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Research Article

The Efficacy of Technical Assistance in Crafting and Appraising the Enhanced School Improvement Plan (E-SIP) in East Butuan District III

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ABSTRACT

Today's impact of technical assistance in improving organizational performance, its people, practices and mechanisms, and the organization itself is far more important than before. The study sought to determine the efficacy of technical assistance in crafting and appraising the E-SIP in the district. The study's participants were the school heads in the district holding different positions. Specifically, the participants were profiled in terms of years of experience, the number of leadership training attended, position, and years in school. The appraisal rating of the E-SIP was utilized, and it was found that there was a significant improvement in the ratings after the TA was provided. Further, paired t-test was used to test the significant difference between the appraisal rating before and after the TA was provided and revealed a significant difference characterized by the p-value of 0.000. It was found that when given appropriately and proactively, technical assistance has a long-term impact on school heads, TA providers, policymakers, and program implementers in improving organizational performance.

Keywords: *E-SIP, School Heads, Technical Assistance*

Introduction

One of the Key Result Areas (KRAs) of the district supervisors under KRA 2 is technical assistance in school management, which aims to provide technical assistance in the formulation of school plans (e.g., SIP) and their adjustments by conducting workshops, doing follow-through coaching, and giving appraisal and feedback on their draft plans so that all schools can have approved plans as the basis for budgeting, resourcing, and monitoring and evaluating the implementation. On this premise, district supervisors play a critical role in ensuring E-SIP quality in all schools under their guidance and supervision. Providing technical assistance is at the heart of achieving this objective to ensure the quality of formulated school plans.

The growth and development of every organization are greatly influenced by the quality of technical assistance (TA) provided by the TA provider to the TA recipients. This is to help

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solve problems, improve performance, get results, and gather data to inform policy formulation to enhance further the school's systems, practices, and mechanisms. School heads in the district have been provided with technical assistance from TA providers to ensure the functionality of their roles and responsibilities to attain valued results in their program implementation. Magcanas (2019) found out that, as a process, TA provides support to an organization with prioritized needs and can be delivered in various ways, such as consultation, small group facilitation, or through a web-based engagement.

Technical assistance is one of the most effective methods for building an organization's capacity. TA engagement differs in various aspects, such as duration, topic, form, and structure. It should be shaped using the following principles: collaborative, targeted, adaptive, customized, asset-based, accountable, and results-driven. Thus, TA is considered a significant component of professional development. TA is essential in providing professional help and guidance or support to others to impact performance by sharing information, helping them acquire a specific area of expertise, and referring to the source of information and competence they need (Magcanas, 2019).

As Dunst et al. (2019) cited, technical assistance describes information sharing, expertise, instruction, training, and other supports for improving a program, organization, or system's capacity to achieve specific goals, objectives, or outcomes. Katz and Wandersman (2016) reviewed the use of TA in promoting evidence-based prevention practices and the effectiveness of interventions to affect changes in outcomes of interest and concluded that there is little consensus about the essential features of TA and how to provide TA with quality.

Dunst et al. (2019) disclosed that the TA models and frameworks emphasize five core elements and practices to engage key personnel in the delivery of quality TA, which include needs assessment or gap analysis of desired changes or improvements; staff decision-making to establish priorities for TA; staff visioning in terms of what a program, organization, or system would look like if desired changes were achieved; an assessment of staff readiness for and commitment to making desired changes; and determining if the program, organization, or system has the resources needed to make desired changes.

Moreover, in the provision of TA, five core elements were considered, such as explicit efforts to establish the credibility of the TA provider and the proposed approach to TA; the use of some professional development or training to promote staff abilities to use targeted practices; the use of coaching or mentoring by the TA provider as part of professional development; TA provider consultation in response to staff requests for assistance and guidance; and TA provider support and performance feedback in response to progress toward using targeted intervention practices (Dunst et al., 2019).

As cited by West et al. (2012), TA was defined as a simple, straightforward activity where program manager requests help or a technical expert identifies a need to design a new or enhance an existing program; a content expert is determined to assist; the TA is provided, and recommendations from the TA are put into practice. But even a superficial assessment will quickly reveal that providing effective TA is a complex and challenging process. They also added that for TA providers to impact change and improvement and be successful through TA provision effectively, TA providers must maintain trusting relationships with the programs they are serving. TA recipients may not heed recommendations without such trust, even when compelling evidence for their effectiveness exists. Because TA can help improve the quality and relevance of research (and programs), TA providers who support in-country research teams (push) need to be familiar and experienced with the scientific, regulatory, and operational issues likely to be encountered.

According to Wilkinson (2016), TA helps build the capacity of service-providing organizations to achieve positive outcomes. TA can influence the delivery and deployment of services to its recipients and provides a high-leverage opportunity to drive better results on a large scale and make more efficient use of public and philanthropic resources.

East Butuan District III does not build a one-shot TA in crafting, formulating, and appraising

school plans such as the E-SIP. It puts a premium on long-term engagement by designing a customized district process flow in E-SIP submission.

TA provision first guides the school heads on the processes and standards to follow, spearheaded by the district supervisor. After receiving the needed inputs, the crating of the E-SIP commences with the collaboration with the School Planning Team (SPT), Project Team (PT), and the school head. A draft will be submitted to the district for checking, and corrections will be made to ensure its quality. The school head will then present the E-SIP to the district appraisal committee to validate the document and ensure the standards are met. The committee will then utilize the E-SIP Quality Assessment Tool (EQAT) in the appraisal phase. The E-SIP will be forwarded to the assigned district uploader if it meets the standards. If not, it will be returned to the school head for editing and revision. Finally, the district uploader will upload the finalized E-SIP to the division E-SIP vault/portal.

In the East Butuan District III context, nine school heads submitted their E-SIP with less quality, as shown in their appraisal results before the TA was provided. The contents of each chapter or part of the E-SIP do not conform with the standards set by the Region through (FTAD) based on the Quality Assessment Tool and found out that the E-SIP needs to be revised. To address this, the district has customized a district process flow for checking, modifying, appraising, and uploading the final copy of the E-SIP. This ensures that all E-SIPs have undergone this phase to ensure their quality and standards. Thus, this study aims to determine the efficacy of TA in crafting and appraising the E-SIP to ensure its quality in terms of its contents and alignment.

Methods

The study used complete enumeration with the inclusion criterion of being a full-fledged school head in identifying the study participants. Nine (9) or 100% of the school heads were taken as the study participants, and they were profiled in terms of years of experience, the number of leadership pieces of training attended, position, and the number of years in school. These were gathered through google forms sent to school head's group chats and were collated and analyzed. The E-SIP appraisal rating data were harvested using the E-SIP Quality Assessment Tool from the division portal. After the district appraisal committee deliberated, a district uploader was assigned to upload the QA results. The data were then used with permission from the E-SIP coordinator.

The researcher asked permission from the school heads and the division E-SIP coordinator to utilize the data in this study by sending messages to the GC and letters. Data analysis was conducted after collecting data in an E-SIP Quality Assessment Tool. Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) were used in interpreting the data. The mean of their responses for each parameter was computed to determine the E-SIP rating before and after the TA was provided.

Meanwhile, a paired t-test was also used to test the difference in the appraisal rating before and after the TA was given.

Results and Discussion

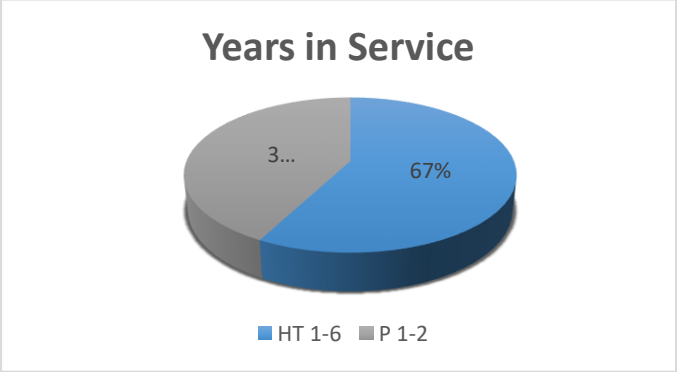

Figure 1. Participant's Years in Experience

Figure 1 shows that 67% of the school heads have 1-5 years of experience, and 33% have six (6) to ten (10) years of experience. A well-experienced school head is often attributed to their length of experience. This is supported by Maranan et al. (2018) findings. They claimed that expert school leaders had developed a healthy other-centered perspective of running their schools, possibly enhanced by years of engagement in the service. On the other hand, other school leaders employ knowledge and skill gained to support their survival which may lead to personal and professional disappointment depending on their competencies.

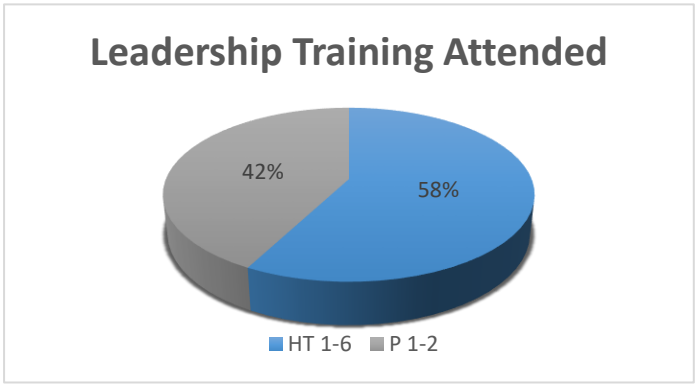

Figure 2. Participant's Leadership Training Attended

Figure 2 below reveals that 67% of the school heads have attended one (1) to five (5) leadership training to enhance their leadership skills in leading their respective schools, and there are 33% with six (6) to ten (10) pieces of training. Pieces of training attended by the school heads enrich their leadership and management skills and improve their capacity to craft the E-SIP.

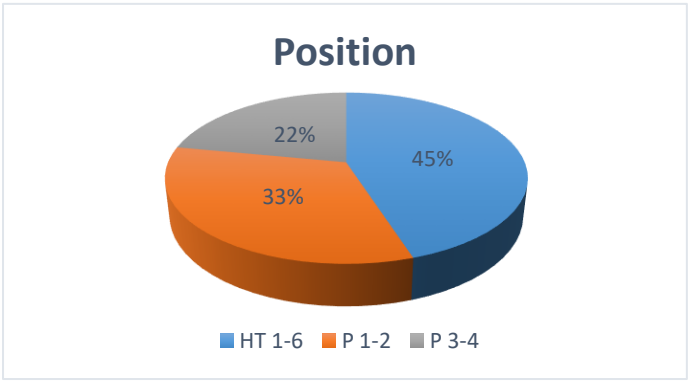

Figure 3. Participant's Position

Figure 3 shows that four 45% of the participants hold the head teacher 1-6 position, 33% hold the principal 1-2 position, and 22% hold the principal 3-4 position. The higher the position of the school head, the more they are exposed to various TA engagements from various TA providers, which helps improve their program implementation, mechanisms, and processes in the school they are in.

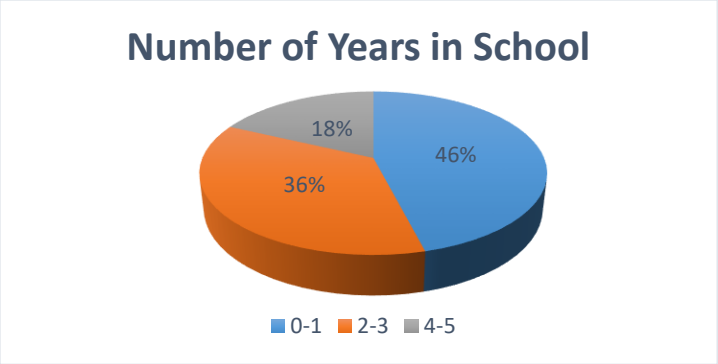

Figure 4. Participant's Number of Years in School

Figure 4 reveals that 46% of the school heads are assigned to the school for zero (0) to (one) 1 year, 36% are staying in the assigned schools for two (2) to 3 (three) years, and 18% of them are staying for four (4) to five (5) years. This means that the longer the school head stays in the station, the more they are exposed to the school-community culture and practices and the more knowledgeable they are in identifying priority improvement areas in the school, which shapes the quality of E-SIP in general.

Table 1. Mean Distribution of the E-SIP Appraisal Rating Before and After the Provision of Technical Assistance

School	Before			After		
	Total	Mean	Interpretation	Total	Mean	Interpretation
A ES	20	2.22	Meet Expectation	27	3.0	Exceed Expectation
2. B ES	19	2.11	Meet Expectation	27	3.0	Exceed Expectation
3. C ES	15	1.67	Below Expectation	27	3.0	Exceed Expectation
4. D ES	20	2.22	Meet Expectation	27	3.0	Exceed Expectation
5. E IS	14	1.56	Below Expectation	27	3.0	Exceed Expectation
6. F ES	18	2.0	Meet Expectation	27	3.0	Exceed Expectation
7. G NHS	21	2.33	Meet Expectation	27	3.0	Exceed Expectation
8. H ISS	17	1.87	Below Expectation	27	3.0	Exceed Expectation
9. I NHS	20	2.22	Meet Expectation	27	3.0	Exceed Expectation
Total	164	18.2		243	27	
MEAN	18.22	2.02	Meet Expectation	27	3.0	Exceed Expectation

Table 1 reveals that the E-SIP appraisal rating before the TA was provided to the school heads was 2.02, meeting expectations. In contrast, after the provision of TA, the rating was 3.0 or exceeded expectation. This shows that the TA provided effectively improves E-SIP quality by observing all the characteristics of a good E-SIP.

Table 2. Results of Paired T-Test Statistics on the Significant Difference in the E-SIP Appraisal Rating of the Schools Before and After the Technical Assistance Provided

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sig, (2-tailed)
Before	2.0222	.26953	.000
After	3.0000	.00000	

Paired t-test is utilized to determine if there is a significant difference in the appraisal rating of E-SIP before and after the TA was provided. Results showed a significant difference in the appraisal rating before and after the TA was given, characterized by a p-value of .000. This implies that the TA given was highly effective. This means that providing appropriate technical assistance has a significant impact on improving E-SIP quality in schools.

This goes with the study of Olson (2016) that long-term, ongoing TA is associated with better outcomes than a one-shot, time-limited effort. They further emphasized that TA providers offer expert guidance in specific substantive areas and form working relationships with stakeholders, including policymakers, program administrators, implementers, and service recipients.

The findings of this study were also supported by the findings of Magcanas (2019). He proved that TA had actual, measurable results, identified improvements in management practices or organizational performance, and tracked those measures for continuous improvement.

Conclusion

When given appropriately and proactively, the study found that technical assistance has long-term impacts to school heads, TA providers, policymakers, and program implementers in improving organizational performance.

Acknowledgment

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