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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Quality Micro-decision-making at Selected Philippine Public Secondary Schools: An Iterative Process of Planning and Implementing the Curriculum

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| ABSTRACT

The Philippine K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum advances with the trends and developments in society and adapts to the sudden shifts of demands and restrictions for the effective delivery of a 21st–century education. The onset of School-Based Management (SBM) has given birth to rapid changes in the Department of Education (DepEd) these past years. Through the SBM, micro-level decision-making has been made to address the unique issues faced by a school which eventually developed a strategy for maximizing local resources for school development. The School Improvement Plan (SIP) has answered the continuing complexities in school management, notwithstanding the volatile education landscape in the new normal. This exploratory multiple case study looked into five (5) selected public secondary schools in the Philippines. It also uncovered constraints in setting plans and empowering the stakeholders to forge a larger school community. Data sources were survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis through the school records. Considering different school categories, populations of learners and teachers, and types of educational leadership, the different views of educational institutions on planning improvements vis-à-vis the DepEd-mandated procedures on formulation and implementation of the SIP surfaced from the data. It is hoped that the investigation's findings provide meaningful insights into crafting strategies to highlight the essence of stakeholders' participation, especially in the planning phase. Although results revealed that schools' have varied ways of making a SIP, each considered an informed, community-based preparation stage as an arduous capsulized plan, with an end in mind, to achieve an outcomes-based education. Notably, all DepEd schools share one set of vision, mission, and core values. School leadership matters the most in such an iterative process. Hence, school heads and their leadership style must cater to flexibility in contextualizing not only the SIP formulation but also its implementation.

1. Introduction

The Department of Education (DepEd) developed School-Based Management (SBM) to keep pace with concurrent concerns and self-management of educational institutions among public schools in the Philippines. SBM has become necessary and decentralized decision-making which is brought to the grassroots level. To be on track with global development, each school shall have a School Improvement Plan (SIP) and work for its implementation (Guidelines on the Enhanced School Improvement Plan Process and the School Report Card, 2015).

The SIP is the main vehicle for public schools to proceed toward their improvement. It outlines how the school can be shaped and the strategies it needs to implement and accomplish its objectives. It is a comprehensive presentation that lays out the plans and

targets to increase the overall performance of schools even in the forthcoming academic years. SIP preparation is a joint activity undertaken by the school administrator, the school personnel, and other stakeholders as represented by their School Planning Team. However, due to the complexities in preparing the SIP and the numerous requirements mandated by DepEd, schools tend to complete their plan hastily or haphazardly. The most important to be considered is the plan's implementation, which must include people around the school. Stakeholders' participation is observed to be minimal and even devalued in the SIP planning phase and its implementation.

1.1 Epistemological and Theoretical Research Perspective

Crotty (2003) posited that the meanings of objects perceived are constructed based on human consciousness and that knowledge is acquired through engagement with the objects being dealt with or the world itself. This study's recorded interviews, observations through field notes, and gathered documents served as bases for understanding how schools prepare and implement their School Improvement Plans (SIP).

Meanwhile, interpretivism is a theoretical perspective that gains insights by discovering meanings and improving the comprehension of the whole (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It also explores the phenomena' richness, depth, and complexity. It is based on understanding, which arises from reflecting on what happens, not just from having had experiences. This perspective helped the researchers to understand the participants' personal and collective efforts in the SIP's formulation and implementation.

This study investigated how schools develop and implement their respective SIP. Constructs discussed in this study were anchored to several theories, such as the Modern Management Theory (Bozeman, 2014), the System Approach of Katz, Khan, and Johnson (Johnson, Kast, & Rosenzweig, 1978), and the Open System Theory of Hanson, Yuki, Katz, and Kahn (1978). The system approach views the school as a complete organism that must survive, stabilize, and grow or die and uses inputs through processes to ensure outputs. The school improvement planning process involves several steps prescribed by DepEd, and the school planning team must work together and follow concrete steps in preparing the SIP. The training was provided to school heads with basic and relevant information necessary to formulate the plan, and the DepEd-published manual assisted the School Planning Team (SPT).

1.2 Research Focus and Questions

Employing the features of a case study, the researchers explored the improvement plans of selected Philippine public secondary schools that were made and implemented. This study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the processes involved in preparing and implementing the School Improvement Plan (SIP)?

2. What are the issues encountered in preparing the SIP?

3. What are the issues encountered in implementing the SIP?

4. How are the stakeholders empowered in the SIP preparation and implementation?

2. Literature Review

The Philippine Educational System, established in 1901 through Act No. 74 of the Philippine Commission, attempted to establish an overall public school system and regular schools. From the year it was founded until the present day, the department has been overwhelmed with perennial problems despite the implemented reform initiatives. The department underwent a series of renovations and innovations from its establishment in 1901, including the Department of Education and Culture during the Marcos Regime in 1972, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports in 1982, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports in 1987, and the Department of Education in 2001. Since it was established, the department's central office was responsible for all levels of education until its tri-focalization in 1995, which separated higher education. The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines faced recurring issues and concerns, such as high drop-out rates, low participation rates, low performance in national achievement tests, and shortages of facilities and teachers (Filoteo, 2021). It was also pointed out that the bureaucracy in the DepEd caused this problem.

To address these, School-Based Management was implemented as a governance framework of DepEd through RA 9155. The SBM was integrated into the Third Elementary Education Project and the Secondary Education Development and Improvement Program. It became a national policy component of the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA). Schools participating in SBM must design a five-year School Improvement Plan (SIP) in partnership with parents and the community. The SBM was designed to improve student outcomes through two main venues: (a) by empowering the school community to identify education priorities and allocating the school maintenance and operating budgets to those priorities and (b) by enhancing transparency and accountability through the annual implementation plans and school report cards. In 2006, BESRA was implemented to include out-of-school youth and adults in primary education, universal participation and elimination of dropouts and repetitions in the first three grades, universal completion of the entire cycle of Basic Education, and a total community commitment. Quality Improvement through School-wide Reforms is one of the Philippines' targets in realizing EFA. Republic Act 9155, or the Governance of Basic

Education in the Philippines Act of 2000, specified the creation of a SIP for all public schools. The SIP is a research intervention designed to address teaching-learning concerns and is the primary vehicle through which schools become trailblazers in their progress. It is observed that poor education is due to a weak monitoring and accountability system, lack of teacher motivation, and inadequate motivation of parents to educate their children. Low-performing schools need research, collaboration, interventions, midcourse corrections, and resolve issues and unanticipated consequences. School improvement planning is necessary to address these issues (Smith & Benavot, 2019). Orders and other reform initiatives are defined by their legalities. Both the SBM and SIP preparation and implementation are supported by the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan. The Local Government Code of the Philippines also makes a robust framework for the SBM. RA 9155 pushes local initiatives to improve the quality of basic education. It defines the roles and responsibilities of the field offices in implementing educational programs, projects, and services.

2.1 School Improvement Plan Preparation

The school's stakeholders should create, implement, and control the School Improvement Plan. The stakeholders should recognize themselves as the owners of their planning products and take control of the resulting initiatives themselves. Three things must be prioritized for a complete and effective plan: curriculum delivery, school environment, and parental involvement. If collaborated, these particulars would create a strong foundation for education, health, and a conducive learning environment and foster partnership between the parents and the school (Department of Education, 2022). There is no fixed beginning and ending for the School Improvement Plan. It is a never-ending process that will provide a framework consistent and sustainable school plan (European Commission, 2020). The school improvement process is important to school improvement planning. It involves communicating identified issues to all stakeholders, reviewing and improving strategies, and evaluating the plan. The Philippines' DepEd has developed a series of SIP training programs and provided a handbook for school improvement planning. The SIP includes collecting, organizing, and analyzing the development of school data, formulating the school's vision, mission, and goals, and formulating and determining the school development objectives (OECD, 2018). The most important details in school improvement planning are the formulation of an indicative and annual plan, developing a monitoring and evaluation plan, setting up the Annual Improvement Plan, writing the SIP, and communicating this to stakeholders. The systems approach ensures school improvement planning is based on relevant and objective data. Strategic planning is also considered a necessary process to bring about school reforms, as it involves the whole community and allows for an understanding of how a school district works, how finances are spent, and identifies the needs of the school district (Day, Sammons, & Gorgen, 2020).

School planning is deemed necessary for the effective management of schools. This is true with the study on rural school superintendents and administrators using their districts' strategic planning process to affect student achievement. This qualitative research design and goal-setting theory was used to determine how rural school superintendents and administrators use the strategic planning process in their districts to affect student achievement. Results of the study found that goals developed during the strategic planning process supported the district's mission, vision, and core beliefs and that the practice of strategic planning affected student achievement positively. School leaders indicated that the strategic planning process was well worth the effort and resources allocated (Verbo, Fernando, & Cabrera, 2023). On the other hand, considering school improvement, the study by Day, Samon, and Gorgen (2020) found that effective school leadership is important but, in isolation, is not a sufficient condition for successful school improvement. It shows that leadership affects school organization, culture, and teachers. The organization, culture, and teaching and learning environment are all directly affected by the implications for student outcomes, which are primarily indirect. Three leadership concepts—transformational, pedagogical/instructional, and distributed—are given particular focus in the review. Three leadership categories are not exclusive of one another, even though there is evidence that pedagogical and instructional leadership is crucial for encouraging improved academic outcomes for learners. In addition, successful learner outcomes are defined more broadly than academic performance alone (including attendance, behavior, engagement, motivation, etc.), and most leadership effects operate indirectly to promote learning outcomes by promoting and improving conditions for teaching and learning through direct positive reinforcement on teachers and their work (Day, Sammons & Gorgen, 2020).

3. Methodology

This qualitative study examined the school improvement planning of selected high schools in Iloilo, taking into account issues affecting its preparation and implementation. To validate the data collected, triangulation was used to establish its validity. This process involves using different sources to increase the validity of a study (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2012). The questionnaire and interview guide added depth to the results, increased the validity, and provided a clearer view of the phenomenon. The narrative analysis also provided detailed and thick descriptions from various perspectives. This helped the researchers to understand the social reality through a subjectivity-tamed academic endeavor (Patton, 2002).

The study was conducted in three phases: preliminaries, research proper, and analysis of the collected data. In Phase I, the researchers identified qualified respondents, secured approval from the DepEd Schools Division Superintendent and principals, negotiated with the administrators, and set dates for data collection. In Phase II, the researchers collaborated with the participants,

conducted a survey, administered a semi-structured interview, and observed the school setting. In Phase III, the researcher analyzed the collected data using survey results, interview records, and field notes about the schools.

The details in this article described higher-ranked principals managed the schools in Category A and had the largest number of enrollees. Kasanag National High School has the most number of enrollees and teachers. Mahilway National High School has the least enrolment and is managed by a Head Teacher. The schools abide by the core values, vision, and mission defined by Deped Order No. 36, s. 2013.

This study used a survey questionnaire to gather information from key stakeholders of the participating school. An interview questionnaire was also prepared for the school planning team and the school administrator. The survey questionnaire had two parts: personal information about the respondent and questions regarding the steps required in formulating the SIP. The interview was conducted in English and Hiligaynon, with an interview guide consisting of questions on the steps in formulating and implementing the SIP. The study results showed that schools were able to provide quality teaching-learning processes for learners.

The researchers considered give-and-take relationships when asking school heads, members of the school planning team, and other stakeholders to participate in this study. The researchers believed that the administrators and their SPT would benefit from the process as this became an opportunity to reflect on questions that could help them better understand what they have been doing in crafting the SIP. The researchers ensured the provision of support when the participants might have queries regarding the SIP, as the research team is composed of practitioners in the field. Participants were allowed to express their ideas and feelings during interviews, but the researchers focused on relevant topics related to the SIP. The information gathered in the study was handled with utmost care and confidentiality for educational purposes only.

The study had several methodological limitations, such as the quality and amount of data collected varied significantly from each participant. Kasanag and Banaag National High Schools provided a richer and more complex data set than the other three schools, while Mahilway National High School gave more defined answers. Despite this, the researchers collected data from other participants allowing them to construct relevant stories of improvement plans. Additionally, the researchers prepared an interview guide, but not all the questions were equally asked to the participants—that is commonly observed through qualitative research's reflexivity. It was better to focus on the schools' particularity to stimulate more contextualized experiences from each interviewee rather than ask standardized or predetermined questions.

4. Results and Discussion
This chapter explores the different aspects of every public high school identified as a respondent in this study. The three fundamental factors being evaluated were the interview, School Improvement Plan (SIP), and survey forms with relevant questions. Narratives served as the central point in determining the vital components of each school's SIP, understanding the whole process of preparing their SIP and evaluating the implementation of their SIPs. The researcher used the SIP rapid appraisal form provided by the DepEd for schools to assess their SIP in reviewing the school plan. Part four of the SIP deals with the goals and objectives of the school. It comprises seven areas: staff development, curriculum implementation, physical resources and facilities, management and administration, learning environment, school performance indicator (National Achievement Test), and stakeholders' participation.

4.1 Kasanag National High School
Kasanag National High School, one of the large schools, commits to developing globally competitive, morally upright, socially responsible, and imbued with a sense of nationalism and reverence for God. It teaches learners in grades seven through ten in the Schools District of Iloilo and has 43 instructional rooms and eight noninstructional rooms. Its ancillary services include two school canteens, one clinic, one library, four faculty rooms, two computer rooms, a Teen Center, and an administration building. The school has 2,158 enrollees, and the class size averages 52. The school is located north of the town's market and other prominent establishments, making its location strategic for learning. Kasanag National High School is a prime institution, earning the top spot in the National Achievement Test in 2013 for Category A Schools. It implements K to 12 and Special Science Class curricula and has full-force coordination of the principal and teaching personnel composed of seven head teachers, six master teachers, 57 teachers, and seven non-teaching staff. The school administrators and School Planning Team members knew their roles and responsibilities in school improvement, but four stakeholders had little to no understanding of their SIP based on the given survey.

4.2 Banaag National High School
Banaag National High School is also a large school with 1,271 students and 39 instructional classrooms. It has an almost equal number of male and female students. It has at least one canteen, clinic, computer laboratory, general academic classroom, home economics room, industrial/workshop, science laboratory, library, and office for the administration. The school has 50 teachers and 13 non-teaching staff, and the percentage rate in the National Achievement Test has aspired to reach 75 % since 2011. The faculty and staff are also actively preparing their Educational Management Information System and using evaluation forms to monitor the school's programs and projects.

Banaag National High School aims to excel in all learning areas, from below 75 % to at least 90 %. Staff development plans include increasing the percentage of teachers having a positive attitude towards supervision, using effective strategies in the teaching-learning process, accepting assigned tasks and responsibilities, and taking graduate studies. Curriculum plans include an increased percentage of teachers having manuals, references, and guides, a one-to-one ratio of textbooks to students, and increased student reference materials. Physical resources and facilities include repairing the Home Economics Building, constructing benches around the track and field oval, improving the sports facilities, repairing comfort rooms, and completing the perimeter fence. Management and administration plans comprise increasing classroom supervision, minimizing absences, and developing school administrators' conceptual and technical skills. The drop-out rate is also reduced from 4.72% to zero.

On the awareness of SIP preparation and implementation, the survey showed that all respondents admitted that they know their basic roles and responsibilities in school improvement and clearly understand their SIP. However, on the question of whether they were able to attend training regarding SIP preparation and implementation, one respondent answered none.

4.3 Mapisan National High School
Mapisan National High School is the only secondary school outside the town proper of the municipality. It is a barangay school with 15 rooms and a population of 486 learners. It is in Category B with its 486 enrolments and has an average gender breakdown: 9 female learners per male. Its principal and 20 teaching staff received awards or recognitions as the Most Effective Secondary School and Most Effective School at the Division Level for four consecutive years.

The school has 15 rooms, of which 13 are for instructional purposes, and the remaining are for non-instructional uses. Of the 13 instructional rooms, 92.3% met DepEd's guidelines for safety and usability, while 7.7% did not meet the standard. The administrator was aware of her roles and responsibilities and was able to attend training on SIP. SPT was aware of the members' in-school improvement, but none clearly understood their SIP and their roles in its implementation. Stakeholders clearly understood the plan and their roles in its realization, but only half of them could attend training regarding this.

4.4 Mauswag National High School
Mauswag National High School is a school located on the boundary of two towns in the school district. It is composed of 17 teachers and a school head who work together to achieve their mission and vision by providing the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum. In 2013, the school had a total enrolment of 331 students, composed of 210 females and 121 males. The school offers 7th to 10th grades and has 11 instructional classrooms, four non-instructional classrooms, a computer laboratory, general academic classrooms, a small library, a canteen, and the administrators' office. The school improvement plan is strategic planning for developing education at the school level that aims to follow a systematic, step-by-step approach to getting where it wants to go.

4.5 Mahilway National High School
Mahilway National High School is located in a vast town in the school district and is endowed with 4.6 hectares of land donated by one of the prominent families in the barangay. The school has six instructional rooms and two non-instructional rooms, four comfort rooms, and Learning Resource Center, and the Division Personnel for medical and dental services. It offers grades 7 to 10 and has 133 enrollees, 75 male and 58 female. The class size is small, with 22 students. The school started in 1998 as an extension of a barangay high school and gained its autonomy in 2000.

The school curriculum is the Basic Education Curriculum, and since 2013 the K-12 Curriculum was introduced. The school is run by a Head Teacher, supported by six Teacher 1, Provincial School Board Teacher, Teacher II, and two watchmen. The survey has shown that the school head is aware of his basic roles and responsibilities in improving the school and his role in the implementation of the SIP.

4.6 Preparation of the SIP
This part of the study examines how the SIP is prepared, including data gathered through interviews and survey results. The researchers' insights are also discussed as follows:

4.6.1 Without a definitive goal and plan, the school would find itself at the tail-end in the race for excellence.
– Kasanag NHS
The school administrator has taken on her responsibilities in managing Kasanag National High School. The school started updating the School Improvement Plan (SIP) in January 2013 due to an upcoming evaluation of schools. The SIP was created in 2018 to identify the school's needs. The school administrator worked collaboratively with the SPT to gather data and make a first draft of the SIP, which was presented to the Parents-Teachers Association, Faculty Association President, Supreme Student Government Officers, Members of the Alumni Association, and the Local Government Unit through the Committee on Education. The SSG President stated that the SIP was discussed at a meeting twice. The school's plan is integrated into the SIP and the Enhanced Basic Education Information System (EBEIS), a databank for all school heads under the Department of Education.

The school adopted the DepEd mission, vision, and core values, and one of the school planning team members encoded and updated the EBEIS and took charge of the school's performance indicator. The other SPT members were tasked to be the secretary of the School Governing Council and were also in charge of the AIP. Monitoring and evaluations were done collaboratively by the SPT, and different sub-committees were organized for monitoring and evaluation.

The study showed that 6 of the ten respondents were involved in the process of setting the core values, vision, and mission of the school. The 3-year work plan and financial plan were collaborated by four respondents, while the three consolidated the school report card. Five respondents set the situational analysis and performance indicators. The least participated process was the setting of the means of verification. When the researchers visited the school, its improvement plan was reviewed, with its school and community profile, situational analysis, school core values, vision, mission, priority improvement areas, 3-year work, financial plan, and annual improvement plan.

4.6.2 Thinking comes before doing. Thus, all successful and effective tasks are well-planned and implemented.
–Banaag NHS
The principal of Banaag National High School used her eight years of experience to update the SIP. She convened the planning team and conducted an actual planning workshop with them. She also organized the School Governing Council and discussed the processes involved in preparing the SIP. She was chosen to be one of the speakers in preparing the SIP. The principal discussed that the tasks in the SIP preparation were divided among members of the SPT.

The SIP was finalized and presented to the Mayor for his signature. It was then presented to stakeholders such as teachers, students, parents, barangay officials, etc. The administrator had to meet with the school's bookkeeper to be knowledgeable of the financial plans. During the survey, eight respondents collaborated and took the processes involved in preparing the SIP. In a separate interview with the school's PTA President and SSG President, the researchers found out their beliefs on the stakeholders' involvement in the preparation of SIP and that they took part in the different programs and projects.

The researcher investigated the Banaag National High School's SIP, which showed an incomplete school profile. There was a situational analysis of relevant data and historical trends, but the school's goals and objectives were not shown. It also had a 3-year work and financial plan and an annual improvement plan, but the researcher could not peruse the school's monitoring and evaluation plan and its school report card.

4.6.3 The principal, as the instructional leader and manager, has plans for the improvement of the school, and there should be well- a defined outcome; that's why there should be a SIP.
- Mapisan NHS
The Mapisan National High School administrator faced many challenges in planning for the school, including the completeness of a SIP and the damaging effects of the previous super typhoons, which made havoc in the school community. The SPT decided to work on the plans, but the natural calamities brought additional problems in the SIP completion. The principal forced one of the planning team members to make the SIP, and the objectives were revised. The School Governing Council was elected one month after they started, consisting of the Farmer Association Representative, peddlers, drivers, and businessmen. They were not able to convene the professionals in the field of education but planned to have a meeting with them.

Due to a lack of data, the school's principal had to prepare a School Report Card. The SPT prepared the school's background, the 3-Year Plan, and the Annual Improvement Plan. At the same time, they needed to prepare one due to the need for a blueprint of their existence, which identified the location, administrative leadership, teachers, and learners as their strengths, while the shortage of facilities, class size, and poor study habits as their weaknesses. Despite these, the school considered the stakeholders' participation and support of the local officials as opportunities. When the SIP was done, it was presented to stakeholders, including the Supreme Student Government President, for revisions. The administrator and her planning team members also mentioned that they made errors in the preparation due to cramming for the deadline.

The survey comprised one administrator, three SPT members, a head teacher, two teachers, SSG President, the Barangay Captain, and the PTA President. Of the processes that need to be taken to have the SIP, only four respondents helped and made an active involvement. The recording of the trend in the school report card showed that stakeholders are well-informed about what is happening inside and outside the school premises. The researchers found that the school and community profile of the SIP lacks substantial information. The situational analysis of the school seemed to have not been reviewed and endorsed by other members of the SPT because it was not complete with relevant data. The school failed to include its goals, objectives, priority improvement areas, and annual improvement plan.

4.6.4 Strategic planning for the development of education at the school level follows a systematic, step-by-step approach to getting where it wants to go.

- Mauswag NHS

The School Improvement Plan (SIP) is the blueprint of the school's plans, and stakeholders and the administration work together to develop plans for the school. Mauswag National High School had a SIP before the past administration, but it needs to be renewed every three years. The SIP includes the new curriculum, and the stakeholders are involved in the planning and implementation of the SIP. Mauswag National High School had a SIP before the past administration, but it needs to be renewed every three years. The SIP includes the new curriculum, and the stakeholders are involved in the planning and implementation of the SIP.

The principal shared with the researcher that they had elected a new set of School Governing Council to be the school rule-making body and the PTA as the collecting officers of the school. They called stakeholders for a conference and checked the school rules, validating and polishing them. They discussed the rules with the other members of the School Planning Team, School Governing Council, and Parents-Teachers Association. The old SIP had its school's vision, mission, and core values, but as DepEd has structured one, it had to use the national vision, mission, and core values. For the financial plan, the school's designated bookkeeper helps the administrator. The administrators, school planning team, and stakeholders were surveyed to gather data on the school improvement plan. All ten respondents positively answered whether they helped identify the school's core values, as the Department of Education had already come up with the core values, vision, and mission. Seven of the ten respondents set priorities for the plan. The survey results showed that administrators, the school planning team, and stakeholders were all involved in preparing the plan.

The most important details in this text are the processes involved in recording the trend for the school report card, preparing a situational analysis, formulating a 3-year work plan, financial plan, performance indicators, and means of verification for the plan. The situational analysis included making inferences and a deeper analysis of the school situation. The SIP has a situational analysis, and part of the plan was a template from the National Educators' Academy of the Philippines (NEAP). However, some parts of the template were not filled up.

4.6.5 With the creation of the School Improvement Plan, the many problems confronting a newly legislated high school will be minimized.

– Mahilway NHS

The SIP is the basis of all teaching-learning developments in the school, including the physical facilities, curricular concerns, and professional development of teachers. In an interview with the school head, the researchers discovered that the school had an existing SIP but needed to update its goals, targets, and strategies. The school had an active Parents-Teachers Association and an organized SPT, but the School Governing Council was not convened due to a lack of interest from other stakeholders. The SPT updates the SIP every 3rd week of January, gathers data by returning to the School Report Card, and consults the Parents-Teachers Association, the community, and other stakeholders. The PTA President of Mahilway National High School stated that the plan was presented to them for their opinions and that problems were identified via conferences with stakeholders. The Supreme Student Government President also actively participated in planning, airing out learners' concerns to their teachers. One faculty member was tasked to be the secretary in writing the plan. Upon approval, the written plan was then signed by the SPT and sent to the Division Office for the approval of the Schools Division Superintendent. The school implemented the plan with the nod from the division level. The survey result indicated that the steps in preparing the school improvement plan involved only four of them. The setting of priorities was given much attention as eight of the respondents participated well in this process.

The most important details are setting priorities for the SIP, establishing a strong working relationship with the community, and assessing the SIP of Mahilway National High School. The school and community profile comprehensively presented the school's environment, including the teacher's profile and the organizational chart in its school management system.

4.7 Implementation of the SIP

4.7.1 Kasanag National High School

This school implemented its SIP by working with other stakeholders and assigning a monitoring and evaluation team. The SPT evaluated the SIP's objectives and compared them with the targets. The school also checked the facilities in case some buildings needed repair, including the classrooms and laboratory tables. Teachers were encouraged to attend training such as in-service training and monthly conferences, and learners' performance was evaluated through the National Achievement. The school administrator called for the involvement of the School Governing Council and orientated them with their roles and learners on school policies. The plan was also presented to the Parents-Teachers Association during the PTA Assembly through an LCD Projector. While the core values, vision, and mission were displayed by all in strategic areas, the tracking of the progress, determining its success, and evaluation of the plan was participated by the least number of respondents. Monitoring the plan's

goals and objectives seemed to be the hardest at Kasanag National High School. One key element of strategic planning is improving the monitoring and evaluation system that collects fundamental educational data, as well as increasing the capacity of education planners to understand and transform data into valuable knowledge. This is parallel to the concept of a plan that is in place, but monitoring is complex as the government keeps implementing reforms that affect the plan's implementation.   This is also supported by the study of (Cahill et al., 2019), that expecting a perfect or near-perfect implementation is unrealistic.

4.7.2 Banaag National High School.
The administrator organized a task force or committee to work on the different activities of Banaag National High School. During the school's evaluation, the evaluators found that the school failed to prepare the School Report Card and Monitoring and Evaluation Tool. The physical aspect of the school was maintained through the support of the MOOE, and stakeholders kept in touch with them. The PTA president collected miscellaneous and PTA fees to support the school. The school's SIP aims to improve academic instruction, teachers' competence, physical facilities, and instructional materials. It is anchored on the school's philosophy and mission vision and is implemented by the administrator, SPT, and stakeholders. Communication of the plan is high. The school head distributes tasks to her subordinates, and the Division Superintendent and Assistant Division Superintendent signed the task force assigned to work on the SIP.

4.7.3 Mapisan National High School
In its implementation, the persons responsible were given their share of satisfying the school's objectives. "*We have started the implementation, for example, for physical work, the fencing, and we have already planned to tap the alumni, the members of the alumni, to donate*," shared the administrator. When asked about their priority, the school's SSG President said, "*As President of SSG, my responsibility is focused sa [to the] students, Ma'am, that you have to choose rules and regulations for their welfare.*" The learners were made to understand the school's core values, mission, and vision. Mapisan National High School's plan implementation has not been circulated well. Nobody from the SPT was able to prepare the annual improvement plan, track the progress of the plans, determine its effectiveness, and evaluate the plan's progress. Though the school head responded positively regarding the steps in implementing the plan, it was not disseminated to the stakeholders. When asked whether the SIP was implemented or not, one of the SPT members shared, "*Yes, it is because we presented it to the meeting, supported by the faculty and staff. When we reviewed our SIP, their comments were almost good about the plan*."

4.7.4 Mauswag National High School
The school made progress with new projects, such as an e-classroom, and conducted a conference with the SSG to set the rules and regulations of the school. Donations from the various stakeholders sustained their projects, and the principal informed the stakeholders, and they also supported the SIP. The school's principal stated that the School Governing Council and the Parents-Teachers Association work together to run the school. She referred to the SGC as the lawmakers and the PTA as collectors, as they are responsible for the miscellaneous and other fees of the school. The principal also noted that some alumni had already built spans of the wall. The principal also has expressed her gratitude to the PTA for their help in actualizing their projects. However, the NAT results of the school continued to drop due to the trend in the community, wherein learners who graduate at the elementary level with good scholastic records in the locality are usually sent to the town proper or *Poblacion* for their secondary education. The SIP of the school is implemented at one point and not at another. Eight respondents placed the school's core values, vision, and mission in strategic locations, while only two tracked the plan's progress. Even executed, the other processes in implementing the plan did not get a high response.

4.7.5 Mahilway National High School
The school head assigned tasks to teachers to work with, and the implementation was evaluated every quarter. During the grading period, teachers are tasked to update parents on the new things in school and encourage parents to inquire about their children's progress. Some teachers are assigned as focal persons in projects and programs, and then it is evaluated quarterly and at the end of the semester. Both stakeholders had a fair share in implementing the SIP, with the PTA President and SSG President being informed of how they could help the school and asked to memorize and understand by heart the core values, mission, and vision. "Yes, we have implemented our plan but not fully because we still have to deal with others in due time based on the timeline," said the PTA President, who also highlighted that the PTA has implemented their plans in the school. The survey result indicated that the school administrators could not track the plan's progress. The SPT members responded positively to all the questions about implementing the school improvement plan. At the same time, only one stakeholder helped prepare and evaluate the annual improvement plan. The findings showed that problems encountered are more prevalent during the implementation of the plan than in its preparation. 73% of the 45 SPTs and stakeholders stated that they were affected by the problems they encountered in the SIP preparation, and 33% felt that they could not fulfill their duties as planners for the school. Cooper (1998) emphasized that in the implementation of the plan, the supportive and non-supportive culture of the stakeholders affects the results. To address this, the school conducts regular meetings with the School Governing Council and its PTA to empower stakeholders.

5. Conclusion

Schools in this study prepare their SIPs differently. One school used SWOT analysis to formulate its objectives, and strategies may differ due to factors such as the school administrators' leadership, external stakeholders' support, and the community. The Department of Education's Handbook on SIP Preparation defines ways to produce a SIP.

SIP preparation in some schools has yet to consider more on planning. Schools prepare or update SIP one to two months before evaluation; some even organize and consult their SPT after the plan is prepared. Interviews showed that some schools could not convene their SGC and mobilize their SPT. SIP preparation and implementation is not easy as different issues and problems face the SPT, and the formulation of the plan needs more attention from its stakeholders and direct users.

Budget mismatch and inadequate funds affect the implementation of the SIP. The literature in this study claimed that budget mismatch affects projects being implemented in schools, not to mention the new normal delivery mode. School leadership matters the most. Administrators play the most vital role in the planning and implementing processes. In this study, it is evident that the prime players in SIP preparation and implementation are the school heads. They mechanize the process as they are the ones who call together stakeholders. They are the ones who create working groups and even fuel the plans' execution.

6. Implications to Theory, Practice, and Literature

The presentation of the findings is quite challenging as different theories and practices must be considered in preparing the plan for school improvement, much more so its implementation. A school's mission statement bonds its components to achieving its objectives. The different administrators, school planning teams, and stakeholders comprise the related and dependent elements in a system that interacts and have a common objective. The schools in this study adopted the Core Values, Mission, and Vision of the Department of Education. The school itself is a system; DepEds' decentralization of school management has helped in the easier administration of the school. According to Leech and Fulton (2008), a common vision and mission unify an organization and harness its collective energies. The literature states that DepEd came up with training for school heads in leading the development and implementation of the SIP and the AIP (DM No. 192, 2016). A manual on SIP preparation was also published to aid the SPT in the planning and implementation. The administrators, school planning team members, and stakeholders responsible for school planning who did not receive relevant training comply with their demands. Administrators re-echo what they have learned from their training to the members of the school planning team, but adequate training was not provided. This led to a problem in the preparation and implementation of the plan. The lack of training for school planners would push them to work within their capacities, undermining the important part of the stakeholders in the process. Issues in the schools include physical facilities, lack of funds, and, most of all, student performance which would be addressed with the help of the stakeholders. This could also be why some of the SIPs of schools are incomplete.

DepEd's logical and iterative way of formulating the SIP has defined the steps, including its plan components. In the schools visited, however, these steps were not adopted as the school's planning teams had their way of coming up with the SIP. Literature on school improvement planning in the Philippines is so limited that studies abroad have been utilized to support this study. This study found that school planning teams, the prime players in school improvement planning, are aware of their basic roles and responsibilities in the process. School administrators assemble concerned individuals and groups to partake in the activities. This is in agreement with the study of (Rey & Cabardo (2016), wherein the school is overwhelmed by the stakeholders' help in the situational analysis and problem-solving of the school. Through the stakeholders, the planning process is leavened, such as improving feedback practices (Paulino, Guintivano, & Siason, 2022).

In preparing the plan, the two-month preparation of the schools for the school improvement plan creates a problem as its focus is not on the plan's effectiveness anymore but on the deadlines set. Hudson et al. (2019) expressed that inadequate time for preparation for the improvement affects the plan. Learners have to be invited to participate in the planning and implementation of the plan. This supports the findings of UNESCO (2022), wherein systems of collaboration and unification define success. The stakeholders are oriented with their respective roles in school policies and activities. Communication was also given priority in the schools being studied as administrators keep in touch with the persons concerned with the school. Through this, stakeholders are empowered. This coincides with the work of Hinrichs-Krapels & Grant (2016), which notes that outcomes are evaluated and relayed to verify the inputs' impact on the outputs. The Parents-Teachers Association, School Governing Councils, and other stakeholder groups help the school; thus, its effect on the latter is considered important. With the constraints brought by the pandemic, it is necessary to consider a resilient academic environment (Biñas & Siason, 2023) that must be included in the SIP. To continuously encourage its stakeholders to take active roles in the implementation of the plan, administrators should communicate the plan with their respective stakeholders. Filoteo (2021) elaborated that in implementing the SIP, administrators must consider roles and relationships in schools.

7. Recommendations

The school administrators in the school district should be commended for their collective and effective efforts in coming up with SIP for their respective schools. According to Kedley (2016), to successfully implement change, principals must have enthusiasm for the change and managerial skills are needed to promote enthusiasm. The change process requires much patience from the principal as it is labor intensive. The intrinsic reward for school heads could motivate them to perform better, especially in empowering others during the SIP planning and implementation.

It is recommended that additional training regarding SIP preparation and implementation be done. The SPT should undergo rigid training and workshop on SIP preparation. School administrators must re-echo the training they get in SIP preparation and implementation to their stakeholders. This includes the adoption of modalities of learning either in augmented face-to-face instruction (Elarde et al., 2014) and/or online learning (Malayas, Paulino, & Siason, 2022) due to limitations and the possibilities of the new normal education.

Communicate openly with the school's stakeholders about the school's plans. There is a need for a connection with a wider environment. Collaborating internally is not enough to achieve success, so schools must interact and work with outside stakeholders. The communication process must not only be about the administrators getting information from the stakeholders. It should be a three-way process. Stakeholders must have a chance to express their opinions and suggestions for the school, and these efforts must be reciprocated with the necessary information. De Jong et al. (2022) emphasized in a study that collaborating and interacting with the local educational environment is important.

Empower the members of the school planning team to be functional. Monitoring and evaluation teams must be organized and put into action. The mechanisms involving the specific tasks in SIP preparation should be working, and every team member should find fulfillment in their tasks. 5. Core values, vision, and mission must be displayed in strategic areas and understood and felt by the stakeholders. Stakeholders must be oriented – well with the school's core values, vision, and mission. They must understand why the schools need to have such guiding principles. 6. Lastly, future qualitative and quantitative researchers should conduct similar studies involving school leadership in planning. It would be valuable to conduct parallel studies involving more participants to explore better how SIP is prepared and implemented.

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