

From Policy to Practice: Literacy-Focused Leadership Competencies Among School Leaders

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Abstract: This study examined the literacy-focused leadership competencies of school heads, the implementation of literacy policies, their influence on reading performance, the challenges encountered, and a proposed Learning and Development (L&D) program to strengthen leadership capacity. Findings revealed consistently high levels of literacy-focused leadership competencies, with overall mean ratings ranging from 4.18 to 4.37, all interpreted as high. School leaders demonstrated strong competencies in setting clear literacy goals, supervising instruction, embedding literacy in the School Improvement Plan, and supporting teachers through assessment-driven strategies. The highest ratings were recorded in school-based practices, particularly in supporting reading interventions, highlighting their commitment to creating literacy-rich environments. School leaders employed various strategies in implementing literacy policies, such as structured remediation schedules, the pull-out system, differentiated instruction, and one-on-one reading sessions. These practices reflect learner-centered, data-informed approaches consistent with national and international best practices in literacy intervention. Their use of tools like Phil-IRI and comprehension checks strengthened targeted interventions and enabled efficient resource allocation. School-wide literacy culture-building practices—such as DEAR, literacy celebrations, and maintaining print-rich environments—further enhanced learners' motivation and engagement. Despite the high competence levels, school leaders faced several systemic challenges. The most significant were limited funding, insufficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, heavy administrative workload, weak parental engagement, and inadequate literacy materials. Gaps in teacher training also posed difficulties, limiting the effectiveness of intervention programs. To address these issues, a three-day L&D program was proposed focusing on: (1) literacy policy implementation and instructional leadership, (2) data-driven decision-making and teacher capacity building, and (3) community engagement, resource mobilization, and innovation. This program aims to strengthen key leadership domains, enhance collaboration, and support contextualized literacy improvement initiatives. Finally, the study concludes that effective literacy-focused leadership significantly influences school reading performance. Strengthening leaders' competencies ensures systematic, equitable, and sustainable literacy development in schools.

Keywords: *Literacy-Focused Leadership, Instructional Supervision, Reading Performance, Community Engagement, Transformational Leadership.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Literacy remains a foundational skill crucial for academic success, lifelong learning, and active citizenship. In today's rapidly changing educational landscape, the role of school heads extends beyond managerial functions—they are expected to be instructional leaders who drive academic excellence, particularly in reading and literacy. The increasing demands for improved literacy outcomes, especially in multilingual and low-performing contexts like some areas in the Philippines, underscore the importance of effective school leadership centered on literacy (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020).

DepEd Order No. 39, s. 2016, also known as the *Adoption of the Basic Education Research Agenda*, serves as

a guiding framework for conducting research that supports evidence-based policy-making and practice in the Philippine basic education system. This policy underscores the importance of research in four major domains: (1) Teaching and Learning, (2) Child Protection, (3) Human Resource Development, and (4) Governance. The present study significantly contributes to the research domains of teaching and learning and governance, particularly in the area of instructional leadership and literacy development. Under the domain of governance, DepEd emphasizes the need for research on school leadership and management, recognizing the critical role of school heads in influencing school performance and student outcomes. At the same time, the teaching and learning domain prioritizes studies on improving literacy instruction and learner achievement. This study effectively addresses both domains by examining how

school heads demonstrate leadership competencies specifically aimed at promoting literacy—a foundational skill for all other learning.

DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2022, which institutionalizes the *National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP)*, was issued in response to the urgent need to address learning gaps caused by prolonged school closures and disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The NLRP focuses on accelerating learning in key areas, especially literacy and numeracy, which were most affected among early grade learners and marginalized student populations. This policy underscores the critical role of school heads in leading the implementation of recovery interventions and ensuring that schools are equipped to respond to these learning challenges. Aligned with this directive, the present becomes highly relevant and timely. It investigates the capacity of school heads to demonstrate strong instructional leadership focused on literacy development, which is one of the core pillars of the NLRP. The policy recognizes that effective school leadership is instrumental in guiding teachers, planning targeted interventions, monitoring student progress, and creating a school culture that prioritizes literacy recovery and academic excellence.

Research has consistently shown that leadership has a significant indirect impact on student learning, primarily by shaping the conditions under which effective teaching and learning occur (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Literacy-focused leadership includes competencies such as setting clear literacy goals, fostering a reading culture, providing professional development for teachers, and using data to inform instruction (International Literacy Association, 2017). These competencies are vital as school heads are key influencers of curriculum implementation, teacher practices, and learner outcomes (Fullan, 2014).

In the Philippines, initiatives under the Department of Education (DepEd), such as the Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) and the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), aim to address literacy issues. However, literacy performance still shows significant gaps across regions (DepEd, 2020). These gaps suggest a need to assess how well school heads are equipped and empowered to lead literacy improvement initiatives.

The Department of Education Order No. 32, series of 2019, titled “*Policy Guidelines on the Implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program*,” establishes the fundamental policies and strategies for effectively delivering the K to 12 curriculum. A key emphasis of this order is the vital role of school heads as instructional leaders tasked with enhancing the quality of teaching and learning across all subject areas. As stated in the policy, school heads are not merely administrative managers but are expected to lead in ensuring that curriculum implementation is responsive, contextualized, and anchored on improving learning outcomes. Their leadership responsibilities include guiding teachers in effective pedagogical practices, ensuring the availability of learning resources, conducting instructional supervision, and promoting a school culture centered on

continuous improvement. This mandate directly supports the relevance and necessity of the present study. Literacy is one of the foundational skills that underpin all academic learning. By examining how school heads demonstrate leadership competencies specifically aimed at literacy development, the study contributes to understanding how DepEd’s policy intentions are translated into actual school practices.

Republic Act No. 9155, also known as the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, establishes the framework for the governance of basic education in the Philippines. One of its most significant provisions is the clear delineation of roles and responsibilities among the various levels of the education system, with particular emphasis on empowering school heads as instructional leaders and administrators of schools. The law mandates that school heads must lead the school community in developing and managing curricular and co-curricular programs, overseeing instructional delivery, managing resources, and ensuring an environment conducive to learning.

This legislative mandate elevates the role of school heads beyond routine administrative duties. They are expected to be at the forefront of instructional leadership, guiding teachers, initiating school improvement plans, and ensuring that students receive quality education. Literacy, being a cornerstone of learning, falls directly within the scope of their responsibility. The success of any literacy initiative, therefore, depends significantly on the leadership capacity of the school head. The present study directly aligns with the intent of Republic Act No. 9155. By investigating the specific leadership behaviors, strategies, and competencies that school heads exhibit in promoting literacy, the study responds to the law’s call for effective, accountable, and learning-focused school leadership. It seeks to provide empirical insights into how school heads fulfill their instructional leadership mandate, especially in the critical area of literacy development, which affects learners’ overall academic performance.

Moreover, RA 9155 promotes decentralized decision-making, giving school heads the autonomy to contextualize learning programs based on the needs of their students and communities. This further supports the rationale for examining their literacy-focused leadership competencies, as it highlights the importance of localized, needs-based leadership practices in addressing literacy challenges. The study’s findings can inform policy decisions, professional development programs, and leadership frameworks that aim to strengthen the capacity of school leaders to lead literacy initiatives effectively. In sum, Republic Act No. 9155 provides a strong legal foundation for this research. It legitimizes the focus on school heads’ leadership roles in literacy and underscores the necessity of evaluating their competencies to ensure that they are equipped to lead and sustain meaningful learning outcomes in the basic education system.

The effective leadership of school heads in literacy also intersected with the principles of distributed leadership and capacity-building—where leaders work collaboratively with

teachers, parents, and stakeholders to create supportive environments for literacy learning (Harris, 2009). Yet, despite global and national recognition of this need, studies remain limited in contextualizing and analyzing the actual competencies of school heads in promoting literacy in specific regional or district settings.

The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, commonly known as the K to 12 Law (Republic Act No. 10533), was enacted to overhaul and strengthen the Philippine basic education system by adding two additional years to secondary education and enhancing the curriculum to meet global standards. One of its key objectives is to ensure that Filipino learners acquire foundational competencies, particularly in literacy and numeracy, which are essential for lifelong learning, employment, and active citizenship.

A vital component of the K to 12 reform is the recognition of instructional leadership as a catalyst for improving learning outcomes. The law underscores the responsibility of school heads not just as administrative managers, but as transformational instructional leaders who guide teachers in delivering the enhanced curriculum effectively. In this capacity, school leaders are expected to possess and demonstrate competencies that directly influence the literacy development of learners—such as setting high expectations for reading achievement, facilitating data-driven instruction, promoting a culture of reading, and initiating targeted interventions for struggling readers.

Given the policy emphasis on improved educational quality through the K to 12 frameworks, it is imperative to assess how well school heads have internalized and operationalized their leadership roles in relation to literacy. The study bridged this gap by evaluating how school heads implement literacy initiatives, support teacher capacity-building, and respond to literacy challenges within their schools.

This study aligns with the intent of the K to 12 Law by exploring whether school heads are effectively leading efforts to enhance students' reading and writing skills—cornerstones of the curriculum's learning competencies. It also highlights the need for sustained professional development and policy support to equip leaders with the necessary tools to drive literacy performance. In essence, the research provides empirical insight into how leadership at the school level contributes to realizing the goals of the K to 12 reforms, particularly in advancing literacy for all Filipino learners.

This study therefore aimed to analyze the literacy-focused leadership competencies of school heads, particularly examining their practices, challenges, and capacity-building efforts. The results can inform policy, training, and professional development interventions, ensuring that leaders are better equipped to meet the literacy demands of the 21st-century learner.

➤ Objectives

This study analyzed the literacy-focused leadership competencies of school heads in the Gubat District for the

school year 2025–2026, with the goal of understanding how these competencies are demonstrated, their impact on school reading performance, and the challenges encountered, in order to propose relevant learning and development interventions to enhance school leadership in literacy.

• Specifically, this Study Adopted the Following Objectives:

- ✓ To determine the level of literacy-focused leader competencies among school leaders.
- ✓ To find out how the school leaders implement literacy policies in their leadership practices.
- ✓ To ascertain how the literacy-focused leadership competencies of the school heads influence the reading performance of the school.
- ✓ To identify the challenges encountered school leaders relative to the literacy-focused leadership competencies.
- ✓ To propose learning and development program to enhance the literacy-focused leadership competencies of the school heads.

II. METHODS

This study utilized mixed-methods research design, precisely employing a convergent parallel approach to widely analyze the literacy-focused leadership competencies of school heads. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods allowed for a deeper understanding of the levels, practices, impacts, and challenges associated with literacy leadership in the basic education setting. The quantitative component involved the use of a structured survey questionnaire distributed to selected school heads. This instrument aimed to measure the level of their literacy-focused leadership competencies based on specific indicators such as instructional supervision, curriculum management, data utilization, and professional development support. The quantitative data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and percentage) to determine competency levels and identify common trends.

The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods allowed for a deeper understanding of the levels, practices, impacts, and challenges associated with literacy leadership in the basic education setting. The quantitative component involved the use of a structured survey questionnaire distributed to selected school heads. This instrument aimed to measure the level of their literacy-focused leadership competencies based on specific indicators such as instructional supervision, curriculum management, data utilization, and professional development support. The quantitative data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and percentage) to determine competency levels and identify common trends.

The primary respondents of this study are the 20 public elementary school heads within the selected district. These school heads serve as instructional leaders responsible for overseeing literacy programs, supervising teaching practices, and implementing school-based reading interventions. Their experience and leadership role position them as the most appropriate individuals to provide data on literacy-focused

leadership competencies. Additionally, to enrich the qualitative aspect of the study, school heads were selected for unstructured interviews. These individuals included were those who have demonstrated notable literacy initiatives, have varied years of experience, or represent schools with different literacy performance levels. This ensures that the data gathered reflect a range of leadership experiences and contexts.

III. RESULTS

The results of the gathered and statistically treated data are presented. Qualitative data and information are presented in an organized table, while qualitative data are organized in

thematic format. Statistical scrutiny of the data is further provided.

➤ *Level of Literacy Focused Leadership Competencies of School Leaders*

School Leaders take a big responsibility aside of administrative duties they also expected to be at the forefront of instructional leadership, guiding teachers, initiating school improvement plans, and ensuring that pupils receive quality education. Understanding the level of these literacy-Focused Leadership competencies of School leaders in terms of Literacy Instruction helps us see how prepared and committed they are in leading meaningful literacy initiatives that make a real difference in learners' lives.

Table 1 Level of Literacy- Focused Leadership Competencies of School Leaders in Terms of Literacy Instruction

Indicators	Mean	Description
Sets clear literacy goals	4.35	High
Monitors and supervises literacy instruction	4.35	High
Supports teachers in utilizing the reading assessment data effectively	4.35	High
Leads the development of literacy-oriented projects in SIP	4.35	High
Facilitates professional development in literacy	4.30	High
Overall-average	4.34	High

Table 1 presents the level of literacy-focused leadership competencies of school leaders in terms of literacy instruction. The findings reveal that school leaders generally demonstrate a high level of competence across all indicators, with an overall mean of 4.34, described as High.

Specifically, school leaders excel in setting clear literacy goals with a mean value of 4.35 described as high. Implied by this result that these 20 school head respondents possessed desirable qualities in terms of crafting goals relative to the improvement of the literacy among learners in the schools. Such was noticed in the Annual Implementation Plan of the schools. In this document monitoring and supervising literacy instruction was also high in result with a mean value of 4.35, School Leaders conduct classroom observations provided tools to see how literacy is being taught. They model effective literacy practices during FGD's and Staff meeting, while supporting teachers in effectively utilizing reading assessment data described also in high result of 4.35 in mean value.

These results indicate that leaders are actively engaged in guiding and sustaining literacy initiatives specifically in crafting and interpreting different types of reading data (ex.

Diagnostic, formative, summative test). Similarly with a mean value of 4.35 which is also high in result School leaders leads the development of literacy-oriented projects in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) by providing Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time- bound (SMART) goals for improving literacy and facilitating professional development in literacy (M = 4.30) were also rated high, showing their commitment to embedding literacy in strategic planning and teacher growth.

Overall, the consistently high ratings across all indicators suggest that school leaders possess strong instructional leadership competencies that directly support literacy promotion. This demonstrates their capacity to guide teachers, design literacy-focused interventions, and create a school culture that prioritizes reading and literacy development.

Strengthening literacy not only within the classroom but also across the wider community reflect how effectively school leaders build partnership with other stakeholders, when they actively involve the community literacy initiatives, they help create supportive environment where everyone contributes to nurturing a culture of learning.

Table 2 Level of Literacy- Focused Leadership Competencies of School Leaders in Terms of School-Wide Culture of Literacy

Indicators	Mean	Description
Supports reading intervention program	4.50	High
Leads events like reading month and book fair	4.40	High
Models of promotion of literacy in decision-making	4.35	High
Integrates literacy-building activities in the school schedule	4.35	High
Promotes a literacy-rich environment	4.25	High
Overall-average	4.37	High

Table 2 shows the level of literacy-focused leadership competencies of school leaders in terms of school-related

practices. The findings reveal an overall mean of 4.37, which falls under the description High. This indicates that the 20

school leaders respondents demonstrate strong competencies in creating, supporting, and sustaining school-based literacy initiatives.

Among the indicators, the highest-rated competency is supporting reading intervention programs with a mean value of 4.50 described as high. This reflects that the respondents provide different intervention programs like DEAR TIME, PULL OUT system on ensuring that interventions are effectively implemented. Likewise, they show commendable leadership in leading literacy-related events such as reading month and book fair which is also high in result with 4.40 mean value, their engagement in such activities is a powerful way to model the value of literacy and boost school-wide enthusiasm.

Other competencies also received high ratings, including modeling the promotion of literacy in decision making which is 4.35 mean value, It implies that respondent's decisions are not only administrative but also pedagogical, anchored in the belief that literacy empowers both learners and the entire school community. In the other hand, with the

mean value of 4.35 which is high in result respondents integrating literacy-building activities into the school schedule, it shows that one of their priorities are providing consistently structured time for literacy specifically in reading and writing to support every subject areas and ever also encourage teachers to establish well equipped classroom reading corners, literacy walls and interactive displays that promoting a literacy-rich environment which has result of 4.35 mean value described as high.

Finally, the findings suggest that school leaders display high literacy-focused leadership competencies in terms of school management. Their efforts to support interventions, lead literacy events, and promote a literacy-rich environment play a critical role in cultivating a school culture that values and prioritizes literacy development.

The level of literacy- focused leadership competencies of school leaders, particularly in terms of community engagement and advocacy, shows their ability to build strong partnerships that support literacy development beyond the classroom.

Table 3 Level of Literacy-Focused Leadership Competencies of School Leaders in Terms of Community Engagement and Advocacy

Indicators	Mean	Description
Engages stakeholders in literacy programs	4.25	High
Partners with parents to build home-based reading readiness	4.20	High
Facilitates collaborative sessions with parents to co-create a school and community-wide literacy vision	4.15	High
Advocates for the involvement of volunteers in Brigada Pagbasa/ARAL Program	4.15	High
Strengthens partnerships to acquire literacy materials for learners	4.15	High
Overall-average	4.18	High

Table 3 presents the level of literacy-focused leadership competencies of school leaders in terms of community engagement and advocacy. The results reveal an overall mean of 4.18, interpreted as High. This indicates that school leaders demonstrate commendable competencies in fostering partnerships and mobilizing community support to strengthen literacy development.

The highest-rated competency is engaging stakeholders in literacy programs with mean value of 4.25. This shows that respondents actively involve key stakeholders such as parents, local government units, and community organizations initiatives, thereby ensuring wider participation and shared accountability. Respondents also believe collaborative sessions also strengthen the home-school connection, emphasizing that literacy begins at home effective reading practices, home reading routines. In connection with facilitating collaborative sessions with parents to co- create a school and community-wide-literacy with High in result of 4.15 mean value, respondents believe that collaborative sessions transform literacy advocacy into a collective endeavor. While advocating for the involvement of volunteers in Brigada Pagbasa/Araral Program got the highest result with a mean value of 4.15, respondents actively advocate for volunteer participation demonstrate their commitment to inclusive education and community

empowerment and strengthening the partnership to acquire literacy materials for learners were also rated high. These findings reflect that while school leaders consistently engage the community and promote advocacy, there remains room for further strengthening partnerships and broadening volunteer participation.

Inclusively, the results suggest that school leaders are effective in mobilizing community support and advocacy for literacy. Their efforts in stakeholder engagement, parental partnerships, and volunteer-driven initiatives demonstrate a strong commitment to making literacy not only a school priority but also a shared responsibility across the community.

➤ *How School Leaders Implement Literacy Policies in their Leadership Practice*

School Leaders have a strong role in turning literacy policies into meaningful actions that directly impact teaching and learning, ensuring that literacy goals set by the DepEd are realized in everyday school activities. From the interviews, six key themes emerge: (1) Policy-driven literacy support, (2) Intervention and remediation strategies, (3) Integration of literacy across the curriculum, (4) Community and parental involvement, (5) Use of technology and innovation, and (6) Teacher development and instructional strategies. These

themes highlight that literacy promotion in schools is guided by policies, reinforced through structured remediation, integrated into all subjects, supported by families and communities, enhanced by technology, and sustained by teacher development.

- *Policy-Driven Literacy Support*

Participant A strictly implements every child a Reader Program (ECARP) mandated by DepEd to ensure that all pupils, especially those in the primary grades, are given guided reading activities to develop comprehension and fluency. As supported by Participant B and C they also engage pupils to DEAR TIME (Drop Everything and Read) in all learning levels as well as the conduct of PHIL-IRI, CRLA/RLA they monitored it to ensure that it is properly implemented and aligned with the goals of DepEd in promoting Literacy. While Participant D religiously observed the “No Read No Pass” Policy He also implemented the PULL-OUT System, wherein struggling readers from higher grade levels are temporarily grouped with lower-grade learners for guided reading sessions. This allows for instruction that is better aligned with their actual reading ability, helping them build confidence and gradually catch up with peers.

- *Intervention and Remediation Strategies*

More statements being said by the respondents like “structured reading remediation time (daily or weekly sessions, e.g., 12:30–1:00 pm). pull-out system (struggling readers from higher grades join lower-grade guided reading). one-on-one reading sessions and differentiated instruction to address learner diversity and remedial classes, peer-assisted reading, and targeted interventions for non-readers. All these interventions surfaced mostly from the school heads.

Moreover, Participant E promote one-on-one reading sessions and differentiated instruction to meet the individual needs of learners. Teachers are encouraged to use varied teaching strategies and tailor interventions based on reading levels, ensuring that both struggling readers and more advanced learners are supported effectively. Alongside Participant F also implement remedial classes, peer-assisted reading, and targeted literacy interventions such as guided reading programs. These approaches provide learners with additional practice, peer modeling, and scaffolding opportunities to strengthen comprehension and fluency.

- *Integration of Literacy Across the Curriculum*

The research participants believed that all teachers are literacy teaches, thus integration of literacy across the curriculum is a must. Instruction in Science, Math, and other subjects have to incorporate reading comprehension and writing tasks. Teachers structured time for storytelling, silent reading, and comprehension activities. Participant H encouraged teachers to integrate literacy skills in their lesson in all subject areas, while Participant B keeping literacy progress record, giving feedback, and refer struggling pupils for intervention programs.

- *Community and Parental Involvement*

Participant A said that she encouraged parents to listen to their children read at home, used different reading materials and provide area for reading. Alongside Participants D and H also conclude the spirit of governance built with a team that comprised of teachers-Parents- BLGU-Alumni Association and other volunteers they will gather as one to share ideas and efforts for the succession of their reading interventions they believe that with the help of these groups they can create an effective way to lessen the problem of non-readers.

The statements of Participants A, D and H emphasized the strong link between community and parental involvement in promoting literacy development. Parents actively support reading at home and stay informed about literacy expectations, ensuring continuity between school and home learning. Schools also conclude that they so implement community outreach initiatives such as literacy month celebrations, storytelling sessions, and book drives, often in partnership with local government units and volunteers. These collaborative efforts foster a shared responsibility for learners’ literacy growth. By strengthening school-home partnerships, policies cultivate an inclusive environment where both families and communities play vital roles in nurturing literacy and lifelong learning.

- *Use of Technology and Innovation*

Participants D, F and G said; “Promotion of digital tools for literacy (e.g., Project INNOVA). Integrating modern approaches and technology in reading instruction to enhance engagement is a must. Learners are more involved to learn literacy when technology is considered as part of the teaching engagement.

Participants E and F underscored the vital role of technology and innovation in advancing literacy initiatives within schools. They noted that the promotion of digital tools, such as Project INNOVA, has transformed the way literacy is taught and learned. Through the integration of digital resources and online platforms, students gain access to interactive and engaging materials that make reading and comprehension more dynamic and accessible. This modern approach not only supports diverse learning styles but also bridges the gap between traditional and digital literacy, preparing students for a technology-driven world.

Furthermore, Participant C highlighted innovative literacy programs like “Catch-up Fridays,” the Aral Program, and other literacy-focused projects, which aim to address learning gaps and sustain students’ interest in reading. These programs utilize blended learning strategies and technology-enhanced activities to reinforce foundational literacy skills. Teachers are also empowered to incorporate multimedia tools, e-books, and interactive applications to enhance student engagement and participation. Overall, the integration of technology and innovative practices reflects a forward-thinking approach to literacy development, ensuring that learners are not only competent readers but also adaptive, critical, and creative thinkers who can effectively navigate the digital landscape of modern education.

- *Teacher Development and Instructional Strategies*

Participant B emphasized the crucial role of teacher development and instructional strategies in enhancing literacy outcomes. She noted that capacity-building initiatives, such as trainings and workshops, equip teachers with the necessary skills and pedagogical knowledge to deliver effective literacy instruction. These professional development activities provide educators with updated methodologies, evidence-based practices, and innovative approaches that align with the diverse learning needs of students. Through continuous learning, teachers become more confident and competent in implementing literacy programs that address both foundational and higher-order reading skills.

Moreover, Participants D and B highlighted the importance of adopting differentiated teaching strategies to cater to learners with varying literacy levels. Struggling readers are given targeted interventions and scaffolding, while advanced learners are provided with enrichment activities to sustain their growth. Teachers are encouraged to use varied instructional methods—such as interactive storytelling, guided reading, phonics-based instruction, and technology integration—to make learning more engaging and effective. This flexible approach ensures that every learner receives appropriate support and challenge. Overall, the testimonies illustrate that teacher development and innovative instructional strategies are essential components in creating a dynamic literacy environment that fosters inclusivity, motivation, and continuous improvement in reading achievement. Globally, intervention and remediation strategies demonstrate school leaders' commitment to addressing literacy gaps in a systematic and learner-centered manner. By allocating time, resources, and innovative methods to support struggling readers, they ensure that no learner is left behind in developing essential reading skills.

➤ *How the Literacy-Focused Leadership Competencies of School Heads Influence the Reading Performance of the School*

The literacy-focused leadership competencies of school Leaders have and direct performance of the school by (1) enforcing policies and programs, (2) empowering teachers through capacity building, (3) making data-informed decisions, (4) engaging parents and communities, (5) building a culture of reading, and (6) sustaining innovation and resource mobilization. Altogether, these competencies create a supportive, accountable, and learner-centered environment where literacy development is prioritized and continuously improved.

- *Policy Enforcement and Program Implementation*

School heads ensure consistent implementation of literacy-related policies and programs such as No Read No Pass, Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP), and Phil-IRI-based remediation. Strict enforcement of these policies creates accountability and strengthens reading practices, directly affecting learners' performance.

Participant D said, “No read no pass has to be made known to the parents and children “such was and supported by Participant C No basa No pasa, is adhered my school”

Reading Also Participant F testified that “No Read No Pass Policy, monthly monitoring of non-readers in each grade level and also consolidating the reports of the adviser as regards to their intervention in their respective classroom have been done One on one reading session with the graduating class as one of the requirements for graduation was also a practice.” And Participant D said, “Every day at 12:30 to 1:00 pm, the school implemented an hour for reading remediation to all school children to develop the love and habit for reading.”

School heads emphasize the importance of data utilization in improving literacy. Assessment tools such as Phil-IRI results, classroom-based tests, and comprehension checks are analyzed to identify learners' reading levels. With this information, leaders guide teachers in grouping learners, planning targeted interventions, and allocating resources efficiently. They also use data to shape teacher development initiatives. This results in interventions that are more precise and responsive to learners' needs, ensuring that both struggling and advanced readers receive appropriate support.

- *Instructional Leadership and Teacher Capacity Building*

School heads support teachers through trainings, seminars, LAC sessions, classroom observations, and coaching. By providing technical assistance, instructional materials, and feedback, they equip teachers with effective literacy teaching strategies, which improves classroom instruction and enhances learners' reading performance.

Participant B said that, “Language Across the Curriculum Policy – All subject teachers are encouraged to integrate literacy skills (reading comprehension, writing, and communication) into their lessons, not only English or Filipino subjects. Assessment and Remediation Policy by which students who struggle in reading and writing are identified through regular assessments and are provided remedial classes or guided reading sessions. Meanwhile, Community and Parental Involvement Policy enables parents support literacy at home, while the school organizes literacy month, storytelling sessions, and book drives. Implementation of Policies Structured Reading Time allows teachers allot a specific period weekly for silent reading or storytelling Literacy Integration in Lesson in Science, Math, and other subjects include reading comprehension activities and writing outputs. Teachers keep literacy progress records, give feedback, and refer struggling students for intervention programs.

Participant E also conducted “The promotion of the Use of Digital Tool to enhance learning and literacy. We launched the project. INNOVA”

School leaders extend the responsibility of literacy beyond the classroom by engaging parents and communities. Through PTA meetings, literacy campaigns, book drives, and storytelling events, leaders build partnerships that encourage reading practices at home and in local communities. Programs such as Brigada Pagbasa also mobilize volunteers and external stakeholders. This collaboration creates a stronger support system for learners, reinforcing reading

habits across different environments and sustaining improvements in literacy performance.

- *Data-Driven Decision Making*

Leaders use reading assessment data (Phil-IRI, CRLA/RLA, classroom tests, comprehension checks) to identify non-readers, group learners by levels, design interventions, allocate resources, and plan teacher development. This competency ensures interventions are targeted and effective, improving both remediation and enrichment outcomes.

Participant A testified that “We strictly implement the Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) mandated by DepEd. This ensures that all pupils, especially those in the primary grades, are given guided reading activities to develop comprehension and fluency. And informant G also shared that “Implementation of NO READ NO PASS and introducing innovation on reading/literacy.”

School leaders also influence reading outcomes by cultivating a school-wide culture of literacy. Practices such as DEAR (Drop Everything and Read), literacy month celebrations, and recognition of reading achievers help motivate learners to value reading. Leaders also ensure the creation of print-rich environments, where learners are consistently exposed to texts and reading materials. These initiatives not only improve reading proficiency but also foster positive attitudes toward literacy, encouraging learners to read for both academic and personal growth.

- *Innovation and Resource Mobilization*

School heads introduce innovative literacy projects (e.g., Project INNOVA, ALPHA BASA, Aral Program, Catch-up Fridays) and maximize available resources, even with limitations. Their resourcefulness in integrating technology, differentiated instruction, and creative interventions sustains progress and enhances reading outcomes.

Participant D shared “We religiously observe the no read no pass policy in line with this we implement the pull-out system wherein all the emergent pupils KS2 join the KS1 in Barasa sa Hapon Program implemented by grade 1-3 teachers. Participant B also said, “DEAR time is always implemented, as well as the PHIL-IRI, CRLA/RLA and other programs by Deped.”

Finally, school heads display creativity and resourcefulness in sustaining literacy progress through innovation and resource mobilization. Projects such as Project INNOVA, ALPHA BASA, Catch-up Fridays, and the Aral Program are introduced to enhance learner engagement. Leaders also maximize limited resources, integrate technology, and promote differentiated instruction to cater to diverse learners. These innovations address gaps and create more meaningful learning experiences, ensuring that literacy programs remain effective and relevant despite challenges.

School heads demonstrate strong literacy leadership by ensuring the consistent implementation of policies and programs designed to improve reading outcomes. Initiatives such as the No Read, No Pass Policy, Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP), and Phil-IRI-based remediation are strictly enforced across grade levels. By holding both teachers and learners accountable, these programs help establish a structured literacy framework. The firm implementation of these policies ensures that no learner is overlooked, thus strengthening foundational reading skills and raising overall school performance.

Another critical way that school leaders influence reading performance is through instructional leadership. They provide support to teachers by organizing seminars, trainings, LAC sessions, coaching, and classroom observations. Leaders also supply instructional materials and continuous feedback to strengthen teachers’ pedagogy. By empowering teachers with updated strategies and tools, they enhance classroom instruction, which directly benefits learners’ reading comprehension, fluency, and engagement. This highlights the ripple effect of leadership on teacher effectiveness and, ultimately, learner achievement.

➤ *Challenges Encountered by the School Leaders Relative to their Literacy-Focused Competencies*

School Leaders face variety of challenges that affect how effect how effectively they can exercise their literacy-focused competencies. These Challenges test their leadership, creativity and ability to adapt. Understanding these difficulties is essential in providing appropriate support and professional development for school leaders so they can strengthen their literacy-focused competencies and lead schools toward improved reading outcomes.

Table 4 Challenges Encountered by the School Leaders Relative to their Literacy-Focused Competencies

Challenges	Frequency	Rank
Limited funds for implementing the literacy initiatives	18	1.5
Inadequate oversight of the literacy program implementation and final evaluations	18	1.5
Administrative tasks restrict school heads from prioritizing literacy	15	3.5
Weak home-school partnership	15	3.5
Limited literacy materials	14	3.5
Some teachers lack formal training in literacy instruction	11	5

The results revealed that school leaders face multiple challenges in implementing and sustaining literacy-focused initiatives. The most frequently cited challenges were limited funds for implementing literacy initiatives and inadequate

oversight of literacy program implementation and final evaluations, both receiving a frequency of 18 and ranked 1.5. This indicates that financial constraints and gaps in

monitoring and evaluation remain major barriers to the effective execution of literacy programs.

Another challenge that ranked equally high was the restriction of school heads' time due to administrative tasks, with a frequency of 15 (rank 3.5). This suggests that school leaders often struggle to balance managerial duties with instructional leadership, limiting the attention they can give to literacy-focused efforts. Similarly, a weak home-school partnership also ranked with a frequency of 15 (rank 3.5), showing that limited parental involvement and community support continue to hinder learners' reading progress outside the classroom.

The results also highlighted issues with limited literacy materials (frequency = 14, rank 5), which underscores resource inadequacies in providing learners with sufficient and diverse reading opportunities. Finally, some teachers lacking formal training in literacy instruction (frequency = 11, rank 6) emerged as another significant challenge, pointing to gaps in teacher preparedness and professional development.

Generally, these findings indicate that while school leaders are competent in implementing literacy initiatives, they are constrained by systemic issues such as lack of funding, insufficient oversight, administrative workload, weak school-community linkages, resource limitations, and teacher training gaps. Addressing these challenges is essential to strengthen literacy-focused leadership and enhance learners' reading outcomes.

➤ *Proposed Learning and Development to Enhance the Literacy-Focused Leadership Competencies of School Leaders.*

• *Rationale*

The persistent challenge of improving learners' reading performance underscores the critical role of school leaders in promoting literacy-focused initiatives. Findings from the study revealed that while school heads demonstrate strong competencies in instructional leadership, policy enforcement, and community engagement, they continue to face barriers such as limited funds, weak home-school partnerships, inadequate literacy resources, and competing administrative demands. These challenges hinder the sustainability and full implementation of literacy programs, thereby affecting learners' opportunities to become proficient readers.

To address these gaps, a structured 3-day Learning and Development (L&D) program has been proposed. The program is anchored on the principle that effective school leadership directly influences teaching quality, program implementation, and learner achievement. By enhancing literacy-focused leadership competencies, school heads can create a stronger foundation for school-wide reading initiatives.

The first day emphasizes instructional leadership and teacher capacity building, equipping school leaders with strategies to provide supervision, coaching, and data-driven

interventions. This addresses the issue of teachers lacking formal literacy training and ensures instructional practices are aligned with learner needs. The second day highlights school-wide literacy culture and community engagement, promoting collaborative efforts with parents, volunteers, and external partners to strengthen home-school connections and sustain reading habits beyond the classroom. The third day focuses on innovation, resource mobilization, and sustainability, empowering school leaders to design innovative literacy projects, maximize limited resources, and establish long-term monitoring and evaluation systems.

Overall, this program is not only responsive to the identified challenges but also aligned with national directives such as DepEd's Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP), Phil-IRI, and Brigada Pagbasa. It seeks to transform school leaders into proactive literacy champions who can mobilize stakeholders, optimize resources, and nurture a culture of reading in schools and communities. Ultimately, strengthening their literacy-focused leadership competencies contributes to improving learners' reading performance and achieving broader educational goals.

• *Program Goal:*

To enhance the literacy-focused leadership competencies of school leaders by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and innovative practices necessary to effectively implement literacy policies, strengthen teacher capacity, engage stakeholders, and foster a sustainable culture of reading within their schools and communities.

• *Program Objectives*

- ✓ Strengthen instructional leadership skills of school heads by equipping them with effective strategies in supervising literacy instruction, providing technical assistance, and utilizing assessment data for informed decision-making.
- ✓ Enhance community and parental engagement competencies by training school leaders to develop strong home-school partnerships and mobilize stakeholders in sustaining literacy programs.
- ✓ Promote innovative and resource-efficient literacy initiatives by enabling school leaders to design, implement, and sustain creative programs despite financial and material limitations.
- ✓ Foster a literacy-rich school culture by empowering school leaders to institutionalize reading activities, recognition systems, and school-wide campaigns that motivate learners to develop lifelong reading habits.

• *Technical Description*

The 3-Day Learning and Development Program on Literacy-Focused Leadership Competencies is designed to strengthen the capacity of school leaders in promoting, implementing, and sustaining literacy initiatives across schools. This program is anchored on the Department of Education's key literacy mandates such as Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP), Phil-IRI, and the National Reading Program, ensuring alignment with national standards and priorities.

The training follows a blended approach, integrating theoretical inputs, workshops, case analyses, and hands-on applications. It covers six essential domains: policy implementation, instructional leadership, intervention and remediation strategies, data-driven decision-making, community and parental engagement, and innovation in literacy promotion.

Sessions will involve expert-led lectures, breakout workshops, collaborative planning, and simulation activities, enabling participants to directly apply leadership strategies in literacy-focused contexts. Tools and resources will be provided to equip leaders with practical frameworks in monitoring literacy instruction, designing interventions, engaging stakeholders, and fostering sustainable literacy environments in their schools.

The culmination of the program will be the development of a School-Based Literacy Leadership Action Plan, where participants will outline context-specific strategies to enhance reading outcomes in their respective schools.

This program emphasizes sustainability and capacity-building by ensuring that school leaders not only acquire competencies but also translate them into tangible, measurable literacy outcomes within their institutions.

IV. DISCUSSION

This section presents a discussion of the study's statement of the problems, highlighting the focus on the literacy-focused leadership competencies of school heads. It examines how school leaders set directions, implement policies, and foster interventions to enhance literacy outcomes. The discussion is anchored on related literature and studies that emphasize the role of leadership in improving reading performance and promoting school-wide literacy culture.

➤ *Level of Literacy Focused Leadership Competencies of School Leaders*

The findings across Tables 1 to 3 indicate that school leaders demonstrate consistently high levels of literacy-focused leadership competencies, with overall means ranging from 4.18 to 4.37, all described as High. This suggests that school leaders play an essential role in setting directions, supervising instruction, and mobilizing both school-based and community resources toward literacy development. The results align with the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (DepEd Order No. 24 s. 2020), particularly across the domains of Leading Strategically, Managing School Operations and Resources, Focusing on Teaching and Learning, Developing Self and Others, and Building connections. These findings indicate that School heads are not only complying with policy expectations but also operationalizing PPSSH Standards in ways that directly influence literacy outcomes.

In terms of literacy instruction (Table 1), the high ratings on competencies such as setting clear literacy goals, supervising instruction, and supporting teachers' use of

reading assessment data reflect leaders' active involvement in shaping instructional practices. This aligns with Hallinger and Heck (2010), who argued that school leaders significantly influence learning outcomes by establishing instructional priorities and creating systems for monitoring teaching and assessment. Similarly, their efforts in embedding literacy-oriented projects in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and facilitating professional development demonstrate their commitment to sustaining teacher growth and aligning school goals with literacy objectives (Fullan, 2014). Under domain 1 in PPSSH: Leading Strategically, School leaders' ability to embed literacy goals into the School Improvement Plan (SIP) reflected competence in setting a clear vision anchored on learner achievement. The high ratings in setting literacy targets and aligning School programs with National initiatives such as ECARP and PHIL-IRI demonstrate strategic leadership that is data-informed and goal-oriented. This supported Liethwood et al. (2028) assertion that leadership significantly shapes school direction and instructional focus, particularly when goals are clearly articulated and shared.

For school-based practices (Table 2), results reveal that leaders excel in supporting reading interventions ($M = 4.50$), leading literacy events, and promoting a literacy-rich environment. These practices highlight the leaders' role in fostering a school culture that celebrates reading, engages learners, and provides targeted interventions for struggling readers. According to Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008), leaders who prioritized instructional leadership and intervention programs positively impact student achievement by addressing learning gaps and motivating engagement. The integration of literacy into daily schedules and decision-making processes also resonates with Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), who emphasize that consistent exposure and structured opportunities for literacy practice enhance students' reading performance.

The findings strongly affirm Domain 3, which emphasized instructional leadership as the core function of school heads. High ratings in supervising literacy instruction, guiding teachers' use of assessment data, and supporting differentiated instruction indicate that school leaders are actively engaged in improving classroom practices. The use of Phil-IRI data and classroom-based assessments to inform intervention strategies exemplifies evidence-based leadership, which Hallinger (2011) identified as a hallmark of effective instructional leadership.

Moreover, school heads' support for remediation programs, pull-out sessions, and one-on-one reading instruction demonstrates alignment with PPSSH expectations that leaders ensure inclusive and equitable learning opportunities. By prioritizing non-readers and struggling readers, school heads operationalize the PPSSH principle of learner.

Meanwhile, community engagement and advocacy (Table 3) also received high ratings (overall mean = 4.18). Leaders' competencies in stakeholder engagement, parent partnerships, and volunteer mobilization demonstrate their

recognition of the vital role of the home and community in literacy development. Epstein's (2011) framework on school, family, and community partnerships supported this finding, noting that when schools collaborate with parents and local stakeholders, students' literacy outcomes improve significantly. However, the slightly lower scores in facilitating collaborative sessions and volunteer involvement suggest that while efforts are commendable, there remains an opportunity to deepen and broaden partnerships. As Bryk et al. (2010) argued, strong community-school ties are essential in sustaining long-term literacy reforms and ensuring equitable High ratings in stakeholder engagement and literacy advocacy reflect strong alignment with Domain 5: Building Connections. Initiatives such as Brigada Pagbasa, parent literacy orientations, and community-led reading activities demonstrate school heads' recognition that literacy development extends beyond the classroom. These practices resonate with Epstein's (2011) framework of school-family-community partnerships, emphasizing shared responsibility for learner success.

Nonetheless, the relatively lower ratings in volunteer mobilization and collaborative sessions suggest that community engagement remains an area for growth. While school heads initiate partnerships, sustaining meaningful and participatory involvement requires capacity-building for parents and community members. From a PPSSH perspective, this indicates the need for school leaders to move beyond participation toward co-ownership of literacy programs, where stakeholders actively contribute to planning, implementation, and evaluation access to resources.

It implies that the consistently high ratings across all dimensions indicate that school leaders in the study context possess strong literacy-focused leadership competencies. Their ability to guide teachers, promote literacy-rich environments, engage communities, and mobilize resources reflects their vital role in fostering a culture of reading. These findings reinforced the claim of Bush and Glover (2014) that leadership is the "key driver" of school effectiveness, particularly in improving literacy outcomes, which are foundational to students' overall academic success.

➤ *How School Leaders Implement Literacy Policies in their Leadership Practice*

One of the central themes that emerged from the findings is the strong emphasis of school leaders on intervention and remediation strategies to address the diverse literacy needs of learners. The consistent prioritization of such strategy's highlights leaders' recognition that literacy development is not a one-size-fits-all process, and that differentiated support is crucial for ensuring equitable learning outcomes. This aligns with Tomlinson's (2014) framework on differentiated instruction, which emphasizes that teaching must be tailored to learners' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles in order to maximize growth.

The implementation of structured reading remediation time, such as daily or weekly scheduled reading interventions, reflects an intentional and systemic approach to addressing literacy challenges. Research indicated that sustained and

scheduled remediation, rather than sporadic interventions, significantly improves reading fluency and comprehension (Allington, 2011). By institutionalizing dedicated periods for reading, school leaders ensure that struggling readers are consistently given opportunities for practice, scaffolding, and feedback, which accelerates progress.

Another practice identified is the pull-out system, where learners are regrouped according to their reading levels for targeted instruction. This approach ensures that learners receive instruction that matches their current literacy competencies, allowing them to gradually build confidence and bridge learning gaps. Vaughn and Fletcher (2012) argued that small-group and leveled instruction are highly effective in supporting struggling readers, as they provide more individualized attention and reduce the cognitive load that often overwhelms learners in larger, mixed-ability classrooms.

School leaders also promote one-on-one reading sessions and differentiated instruction, further underscoring their learner-centered approach. These strategies empower teachers to address students' unique literacy needs by using multiple instructional methods, scaffolds, and materials. Hattie (2012) stated that one-on-one tutoring and small-group interventions rank among the most impactful strategies for improving student learning outcomes, particularly in foundational skills like reading. In addition, peer-assisted learning opportunities foster collaboration and modeling, which Vygotsky's sociocultural theory supports as a means of advancing learners through the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978).

Globally, literacy-focused intervention and remediation strategies are considered best practices for ensuring that no learner is left behind. For example, programs in the United States such as Response to Intervention (RTI) and the Reading Recovery Program have demonstrated that structured, tiered interventions can significantly reduce the number of students performing below grade level in reading (Slavin et al., 2011). Similarly, in the Philippines, DepEd's Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) institutionalizes remediation and reading support, recognizing its necessity in achieving national literacy goals.

Moreover, in Domain 2: Managing School Operations and Resources under PPSSH, school heads' efforts in mobilizing resources, organizing reading interventions, and allocating time for remediation highlight their operational competence. The institutionalization of scheduled reading periods and intervention programs reflects effective resource management consistent with PPSSH expectations that school heads maximize limited resources to improve learner outcomes. Despite fiscal constraints, leaders' adaptive strategies—such as leveraging community support and implementing low-cost innovations—demonstrate contextualized leadership that responds to local realities.

➤ *How the Literacy-Focused Leadership Competencies of School Heads Influence the Reading Performance of the School*

The results of the study highlight that school leaders significantly influence literacy outcomes through data utilization, community engagement, culture-building, innovation, policy enforcement, and instructional leadership. These competencies reflect a multidimensional approach to literacy development, aligning with research that underscored the pivotal role of school heads in shaping both instructional practices and the broader learning environment (Leithwood et al., 2008).

Data utilization emerged as a critical leadership practice influencing reading performance. School heads systematically analyze Phil-IRI results, comprehension checks, and classroom-based assessments to identify learners' reading levels and design targeted interventions. This practice reflects strong alignment with PPSSH Domain 3: Focusing on Teaching and Learning, which requires school heads to use assessment data to improve instructional quality and learner outcomes.

The use of data ensures that interventions are precisely targeted, and resources effectively allocated. Research supports this practice, as Marsh, Pane, and Hamilton (2006) emphasized that data-driven decision-making strengthens instructional alignment and promotes student learning gains. Similarly, Mandinach and Gummer (2016) argued that leaders who integrate data into professional development help teachers refine pedagogy and tailor instruction, ensuring that both struggling and advanced learners are supported.

Beyond the classroom, the findings highlight the role of community and parental engagement in sustaining literacy growth, consistent with PPSSH Domain 5: Building Connections. School heads actively involve parents and community members through PTA meetings, literacy campaigns, and initiatives such as Brigada Pagbasa, which mobilize volunteers to support struggling readers. These efforts resonate with Epstein's (2011) theory of overlapping spheres of influence, which posited that collaborative partnerships between schools, families, and communities enhance literacy outcomes by reinforcing learning both at home and in the community. This finding is also supported by Sheldon and Jung (2015), who note that community-based literacy programs positively influence reading motivation and achievement.

The creation of a school-wide culture of literacy is another critical leadership competency. Practices such as DEAR (Drop Everything and Read), literacy month celebrations, recognition of achievers, and maintaining print-rich environments foster a positive reading culture. Gambrell (2011) asserted that nurturing motivation and positive attitudes toward reading is essential for developing lifelong readers. By embedding literacy into daily routines and school traditions, leaders ensure that reading is not only an academic task but also a valued habit and social activity.

School heads also demonstrate innovation and resource mobilization, introducing initiatives such as Project INNOVA, ALPHA BASA, and Catch-up Fridays to strengthen engagement despite resource constraints. Their ability to integrate technology and promote differentiated instruction reflects adaptive leadership, which Fullan (2014) highlighted as necessary in managing educational change. Moreover, innovations address gaps in traditional instruction and ensure that literacy initiatives remain responsive to the evolving needs of learners.

Strict policy enforcement and program implementation also play a significant role in shaping reading performance. The consistent application of DepEd programs such as ECARP, Phil-IRI remediation, and the No Read, No Pass policy establishes accountability and ensures that literacy remains a central school priority. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) emphasized that leadership focused on instructional improvement has the strongest impact on student outcomes, particularly when policies are embedded into everyday practice.

Finally, the influence of literacy-focused leadership on reading performance is further strengthened through teacher development, which aligns with PPSSH Domain 4: Developing Self and Others. School heads provide professional learning opportunities through seminars, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, coaching, and classroom observations, enabling teachers to refine their literacy instruction strategies. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) argued that sustained professional development supported by instructional leaders significantly improves teaching quality and student achievement. In this study, School heads act as instructional mentors who build teachers' capacity to implement differentiated instruction, small-group remediation, and one-on-one reading support. The ripple effect of leadership on teacher effectiveness underscores the indirect yet powerful influence of school heads on learners' reading performance, consistent with PPSSH's emphasis on capacity building as a pathway to improved learning outcomes. This is supported by Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), who found that leadership that invests in teacher capacity building contributes significantly to improved teaching quality and student achievement. The ripple effect of leadership on teacher effectiveness highlights the central role of instructional leadership in achieving literacy goals.

Lastly, these findings demonstrate that school leaders exercise comprehensive literacy-focused leadership competencies that extend from classroom instruction to community engagement and resource mobilization. Their practices reflect global best evidence that leadership is second only to classroom instruction in influencing student learning (Leithwood et al., 2008).

Inclusively, the results of this study emphasize that school leaders' commitment to intervention and remediation ensures literacy equity within schools. By allocating time, mobilizing resources, and supporting teacher capacity for targeted interventions, they create an inclusive system where learners with varying abilities can thrive. This reflects

international best practices and reinforces the claim that effective leadership directly influences literacy outcomes through systematic, learner-centered strategies.

➤ *Challenges Encountered by the School Leaders Relative to their Literacy-Focused Competencies*

The findings reveal that school leaders encounter significant systemic and contextual challenges in implementing and sustaining literacy-focused programs. The most pressing concern is the limited availability of funds to support literacy initiatives, alongside insufficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The persistent limitation in financial resources constrains school heads' capacity to fully enact PPSSH Domain 2: Managing School Operations and Resources. Although school leaders strategically prioritize literacy initiatives, inadequate funding and weak monitoring mechanisms hinder the acquisition of reading materials, implementation of comprehensive interventions, and evaluation of literacy programs. This suggests that effective resource management under PPSSH requires stronger institutional and policy-level support to enable school heads to translate leadership competence into sustained literacy outcomes. This is consistent with findings by Piper et al. (2018), who emphasized that inadequate financial support and weak accountability structures hinder the sustainability of literacy reforms, especially in resource-constrained contexts. Without sufficient funding, schools struggle to acquire reading materials, train teachers, and conduct continuous program evaluation, all of which are essential for long-term literacy development.

Another critical challenge is the time constraint faced by school heads, as administrative duties often overshadow instructional leadership. The heavy administrative workload borne by school heads limits the realization of PPSSH Domain 3: Focusing on Teaching and Learning. While school leaders recognize the importance of instructional leadership, competing managerial demands reduce the time available for classroom supervision, teacher mentoring, and monitoring of reading interventions. This finding underscores the need to protect instructional leadership time if school heads are to fulfill their PPSSH mandate of improving teaching quality and learner achievement. Hallinger and Murphy (2013) noted that principals frequently juggle competing demands, which limits the depth of their instructional supervision and literacy-focused leadership. When school leaders are overburdened by managerial tasks, their capacity to mentor teachers, oversee reading interventions, and actively monitor progress diminishes, thereby slowing down literacy gains.

The results also highlighted the problem of weak home-school partnerships, with limited parental involvement and community support affecting learners' literacy growth. Weak home-school partnerships reflect partial attainment of PPSSH Domain 5: Building Connections. Although school heads initiate parent and community engagement activities, limited parental involvement constrains the extension of literacy support beyond the school. This indicates that strengthening literacy outcomes requires not only school-led initiatives but also sustained and capacity-driven collaboration with families and community stakeholders,

consistent with PPSSH expectations of shared responsibility for learner development. Research shows that parental engagement significantly improves children's reading performance, as literacy practices reinforced at home enhance comprehension and motivation to read (Epstein, 2011; Jaynes, 2012). Thus, the lack of strong partnerships suggests a missed opportunity for extending literacy support beyond the classroom, particularly for struggling readers who need consistent reinforcement at home.

The inadequacy of literacy resources highlights challenges in operationalizing PPSSH Domain 2, particularly in ensuring equitable access to learning materials. Limited availability of age-appropriate and engaging reading texts reduces learners' opportunities for practice and independent reading. This conclusion emphasizes that literacy-focused leadership must be supported by systematic resource mobilization and partnerships beyond the school level to achieve equitable literacy development. Studies have established that exposure to a variety of reading texts is crucial in developing learners' fluency, comprehension, and motivation (Gambrell, 2011). In contexts where learners have restricted access to age-appropriate and engaging reading materials, their opportunities to practice and develop literacy skills are significantly reduced. This challenge underscores the need for more strategic resource mobilization and partnerships with local and external stakeholders.

Finally, the lack of specialized teacher training in literacy instruction constrains the full implementation of PPSSH Domain 4: Developing Self and Others. While school heads facilitate professional learning opportunities, gaps in sustained and evidence-based literacy training limit teachers' instructional effectiveness. This underscores the importance of institutionalized, literacy-specific professional development programs to strengthen teacher capacity and maximize the indirect influence of school leadership on reading performance. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) argued that teacher expertise is a key determinant of student outcomes, and without adequate preparation in evidence-based literacy strategies, teachers may struggle to address the diverse needs of readers. The gap in teacher professional development suggests the importance of ongoing capacity-building initiatives, such as workshops, LAC sessions, and coaching, to ensure teachers are equipped to deliver effective literacy instruction.

Overall, the challenges—financial constraints, administrative workload, weak parental engagement, inadequate resources, and insufficient teacher training—reflect structural and systemic barriers that limit the full realization of literacy-focused leadership. Addressing these issues requires a multi-level approach that includes stronger policy support, capacity-building for teachers, efficient resource mobilization, and enhanced community-school partnerships. These findings aligned with international evidence that leadership effectiveness is mediated not only by individual competencies but also by the systems and contexts within which leaders operate (Leithwood et al., 2020).

➤ *Proposed Learning and Development to Enhance the Literacy-Focused Leadership Competencies of School Leaders.*

The proposed three-day Learning and Development (L&D) program is designed to strengthen the literacy-focused leadership competencies of school heads by equipping them with essential knowledge, skills, and strategies to improve reading outcomes in schools. Anchored on the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), the program is crafted to strengthen the literacy-focused leadership skills of school leaders by equipping them with the knowledge, tools, and strategies necessary to improve literacy outcomes in their respective schools. This program is grounded in the recognition that effective school leadership plays a critical role in fostering a culture of literacy, supporting teachers, and engaging communities to address reading challenges systematically.

On Day 1, the focus is on Instructional Leadership and Literacy Policy Implementation. School heads will undergo sessions on understanding and enforcing existing literacy-related policies such as the No Read, No Pass Policy, Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP), and Phil-IRI-based remediation. Through workshops and case studies, leaders will explore how to contextualize these policies to fit the unique needs of their schools while ensuring accountability. This lays the foundation for building a strong literacy framework that is both consistent and adaptable.

On Day 2, the emphasis shifts to Data-Driven Decision-Making and Teacher Capacity Building. School leaders will be trained to analyze literacy assessment results (Phil-IRI, classroom-based reading tests, comprehension checks) and translate these data into actionable interventions. Additionally, the program highlights the importance of mentoring and coaching teachers, facilitating professional learning communities, and providing technical assistance. By equipping school heads with practical tools to support teacher growth, the program ensures that literacy instruction is strengthened at the classroom level.

On Day 3, the sessions center on Community Engagement, Resource Mobilization, and Innovation in Literacy Programs. Leaders will explore strategies to engage parents, local government units, and stakeholders in building home-school literacy partnerships. Innovative practices such as Project INNOVA, ALPHA BASA, and Catch-up Fridays will be showcased, demonstrating how creativity and resourcefulness can sustain progress despite financial and material limitations. The day concludes with action planning, where school leaders draft localized literacy improvement plans integrating the strategies learned throughout the program.

The proposed program addresses the core leadership domains identified in the study—policy enforcement, instructional support, data utilization, community engagement, culture-building, and innovation. By targeting these domains, the program directly responds to the challenges reported by school leaders, such as lack of

resources, weak home-school partnerships, and gaps in teacher training.

Moreover, this program is anchored in the principle of transformational leadership, which emphasized the role of school heads in inspiring and motivating teachers, students, and communities to pursue shared literacy goals (Leithwood et al., 2020). By strengthening competencies across instructional, managerial, and advocacy functions, the program enables school leaders to act as change agents in improving reading performance.

This initiative is also aligned with DepEd's thrust to enhance literacy and numeracy skills as part of the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP 2030), which calls for stronger instructional leadership and community partnerships (Department of Education, 2022). Thus, the proposed program not only responds to the immediate findings of the study but also supports broader national education priorities.

In essence, the program is both responsive and future-oriented—it builds on existing policies and practices while empowering leaders to innovate and collaborate in advancing literacy. The expected outcome is a cadre of school leaders who are more confident, resourceful, and effective in fostering a literacy-rich school culture that significantly enhances learners' reading achievement.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ *Based on the Findings the Researcher Drew the Following Conclusions:*

- School leaders demonstrate high levels of literacy-focused leadership competencies demonstrating strong instructional guidance, school-based practices, and community engagement that foster a culture of reading and improved literacy outcomes.
- Literacy policies are implemented through structured interventions, curriculum integration, community collaboration, and innovative practices to ensure accountability and sustain improvement in reading performances.
- Literacy -Focused leadership directly impact reading performance.
- Systemic and resource- related challenges hinder the full implementation of sustainability of literacy program.
- The proposed three-day Learning and Development program offers a strategic solution to enhance school leaders' competencies in policy enforcement, instructional leadership, data-driven planning, and community engagement, aligning with national education priorities.

The following recommendations are proposed: (1) Conduct competency-based training to strengthen school

leaders' literacy-focused competencies across instructional, school-based, and community engagement domain. (2) Institutionalize structured literacy intervention and integrate them into school improvement plan to ensure consistent implementation and accountability. (3) Provide recognition and incentives for schools' demonstrations significant literacy means. (4) Advocate for increased budget allocation, streamlined administrative support, stronger home-school collaboration, and provision of literacy materials to remove barriers that limit school leaders' effectiveness. (5) Implement the proposed three-day learning and development program at district and division levels complimented by follow-up coaching and mentoring to ensure sustainability of literacy leadership practices. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct topics-related with proposed output.

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