires leaders to be courageous, reflective, and action-oriented in addressing systemic inequities.

The most evident practice—ensuring equitable distribution of resources—aligns with Shields' assertion that transformative leaders must make power a positive force and promote both private and public good. This prioritization of resource allocation demonstrates a commitment to meeting the diverse needs of learners and fostering inclusive environments.

Other practices such as establishing equity-promoting policies, advocating for marginalized learners, and empowering stakeholders in decision-making also reflect the principles of transformative leadership. Shields and Hesbol (2020) argued that such practices are essential for creating inclusive school cultures and for addressing the needs of all students, particularly those who have been historically marginalized.

The relatively lower score for creating professional development programs focused on equity suggests a gap in capacity-building. Shields (2025) highlights the importance of ongoing reflection and professional growth for leaders, noting that transformative leadership is a continuous journey that demands systemic support and investment in educator development 3.

The results indicate that transformative leadership practices are generally evident across schools, with some areas showing exceptional implementation and others offering growth opportunities. These insights are consistent with contemporary scholarship that underscores the role of leadership in advancing equity and inclusion in education.

The data reveal a generally positive implementation of transformative leadership practices aimed at promoting access in inclusive education. School heads demonstrate strong efforts in advocating for inclusive policies and mobilizing resources through stakeholder coordination. These practices reflect a commitment to creating supportive environments that ensure all learners, including those with special needs, can access quality education.

This aligns with the work of Shields (2017), who emphasized that transformative leadership involves challenging inequities and fostering inclusive practices through advocacy and systemic change. The active engagement of stakeholders and the integration of LSEN data

into school systems further support the notion that inclusive education must be community-driven and informed by evidence, as highlighted by Shields and Hesbol (2020).

However, the relatively lower emphasis on empowering teachers through professional learning communities and improving school facilities for differently abled learners suggests areas for growth. These findings echo Shields (2025), who argued that transformative leadership must also include capacity-building and infrastructure development to sustain inclusive practices. Without adequate support for teachers and accessible facilities, efforts to promote access may fall short of their full potential.

The data reflect a strong foundation of leadership practices that promote access, with clear strengths in policy advocacy and stakeholder engagement. At the same time, they highlight the need for continued investment in professional development and infrastructure to ensure that inclusive education is both equitable and accessible.

B. How the Transformative Leadership Practices of School Heads Advance Equity and Ensure Access in Inclusive Education

Transformative leadership in inclusive education is fundamentally anchored in a vision and mission-driven commitment to equity. School heads who articulate values such as respect, support, and equal opportunity demonstrate leadership that is deeply aligned with institutional goals and the broader educational mandate for social justice. Shields (2017) emphasized that transformative leadership is not merely about managing schools but about creating inclusive, equitable, and socially just learning environments. Her framework highlights the importance of grounding leadership in moral purpose and democratic values to ensure that all learners are respected and included, regardless of background.

The celebration of diversity within schools reflects a proactive approach to inclusion. Rather than simply accommodating differences, transformative leaders embrace diversity as a strength. Adams, Hussain, and Tan (2023) argued that inclusive school leadership must go beyond structural adjustments and cultivate a culture that values every learner's identity and potential. Their work underscores the importance of school leaders in shaping environments where diversity is not only acknowledged but actively celebrated, thereby enhancing the educational experience for all students.

Transformative leadership also involves advocating for inclusive policies and mobilizing resources to support learners with special needs. Villaver Jr. et al. (2024) highlight that effective leadership in special education includes policy advocacy, stakeholder collaboration, and systemic change to ensure equitable access. Their study emphasizes that leadership must be exercised at all levels—from individual schools to district and state policy-making—to create inclusive learning environments where all students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

A key component of advancing access is the integration of LSEN (Learners with Special Educational Needs) data into school systems. This data-driven approach allows leaders to make informed decisions that address the specific needs of learners with disabilities. Shields (2017) underscored the importance of using evidence to guide inclusive practices, noting that transformative leaders must be reflective and responsive to the realities of their school communities. By embedding LSEN data into planning and evaluation, school heads ensure that inclusion is both strategic and sustainable.

Despite these strengths, challenges remain in empowering teachers through professional learning communities. Adams and Tan (2020) noted that teacher capacity is critical to the success of inclusive education, yet many schools lack structured opportunities for collaborative learning and professional growth. Transformative leaders must prioritize ongoing development to equip educators with the skills and confidence needed to support diverse learners effectively. This investment in professional development is essential for sustaining inclusive practices over time.

Finally, the provision of school facilities for differently abled learners is an area requiring further investment. Villaver Jr. et al. (2024) stressed that inclusive education is not only about pedagogy but also about creating accessible physical environments. Transformative leaders must advocate for infrastructure improvements that accommodate all learners, ensuring that access is not limited by physical barriers. This holistic approach to leadership reinforces the commitment to equity and inclusion at every level of the educational experience.

➤ *Communication and Implementation of Inclusive Vision in Daily Practice*

Transformative leadership in inclusive education requires that the school's vision for equity and inclusion be consistently communicated and embedded into daily practices. As noted by Reza (2021), inclusive leaders must ensure that their vision is not only articulated but also understood and internalized by all stakeholders. This involves regular dialogue with students, teachers, and staff, as reflected in the *in vivo* code "Regularly discuss the vision." Such practices foster a shared understanding and collective commitment to inclusive goals, making the vision a lived reality rather than a static document.

Effective communication of inclusive values also involves cultural and linguistic responsiveness. The use of local dialects in school announcements, as described by Informant G, exemplifies this approach. Huang (2025) emphasized that inclusive communication must be accessible and culturally sensitive to ensure that all members of the school community can engage meaningfully. Broadcasting messages in local dialects removes linguistic barriers and affirms the cultural identities of learners and families, thereby enhancing participation and trust.

The operationalization of inclusive vision through daily routines reflects a deeper commitment to equity. Adams, Hussain, and Tan (2023) argued that inclusive leadership is

most effective when it is visible in everyday interactions, policies, and practices. This includes fair discipline, supportive learning environments, and inclusive teaching strategies. When school heads consistently model and reinforce inclusive values, they cultivate a school culture where equity is embedded in the fabric of daily life.

Furthermore, the integration of inclusive practices into routine communication and decision-making processes strengthens stakeholder engagement. Reza (2021) highlighted that inclusive leaders must create spaces for dialogue and collaboration, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued. By regularly discussing the vision and using inclusive language, school heads empower teachers, students, and families to co-create an inclusive school environment. This participatory approach enhances ownership and accountability across the school community.

The consistent implementation of an inclusive vision contributes to systemic change. Adams and Tan (2020) noted that transformative leadership involves aligning school practices with broader goals of social justice and educational equity. When inclusive values are communicated and practiced daily, they influence not only individual behaviors but also institutional norms and policies. This alignment ensures that inclusion is sustained over time and becomes a defining characteristic of the school's identity.

➤ *Stakeholder Engagement in Inclusive Decision-Making*

Inclusive decision-making in schools is a hallmark of transformative leadership, where school heads actively involve stakeholders—students, teachers, parents, and community members—in shaping school policies and practices. Informant B's statement, "Engage students in planning and implementing events that celebrate diversity," reflects a leadership approach that promotes student agency and cultural awareness. This aligns with Wenzel et al. (2025), who argued that stakeholder engagement must integrate participation, inclusion, and democracy to be truly holistic and impactful. By involving students in meaningful roles, school leaders foster ownership and leadership development, essential for inclusive school cultures.

The establishment of structures such as the School Governance Council (SGC) and the use of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), as mentioned by Informant E, exemplify institutional mechanisms for inclusive representation. These practices ensure that diverse voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes. Nantale (2020) emphasized that inclusive governance in education enhances policy legitimacy and transparency, especially when stakeholders are engaged through structured and culturally responsive platforms. Such mechanisms not only democratize school leadership but also build trust and accountability within the school community.

Transformative school leaders also recognize the importance of cultural responsiveness in stakeholder engagement. By conducting FGDs and using local dialects in communication, they remove linguistic and cultural barriers that often exclude marginalized groups. Reza (2021)

highlighted that inclusive leadership requires listening to and communicating with all stakeholders, particularly those from underrepresented communities. This approach affirms the identities of learners and families, ensuring that inclusion is not just theoretical but practiced in everyday school interactions.

Inclusive decision-making also strengthens collaboration and shared responsibility. When stakeholders are actively involved in planning and feedback processes, they become co-creators of the school's vision and strategies. Wenzel et al. (2025) noted that such engagement fosters innovation, adaptability, and moral accountability in organizational settings. In schools, this translates to more responsive and equitable policies that reflect the lived experiences of the community. It also enhances the relevance and sustainability of inclusive education initiatives.

Stakeholder engagement in inclusive decision-making contributes to systemic change. Nantale (2020) argued that inclusive policymaking is essential for shaping education systems that reflect societal values and respond to diverse needs. By embedding inclusive practices into governance structures, school heads not only promote equity and access but also model democratic leadership for future generations. These efforts lay the foundation for inclusive school environments where every voice matters and every learner is supported.

➤ *Stakeholder-Driven Improvements in Inclusive Practices*

Transformative leadership empowers stakeholders to initiate inclusive infrastructure improvements. Community-led projects such as playground concreting reflect shared responsibility and commitment to inclusive learning environments. These actions align with Miller et al. (2025), who emphasized that inclusive education benefits from evidence-based practices responsive to the lived experiences of marginalized students.

Gender-sensitive infrastructure, such as comfort rooms constructed through PTA and alumni initiatives, demonstrates responsiveness to diverse learner needs. UNESCO (2017) highlights that inclusive education systems must address gender, disability, and cultural diversity through structural provisions that ensure safety and dignity for all learners.

Inclusive school development is strengthened by collaborative action. The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2025) asserted that inclusive change requires stakeholder involvement in decision-making and implementation, promoting ownership and sustainability in inclusive practices.

Bottom-up innovation complements policy implementation. Miller et al. (2025) argued that inclusive practices must be informed by community feedback and local initiatives. Stakeholder-led projects enhance equity and responsiveness in educational systems.

Cultural and structural transformation is essential for lasting inclusion. UNESCO (2017) advocates for inclusive policies grounded in community values and local contexts. Collaborative infrastructure development reflects principles of equity, dignity, and inclusion.

➤ *Professional Development and Capacity-Building for Inclusive Education*

Professional development focused on inclusive education equips teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to meet diverse learner needs. Informant F's statement, "Training on adapting instruction based on individualized education plans," reflects a leadership commitment to differentiated instruction. Donath et al. (2023) found that professional development significantly improves teachers' knowledge and skills related to inclusive education, with large effects on instructional adaptation and moderate effects on classroom practices.

Collaborative learning structures such as Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions promote peer engagement and shared expertise. Informant D's emphasis on "collaborative expertise" aligns with inclusive professional development models that encourage reflective practice and co-construction of strategies. The APA (2025) toolkit highlighted the importance of inclusive collaboration and participatory learning environments in fostering equity and responsiveness among educators.

Effective professional development must be sustained, practical, and contextually relevant. Donath et al. (2023) emphasized that long-term training with active learning components leads to better transfer of inclusive practices into classrooms. This supports the use of ongoing LAC sessions and school-based workshops that allow teachers to apply inclusive strategies in real-time and refine them through feedback and peer support.

Inclusive professional development also requires attention to cultural and linguistic diversity. The APA (2025) framework advocates for training that incorporates equity, diversity, and inclusion principles, ensuring that educators are prepared to address the needs of learners from varied backgrounds. This includes understanding intersectionality, using inclusive language, and designing culturally responsive instruction.

Transformative school leaders play a critical role in facilitating professional development that builds inclusive capacity. By prioritizing teacher growth and fostering collaborative learning cultures, they ensure that inclusive education is not only policy-driven but practice-embedded. These efforts contribute to a school-wide commitment to equity, continuous improvement, and learner-centered pedagogy.

C. *Challenges Encountered by School Heads in Practicing Transformative Leadership in Inclusive Education*

The challenges encountered by school heads in practicing transformative leadership within inclusive education settings reveal critical areas that require strategic

attention. The most prominent issues include the lack of qualified educators and limited professional development opportunities, both of which underscore the need for robust capacity-building initiatives. These findings align with Donath et al. (2023), who emphasize that professional development significantly enhances teachers' ability to implement inclusive practices effectively, particularly when training is sustained and contextually relevant.

Another major challenge is the absence of clear and actionable implementation frameworks for inclusive education. This systemic gap suggests that while inclusive policies may exist, they often lack the practical guidance necessary for effective execution. Shields (2017) argued that transformative leadership must be grounded in moral purpose and supported by coherent structures that translate vision into practice. Without such frameworks, school heads may struggle to lead inclusively despite their commitment.

Resource-related constraints also pose significant barriers. Limited stakeholder support, insufficient funding, and the lack of assistive technologies and adaptive learning materials reflect the broader issue of under-resourced educational environments. UNESCO (2017) highlighted that inclusive education requires adequate resources and community engagement to be sustainable and impactful. These constraints hinder the ability of schools to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students.

The increasing diversity of learners, though less frequently cited, remains a relevant concern. As classrooms become more heterogeneous, the need for adaptive teaching strategies and inclusive support systems grows. Adams, Hussain, and Tan (2023) noted that inclusive leadership must embrace diversity as a strength and respond with flexible, learner-centered approaches that accommodate varied needs and backgrounds.

The challenges identified point to a combination of human resource limitations, systemic ambiguity, and resource deficits. Addressing these areas is essential for empowering school heads to lead transformative and inclusive educational initiatives. As Shields and Hesbol (2020) asserted, transformative leadership is not only about vision but also about the capacity to enact change through collaboration, clarity, and sustained support.

D. *District-Based Training on Transformational Leadership Practices for School Heads to Promote Equity and Access in Inclusive Education*

Transformational leadership has emerged as a vital framework in education, emphasizing vision-driven, motivational, and inclusive practices that empower school leaders to foster equity and access. As James (2025) explained, transformational leaders inspire change by engaging stakeholders, promoting innovation, and cultivating inclusive school cultures that support all learners, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds. This leadership style is essential in addressing systemic challenges such as limited professional development, unclear implementation frameworks, and insufficient stakeholder support.

The rationale for district-based training is grounded in the need to build leadership capacity among school heads. Jabali-Kassem (2019) highlighted that transformational leadership withstands institutional pressures and promotes inclusive education by encouraging respect, collaboration, and responsiveness to diverse student needs. Training programs that focus on individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation equip school leaders with the tools to implement inclusive policies and practices effectively.

Moreover, the integration of diversity and technology into leadership development enhances the relevance and impact of training initiatives. Assefa and Mujtaba (2024) argued that leveraging digital tools and embracing cultural diversity are key strategies for transformational leaders to create inclusive and effective learning environments. District-based programs that incorporate these elements can help school heads navigate the complexities of inclusive education and foster environments where all learners thrive.

The proposed training also addresses the importance of collaborative governance and stakeholder engagement. Transformational leaders build strong partnerships with teachers, parents, and communities to co-create inclusive school cultures. James (2025) emphasized that inclusive leadership involves shared decision-making, open communication, and a commitment to continuous improvement by embedding these principles into the training design, the program ensures that school heads are prepared to lead inclusively and responsively.

The initiative represents a strategic investment in educational equity. Jabali-Kassem (2019) noted that inclusive education requires both cultural and structural transformation, supported by visionary leadership and community involvement. Through targeted training, school heads can become agents of change who champion equity, celebrate diversity, and ensure access for all learners. This district-based approach not only strengthens individual leadership but also fosters a collective commitment to inclusive education across the region.

➤ *Theoretical Implications*

The research highlights the importance of transformational leadership as a foundational approach for driving inclusive education reform. It suggests that when school heads are equipped with leadership strategies that emphasize vision, collaboration, and responsiveness, they are better positioned to create equitable learning environments. This implies that leadership development should not only focus on administrative competencies but also on values-driven practices that promote inclusion.

The findings also point to the need for a shift in leadership paradigms within school systems. Traditional leadership models that prioritize compliance and hierarchy may not be sufficient to address the complexities of inclusive education. Instead, the research supports a model where leadership is distributed, participatory, and reflective—encouraging school heads to engage stakeholders, foster

shared decision-making, and continuously evaluate their practices.

Another implication is the role of professional development in sustaining inclusive leadership. The research underscores that inclusive education cannot be effectively implemented without ongoing training and support for school leaders. This suggests that capacity-building should be embedded within district-level planning and should include opportunities for peer learning, mentoring, and contextualized problem-solving.

The research also emphasizes the importance of aligning leadership practices with inclusive education goals. This means that school heads must be able to translate broad policy directives into actionable strategies that respond to the needs of diverse learners. The implication here is that leadership training should include components on data use, individualized instruction, and culturally responsive practices.

Finally, the research implies that inclusive leadership is both a personal and systemic endeavor. School heads must embody inclusive values in their daily interactions while also advocating for structural changes that support equity. This dual focus reinforces the idea that transformational leadership is not only about inspiring others but also about reshaping systems to ensure that every learner is respected, supported, and allowed to succeed.

➤ *Practical Implications*

The research highlights the need for structured and context-specific professional development programs for school heads. Practically, this means that districts should design and implement training modules that focus on inclusive leadership competencies, such as vision-setting, stakeholder engagement, and differentiated instruction. These modules should be tailored to the realities of local schools, ensuring relevance and applicability.

One key implication is the integration of inclusive education principles into daily school leadership practices. School heads must be equipped to lead inclusive planning, monitor equity indicators, and support teachers in implementing individualized education plans (IEPs). This requires not only training but also ongoing coaching and access to tools that support inclusive decision-making and instructional leadership.

The research also suggests that inclusive leadership must be supported by collaborative structures. Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, peer mentoring, and school governance councils should be institutionalized as platforms for shared learning and participatory leadership. These structures enable school heads to foster a culture of inclusion and continuous improvement within their schools.

Another practical implication is the need for resource mobilization. Districts must allocate funding from sources such as the Local School Board (LSB) and Special Education Fund (SEF) to support training logistics, materials, and

accessibility provisions. Partnerships with NGOs, alumni associations, and community stakeholders can further enhance the sustainability and reach of inclusive leadership initiatives.

The research underscores the importance of monitoring and evaluation. School heads should be trained to use data to assess the effectiveness of inclusive practices, identify gaps, and inform strategic planning. This includes using tools such as pre- and post-assessments, feedback surveys, and reflection journals to track progress and refine leadership approaches.

➤ *Limitations of the Present Study*

One limitation of the study is its geographic scope, which is confined to a specific district. While the findings provide valuable insights into the local context, they may not be fully generalizable to other regions with different socio-cultural, economic, or institutional conditions. Broader studies involving multiple districts or regions would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of transformational leadership training in diverse educational settings.

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data from school heads and stakeholders. While interviews and surveys are useful for capturing perceptions and experiences, they may be subject to bias, such as social desirability or selective recall. This could affect the accuracy of the findings related to leadership practices and challenges in implementing inclusive education.

The study also faces constraints in terms of longitudinal impact assessment. Since the training program is newly implemented, the research may not yet capture long-term changes in school culture, student outcomes, or systemic transformation. A follow-up study over an extended period would be necessary to evaluate the sustained impact of the training on inclusive leadership and educational equity.

Thus, the study may have limited representation of stakeholder voices, particularly those of learners with special educational needs, parents from marginalized communities, and support staff. Their perspectives are crucial in assessing the inclusivity and responsiveness of leadership practices, and future research should aim to include a broader range of participants.

The study may not fully account for external factors that influence the success of inclusive leadership, such as policy shifts, funding availability, or community dynamics. These variables can significantly affect the implementation and outcomes of training programs, and their interaction with leadership practices warrants further exploration.

➤ *Future Research Directions*

Future research may broaden the scope of this study by including a larger and more diverse set of schools across different districts, divisions, or regions. Comparative studies between rural and urban schools, or between public and private institutions, would provide valuable insights into the

similarities and differences in how transformative leadership practices are implemented in varying contexts. Such comparative approaches can highlight unique challenges and strengths that may not have surfaced within the limited scope of this research.

A longitudinal approach is also recommended for future studies to track how leadership practices evolve over time. Since inclusive education is a continuous and adaptive process, examining the long-term effects of leadership strategies, policy implementation, and stakeholder engagement would offer a more comprehensive understanding of their sustainability and impact. Related to this, future research should also consider the perspectives of teachers, learners, and parents, providing a holistic view of how transformative leadership is experienced across different levels of the school community.

Another direction for research involves investigating the direct link between transformative leadership practices and student outcomes. While this study identified that equity and access practices are evident, future research may explore how these practices influence learner achievement, participation, and well-being, particularly among learners with special educational needs (LSEN). This evidence-based connection would further validate the role of leadership in shaping inclusive education outcomes.

Given that professional development received the lowest mean score in this study, future research should also focus on exploring effective models of capacity-building for both school heads and teachers. Studies could evaluate the effectiveness of Learning Action Cells (LACs), mentoring systems, or alternative professional learning frameworks tailored to inclusive education. Likewise, resource allocation and policy implementation should be examined more deeply to determine how national or divisional guidelines align with practices at the school level, and whether funding, facilities, and assistive technologies are equitably distributed.

Lastly, future research may investigate the role of technology and innovation in strengthening inclusive leadership practices. With the growing importance of digital platforms and assistive tools, studies on how school leaders adopt and integrate these technologies could provide practical models for supporting learners with diverse needs. Addressing systemic challenges—such as limited stakeholder support, unclear implementation frameworks, and insufficient funding—also warrants further exploration. By engaging with these gaps, future research can contribute to the development of sustainable, collaborative, and adaptive models of transformative leadership in inclusive education.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the preceding findings, the researcher concludes that school heads show strong commitment to promoting equity in inclusive education ($M = 4.44$), with equitable resource distribution as their top practice. However, the low rating on professional development programs indicates a need to strengthen teacher competence and

capacity-building in inclusive practices. Transformative leadership is operationalized through vision-driven and inclusive practices. School heads communicate inclusive values, engage stakeholders in decision-making, and foster a culture that respects and celebrates diversity. Thematic analysis indicates that professional development and stakeholder collaboration are key to sustaining equity and access in inclusive education. The study concludes that systemic barriers hinder inclusive leadership, including the lack of trained teachers and school heads, limited professional development, and inadequate resources. These challenges highlight the need for stronger institutional support and district-level interventions to address gaps in training and funding. The study concludes that a District-Based Training on Transformational Leadership Practices is necessary to enhance school heads' competencies. This program would address gaps in professional development, equip leaders with strategies for promoting equity and access, and strengthen collaborative efforts with stakeholders.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are given (1) Regular district-based training be prioritized on transformational leadership practices focusing on equity and inclusive education. These trainings should include strategies for addressing diverse learner needs, designing inclusive policies, and strengthening teacher capacity to deliver responsive instruction. (2) School heads should collaborate with local government units, NGOs, and community stakeholders to mobilize resources for inclusive education, and prioritize acquiring assistive technologies, adaptive learning materials, and upgrading school facilities to ensure access for differently abled learners. (3) School heads should strengthen stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes through regular consultations, partnerships, and collaborative planning, and reinforce equity-driven initiatives, improve community support, and enhance the sustainability of inclusive programs. (4) The Department of Education at the district level should establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to track the effectiveness of transformative leadership practices, and the proposed district-based training on transformational leadership practices be adopted. (5) Future researchers may expand the scope of this study by including multiple school districts or employing a comparative approach across regions. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to examine the long-term impact of transformative leadership practices on equity and access in inclusive education.

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