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Research Article

School Principals' Leadership Behaviors on Issues Concerning Equity, Inclusion, and Gender Equality in Public Schools in Marikina City

Michelle B. Carlos*

Graduate Student, Ateneo de Manila University

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*Corresponding author:

E-mail:

michelle.basacarlos@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

A good school is a reflection of principals' way of managing all the aspects of the educational institution in which they are assigned. Because of this, it is necessary that the school heads display leadership behaviors which will be beneficial to the people under his or her supervision. The study utilized a qualitative research design to determine the school principals' leadership behaviors and conduct an in-depth analysis of their impact on issues concerning equity, inclusion, and gender equality in selected public schools in Marikina City. The study made use of the Path-goal leadership Framework and the Fordham University Diversity (Gender Equality), Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Framework (DEI) to make sense of the results of the study. The study revealed that the school head respondents formulate educational policies that are universal. They viewed policymaking to be a set of rules that is for everyone. This is a clear way of promoting equality, inclusion, and gender equality in public schools. Next, the school leaders show respect and support to the diversity of people which are present in his or her school community. The school principal allows display of practices and beliefs in school as long as it does not violate the rights of the other members of the school community. Third, school leaders stated that faculty members think that their decision is fair based on how they are supervised by the school principal. In line with the results of the study, it is recommended that future researchers conduct quantitative research which may help in generalizing specific results of this study.

Keywords: *Equity, Inclusion and gender equality, School leadership behaviors*

Introduction

A school is a place where learning and personal development take place among learners. A good school is a reflection of the principals'

way of managing all the aspects of the educational institution in which they are assigned. The goal of the school head is to oversee and guide the teaching and non-teaching staff of an

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educational institution. Danbaba (2021) explained that educational administrators have a significant impact on the culture, outlook, and reputation of their institutions. The principle is being the manager and the instructional leader of the secondary school, and as such, the school leader is expected to perform a variety of duties. Hence, this is done to implement quality leadership practices that will not only motivate and stimulate the human element in the school but also ensure that all resources are used wisely with the sole purpose of realizing set educational goals or objectives which are believed to contribute to the schools' performance. The principals, therefore, are expected to utilize everything they have to offer, capitalizing on their experience in education that will ensure promotion of positive human relationships, communication skills, and collaboration among the members of the school community.

School principals in the public school system tend to focus on managerial roles such as overseeing the institution's implementing rules, budget, and handling paper works about school policies. They tend to focus less on instructional improvements within the school which they delegate to the heads of departments or Master Teachers. Principals have their own perceptions when it comes to the components of educational leadership that would affect student performance (Langlois, 2022). Through instructional leadership, principals can direct teachers to focus on exposing students to opportunities that may allow them to build connections, improve critical thinking, and even make contributions of new knowledge in the classroom. Evidence suggests that if equity-based leadership methods are used, school heads can transform and improve the instructional experiences for a larger number of learners in the educational process (Ehren, 2009; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012; Tooms & Boske, 2010). Interestingly, it was also shown that school heads that advocates for educational equity are more likely to promote teacher engagement in higher quality instructional experiences that are meticulous and make use of multiple different instructional strategies to meet the educational needs of all students (Nadelson et al., 2019).

According to DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2020, school principals, as the ones in charge in managing the school, has a significant role in making certain that the school environment is conducive so that effective teaching and learning will take place. This highlights the main duties and responsibilities of the school heads as the executive of the school. Further, the DepEd order states that through the leadership and management of the school principal, the education agency can develop teachers and learners who have qualities expected of a competent and responsible citizens characterized with the right values, knowledgeable of the 21st century skills, and able to direct the country to development and progress.

Rochmes (2017) explained that schools encounter numerous problems that the principals would need to address. Multiple studies suggest that inequality is also present in a school context among students and teachers alike. Disparities in educational achievements and attainment have consequences for long term gaps in earnings and other areas such as health and behavior. It is the schools' responsibility to improve on the equality among teachers and among students to create a better teaching and learning environment for them.

An example of inequality is gender stereotypes. Both family and the workplace play a role in changing them. However, education is still the most suitable environment for implementing positive interactions among people. There should be equal opportunities for both genders which is the reason why policies and measures to advocate for gender equality in education is important (Marmani, 2022).

The increasing concern on the diversity, due to the demographic shift, climate change, development in sexual orientations and gender identities, liberalities in terms of religions, cross cultural adoptions due to accessibility of the internet thus opening culture among nations, and rising concerns on mental health, gives a heavy burden among government leaders and specifically, in a smaller scale - the Education System to focus and develop strategies to address the DEI (OECD, 2023).

During the 2019 SDG Summit in September, world leaders advocated for a Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development. In

addition, they committed to raising funds, improving national implementation, and supporting institutions in order to achieve the SDGs by 2030 without leaving anyone behind. In an effort to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs, a number of civil society leaders and organizations have been advocating for a "super year of activism," urging world leaders to increase their efforts to aid those who are most in need, encourage local initiatives and creativity, boost information systems and institutions, bring back the relationship between humans and nature, and elevate funding for sustainable development. Taking action to address the climate catastrophe, combat rising poverty, and empower women and girls are the main priorities for the decade of 2020–2030. More individuals than ever before have access to higher quality healthcare, employment, and education. However, the advantages run the risk of being reversed by inequality and climate change. Investments in sustainable and inclusive economies can create a wide range of opportunities for shared prosperity. Political, technological, and financial choices are also available. To connect these change agents with the goals of sustainable development, however, far greater leadership and quick, unheard-of reforms are required (SDGs Report, 2022).

Moreover, Danbaba (2021) argued that the leaders' capacity to make strategic changes to the methods they use to the situations that confront them, their comprehension of the root causes of the issues they run into, and how they handle those issues all play a significant role in how successful their leadership is. In education, pressures from rapidly changing communities slam leaders with challenges as they attempt to build more effective organizations, such as competition from charter schools or issues brought on by liberal district transfer policies. Context can also limit leaders, especially when environmental pressures are high.

The implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum saw the emphasis on the importance of acknowledging the differing social backgrounds of the learners by ensuring that the policies made and enacted promoted inclusive education. Moreover, the MATATAG Curriculum focused on the nation's varied cultural diversity and refers to it as it promotes learning that is efficient and relevant. The framework of

the curriculum takes into consideration the things that the learners can do, their socio-cultural background, and related elements. It is the goal of the MATATAG Curriculum to show appreciation of the learners' values and belief system, practices, and knowledge within their context to remain relevant in the community where they belonged and came from. Further, with the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, DepEd, the Philippine Education agency zeroes in to its commitment to make sure that the country's basic education follows global standards. This specifically complies to the international benchmarks and quality standards which will eventually lead to the realization of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UN SDG) 4, which hopes to promote a system of education that is inclusive, equitable quality education and promotes life-long learning to each and every Filipino learner. Finally, the MATATAG Curriculum is expected to help instructional leaders craft supervisory and management plans which will help monitor and improve instructional delivery, support teachers, and staff through the most appropriate technical assistance and monitor learning gains. With the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, the school principals are expected to develop the capability to greatly influence the environment of the school assigned to them. Their support of equitable education may create a better school environment through their instructional leadership to transform the learning environment to one with a culture of equity among students and among teachers. In the present time, knowing and understanding the school leaders' behavior in relation to educational settings are seen to be the future that may contribute to improving our educational system by way of quality and relevant educational leadership. Many studies have been conducted which focus on this topic. However, an in-depth analysis of school principals' leadership behaviors in connection with issues concerning equity, inclusion, and gender equality in public schools has not yet been explored. It is here that this study is considered important.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research investigation is to determine the school principals' leadership behaviors and conduct an in-depth analysis of their impact on issues concerning equity, inclusion, and gender equality in selected public schools in Marikina City. Specifically, it seeks to find answers to the following questions:

Research Questions

1. What are the leadership behaviors of public-school principals that promote quality, inclusion, and gender equality in public schools?
2. How do the leadership behaviors of the public-school principals promote equity, inclusion, and gender equality in public schools?

Significance of the Study

The study will help understand the school heads' leadership behaviors on issues concerning equity, inclusion, and gender equality in public schools. The results of the study will be of great benefit to the following:

Teachers. The result of the study could help teachers understand the policies and decisions made by the school administration concerning issues that are very important to them and the school community.

School Administrators. Subject Coordinators and Principals may be encouraged to explore new strategies that may lead to better understanding of leadership behaviors which are crucial in managing schools and other educational departments. As a result, they may facilitate and conduct seminar-workshops to equip teachers with leadership skills that will prepare them in micromanaging organizations.

Curriculum Planners. This study may influence curriculum planners to incorporate transformational leadership behaviors as they improve policies in schools.

Researchers. The results of the study can be a springboard for other researches particularly in school leadership and management. It can possibly result to many school leaders to adapt transformational leadership styles which will help them in school administration.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The research participants were composed of five school heads detailed in selected public schools that were involved in the study. The study was carried out in selected SDO Marikina public schools. The study made use of qualitative research design in pursuing the research investigation.

It is important to note that only the insights of the participants were qualitatively analyzed, and no other data was analysis in the study. Other school principals who did not meet the qualifications of the intended participant were not included in the study.

Review of Related Literature

The Evolving Role of School Leadership in the Philippines. School leadership is increasingly being recognized as a priority in education policy agendas around the world. It plays a key role in improving student outcomes, as it has the ability to influence the motivation and capacity of teachers, as well as the overall climate and environment of the school. By developing effective school leadership, we can improve both the efficiency and equity of our educational systems. This can be done through initiatives such as providing teachers with the resources they need to succeed, creating a safe and supportive learning environment, and encouraging collaboration among staff. The success of school leadership is dependent upon the commitment of everyone involved to work together for the betterment of students. With strong leadership in our schools, we can make sure that students receive the quality education they need to reach their full potential.

Studies have shown that school administrators have the ability to improve academic and student performance if they are given the chance to make crucial decisions. However, autonomy by itself may not be a result in improvements unless it is sufficiently supported. Furthermore, it's important to recognize and limit the primary responsibilities of school administrators. Effective school leadership is learning-focused and supports a good school culture. Instructional leaders who engage their teachers in collaborative efforts are said to make a difference in student achievement. Leithwood et al. (2020) points out that school leaders must

also know their way through complex educational environments and guide their staff in the application of effective pedagogies. The role of school leaders has now expanded to include not only administration but also professional development and community engagement. Independent decision-making by teachers through the leaders' involvement in their decisions and provision of professional development results in a motivated and technically equipped teaching force. This kind of collaboration instills a sense of ownership around the educators involved, which can permit enhanced performance of students (Harris & Jones, 2020). The aforementioned seemed to be the ideal way in which the school head must govern the school community. However, in the Philippine setting, there are many factors that the school principal must consider one of which is the Department of Education Orders or DepEd Orders which served as the very guiding principles in which public schools should operate.

Transformational and Consultative Leadership Models. School leadership frameworks, which emphasize the essential quality of school leadership as leadership for learning, can be used to highlight the key characteristics, obligations, and responsibilities of effective school leaders. Frameworks that also allow for the contextualization of local and school-level standards should clearly specify the main areas of accountability for school leaders. They should be developed with expert advice (Beatriz et al., 2008). Further, Robinson et al. (2021), emphasized that the chances for school leaders are brighter. However, school leaders who follow the transformational way inspire and motivate their staff, thereby increasing teacher engagement and student achievement. Relationship building, vision sharing, and supporting their schools' innovation are hallmarks of transformational leaders. Such an approach not only creates a favorable atmosphere for learning but also nurtures teachers' willingness to innovate in their classrooms.

Educational administrators have a significant impact on the culture, outlook, and reputation of their institutions. The principle is the manager and the instructional leader of the sec-

ondary school, and as such, he or she is responsible for a variety of duties. In order to implement quality leadership practices that would not only motivate and stimulate the human element in the school but also ensure that all resources are used wisely with the sole purpose of achieving set educational goals or objectives, the principals are therefore expected to use everything they have to offer in terms of experience, human relationships, communication skills, and collaborative skills (Danbaba, 2021).

The ability of leaders to adjust their methods to the situations they find themselves in, their comprehension of the root causes of the issues they run into, and how they handle those issues all play a significant role in how successful their leadership is. In education, pressures from rapid changes in communities present leaders with challenges as they attempt to build more effective organizations such as competition from charter schools or issues brought on by liberal district transfer policies. Context can also limit leaders, especially when environmental pressures are high (Danbaba, 2021).

School administrators are change agents who have a significant impact on the educational environment through their ways of disseminating information, forging enabling social bonds, taking part in mentoring initiatives, and encouraging advancement. As a result, this study determined the relationship between teachers' performance and the leadership style of the public-school principal.

According to one study, teachers and school administrators experience different leadership styles, and this confirms that their responses are inherently superior. Regardless of age, academic achievement, or substantial achievements, teachers perform consistently. Head teachers have better teaching effectiveness than teachers and master teachers in terms of teaching status and number of years of experience. Compared to individuals who spent more time in the educational system, teachers with less relevant experience demonstrated lower educational quality. Doctorate-educated school leaders possess a higher level of leadership skills than those with master's degrees. No matter how much true leadership the school heads demonstrate, the instructors continue to perform very productively (Aquino, et al., 2021).

Contrarily, differences in how principals' approach administrative leadership are unrelated to teaching methods, pedagogical attitudes and beliefs, or how much professional development teachers receive (Talis, 2009).

Leadership Stages and Styles. Kouzes provides five practices of exemplary leadership which was the result of rigorous research by the authors and continuously used to assess the effective leaders of today. According to the book, analyzing responses from nearly three million people around the world using the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) to assess how often their leaders engage in The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership showed that 95.80% of direct reports are "Highly Engaged" when leaders "Very Frequently" or "Almost Always" use the five practices. This related literature is necessary to be included in the study as it thoroughly explains the 'five models of transformational leadership practices by Kouzes and Posner. The five practices of exemplary leadership will be adopted as the model of the study as it aims to investigate whether to what extent it was being practiced by the principals, as perceived by the teachers and co-principals in the DepEd Marikina during the pandemic. The five practices are:

- a) Model the way
- b) Inspire a shared vision
- c) Challenge the process
- d) Enable others to act
- e) Encourage the heart (Kouzes et al., 2016)

On the other hand, according to Bass and Avolio, there are three main elements of the Full Range Leadership Model in terms of efficiency and engagement are as follows:

- a) Laissez-Faire leadership (lowest)
- b) Transactional Leadership (medium)
- c) Transformational Leadership (strong)

Transactional leadership from the word itself 'transaction' means it is a leadership style where the leader will set goals and his/her subordinates upon accomplishing the goal will be rewarded. Further, transformational leadership is where creativity is encouraged, there is more room for flow – where the subordinates can freely express themselves, thereby, and

they are more motivated, independent and actively participating to achieve the goal.

Bass and Avolio believed that transformational leadership is the most desirable form of leadership specifically with the millennials who believe that transformational leadership positively impacts the motivation of junior employees.

The basic processes of developing transformational leadership include three stages as follows:

- a) Embryonic stage where the principal has the desire to develop the school by identifying the problem/issue and solving it, however, it lacks the ability to do so;
- b) Formative stage where the principal has already undergone development and already able to identify the issues/problems, however, its strategies are not the exact solutions thereby making it difficult to adopt by the teachers thus slowing down the progress;
- c) Mature stage where the principal is able to think and identify the right issues/problems and determine effective strategies to solve it, thus, resulting in school development.

It explains that there are stages in transformational leadership, thus, a leader principal is not confined to which stage he/she is initially classified. Moreover, it reveals opportunities to move towards the next stage while practicing the five fundamentals of becoming an exemplary leader discussed below (Yingxiu, 2013).

Leadership Behavior. Extensive research have been done on leadership behavior than on any other aspect of leadership (Yukl, 2006). Research in leadership behavior can be classified into one of two categories: the first line of research examines how leaders spend their time throughout the day, their particular pattern of activities, and their job responsibilities. The second line of research focuses on identifying effective leadership behavior. Despite the fact that there could potentially be numerous leadership behaviors, Farris (1988) identified two specific kinds of leadership behaviors: task-oriented behaviors and relations-oriented behaviors.

Previous studies conducted on leadership behaviors have revealed significant results. A

study conducted by Alaei (2010) compared the importance of leadership and managerial behaviors from the perspective of teachers and principals of schools in Zahedan. The results showed that teachers and principals value leadership and managerial behaviors equally. Surprisingly, the principals believed that modeling is more important than managerial behavior when it comes to components of leadership. Both teachers and principals stated that managerial behaviors outweigh challenging and female principals considered more value for managerial and leadership behaviors than men. Another study conducted by Goudarzi (1996) stated that when effectiveness of leadership behaviors are evaluated, there is no significant difference between principals who belong to public and private schools. Further, there is no significant relationship between academic qualifications of principals and efficiency of their leadership behaviors.

Dean (2005) revealed that modern leadership theories are explained in two dimensions based upon behavior data and situational modern approach. Behaviorist theory regards behaviors of leaders rather than their properties. Success and efficiency of leaders do not depend upon their properties but depends upon the behaviors they show while leading. In these behaviors, the behaviors such as communication skills of the leaders with followers, view and practice towards transfer of authority, approach towards the planning process, and way of determining the targets, etc. are evaluated as the basic factors determining the efficiency of a leader. Accordingly, followers as well as the characteristic traits affect the success of a leader (Dean, 2005). According to the contingency approach, integrity of an efficient leader does not have only one property, and there is no leadership style presenting an efficient leadership property in all situations. Because the factors affecting the efficiency of leadership style vary in any situation, they have been tried to be determined separately (Lightning et al, 2003). These factors discussed in the findings of Ozsahin et al, (2011) in their paper, are personality, experience and expectations of the leader, expectations and behaviors of senior managers, requirements of assignment, organization culture and policies, and expectations

and behaviors of employees. According to another modern approach evaluating the leadership properties, 6 types of leadership approaches can be mentioned.

School Leadership in Philippine Public Schools. In her paper, Villar (2021) explained that a good public education system requires effective management by school principals. Her study determined the relationship between leadership style and school climate in the context of public elementary school in Quezon City, Philippines. They involved 36 respondents-one school principals, and two school teachers from each of the 12 randomly chosen schools. The ordinary least squares statistical test was used to analyze the data. The study revealed that among the nine indicators of the three leadership styles and three school climate indicators, the relationships between intellectual stimulation and two aspects of school climate which are physical resources and security showed statistically significant results. The findings also revealed that school heads and teachers see social support as the most provided aspect of school climate while the physical facilities are the ones which are poorly supported. The study recommended that public school heads undergo training programs designed to focus on critical skills involved in school-based management to be able to effectively provide a solution to the needs of the school community.

For school heads to become effective in managing their schools, they must follow a specific set of professional standards and competencies which will serve as their guide in leading schools so that set mission and vision by the Department of Education will be realized. Because of this, the Department of Education launched the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). This program recognizes the importance of professional standards in continuing professional development focusing on the school head's ability to lead and manage schools drawing from the principle of career-long learning. The legal bases for this program are stipulated in DepEd Order No. 24 s. 2020 otherwise known as the National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Public School Heads (PPSSH) which was crafted to institutionalize it

as a public commitment through professional accountability for school heads which may help them reflect on the current practices while pursuing professional advancement (Dellomas & Deri, 2022).

The study of Cruz (2022) discusses the plight of school leaders in the Philippines, especially considering turning schools online. Cruz said there is an adaptive kind of leadership that responds to rapid changes and focuses on building resilience for teachers and students during crises. Findings of research showed that it was difficult for many leaders to transit from a paper-inclined life to a digitally inclined mind. This non-perturbing scenario has posed challenges to leaders' abilities in ensuring maximum support for their teachers and pupils. These suggest that the leaders must be equipped with requisite skills to confront technological challenges as well as enough training to offer the teachers. Also, it indicates that such research would have significant community interventions in the study environment. Cruz concluded that future leadership development programs incorporate crisis management and digital literacy strategies needed by upcoming leaders.

Addition to that, Dela Torre (2021) studies the school's trend of leadership on the participation of inclusive practices in education in the Philippines. Findings reveal that heads would really substantiate upsurges in the bargain performance of underprivileged students by the adoption of inclusive policies. The study raises that successful leaders will dynamically seek a thorough understanding of the diversity inherent within their students so as to strategize meeting the needs of each. It also details one of the most relevant forms of professional development, such as being equipped with skills to facilitate inclusivity. Dela Torre states that a collaboration with community stakeholders is critical for inclusive environments. This research sees that school leaders should advocate equity-promoting access.

This study demonstrates the effectiveness of distributed leadership models in Philippine schools. Gonzales believes that through shared leadership teachers will have major involvement in deciding matters that will be taken by the school, thus propel the school toward total improvement. It is noted also that if teachers

have access to leadership opportunities, they feel their worthiness in being part of the mission. Definitely, it will create a culture of trust and mutual respect among staff. However, it added that on the contrary distributed leadership phenomenon could cause innovation because it collaborates different viewpoints. Buying Gonzales's argument, the school leaders ought to be trained on the using and maintenance of distributed leadership (Gonzales, 2021).

López (2022) explained how the styles of school leadership relate to their students' academic performance. This study stipulates that collaborative leadership styles promote better student results, creating a more involved and motivated student. They should adopt a team-oriented approach to developing communication and cooperation with teachers, which leads to better student outcomes. The findings show that when teachers work together, they exchange their best practices and resources, which make their instructions better. López also emphasized the significance of school heads keeping precise academic goals and expectations for both teachers and students. The findings here recommend that training in leadership should include collaborative practices that will consequently yield better student outputs.

Another paper aimed at identifying the professional development needs of school leaders in the Philippines. Martinez (2020) underscores constant upgrading facilities with leadership competencies so that the leaders could manage schools well and support their teachers, modeled by the study report saying that a school leader lacks access to good professional practices that could otherwise hinder their effort to implement practices effectively. And mentorship for new administrators is an important tool in honing leadership capacities. This carries evidence for better planning in terms of professional development that will apply to leaders in diverse educational settings. Martinez concludes that investing in leadership training will equip and, thus, ultimately improve educational outcomes.

Paredes (2021) underscores the power of school leaders in transforming the school culture into a positive one, enabling it to facilitate student learning and teachers' satisfaction.

Paredes' study indicates that leaders who would give importance to the communication and engagement of the community could generate a sense of belonging among the students and staff on the premises. Through a spirit of inclusivity, issues regarding bullying and disaffection may be minimized. Moreover, it showed that positive school culture manifests much as academic applicability. Furthermore, school events and activities in building community spirit of school are highlighted. Moreover, the research recommends that the school must work toward the strengthening of the ties between themselves and the community at large.

According to Reyes (2022), ethical leaders build trust and respect that lead to collaboration among teachers and engagement among learners. It expressly provides that ethical practices in leadership are relevant to the establishment of a secure and nurturing environment for learners. It further stresses the need for ethical behavior among leaders because it sets a tone that is pertinent to the general school culture. Research suggests that schools where there are ethical leaders have fewer relevant conflicts and better job satisfaction among faculty. Reyes also strongly advocates that training programs emphasize ethical decision-making and integrity.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2016.

The United Nations acknowledges the significance of gender equality in ensuring the right to education for all through its initiatives and programs. Specifically, they pledge to support gender-sensitive planning, policies, and learning environments; incorporate gender problems in teacher preparation and curricula; and abolish gender-based violence and discrimination among students in schools (SDG, 2016). This attempt to eliminate inequality and bias stemmed from the discrimination and the indifference of many people to individuals who the society see as different because of their physical and mental challenges or those who have decided to take on a path which is not part of the traditional culture which many are accustomed to.

Sustainable Development Goal 2020-2030.

World leaders pushed for a Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development at

the SDG Summit in September 2019. Additionally, it is aimed to increase funding, ensure implementation at the national level, and support institutions in order to meet the SDGs' 2030 deadline without leaving anyone behind. In an effort to speed up the realization of the SDGs, a number of civil society leaders and organizations have also urge world leaders to intensify efforts to aid the most vulnerable, support regional initiatives and innovation, strengthen data systems and institutions, rebalance the relationship between people and nature, and increase funding for sustainable development.

The 2020–2030 decade focuses on addressing the climate catastrophe, combating expanding poverty, and empowering women and girls. Ten years ago, a greater proportion of the global population led healthier lives than they do today. More individuals than ever have access to improved education, respectable employment, and healthcare. Further, effective leadership and unprecedented reforms are required to achieve the goals of sustainable development (Report on SDGs, 2022).

There is a significant progress been made in attaining the goal of primary education for all when the number of children worldwide who were out of school decreased by almost 50 percent. Literacy rates also increased significantly, and the number of females attending school is evident in majority of the places worldwide. However, there are other barriers in the continuous development in education such as elevated levels of poverty, armed conflict, and natural calamities where there is a higher tendency for high rate of out-of-school youth.

Henceforth, it is evident that the most important factor in achieving the SDG is to make sure that there is a high-quality education available for anyone. By 2030, the SDG aims to ensure that every single child has access to free quality education. Also, as they grow up, there will be free vocational training and courses that will enable them to secure a job thereafter.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI). The increasing concern on the diversity, due to the demographic shift, climate change, development in sexual orientations and gender identities, liberalities in terms of religions, cross cultural adoptions due to accessibility of the internet thus opening culture among nations, and

rising concerns on mental health, gives a heavy burden among government leaders and specifically, in a smaller scale - the Education System to focus and develop strategies to address the D.E.I. (OECD, 2023)

Diversity. Diversity pertains to the differences and uniqueness of each individual or of those who belong to a group. It could be skills, abilities, education, personality, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and others. Diversity matters because there is strength and beauty as one complements the other and learns from another to achieve the organization's goal. Moreover, there is what we call "gender diversity". Gender can be a 'gender assigned at birth' – whether male or female. Gender identity pertains to how someone experiences their own gender internally or as part of their core sense of self. Gender identity can develop or change over time. Gender role expectancies, which concern what society expects of a person together with his or her gender that led to stereotyping, have been one of the concerns being addressed since then (Wisdom, 2021).

According to one study, despite the recent developments to address the concerns on gender inequalities there are still different challenges experienced by the LGBTQ+ in higher education which are discrimination, lack of knowledge, bias and representation (Losleben et al., 2023).

It has been observed, based on the research of Heyi and Golga (2022) that in the field of educational management and leadership, more women are taking more initiative and involvement than men. However, opportunities continue to favor males over women, preventing the advancement of the latter. Section 35, General Provisions of the General Appropriations Act (GAA) for Fiscal Year 2023, or the Republic Act No.11936 mandates that all government agencies shall attribute at least five percent of its total appropriations to promote Gender and Development. In the case of the Department of Education whose appropriations for FY 2023 is P676,141,555,000.00, at least five percent of it is equivalent to P33,807,077,750 that is attributable to Gender and Development (RA No. 11936).

Equity in the Academe. Equity is that everyone can be successful and contribute to the organization's goals because the organization has identified each individual's strengths and weaknesses, and provided policies and procedures that will fulfill each need (Wisdom, 2021).

Smart school principals will put equality first by taking a transformative approach, as Practice I in the book advises, and by developing new ways of thinking and doing in order to break these ingrained habits. They will schedule time for introspection and self-awareness.

Practice II serves as a reminder to principals to carry out the mental and emotional labor of equity leadership. The principal of Anthony's school might have felt awkward or even terrified of discussing race with his staff and children. Effective school leaders, however, are aware that they cannot compromise the safety of their pupils for the convenience of the general public. Particularly vulnerable pupils require strong champions in their principles.

Equity requires a lot of effort. Practice III offers advice to principals on how to form a strong and efficient equity leadership team. This team will assist the principals as they carry out their plan for equity and make every effort to enlist as many people as they can.

Practice IV highlights the requirement for developing equity-focused systems through data collection and analysis as a collaborative process under the direction of the principle.

Practice V, which summarizes key practices that principals can and should repeat as they reflect on the past and make plans, concludes by reminding leaders of the significance of maintaining equity over the long term. Principals will need to continue developing coalitions and planning for change, for instance, by strengthening existing ties and fostering new ones (Gooden, 2021).

Inclusion. Inclusion is promoted when a safe place is provided for each individual, where diversity is embraced and each individual is valued, heard and respected, where they can be who they are and there are opportunities that await them (Wisdom, 2021). The United Nations crafted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD; United Na-

tions, 2006) in the year 2006. This policy highlighted the concern regarding the welfare of people with disabilities and corresponding special educational needs (SEN). Based on the guidelines, it was stipulated that people who have special educational needs must have the opportunity to be educated in the same way other children without disabilities are taught and trained (see Article 24). This puts emphasis on the idea that all human beings must be treated equally regardless of their differences. The CRPD became a wake-up call which prompted other countries to craft and formulate an educational system characterized with inclusiveness wherein the learners with or without special needs are joined together receiving the same kind of learning experience. Before this policy was put into effect, students were classified into learners with intellectual disabilities and students without intellectual disabilities. However, with many countries adapting this new policy, they develop learning challenges that are more generalized to all members of a class (Craddock & Owen, 2005; Feczko et al., 2019). In their research Möller and Zimmermann (2021) suggests that the focus should not be in the students' differences but on the kind of help that will be provided to them by the teachers and the entire school community. Because of this, it was thought that all students, regardless of their disabilities must have the same learning experiences as the other members of the class.

Inclusive Learning. Principals are recognized as crucial figures that are accountable for carrying out administrative duties in educational institutions and are expected to be effective and efficient. Part of their administrative function includes an efficient internal functioning school system, be the face of the educational institution where it is located and strictly implements educational policies. Principals also serve as ethical and professional role models for the improvement of teachers and other professional employees. Principals also ought to develop a policy which will amend the diversion existing within the educational institution (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

According to Dyal et al. (1996), a school principal plays a crucial role in fostering an ed-

ucational climate, which increases learning opportunities for all students, including those with special needs. It is also added that how the school principals envision, treats his or her teachers and subordinates, and how he or she performs his or her duties and responsibilities is an important component to maintaining an inclusive school environment.

Cohen (2015) identified the principal as the major figure, more than the teachers, or students, or administrative staff, which can influence majority of the individuals to implement inclusiveness inside the educational institution. When children with special needs are integrated into conventional classrooms by inclusive schools, they can socialize and interact with their peers (Jackson et al., 2000; Hussain, 2017). Inclusive education is the setup where a learning environment creates a new type of education that includes students with challenges in conventional school classes. This enables all students to significantly benefit from educational components and teaching methods tailored to their individual needs.

According to some studies, instructors frequently feel unprepared to meet the various requirements of pupils if they are not given adequate learning chances during their whole career as educators. For many years, the United States and other industrialized nations have recognized and backed the right of kids with disabilities to a quality education. It has become more important for principals and other school administrators to oversee educational initiatives and guarantee that these rights are realized for students with disabilities. The complementing fields of general and special education leadership were linked through discussions about principals and school administrators acting in the leadership and management capacities on behalf of students with disabilities. They took a leadership stance, which sparked discussions on the idea of inclusion and the provision of an inclusive education for kids with impairments.

The terms equality, social justice, and acknowledgement of the student's civil right to full inclusion in all facets of the educational endeavor are frequently used in contemporary conceptions of inclusive education. Before they can share a vision of inclusion, administrators

and school leaders must first consider the values and beliefs that shape their own thoughts and behaviors. This is because the processes involved in establishing an inclusive school climate require them to do so. In order for every student to reach full membership and feel welcomed and appreciated, principals and other school leaders must be prepared to work together with others to establish the type of school culture that uniformly and positively responds to differences (Pazey & Combes, 2020).

The concepts of vulnerability and difficult conversations regarding diversity and inclusion are known leading practices of effective leadership. These issues permit leaders to create a culture of trust and empowerment. Brown (2020) emphasized that to be an effective leader, one must confront personal biases and serve as a safe space for others to process their experiences. In the education context, equity refers to the identification of what each learner requires to succeed and the provision of that. Educators should practice the norms that secure fairness and allow all students to begin equally toward success. Winters (2021) studied culturally responsive teaching and stressed teachers' awareness of their biases in creating inclusive learning environments. With these principles in action, leaders will develop an educational environment that not only appreciates diversity but also promotes equity so that all students can have the chance to thrive on the equitable playing field. The integration of DEI into a school leadership framework is vital in creating an inclusive educational environment. Those who are able to lead effectively will identify and implement strategies to respond to the varied populations of students their schools serve. They will not only advocate for pertinent policies but will also act affirmatively to create a school culture that recognizes diversity and fights for equity (Snyder et al., 2022). This collaborative approach among staff and involving families in the learning process can assist leaders to build a community that can nurture the students' sense of belonging and motivation. Also, such leaders need to prioritize professional development so that educators themselves receive training to address the more immediate and long-lasting needs of students from marginalized groups.

Equitable School Leadership. When guided by a well-developed framework of effective school leadership, the majority of the framework's actions and attitudes can be implemented in ways that promote more equitable conditions and outcomes for students. A small subset of these practices and dispositions appears to play a particularly important role in the development of more equitable schools, and several other behaviors and dispositions associated with equitable leadership are worthy of mastery by leaders who are committed to promoting equity. Two particularly crucial strategies include encouraging teachers to employ ambitious and culturally sensitive teaching methods with all students and fostering strong partnerships between parents, schools, and the community. Leaders have a greater chance of achieving success when they adopt a critical attitude toward the policies, procedures, and practices of their organizations and develop a comprehensive understanding of the cultures, traditions, beliefs, and expectations of the children's families (Leithwood, 2021).

There are variations in how the mental traits are expressed and principals' dedication to fostering an environment that supports achievement for all pupils. We also revealed two unexpected qualities and different forms of attribute commitment. There were substantial disparities in the mentality qualities that were related to the principals' personal, professional, and educational factors (Nadelson, 2019).

There are eight Steps to making progress on DEI in the event that the principal doesn't know where to start (McDonald, 2021).

- 1) Sincerity – genuinely strive to make a meaningful change and not just do this because you have to
- 2) Transparency – be transparent to the team about what you do and do not know, and be open to receive help from them
- 3) Acknowledgment – acknowledge and be honest whether there is an existing issue about equity, inclusion and diversity so that there will be a meaningful progress to address the said issues.
- 4) Respect – respect amplifies sincerity and transparency. It fuels the team to be part of the movement thus making a meaningful progress to achieve DEI.

- 5) Tools – this are the means, such as research and trainings, needed by the team to determine DEI issues and how to address them.
- 6) Investment – making progress to achieve DEI will not be done by simply having sincerity, transparency, acknowledgement and respect. It will require the school and its leadership resources such as the time, capital and human resource.
- 7) Nurturing Talent – this pertains to the human resource or the team which will be part of to implement the achievement of DEI.
- 8) Goals – making progress in the DEI is a long journey, thus, it is important to set each goal which should be specific, achievable and measurable.

Effective school leadership is critical to create equitable learning environments (Gordon et al., 2020). Leaders who advocate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives can bring about a tremendous increase in teacher efficacy, thus establishing a culture that makes every student feel appreciated. Culturally competent training for leaders is critical so that they can address the diverse needs of their respective student populations. Khalifa et al. (2020), explained culturally responsive leadership is key to meeting the various needs of public-school students. By engaging families and communities as partners in the education process, leaders engender trust and feelings of belonging so necessary for equity. Meyer et al. (2021) insist that school leaders should intervene against bias and discriminatory behaviors in their schools. In doing so, leaders can make redress for inequities and start the pathway toward just and inclusive practices designed to dismantle systemic barriers against marginalized groups. In addition, inclusive leadership is about being able to create conditions that render all such persons safe and valued (Brown, 2020). To that end, leaders ought to invite diverse perspectives whilst making sure that all voices are heard, for such a stance is imperative to build a culture of belonging and equity in education. These views combined stress the indispensable place that leadership must occupy for inclusivity and equity within educational contexts.

It is contrary to Kendi (2021) to consider any pursuit of equity that does not first deal

with systemic injustices in education. Having recognized the inequities, the next goal is to facilitate concerted action to destroy the very systems that sustain these inequities—a goal that must be sought sincerely and admitted honestly in our journey toward equity. Also, Winters (2021) emphasized that culturally responsive teaching is a necessary condition for equity. Teachers must be aware of their biases and have fair practices that provide equal opportunity for success for their students.

Gooden (2021) emphasized the successful equity leadership requires a complete understanding of student marginalization agents and relevant strategies for their accomplishment; hence, principals must be willing to have difficult conversations around race, gender, and socioeconomic status toward an equitable learning environment. Such transformational effort view equity leadership as sustained and collaborative action.

Material and Methods

Research Design

This study collected and analyzed data using qualitative research design. The researcher thought it would be best to utilize the qualitative research method to have an in-depth understanding of the perception of the respondents regarding the leadership behaviors of school principals in the schools that were part of the exploration. The study employed qualitative research because it is more suitable in gathering data about real life people and situations in their natural settings (De Vaus, 2014; Leedy and Ormrod, 2014).

Data Gathering Instrument

In order to study the leadership practices of the school principals in public secondary schools in Marikina City, this study employed a qualitative research design. The semi-structured interviews were conducted according to a protocol developed by the researcher. It is composed of 8-item questions which depend on the exploration inquiries of the assertion of the issue of the review. The research instrument was validated by experts whose fields of expertise correspond to the subject of the study. These supplied the information for in-depth conclusions and arising subjects to help with tending to the key examination questions.

To answer the research questions of the participants' leadership behaviors, the responses of the school administrators were documented through interviews, focus group discussions, and other methods.

Research Participants and Demographics

The researcher employed purposive sampling of participants for the study. The participants were selected based on the recommendations of the Schools Division Office of Marikina following the specific set of criteria stipulated in the letter of permission to conduct the study among public schools in Marikina City. In the public school system, it is the School Governance and Operations Division, which decides and approves requests regarding academic research coming from within and outside the schools under the jurisdiction of SDO Marikina.

The number of respondents was based on the capacity of the researcher to interview and transcribe the qualitative data that was provided by the interviewees. In addition to this, (Patton, 2015) explained that there is no hard or fast rule in determining the number of respondents in qualitative research. The participants were contacted and were asked for their initial permission to be part of the study. Age, tenure with the Department of Education, and gender are a few of the criteria that were taken into account when choosing the principals. Finally, the study was carried out in several SDO Marikina public schools.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher interviewed the respondents which became the source of the qualitative data that was used in the study. The interview was done separately and was conducted in a secluded place in the school where they are assigned to protect the privacy of the interviewee. The rights of the participants are of top priority during the conduct of gathering the data and the researcher ensured that they will not be harmed.

The permission from the School Division Superintendent was requested and filed before the study began. In the letter of request, the research instruments are also included as per request of the Schools Divisions Office to all who

seek permission to conduct research investigations in public schools within Marikina City. The participants individually signed a consent form before he or she was a part of the study. Every participant was given an intensive clarification of the review's targets along with the scientist's arrangements for the information. The researcher accumulated experiences from the participants through interviews.

The participant was interviewed by the researcher in a location chosen by the respondent in order for every individual to feel comfortable and protected throughout the review. Further, he or she may withdraw from the interview at any time without needing to explain or justify his or her reasons. The participant was represented by an alias during data collection, analysis, and results to protect his or her privacy and at the same time there is truthfulness and validity on the findings, as each respondent can freely share their own thoughts with the researcher during the structured interviews without the need to be identified. Regarding this study, participants were instructed to use indirect descriptions when discussing personally identifying information.

For this study's qualitative data collection, the researcher designed and facilitated one-session semi-structured one-on-one interviews, documents, journal entries, and observations. Follow-up interviews were conducted in order to fill in any information gaps or absent information. During the interview, the researcher asked the respondent a predetermined list of specific questions, allowing them time to freely discuss their relevant thoughts and perceptions. Each interview was scheduled to last between half to one hour depending on the conversation and willingness of the participant to discuss which caused the conversation to end sooner or later than anticipated. Because the interviews will be semi-structured, the researcher may ask clarifying questions and the respondents to elaborate on the thoughts that they shared. The participant has the privilege to select a location where the interview was conducted and must not within his or her work hours, so they could discuss their thoughts and emotions with the researcher in comfort and safety. Both audio recordings and transcriptions of the interviews were created. Field notes will be handed out at a later time while

focusing on accurate accounts of the meetings so as not to detract from the conversation regarding the participants. For the elucidation of concepts and responses to study questions, a continuous comparison strategy of entering and exiting the site during multiple interviews were permitted.

Data Analysis

For the qualitative data of the study, the researcher asked open-ended questions to capture the data needed for the exploration. The various viewpoints and insights anticipated from each participating school administrator and teacher were analyzed by meticulously examining each interview and the corresponding documents and observations. After recording each interview and documenting insights in field notes, the data was scrutinized for emerging patterns, and common concepts were highlighted for each conversation. Gay et al. (2012) proposed a step-by-step way of categorizing emerging themes extracted from the interviews. After the series of interviews, with the use of notes and careful observations, similarities and differences observed among the perceptions of the respondents were written down and classified. It is imperative that the researcher applies the method of interviews, focus group discussions, and document review (if any), to draw an accurate description of each respondent's thoughts which were analyzed using appropriate methods as explained by Braun and Clarke (2019) in their reflexive thematic analysis protocols.

The most frequently cited technique for analyzing qualitative data is thematic analysis. Since the study made use of qualitative research design, the researcher opted to use reflexive thematic analysis originated by Braun and Clarke (2019). It is a method which makes use of interpretations and can be applied in various situations which needs qualitative research analysis. In the use of this method of research exploration, the personal views of the researcher are taken into consideration and not seen as something that poses a problem because it is regarded as an important aspect of the research process. Because of this, the researcher decided to make use of the investigative reflexive thematic analysis for her to be

able to make use of her skills in analysis as she utilizes it in educational research and gives light to things that are still difficult to understand which are related to the topic at hand. Trustworthiness measures such as member checking, triangulation through documents, and peer debriefing were used to strengthen the methodological rigor of the reflexive thematic analysis.

Results and Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine the school principals' leadership behaviors and conduct an in-depth analysis of their impact on issues concerning equity, inclusion, and gender equality in selected public schools in Marikina City. This chapter focuses on the narrative of the findings and ends with the overall summary. Chapter IV presents the analysis of the data which led to the emerging themes that are categorized three overarching themes followed. The illustrative statements made given by the participants which are aligned in the thematic patterns shown in the evidence are elaborated in discussion of the results. Finally, Chapter IV ends with a summary of the results of the study.

Research Question 1: What are the leadership behaviors of public-school principals that promote quality, inclusion, and gender equality in public schools?

For the first research question, the following themes were derived from the interview data:

Theme 1: *School Principals implement policies that promote equality and equity*

Findings from the data collected were fairly the same among the participants and they have shared that they are formulating policies, rules, and regulations which are universal in nature and will cater to everyone regardless of their gender and cultural backgrounds. This is supported by (Paqueo & Orbeta, 2017) when they argued that when dealing policy issues, cultural and historical context must be considered even in a qualitative way. The school heads even mentioned that they practice equity and equality in a way that they show respect to every teacher's belief as long as it is following the Code of Conduct prescribed by the Philippine Teachers' Professionalization Act of 1994.

Theme 2: *School Principals recognize diversity in school community.*

The responses of the participants revealed that they always make sure that teachers feel that they belong and that they are not different from the rest of the organization. They also mentioned that they make decisions in a way that the members of the faculty would not be alienated by any new policy. Further, a participant mentioned that the policies they make depend on the teachers' personality and she makes sure that as a school head, she always practices equality and equity that any of the rules and regulations will be for everyone and there will be no exception. The responses of the school heads are in line with the study of Danbaba (2021) who argued that the leaders' capacity to make strategic changes to the methods they use to the situations that confronts them, their comprehension of the root causes of the issues they run into, and how they handle those issues all play a significant role in how successful their leadership is.

Theme 3: *School Principals demonstrate consultative leadership when it comes to decision making.*

One school head respondent even shared that she is a consultative leader. This means that before making an important decision, the opinion and side of all concerned parties are taken into consideration. In relation to this, Levine and Tyson as cited in Khawam et al. (2017) argued that high representative, consultative and substantive participation by employees result in a significant and long-lasting increase in productivity. The school sees that involving her teachers and staff in decision-making helps her build trust and confidence among the people she leads.

Research Question 2: How do the leadership behaviors of the public-school principals promote equity, inclusion, and gender equality in public schools?

Research question two looked into the leadership behaviors of the public-school principals which promote equity, inclusion, and gender equality in public schools. The leadership behavior of the school head as manifested in their responses in the succeeding discussions,

is hard proof that they put high regard and respect to ideas and processes that will result to equity, equality, and inclusion to people who identify themselves with any gender preferences they choose to belong to. The following are the themes generated from the answers gathered during the interview.

Theme 4: *The principals support programs provided that activities promote respect for religion, culture, and diversity.*

The responses under Theme 3 suggests that the school activities are supported by the school principal as long as they are in line with the Department of Education's policies and does not violate any of the rights of the students, teachers, and other members of the school community. The school administration made it clear that they are serious in implementing the schools' policies and anything that will deviate from it or break it will be dealt with accordingly.

Theme 5: *School principals have respect for gender and discrimination is not tolerated.*

The study revealed that respect for gender and gender preferences is prioritized by the respondents of this research. They have shared that they respect members of the community no matter what their identity or beliefs are. For them, their own experiences in discrimination made them feel for the struggles of people who are punished just because they just wanted to be true to themselves. It is important to note that the Department of Education promotes gender equality in many aspects such as in classroom instruction and other extra-curricular activities. For the part of the school head, their leadership behavior's high regard for this belief of the Department where they belong as they formulate policies, rules, and regulations which will cater to all gender in the school community is the very things that will make a difference to learners, teachers and staff. Because of this, Marmani (2022) was right when she said that education or the school is still the most suitable environment for implementing positive interactions between people. There should be equal opportunities for both genders, which is the reason why policies and measures to advocate for gender equality in education.

This is something that school leaders must create and strive to preserve if their goal is to create an environment where equity and equality is observed.

Theme 6: *Sex and gender are not the basis for assigning teachers' ancillary tasks but their skills and talents.*

In a country with many cases of discrimination, responses of the school heads revealed that sex and gender was never a factor in deciding which task to give to a member of the school community particularly those among the faculty members. The Disaster Readiness and Risk Management is usually assigned to male teachers in the public school. The decision to do so I based on the idea that a male teacher is stronger, faster, and in many cases, a good strategist. Further, the masculinity of a male is often associated with heavy task that only man can accomplish it. The responses of the school head respondents totally contradict this practice as evidenced in their responses. The ability and the willingness to serve are the primary requisites they wanted to see with the person they will assign the task to. In connection to this, it was revealed in the study of Munive et al., (2023) that public leaders, which in this case, school principals, have a role in promoting gender equality as an integral societal principle, and in a collective effort to envision gender equality which is beneficial to everyone. The decision to give the assignment to a faculty depends on their ability to do the job and not dependent on their identity. This can be seen on how the Disaster Readiness and Risk Reduction Coordinatorship was assigned to a faculty member.

Theme 7: *Gender does not play a significant role in policy making for teachers and students.*

Theme 7 revealed that the respondents do not craft policies taking gender into consideration. The policies and guidelines that were made are completely in line with the DepEd Order which are supported by legal bases in education. Through this, they can ensure the equal opportunity for all is truly observed. The aforementioned results align with the statement of Munive et al. (2023), which states that when leaders are firm with regard to their support for equality as an intrinsic right, this creates a

venue that considers gender equality as a public value and this is recognized by the school community that the school leader serves.

Summary

The study focused on knowing the school principals' leadership behaviors and conducting an in-depth analysis of their impact on issues concerning equity, inclusion, and gender equality in public schools in Marikina City. The respondents revealed that when they formulate educational policies that are universal. They viewed policymaking to be a set of rules that is for everyone. This is a clear way of promoting equality, inclusion, and gender equality in public schools. Next, the school leaders shared that school policies must be universal. This means that there must be no exception to the rule. If one will benefit from a set of guidelines, one must not feel disadvantaged because of it. Third, school leaders stated that faculty members think that their decision is fair based on how they managed the school. Further, the respondents revealed that they support school activities by students that promote equality, equity and diversity under strict conditions. The respondents, based on the collected data, revealed that students are more empowered when they are the ones who spearhead activities. School heads think this is the better way since learners know what is best for them, they just need enough guidance. Finally, they shared that they advocate respect for gender and discrimination is not tolerated. They made sure that the guidelines are tailor fit to all the students coming from different backgrounds with different identities. They also added that sex and gender are not the basis for assigning ancillary tasks but their skills and talents.

Based on the aforementioned, the leadership behaviors of the public-school principals promote equity, inclusion, and gender equality in public schools in a number of ways that became evident because of this research investigation. From the way they make decisions, craft policies and guidelines and even in delegating tasks and other assignments, they highly consider each and every member of the community regardless of gender, beliefs, and general background. Finally, it is important to note that school heads also adhere to the Department of Education's marching orders which

will help uphold everyone's dignity and foster an environment where respect and consideration for every living being is a priority.

Key Findings

1. One of the primary duties of the school head is to formulate policies which help in determining the direction of the organization which he or she leads. In designing school policies, there are many things that the school head must consider, and this reflects his leadership behavior. The decision made by the principal is encompassing that it has an impact on many aspects like personnel which include the teachers, staff, and the learners. Therefore, before he or she crafts the rules and regulations, the school principal, according to the respondents and the accepted practice, they consider that all the policies reflect equity, equality, and are inclusive.
2. Fostering equality in the school community is one of the main characteristics of the policies made by the school head. These are particularly evident in the programs and decisions made by the school principal. Since there are members of the LGBTQ in the school community, the school administrators consult all the representative members so that the voices of each and every one are heard and considered in the decision-making process.
3. The school administrators show respect and support to the diversity of people which are present in his or her school community. The school principal allows display of different practices and beliefs in school as long as it does not violate the rights of the other members. Events and programs are also allowed as long as they are not against any DepEd Order or DepEd Memorandum. The school head respondents believe the true spirit of equity can be felt if everyone is respected and accepted no matter what their beliefs are and where they came from.
4. In today's society, gender is a very important construct. People who identify themselves with a gender they belong to longs for respect and acceptance from their family, peers and other members of the society. Based from the responses of the school heads, they put premium in seeing to it that members of the community, no matter which gender they identify with must be given equal opportunity to develop themselves and to be of service to the school and its members. Further, any activity of the LGBTQ, as long as they are in line with the DepEd Orders and DepEd memorandum are supported and allowed.
5. The school administrator respondents revealed that sex and gender are not basis for assigning ancillary tasks. They view all the faculty members to be equal in the eyes of men and must be give the same opportunity to serve based on their identified and demonstrated competence regarding a specific concern. For instance, assignments like Disaster Risk Reduction Management are not only given to males but also to females as well. Similarly, coaching tasks for dance competition for female category is not limited to females but are delegated to males as well.
6. The importance of policymaking concerning the rules and regulations that will be implemented which will serve as guidelines in the conduct of work does not discriminate any gender a teacher or any other employee identify themselves with. The school principals respect everyone regarding their gender preferences and ensures that policies that were made is applicable to all and uphold the right of everyone.
7. Finally, the importance of policymaking concerning the rules and regulations that will be implemented which will serve as guidelines in the conduct of the students as they go about fulfilling their academic activities are also not limited by the gender they prefer to have. The school heads make sure that they create an environment where the learners can freely express themselves. However, limitations are set and these are based from the DepEd Orders and DepEd Memorandums. As long as no DepEd provision is violated, they are allowed any form of expression. It is important to note, however, that the principals would really want to uphold the idea of following the rules and regulations because that is their compass for doing the right thing as a school manager.

Conclusion

1. Presently, school head respondents of the study abide by and practice leadership principles which makes the school environment a safe place for the diverse members of the community. Most importantly equity, as evidenced by the justice and fairness in all school operations, are enjoyed by all members of the school community.
2. The school head respondents' leadership behaviors help promote equity, inclusion, and gender equality in public schools by making decisions where the welfare of all the members of the community is taken into consideration. This is a clear manifestation of justice and fairness to everyone in the school community no matter where they belong and how they identify with themselves.

Recommendations

The researcher looked into the school principals' leadership behaviors and conducted an in-depth analysis of their impact on issues concerning equity, inclusion, and gender equality in public schools in Marikina City. In line with the findings of the study, the following concerns are hereby recommended:

1. School leaders may revisit and review school policies that may not be in line with diversity equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles to ensure that the rules and regulations take into consideration the rights of all the members of the community.
2. School leaders may craft local school policies that are sensitive to the issues of diversity equity, and inclusion. By doing so, schools will be a place where equal rights and opportunities will be observed for the benefit of all the members of the community.
3. Conduct of a quantitative research which may help in generalizing specific results of this study.
4. A study may be pursued using a larger population of school heads may be done so that observations can be made on the leadership behaviors of the school heads.
5. The study may be conducted among school principals of private education institutions to be able to compare the results of the present study.
6. Perspectives and experiences of the teachers and students may also be obtained to determine the consistency of the results of the

study with the responses of the faculty and the learners.

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