

Strengths And Challenges In The Adoption Of The Philippine Professional Standards For School Heads (Ppssh) Among Public Elementary School Heads In Bislig City Division, Philippines: A Mixed-Method Study

Rex C. Apillanes, PhD
Graduate Studies Department
Saint Joseph Institute of Technology
Montilla Boulevard , Butuan City, Philippines

DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.15.08.2025.p16418
<https://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.15.08.2025.p16418>

Paper Received Date: 14th July 2025
Paper Acceptance Date: 16th August 2025
Paper Publication Date: 20th August 2025

Abstract

The main goal of this study was to assess the adoption of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSH) and describe the challenges and strengths based on the lived experiences of the public elementary school heads from the Bislig City Division. It is considered a complete enumeration of 51 public elementary school heads in the Bislig City Division for the quantitative part. The 15 school heads included in the FGD were chosen based on the following inclusion criteria; (1) has been designated as school head for at least 5 years, (2) eight of the school heads should be passers of NQESH, (3) seven of the school heads are non-passers of NQESH, and (4) voluntary participation in the FGD through the signed informed consent form. Following a sequential explanatory research design, quantitative data were treated with statistical tools while thematic analysis was used to extract relevant themes from the qualitative data. The findings are presented in the next discussion.

Index Terms

Strengths and Challenges, Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH)

I. INTRODUCTION

ABSTRACT

The main goal of this study was to assess the adoption of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSH) and describe the challenges and strengths based on the lived experiences of the public elementary school heads from the Bislig City Division. It is considered a complete enumeration of 51 public elementary school heads in the Bislig City Division for the quantitative part. The 15 school heads included in the FGD were chosen based on the following inclusion criteria; (1) has been designated as school head for at least 5 years, (2) eight of the school heads should be passers of NQESH, (3) seven of the school heads are non-passers of NQESH, and (4) voluntary participation in the FGD through the signed informed consent form. Following a sequential explanatory research design, quantitative data were treated with statistical tools while thematic analysis was used to extract relevant themes from the qualitative data. The findings are presented in the next discussion.

The role of school leaders is pivotal in shaping the academic environment, fostering a positive school culture, and ultimately influencing student outcomes. Effective school leadership goes beyond administrative tasks; it requires a diverse skill set encompassing strategic decision-making, interpersonal communication, instructional leadership, and the ability to navigate the complexities of the educational landscape. As schools strive to meet the evolving needs of students and

communities, the assessment of school leadership skills becomes crucial for ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of educational institutions.

Setting high standards for school leadership is an instrumental step to ensure a better quality of education for all. The competence and leadership skills of school leaders are crucial in the overall administration of schools and the attainment of their performance. Arrieta and Ancho (2022) stated that school heads or principals are essential leaders who guide the vision and mission of the school. Their ability to make informed and strategic decisions directly impacts the success of the educational institution. From curriculum development to resource allocation, principals must possess strong leadership skills to navigate the complexities of the education system.

In the recent trends of education, school heads need to be at par with the 21st-century skills and leadership competence to satisfy the national and international standards. In the Philippines, DepEd Order No. 024, series 2020 or the

National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) emphasizes “in line with the commitment of the department in supporting school heads so they can better perform their roles in schools, including the improvement of teacher quality, and through this, learner achievement.” PPSSH has three standing aims, and these are as follows: (1) set out clear expectations for school heads along well-defined career stages of professional development from beginning to exemplary practice; (2) engage school heads to actively embrace a continuing effort to attain high levels of proficiency; and (3) provide support for professional learning and development, help identify development needs, and facilitate uniform assessment performance.

The adoption of the PPSSH aims to ensure that school heads in all public schools will be guided by the high and appropriate standards to ensure better learning outcomes for all learners. However, since the issuance of Department Order (DO) 24, Series of 2020, there is no comprehensive assessment report or research output that describes the status of the adoption of the PPSSH. In effect, it poses a question: where are we now in terms of school management relative to PPSSH?

The goal of this study is to describe the current status of the school leadership of the school heads in Bislig City, considering the standards and targets under the PPSSH. It will particularly investigate the challenges and strengths in the adoption of PPSSH, considering as well the Key Results Areas (KRAs) that are expected to be achieved by the school heads. Further, documenting the lived

experiences of public school heads are an excellent step to understand and address pressing problems and optimize opportunities.

Findings

1. The status of PPSSH adoption in the public elementary schools of Bislig in terms of Leading Strategically, Managing School Operations and Resources, focusing on Teaching and Learning, Developing Self and Others, and Building Connections is very high. Among these five domains, focusing on Teaching and Learning obtained the least mean score, indicating areas needing improvements on technical supports, including research, instructional resources, technological facilities, and others.
2. Understanding and perceptions in the implementation of PPSSH produce four themes that reflect a robust endorsement of the PPSSH as a transformative and responsive leadership framework, such as professional and ethical leadership, transformational leadership in practice, inclusive and participatory governance, and instructional leadership. It not only delineates clear competencies but also fosters ethical practice, strategic transformation, community collaboration, and instructional excellence.
3. Challenges in the adoption of the PPSSH are evident. These are thematically described as: (1) constraints hindering effective leadership and (2) difficulties in collaborative capability building. These relevant themes emanate from the codes that came from the responses. Time Management and Work-Life Balance, Resource Limitations, Leadership and Management Skills, Technical Assistance and Guidance, Professional Development and Training, Stakeholder Engagement and

Support, and Understanding and Alignment with PPSSH are the significant codes that are generated from the experiences of the school heads.

4. In spite of the challenges, several strengths in the adoption of PPSSH were also identified. These are categorically described as follows: Continuous Growth through Effective Communication, Positive Environment through Stakeholder Engagement, Strategic Leadership with Community Support, and Proactive Leadership with Clear Implementation. Some of these notable positive attributes in schools might be present in some schools, but may not be true in others.

5. Recognizing the evident areas needing improvements, an output entitled *Leading with Excellence in the Generation's Emerging Needs and Demands* or the **L.E.G.E.N.D.** program, was proposed. This program generally recognizes the emerging needs and demands of the present generation when leading or managing schools. It encompasses the essence of technological support, evidence-based decision-making skills, time and resource management, collaboration and partnership, and continuing professional development and growth.

Conclusions

Based on the findings drawn from the data, the following conclusions are obtained.

1. The findings suggest that elementary school heads have largely embraced and effectively integrated the various domains of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) into their leadership practices. This high level of adoption

indicates a strong foundation for implementing the standards across elementary schools.

2. The themes emerging from the school heads' understanding and perceptions of PPSSH implementation highlight a comprehensive and progressive interpretation of the standards. This indicates that school heads view the PPSSH not merely as a set of guidelines but as a framework that fosters dynamic, ethical, collaborative, and instructionally focused leadership, ultimately aiming for improved educational outcomes.

3. Despite a high rate of adoption, the presence of challenges like constraints on effective leadership and difficulties in collaborative capacity building suggests that there are still systemic or operational hurdles that impede the optimal implementation of the PPSSH. Addressing these specific challenges is crucial for maximizing the standards' impact and ensuring sustained improvement in school leadership.

4. The identified strengths demonstrate that elementary school heads possess valuable resources and approaches that facilitate the successful adoption of the PPSSH. These strengths, particularly in communication, stakeholder engagement, community involvement, and proactive leadership, serve as key enablers for navigating challenges and fostering a conducive environment for continuous professional development and effective school governance.

5. The study concludes that there is a need for programs that intervene in or enhance traditional approaches to leadership by strategically addressing the pressing needs and demands of the time.

Recommendations

Relative to the findings and conclusions presented above, the following recommendations are generated.

The **Department of Education (DepEd)** may utilize the findings or output of the study as benchmark information in aligning its present support initiatives to promote highly competent school leaders in the country. Through the significant results and implications derived from the study, DepEd may optimize such information to tailor-fit its initiatives in line with fostering school leadership and management skills that are responsive to the demands of time.

School leaders / Administrators of Bislig City Division may also use the output and conclusion of this study as relevant inputs to the school improvement plan, along with its implementation and monitoring. By acknowledging the identified strengths and challenges, the schools may institutionalize the output of the study, specifically the strategies and activities that are emphasized in the **L.E.G.E.N.D** program.

Teachers may also utilize the results and relevant implications from the study through active participation in Learning Action Cell (LAC), pursuit of graduate studies, and production of instructional resources. It is recommended that teachers also reflect on the challenges and strengths that surfaced from the analysis in the development of action plans, even at the school and classroom levels.

Future researchers may also expand the scope of the study by including public secondary schools in the Division of Bislig City. The major findings and

conclusions may shed light on the existing body of knowledge regarding the adoption of PPSSH. Moreover, modelling the adoption of PPSSH is a potential research area that might be ventured into by a group of interested researchers in the future

II. IDENTIFY, RESEARCH AND COLLECT IDEA

This chapter discussed the research design, research locale, respondents, research instruments, data gathering procedure, and statistical tools used for data analysis and appropriate interpretation.

Research Design

This study employed a multi-method research design using both quantitative and qualitative data. The first phase constituted the quantitative part, which dealt with the assessment of the status of the implementation of PPSSH in terms of the different domains such as leading strategically, managing school operations and resources, focusing on teaching and learning, developing self and others, and building connections.

The second phase involved gathering the qualitative data, which asked for the general understanding and perceptions of the school heads in the implementation of PPSSH domains. Likewise, the challenges encountered by the school heads in implementing the PPSSH standards were sought, as well as the strengths experienced by the school heads in the attainment of the different domains of PPSSH.

Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the quantitative data, and thematic analysis was used to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within

the qualitative data. Focus group discussions and interviews were used to gather qualitative data.

The output of this study was a proposed intervention or action plan to enhance the adoption and implementation of the PPSSH standards among elementary school heads.

Research Respondents / Participants

The target respondents of this study were the 51 school heads representing all 51 public elementary schools across the eight districts within the Division of Bislig City. As a single school leader heads each school, a total enumeration approach was employed to capture a complete quantitative data set from the entire population of school heads. This ensured comprehensive representation and strengthened the reliability of the quantitative findings.

In the qualitative phase of the research, a total of 15 school heads were selected to participate in a Focused Group Discussion (FGD) using purposive sampling. This method allowed for the deliberate selection of participants who could provide rich, relevant insights based on their experience and context. The number of participants selected for the FGD aligns with the recommendations of Braun and Clarke (2006), who suggest that smaller, carefully chosen groups are most effective in qualitative research for generating in-depth thematic data. Table 1 presents the breakdown of the study's population and sample for both the quantitative and qualitative components.

Table 1

List of Districts with the Respondents and Participants

Districts	N	n	Participants
Bislig 1A	4	4	2
Bislig 1B	6	6	2
Bislig 2A	8	8	2
Bislig 2B	8	8	2
Bislig 2C	8	8	2
Mangagoy 1	8	8	2
Mangagoy 2A	2	2	1
Mangagoy 2B	7	7	2
Total	51	51	15

Furthermore, the 15 school heads included in the FGD were chosen based on the following inclusion criteria; (1) has been designated as school head for at least 5 years, (2) eight of the school heads should be passers of NQESH, (3) seven of the school heads are non-passers of NQESH, and (4) voluntary participation in the FGD through the signed informed consent form.

The majority of the school heads (51%) have served in the Department of Education for 21–30 years, indicating a high level of institutional knowledge and system familiarity. Meanwhile, those with 11–20 years and 31+ years of service are equally represented (each at 25.5%). This diverse range of service years suggests that the school leadership group consists of a healthy

mix of mid-career and senior professionals, which is beneficial for peer mentoring and experience sharing.

A significant proportion of the school heads (51%) have 11 years of experience in leadership roles, suggesting a high level of administrative and leadership maturity. However, 25.5% are newly appointed leaders (less than 1 year), which may pose challenges in policy implementation, especially with frameworks like the PPSSH that require strategic competence. These findings point to a need for differentiated leadership support programs targeting both novice and veteran school heads.

Most respondents are Head Teacher 3 (37%) and Principal 1 or Head Teacher 1 (each at 25.5%). A small number hold the Head Teacher 2 designation. This distribution implies a balanced but stratified leadership structure, with varied administrative scopes and responsibilities. The prominence of Head Teachers (as opposed to Principals) suggests that many of the school heads are functioning in leadership roles even if not yet formally occupying principal designations, a trend commonly observed in smaller or multi-grade public schools.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at the Schools Division of Bislig City. Bislig City is a coastal component city in the province of Surigao del Sur. It has a land area of 331.80 square kilometers or 128.11 square miles, which constitutes 6.73% of Surigao del Sur's total area. Its population, as determined by the 2020 Census, was 99,290, which represented 15.46% of

the total population of Surigao del Sur province, or 3.54% of the overall population of the Caraga region. Based on these figures, the population density is computed at 299 inhabitants per square kilometer or 775 inhabitants per square mile (PhilAtlas, n.d.).

The division is composed of 70 schools, which include 19 secondary and 51 elementary schools. However, this study was conducted in selected public elementary schools of the eight districts of the division, as described below:

Bislig 1A District is a thriving educational community composed of four schools, each guided by a dedicated school head and supported by a team of 68 teachers. Its district office is strategically located at the heart of Bislig Central Elementary School, serving as a central point for coordination and support under the leadership of a Public Schools District Supervisor.

Bislig 1B District is comprised of six schools, each overseen by a school head and supported by a dedicated team of 60 teachers. The district office is settling at Stand Alone Senior High School in Cumawas, Bislig City, serving as the central hub for district operations and coordination.

Bislig 2A District, led by a dedicated Public Schools District Supervisor, oversees eight elementary schools, supported by 64 teachers. Most of these teachers are assigned to schools in the hinterland areas where they work tirelessly to deliver quality education to students in remote communities.

Meanwhile, Bislig 2B District comprises eight schools with 61 supportive teachers. Two of these schools are situated in an urbanized area,

while the rest are in rural areas. A new public school district supervisor mans the district.

Bislig 2C is the fifth district of the division and is in the coastal areas, composed of 8 schools with 63 teachers. The district includes one multi-grade school, catering to learners across different grade levels in a single classroom setting.

Mangagoy 1 District, located at the heart of Barangay Mangagoy, consists of eight elementary schools, supported by 121 teachers. The district is dedicated to inclusive education, with two of its schools offering the Special Education Program and Madrasah Education Program.

Mangagoy 2A District is the smallest in terms of the number of elementary schools but stands out for having the largest number of enrollees, largely due to the presence of a large secondary school that attracts students from surrounding areas.

Mangagoy 2B District is composed of seven elementary schools, three of which are located along the coastal areas, serving the needs of the local coastal communities. The central school in Barangay Mangagoy serves as a hub for both Madrasah and Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners.

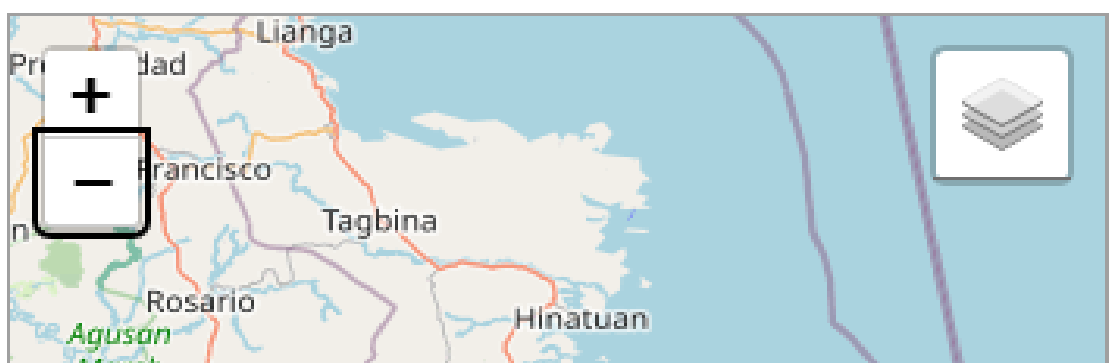


Figure 3. Geographical map of Bislig City Division

Research Instrument

This study employed a researcher-made survey questionnaire, meticulously structured in alignment with the chronological flow of the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. The instrument was designed to collect comprehensive data on the adoption of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) within the context of public elementary schools in the Division of Bislig City. The questionnaire consisted of four distinct sections.

The first part gathered the professional profiles of the respondents, such as relevant training. The second part assessed the extent of PPSSH adoption across its five domains, with each domain represented by ten carefully formulated statements intended to capture school heads' levels of awareness, implementation, and perceived relevance of the standards.

The third part comprised open-ended questions aimed at eliciting the specific challenges encountered by school heads in the implementation of the PPSSH, while the fourth section focused on uncovering their perceived strengths, successes, and positive experiences related to the application of the standards in their respective leadership practices.

To ensure content and face validity, the survey instrument underwent rigorous validation procedures. It was first reviewed by the research panel and the thesis adviser, who provided feedback to enhance the clarity, relevance, and alignment of the items with the study's objectives. Subsequently, three independent external experts who were secondary

school heads from the division with recognized expertise in educational leadership and research were consulted to validate the instrument further, ensuring that each item effectively captured the constructs under investigation. This robust process of instrument development and validation underscores the study's commitment to methodological rigor and the credibility of its findings.

In addition to content validation, the reliability of the closed-ended items in Section 2 (Likert-scale items on the five PPSSH domains) was tested through a pilot study involving a sample of respondents who were not part of the actual study. The internal consistency of the instrument was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The overall reliability score yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, indicating a high level of internal consistency and suggesting that the items reliably measured the intended constructs across the five domains of the PPSSH.

Data Gathering Procedure

To ensure an ethically sound and methodologically responsible research process, this study strictly adhered to established ethical standards and institutional protocols designed to safeguard the rights, privacy, and confidentiality of all participants. In compliance with data protection policies and ethical research guidelines, several key steps were undertaken to uphold the integrity of the study.

First, the researcher prepared a formal letter of request addressed to the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) to secure permission to conduct

the research. This request was duly coursed through the appropriate administrative channels, specifically through the designated public secondary district supervisors, following the prescribed communication protocols of the Department of Education.

Second, upon receiving approval from the SDS, the researcher issued individual letters of invitation to the identified school heads or principals. These invitations included detailed information regarding the purpose of the study, the nature of participation, and an explanation of any potential risks and benefits involved. The aim was to provide respondents with ample time and clarity to make an informed decision regarding their voluntary participation in both the survey and interview phases.

Third, after securing the participants' confirmation, the researcher scheduled the survey administration and interviews at a mutually convenient time and location. The scheduling process was designed to accommodate the availability of each respondent, ensuring minimal disruption to their professional responsibilities.

Finally, at the outset of each face-to-face interview, participants were asked to read and sign an informed consent form. This form reiterated the objectives of the research, confirmed their voluntary participation, and assured them of the confidentiality of their responses. For those requiring clarification, the researcher was available to provide further explanation. Participants were also informed that interviews would be audio-recorded solely for transcription and analysis purposes, and that all recordings would

be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. Furthermore, respondents were assured that their identities would remain anonymous in the final report.

In addition, the researcher explained the data management procedures, including how all collected data would be safely handled, stored, and protected from unauthorized access. Participants were also informed of their right to request access to the research findings. Before conducting thematic analysis, all data were carefully cleaned and organized, following the qualitative data analysis procedures outlined by Creswell and Clark (2017), to ensure accuracy and reliability in the interpretation of results.

Ethical Considerations

Before the conduct of the interviews, consent was obtained from the participants. In the interview, to avoid conflicts or misunderstandings, the researchers informed the participants of their limits. A letter of request was sent to the Schools Division Superintendent of Bislig City Division. Upon approval, the researcher identified the respondents to be involved in the study and sent a letter to the Elementary School Principal of each school to legitimize the conduct of the study. Likewise, a letter of consent was also prepared to ensure that all their responses were treated with utmost confidentiality and used for research purposes only. The institutional informed consent form was used in this study. All participants were given the luxury of time to read and understand the said form. In addition, a comprehensive and brief orientation about the topic was held before the actual survey and

interviews. It was also further emphasized to them that their participation was voluntary and that they were not forced to participate. If they had already promised to participate, it was also made clear that they still had the right to withdraw from the interview at any point in the process. This mechanism ensured the completeness of high ethical standards.

The researchers assured the participants that all the data gathered would be kept confidential and would not be known to anyone not involved in the study. This case would not be ignored or set aside by the researchers. In the interview, punctuality was observed. The dress code was appropriate and precise. And finally, the researchers were very careful to avoid misunderstandings with the participants and showed respect. Furthermore, the confidentiality of the information was maintained by keeping the acquired data private and not exposing the identity of the participants while releasing the results.

Statistical Treatment

The following statistical tools were used to treat the data gathered in this research.

Frequency and Percentage. These descriptive statistics were used to describe the profile of the school heads, and the results were used to describe the respondents.

Mean and Standard Deviation. These measures were used to determine the status of adoption of the PPSSH in the different public elementary schools in Bislig. It was also utilized to describe the extent of the identified strengths and challenges in

the adoption of PPSSH. In particular, these formulas were used to answer problem 2.

Thematic Analysis. This technique of grouping actual sentences, words, or phrases was used to describe the experiences of the teachers and the school heads.

After being highly familiar with the responses and their salient points, the next phase involved coding. Codes were identified by grouping statements or responses that commonly suggest similar meanings. In this research, codes have been extracted by considering each problem statement to be answered.

After generating relevant codes, the next phase was searching for themes. As defined by Creswell and Clark (2007), this phase dealt with identifying patterns from the codes in response to a given problem statement. It must be noted that in FGD, there was a possibility of overlap between coding and the extraction of themes. This occurred when the responses of the study participants were homogeneous concerning the specific objective. On the other hand, when there were relatively many codes, grouping and organizing such codes were performed to generate broader themes that had direct implications or answers to the problem statement. This phase basically produced preliminary themes that were subjected to deeper perusal in the next step.

The preliminary themes extracted were further reviewed by cross-checking with the research objectives. In this phase, the researcher

scrutinized whether the themes were truly making sense to answer the problem statement. More particularly, the researcher traced back the actual statements and verified coherence from the extraction of codes and the emergence of relevant themes.

Before finalizing or writing the report, the themes were first finalized. In this phase, the researcher investigated interrelationships among themes that were extracted considering a particular objective. If there were sub-themes, the correlation was analyzed at this level. Also, in this phase, a thematic map was produced to visualize interrelationships among sub-themes of the major theme.

Finally, when the major theme was extracted to answer a particular problem statement, the final report was prepared. This was the last phase of the framework suggested by Creswell and Clark (2007). In the final writing of the results, necessary discussions and implications were highlighted. Regarding the existing literature, the discussions were also verified in terms of similarities and differences from the results of the previous studies. The researcher also emphasized the position of the findings against the existing body of knowledge related to the main topic.

III. WRITE DOWN YOUR STUDIES AND FINDINGS

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the results based on the data gathered. Conclusions and recommendations are also shown considering the relevant implications from the findings.

Problem 1. What is the status of PPSSH adoption in the public elementary schools of Bislig in terms of the following domains: Leading Strategically, Managing School Operations and Resources, Focusing on Teaching and Learning, Developing Self and Others; and Building Connections?

Table 2 presents the status of PPSSH adoption in the public elementary schools of Bislig in terms of the Leading Strategically Domain. It presents the status of PPSSH adoption in public elementary schools in Bislig City, with a specific focus on the Leading Strategically domain. Notably, Item 2, which pertains to staff involvement in the formulation and execution of strategic plans, garnered the highest mean rating of 4.88, interpreted as very high. This result underscores the school heads' effectiveness in fostering collaborative leadership, where teachers and other stakeholders are actively engaged in shaping and implementing the school's strategic direction. Such participatory practices promote a culture of shared ownership, transparency, and collective accountability—hallmarks of effective school leadership under the PPSSH framework.

Table 2

Status of PPSSH adoption in the public elementary schools of Bislig in terms of the Leading Strategically Domain

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1. The school head has a clear and well-defined strategic vision for the development of the school.	4.75	0.46	Very High

2. The school head regularly involves staff members in creating and implementing the strategic plan for the school.	4.90	0.35	Very High
3. The school head ensures that all school activities are aligned with the broader goals outlined in the strategic plan.	4.10	0.52	High
4. The school head effectively allocates resources (time, budget, personnel) to support the implementation of the school's strategic initiatives.	4.88	0.35	Very High
5. The school head actively monitors the progress of strategic initiatives and makes adjustments as necessary.	3.35	0.52	Average
6. The school head communicates the strategic goals and vision clearly to all staff, ensuring everyone understands their roles in achieving these goals.	4.88	0.35	Very High
7. The school head fosters a culture of continuous improvement and encourages staff to contribute innovative ideas to the school's strategic plan.	4.75	0.46	Very High
8. The school head ensures that the strategic direction of the school aligns with the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH).	4.12	0.52	High
9. The school head is proactive in anticipating challenges that could affect the achievement of the school's strategic goals and takes appropriate action to address them.	3.38	0.53	Average
10. The school head maintains a strong and positive relationship with external stakeholders (e.g., local government units, parents, and community leaders) to support the strategic goals of the school.	4.88	0.35	Very High
Overall	4.40	0.44	Very High

Note: Mean scores falling within 1.00-1.79 Very Low, 1.80-2.59: Low, 2.60-3.39: Average, 3.40-4.19: High, 4.20-5.00: Very High

This finding is corroborated by the study of Pana (2024), who emphasized that school heads within the Department of Education (DepEd) consistently demonstrate strength in strategic planning. Pana attributed this to the institutional mandate requiring school leaders to lead the development of key planning

instruments, such as the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP). These documents not only serve as planning tools but also reinforce the importance of consultative and data-informed leadership in the Philippine educational context.

Conversely, the lowest-rated item in the domain—Item 5, which deals with the monitoring of progress toward strategic goals—received a mean score of 3.35, classified as moderate. This suggests a notable gap in the systematic tracking and evaluation of implemented strategies. While school heads appear capable in the planning and initiation phases, there is evidence of a shortfall in ensuring that these plans are continuously monitored and adjusted based on evidence of progress or setbacks.

The findings are further validated by Decena and Galarosa (2024), who emphasised the need for strengthening school leaders' competencies in monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Their study recommended targeted capacity-building programs to equip school heads with the necessary skills to interpret data, apply evidence-based adjustments, and establish feedback mechanisms for continuous school improvement. This underscores the critical role of M&E not only as a technical process but as a strategic function that ensures accountability, relevance, and impact of school-based initiatives.

In summary, while the data affirm the strong strategic leadership of school heads in terms of planning and stakeholder engagement, they also highlight the need to enhance their capacity in tracking implementation fidelity and using data for

adaptive decision-making—a vital component for sustaining progress and institutionalizing school reforms.

The overall mean score of 4.40 in the Leading Strategically domain indicates a very high level of adoption of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) among school heads in Bislig City. This result suggests that school leaders in the division demonstrate strong strategic leadership skills, particularly in articulating a clear school vision, fostering shared decision-making among staff, effectively allocating resources, maintaining open lines of communication, and nurturing relationships with internal and external stakeholders. These competencies align closely with the expectations outlined in Domain 1 of the PPSSH, which emphasizes the importance of visionary leadership and strategic planning in improving school performance and learner outcomes.

The high mean score reflects a commendable level of commitment and capability among school heads in translating strategic goals into actionable plans, aligning school initiatives with broader educational priorities, and ensuring collaborative governance. This may also indicate the presence of ongoing professional development programs, strong support systems, and a culture of shared leadership within the division.

However, despite these strengths, qualitative responses and item-level analysis reveal that monitoring and evaluating progress toward strategic goals remains an area for improvement. This gap highlights the need for enhanced mechanisms in performance tracking, data utilization, and continuous improvement processes. Effective strategic leadership is not only about setting direction but also

about sustaining momentum through evidence-based decision-making and timely adjustments. Thus, capacity-building efforts may need to focus on developing more robust tools for monitoring school progress and training school heads in data interpretation and impact assessment.

Addressing this area will ensure that strategic initiatives are not only well-intentioned but also well-executed and responsive to changing school contexts. Ultimately, strengthening the monitoring dimension of strategic leadership will contribute to more adaptive, accountable, and learner-centred school management.

Table 3 presents the status of PPSSH adoption in public elementary schools in Bislig City, specifically within the domain of Managing School Operations and Resources. Among the indicators, Item 1, which pertains to effective resource allocation, registered the highest mean score of 4.88, indicating a very high level of adoption. This reflects the school heads' strong capacity to judiciously allocate financial, human, and material resources in alignment with school goals and learner needs. It also suggests a high level of administrative competence and fiscal responsibility, which are critical to sustaining quality education services.

Table 3

Status of PPSSH adoption in the public elementary schools of Bislig in terms of the Managing School Operations and Resources Domain

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1. The school head ensures that school resources (e.g., funds, facilities, teaching materials) are allocated effectively and efficiently to meet the needs of the school.	4.88	0.35	Very High
2. The school head monitors the use of resources to ensure they are being utilized in line with the school's goals and objectives.	4.75	0.46	Very High
3. The school head has developed and implemented effective systems for managing the school's operations, such as scheduling, budgeting, and personnel management.	4.75	0.46	Very High
4. The school head ensures that all staff members are properly trained and equipped to manage the resources they are responsible for.	4.19	0.52	High
5. The school head encourages accountability and transparency in the management and use of school resources.	4.75	0.46	Very High
6. The school head ensures that all school operations, including administrative tasks, teaching activities, and student services, are running smoothly and efficiently.	4.75	0.46	Very High
7. The school head has established clear policies and procedures for the allocation and use of resources within the school.	4.18	0.52	High
8. The school head actively involves staff in decision-making processes related to school operations and resource management.	4.75	0.46	Very High
9. The school head effectively uses data and feedback to make informed decisions on how to improve school operations and resource management.	3.36	0.52	Average
10. The school head has created a conducive environment for the efficient management of school resources, ensuring that the needs of students and staff are met.	3.38	0.53	Average
Overall	4.37	0.48	Very High

Note: Mean scores falling within 1.00-1.79 Very Low, 1.80-2.59: Low, 2.60-3.39: Average, 3.40-4.19: High, 4.20-5.00: Very High

This finding aligns with the conclusions of Gaspar et al. (2022), who noted that the strengthened policies of the Department of Education (DepEd) on transparency and accountability have significantly enhanced the ability of school heads to manage resources effectively. The institutionalization of financial reporting mechanisms, coupled with oversight from the Schools Division Offices, has reinforced responsible budgeting practices, ensuring that resources are not only optimally utilized but also equitably distributed. These practices uphold the PPSSH's emphasis on resource stewardship as a key leadership competency.

On the other hand, Item 9, which relates to the use of data-driven decision-making, received the lowest mean score of 3.36, interpreted as average. This points to a considerable gap in the ability of school heads to gather, analyse, and utilise data as a basis for operational and instructional decisions. While resource allocation appears to be a well-established practice, the strategic use of empirical evidence and performance metrics to inform planning and interventions remains an area for improvement.

This concern is substantiated by the findings of Mandap and Almario (2024), who observed that deficiencies in school administrators' use of relevant data often lead to ineffective decision-making and missed opportunities for targeted improvements. Their study emphasized the need for capacity-building initiatives focused on data literacy, school-based research, and the use of key performance indicators (KPIs). Without these skills, school heads may rely on intuition or tradition rather than evidence-based practices, potentially compromising the effectiveness of school operations.

In sum, while the domain reflects overall strong adoption of PPSSH competencies—especially in operational efficiency and resource management—there is a pressing need to strengthen school leaders' capacity for data-informed leadership. Enhancing this competency will not only lead to more precise and responsive decision-making but will also promote a culture of accountability, continuous improvement, and results-based management, which are essential pillars of effective school governance. The overall mean score of 4.37 in the Managing School Operations and Resources domain reflects a very high level of adoption of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) among school leaders in Bislig City. This result signifies that school heads demonstrate a strong capacity for effectively managing day-to-day school operations, including the efficient use of financial, human, and physical resources. Their proficiency is particularly evident in key areas such as resource allocation, monitoring of systems and processes, accountability practices, and fostering collaborative staff engagement—all of which are essential components of operational excellence in school leadership.

These strengths indicate that school heads are able to establish and maintain systems that support teaching and learning, ensure the availability and equitable distribution of resources, and promote transparency and shared responsibility in school management. Moreover, their ability to mobilize and engage staff in operational planning underscores a culture of participatory leadership, which is vital for sustaining a well-functioning and responsive school environment.

However, despite these positive indicators, the data also suggest that data-driven decision-making remains an area in need of further enhancement. While school heads appear adept at overseeing logistical and administrative functions, there may be limited use of empirical data in shaping decisions related to budgeting, personnel deployment, learning environment improvements, and policy adjustments. This gap could stem from constraints such as limited training in data analytics, lack of access to real-time school performance data, or insufficient integration of monitoring tools into daily operations.

To address this, targeted capacity-building programs should be considered, focusing on strengthening the school heads' competencies in interpreting and applying quantitative and qualitative data for strategic and operational decisions. Encouraging a culture of evidence-based management will not only enhance efficiency but also ensure that school operations are more responsive to learner needs, aligned with school improvement goals, and anchored in measurable outcomes.

Ultimately, bridging this gap in data-informed leadership will help school heads move beyond routine management toward more strategic, impact-oriented practices, fulfilling the broader objectives of the PPSSH in transforming school leadership in the Philippines.

Table 4 presents the status of PPSSH adoption in the public elementary schools of Bislig in terms of the Focusing on Teaching and Learning Domain.

Table 4

Status of PPSSH adoption in the public elementary schools of Bislig in terms of the Focusing on Teaching and Learning Domain

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1. The school head ensures that teaching and learning are prioritized in the school's overall vision and planning.	4.63	0.52	Very High
2. The school head fosters a positive and supportive environment that enhances student learning outcomes.	4.15	0.53	High
3. The school head ensures that teachers receive continuous professional development opportunities to improve their teaching effectiveness.	3.90	0.76	High
4. The school head actively encourages the integration of innovative teaching strategies and approaches to improve the learning experience for students.	4.63	0.52	Very High
5. The school head ensures that the curriculum is implemented effectively and is aligned with the learning needs of students.	4.63	0.52	Very High
6. The school head promotes a culture of high expectations for both students and teachers in terms of academic performance.	2.55	0.46	Low
7. The school head regularly monitors teaching and learning activities to ensure the effective delivery of lessons and student engagement.	4.75	0.46	Very High
8. The school head promotes collaborative teaching practices and encourages teachers to share best practices to improve student outcomes.	3.39	0.53	Average
9. The school head actively involves parents and the community in supporting student learning and school programs.	3.37	0.53	Average
10. The school head ensures that the assessment and evaluation of student learning are fair, transparent, and aligned with the curriculum goals.	3.34	0.53	Average
Overall	3.93	0.54	High

Note: Mean scores falling within 1.00-1.79 Very Low, 1.80-2.59: Low, 2.60-3.39: Average, 3.40-4.19: High, 4.20-5.00: Very High

Table 4 presents the status of PPSSH adoption in public elementary schools in Bislig City, specifically under the domain of Focusing on Teaching and Learning.

Among the indicators, Item 7, which pertains to the monitoring of teaching and learning, garnered the highest mean score of 4.75, classified as very high. This suggests that school heads are highly consistent in observing classroom instruction, providing feedback, and ensuring alignment between teaching practices and learning standards. Such monitoring is a cornerstone of instructional leadership, a role increasingly emphasized in the Philippine educational context. Regular classroom observation allows school heads not only to support teacher growth but also to maintain accountability and drive instructional improvement.

This finding is supported by Dellomas and Deri (2022), who emphasized that classroom supervision and teacher observation remain a core responsibility of school heads, as reinforced by DepEd's performance standards. Their study affirms that school leaders in the public sector are generally proactive in this area, recognizing the direct link between classroom quality and student achievement. The systematic and consistent implementation of classroom monitoring practices reflects a strong alignment with PPSSH expectations in promoting excellence in teaching.

Conversely, the lowest-rated indicator, Item 6, with a mean score of 2.55, falls within the low level and pertains to promoting a culture of high expectations. This result reveals a significant area of concern. It implies that while school heads may be proficient in observing instruction, they may struggle to cultivate an academic climate where both teachers and students are consistently challenged to exceed minimum standards. Establishing a culture of high expectations is essential to fostering student motivation, teacher efficacy, and a mindset of continuous improvement—all of which are vital in high-performing school environments.

The study of Belain and Labrador (2024) lends further insight into this issue, highlighting that school heads' difficulty in establishing such a culture is often rooted in entrenched teacher attitudes and systemic challenges within the DepEd organizational culture. According to their findings, negative perceptions of change, resistance to performance-based evaluation, and a lack of intrinsic motivation among some educators hinder the efforts of school leaders to raise expectations. Additionally, organizational inertia, limited recognition mechanisms, and insufficient support for teacher innovation may further exacerbate this issue.

To address this gap, school leaders must go beyond compliance-driven observation and actively foster a vision-driven culture—one that sets clear academic goals, recognizes excellence, and promotes high expectations as a shared value. This involves leading by example, celebrating achievements, promoting growth mindsets, and engaging in transformational leadership practices that inspire staff and students alike.

In conclusion, while school heads in Bislig exhibit strong alignment with PPSSH competencies in monitoring and supporting instruction, the absence of a pervasive culture of high expectations remains a critical leadership challenge. Addressing this issue is essential not only for improving teaching and learning outcomes but also for transforming school cultures into dynamic, aspirational, and learner-centred communities.

The overall mean score of 3.93 in the Focusing on Teaching and Learning domain indicates a high level of adoption of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) among school leaders in Bislig City. This score reflects a

generally strong performance in one of the most critical areas of school leadership—ensuring that teaching and learning remain at the core of school operations and decision-making.

The results suggest that school heads are effectively fulfilling their roles as instructional leaders by creating supportive learning environments, promoting the use of innovative and learner-centred teaching strategies, and facilitating professional development among teachers. Their leadership in this domain helps to cultivate conditions where effective teaching can thrive, aligned with the PPSSH's expectations that school heads drive continuous improvement in instructional quality and student achievement.

Moreover, the high score demonstrates the school heads' capacity to align curriculum implementation with learning goals, monitor teaching practices, and provide feedback that enhances instructional performance. These practices are indicative of a commitment to fostering academic excellence and nurturing teacher growth, key aspects of sustainable school improvement.

However, despite the overall favourable rating, the findings also point to a need for stronger emphasis on promoting a culture of high expectations for both teachers and students. While supportive leadership is evident, there may be inconsistencies in setting, communicating, and reinforcing high academic standards and performance benchmarks. A culture of high expectations is essential in driving student motivation, teacher accountability, and overall school success.

To address this gap, school heads may benefit from further professional development focused on transformational leadership and student-centred

performance management. Strategies such as goal-setting workshops, peer accountability systems, recognition of excellence, and the use of achievement data to drive instructional practices can be integrated more intentionally. Additionally, school leaders should be encouraged to model high expectations themselves, consistently reinforcing the belief that all students can achieve excellence given the right support and learning environment.

Strengthening this dimension of the domain will ensure that school heads not only maintain effective instructional systems but also inspire a collective commitment to high performance and continuous improvement, which are foundational principles of the PPSSH and crucial for long-term educational impact.

Table 5 presents the status of PPSSH adoption in the public elementary schools of Bislig in terms of the Developing Self and Others Domain.

Table 5

Status of PPSSH adoption in the public elementary schools of Bislig in terms of the Developing Self and Others Domain

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1. The school head actively engages in professional development activities to improve their leadership skills and knowledge.	4.14	0.52	High
2. The school head encourages teachers and staff to pursue continuous professional learning and development opportunities.	4.88	0.35	Very High
3. The school head provides constructive feedback to teachers and staff to help them improve their professional practices.	4.75	0.46	Very High
4. The school head promotes a culture of self-reflection and self-improvement among staff members.	3.31	0.53	Average
5. The school head encourages a collaborative environment where staff can share knowledge, skills, and experiences to enhance personal and professional growth.	4.75	0.46	Very High
6. The school head regularly reflects on their own leadership practices and seeks ways to improve their performance.	4.10	0.52	High
7. The school head facilitates opportunities for teachers and staff to attend workshops, conferences, or other professional development activities.	4.75	0.46	Very High
8. The school head creates an environment that encourages personal and professional growth for all members of the school community.	3.30	0.53	Average
9. The school head demonstrates a commitment to lifelong learning and encourages others to do the same.	4.75	0.46	Very High
10. The school head provides mentorship and coaching to staff to help them achieve their professional goals.	4.75	0.46	Very High
Overall	4.35	0.48	Very High

Note: Mean scores falling within 1.00-1.79 Very Low, 1.80-2.59: Low, 2.60-3.39: Average, 3.40-4.19: High, 4.20-5.00: Very High

Table 5 illustrates the status of PPSSH adoption in public elementary schools in Bislig City, with a specific emphasis on the domain of Developing Self and Others. The highest-rated indicator, Item 2, received a mean score of 4.88, interpreted as very high, and pertains to encouraging continuous learning. This result underscores the effectiveness of school heads in cultivating a culture of ongoing professional development among teachers and staff. Such a high rating indicates that school leaders are not only compliant with but also proactive in implementing DepEd's policies on sustained professional learning, most notably through institutionalized mechanisms such as the Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions.

The importance of this finding is reinforced by Jala (2024), whose study affirms that school heads' commitment to fostering professional learning is significantly influenced by the Department of Education's directive to prioritize teacher development and well-being. The mandate positions school heads as key enablers of lifelong learning, ensuring that professional growth is embedded in the school culture and aligned with both individual career progression and institutional improvement. Through consistent facilitation of LAC sessions, mentoring, and support for formal training, school heads fulfil a crucial leadership function under the PPSSH framework.

In contrast, Item 8, which addresses the creation of an environment that encourages personal and professional growth for all members of the school community, registered the lowest mean score of 3.30, categorized as average. This suggests a notable gap in establishing a consistently supportive and empowering

workplace climate, especially one that accommodates the diverse developmental needs of teaching and non-teaching personnel. While structured programs such as LACs are widely implemented, the broader goal of nurturing an inclusive growth culture—one that recognizes varying motivations, capacities, and aspirations—remains a leadership challenge.

This finding is supported by Esguerra and Daryl (2025), who concluded that school heads often face difficulty in sustaining a growth-oriented environment due to the low perceived value of professional development among school personnel. Their study points to scepticism, limited incentives, and competing personal responsibilities as major barriers that diminish staff engagement in development initiatives. Additionally, the lack of differentiated support strategies tailored to individual needs may contribute to the uneven participation and limited impact of growth programs.

In sum, while the findings highlight the school heads' effectiveness in implementing structured professional learning systems, they also reveal a pressing need to broaden the developmental paradigm—from compliance-based training to a more personalized, aspirational, and values-driven approach. School leaders must exercise transformational leadership by inspiring intrinsic motivation, recognizing staff potential, and embedding professional growth into the school's core culture. Only then can the vision of PPSSH in cultivating empowered, reflective, and continuously improving school communities be fully realized.

The overall mean score of 4.35 in the Developing Self and Others domain indicates a very high level of adoption of the Philippine Professional Standards for

School Heads (PPSSH) among school leaders in Bislig City. This score highlights a commendable level of effectiveness in nurturing both personal and professional growth within the school context—an essential function of transformative and instructional leadership.

The findings suggest that school heads are actively promoting continuous professional development, facilitating learning opportunities for their staff, and engaging in reflective practices that support their leadership growth. Their ability to provide constructive feedback, mentor teachers, and encourage professional collaboration across departments contributes significantly to building a cohesive and improvement-driven school culture. These efforts align with the expectations set by the PPSSH, which emphasizes leadership that empowers both the individual and the collective capacity of the school community.

Additionally, the high mean score reflects the school heads' commitment to lifelong learning, not only by encouraging ongoing teacher development but also by modelling this value themselves through engagement in relevant training, academic advancement, and leadership development activities. This modelling sets a powerful precedent for staff and fosters a learning-oriented environment within the school.

However, despite these strengths, the results also indicate that there is room for growth in creating environments that more actively and holistically support both personal and professional development. While professional training is prioritized, there may be gaps in providing individualized support systems, promoting staff well-being, recognizing diverse learning needs, and empowering staff to pursue self-initiated learning goals. Creating such an environment involves more than offering

training—it requires a culture that values autonomy, psychological safety, career growth, and recognition, where teachers and staff feel genuinely supported to reach their full potential.

To address this, school leaders could integrate practices such as personalized professional growth plans, peer coaching, wellness programs, and structured mentoring systems. Encouraging open dialogue, recognizing accomplishments, and giving staff a voice in decision-making can also foster a deeper sense of belonging and motivation. These strategies not only elevate the performance of individual educators but also contribute to a stronger, more resilient school culture.

By enhancing their efforts in this area, school heads will further align with the PPSSH's call to be leaders who not only manage systems but develop people, empowering every member of the school community to thrive, grow, and lead.

Table 6 presents the status of PPSSH adoption in the public elementary schools of Bislig in terms of the Building Connections Domain.

Table 6

Status of PPSSH adoption in the public elementary schools of Bislig in terms of the Building Connections Domain

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1. The school head actively builds positive relationships with students, teachers, and staff to create a supportive school culture.	4.80	0.46	Very High
2. The school head fosters strong partnerships with parents and guardians to support the academic and social development of students.	4.12	0.52	High
3. The school head collaborates with local community organizations, government units, and other stakeholders to enhance the learning environment for students.	4.63	0.52	Very High
4. The school head promotes a culture of open communication between teachers, parents, students, and other school stakeholders.	4.75	0.46	Very High
5. The school head actively participates in professional networks, conferences, or communities to stay informed about best practices in education.	4.75	0.46	Very High
6. The school head encourages and supports teacher collaboration and peer learning to enhance professional growth and improve school performance.	4.18	0.52	High
7. The school head builds connections with local businesses and organizations to create opportunities for student enrichment, internships, or career exposure.	3.35	0.53	Average
8. The school head promotes involvement from the community in school activities, programs, and events to strengthen school-community ties.	4.75	0.46	Very High
9. The school head demonstrates a commitment to building trust and respect among school stakeholders, including staff, students, and the community.	4.75	0.46	Very High
10. The school head seeks opportunities for collaborative partnerships that benefit both the school and its external stakeholders.	3.38	0.53	Average
Overall	4.35	0.49	Very High

Note: Mean scores falling within 1.00-1.79 Very Low, 1.80-2.59: Low, 2.60-3.39: Average, 3.40-4.19: High, 4.20-5.00: Very High

Table 6 presents the status of PPSSH adoption in public elementary schools in Bislig City, specifically focusing on the domain of Building Connections. Among the indicators, Item 1, which pertains to building positive relationships, received the highest mean score of 4.75, classified as very high. This result indicates that school heads demonstrate a strong capacity for cultivating positive and trusting relationships with students, teachers, and staff—an essential feature of a supportive and collaborative school culture. Such relational leadership fosters psychological safety, open communication, and shared responsibility, which are critical in achieving educational goals and enhancing workplace morale.

This finding aligns with the study of Nogadas and Apostol (2024), which emphasized that school heads who prioritize relationship-building and emotional intelligence contribute significantly to the development of supportive school environments. Their research suggests that relational leadership leads to improved teacher engagement, student behaviour, and overall school climate—outcomes that are central to the PPSSH framework. By fostering strong interpersonal connections, school leaders lay the foundation for collective efficacy and cohesive school communities.

Conversely, Item 7, which refers to establishing connections with local businesses, obtained the lowest mean score of 3.35, interpreted as average. This result points to a notable gap in community engagement and external stakeholder collaboration, particularly in forming partnerships with local industries for student enrichment activities, such as career talks, internships, and workplace exposure. While school heads appear effective in internal relationship-building, their capacity to

extend leadership influence beyond the school premises—toward external linkages that enrich the learning experience—remains underdeveloped.

This challenge is echoed in the findings of Ricket et al. (2023), who observed that limited engagement with local businesses hinders the implementation of career development programs and deprives students of real-world exposure essential to holistic development. Factors such as weak networking channels, lack of awareness of potential partnerships, and perceived disinterest from business sectors were cited as contributing to this disconnect. Moreover, schools located in geographically isolated or economically constrained areas may face additional barriers in accessing relevant community resources.

In light of these findings, it is imperative that school heads not only maintain strong internal cohesion but also act as boundary spanners—leaders who actively seek, initiate, and sustain strategic partnerships with external stakeholders, including local businesses, NGOs, and civic groups. Doing so enables the school to broaden students' learning opportunities and bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. Strengthening this aspect of leadership aligns with the PPSSH's emphasis on community engagement and social capital building as levers for school improvement and learner success.

The overall mean score of 4.35 in the Building Connections domain reflects a very high level of adoption of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) among school leaders in Bislig City. This score indicates that school heads are highly effective in developing and sustaining positive relationships with various stakeholders within and beyond the school community. Specifically, the

findings suggest that they demonstrate strong leadership in fostering partnerships with parents and community members, maintaining open and transparent communication, participating in professional learning networks, and encouraging active community engagement in school activities and decision-making.

These practices are crucial for strengthening the school's support system, enhancing the learning environment, and ensuring that education remains a shared responsibility among all stakeholders. The ability to build trust and collaboration with internal and external actors reflects the school heads' commitment to inclusive leadership, transparency, and community-driven school improvement—key principles embedded in the PPSSH framework.

Furthermore, school heads appear to be leveraging professional networks and stakeholder relationships to mobilize resources, enhance accountability, and ensure that the school remains responsive to the unique cultural, social, and economic contexts of the community. These efforts contribute to a more holistic and sustainable approach to educational leadership, where the school is viewed as an integral part of the larger community ecosystem.

However, despite the very high level of adoption overall, there is a noted need for improvement in building more strategic and mutually beneficial connections with local businesses and other external organizations. While existing efforts have focused largely on parent involvement and professional collaboration within the education sector, partnerships that could provide financial support, career exposure for learners, technical resources, and real-world learning opportunities remain underdeveloped.

This gap suggests the importance of equipping school heads with skills in stakeholder mapping, partnership negotiation, and collaborative project planning to expand their networks beyond traditional education stakeholders. Strengthening ties with local enterprises, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and civic groups can lead to innovative programs, shared resources, and greater community investment in education. Moreover, such partnerships can help schools prepare students for future career pathways by providing access to mentorship, internships, and experiential learning opportunities.

In sum, while school heads in Bislig have demonstrated a strong foundation in relationship-building and community engagement, broadening the scope of connections—particularly with local industries and community-based organizations—will further enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of their leadership. This expansion of partnerships is vital for creating more dynamic, resource-rich, and future-ready learning environments, fully aligned with the goals of the PPSSH.

Table 7 presents the summary status of PPSSH in terms of the provided indicators.

Table 7

Summary Status of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH)

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1. Leading Strategically	4.40	0.44	Very High
2. Managing School Operations and Resources	4.37	0.48	Very High
3. Focusing on Teaching and Learning	3.93	0.54	High
4. Developing Self and Others	4.35	0.48	Very High
5. Building Connections	4.35	0.49	Very High
Overall	4.28	0.49	Very High

Note: Mean scores falling within 1.00-1.79 Very Low, 1.80-2.59: Low, 2.60-3.39: Average, 3.40-4.19: High, 4.20-5.00: Very High

As shown in Table 7, the five PPSSH domains were assessed in public elementary schools in Bislig. Leading Strategically domain (Mean: 4.40, SD: 0.44), described as Very High, received the highest rating, suggesting that school heads are highly proficient in setting directions, creating a shared vision, and aligning school goals with broader educational policies. This supports Pana (2024), who emphasized that DepEd's emphasis on school-based management has compelled leaders to excel in strategic planning.

On the other hand, the lowest domain is the Focusing on Teaching and Learning domain (Mean: 3.93, SD: 0.54), described as High, suggesting that more targeted interventions are needed to reinforce instructional leadership. Leithwood et al. (2020) stress that leadership that prioritises learning directly impacts student outcomes. The relatively lower score could reflect challenges in fostering high expectations or supporting instructional innovations. As Belain and Labrador (2024) noted, negative perceptions toward DepEd's organizational culture may inhibit a more vibrant teaching and learning culture.

The overall mean score of 4.28 (SD = 0.49) signifies a "Very High" level of adoption of the PPSSH framework. This result indicates that the school heads in Bislig are demonstrating highly competent leadership practices as aligned with national standards.

The PPSSH domains reflect the multifaceted roles of school heads as instructional leaders, managers, community builders, and professional developers. The consistently very high adoption across most domains illustrates that school

leaders in Bislig are performing well in aligning their practices with national benchmarks. This is a promising sign for DepEd's ongoing professionalization and accountability reforms.

However, the lower rating in "Focusing on Teaching and Learning" raises important considerations. According to Hallinger and Murphy (2021), instructional leadership remains the most direct path to improving student achievement, but it often receives less emphasis due to the overwhelming administrative load on principals. This underscores the need to rebalance leadership functions by delegating managerial tasks, thereby allowing principals to prioritize curriculum supervision, pedagogy, and assessment.

Furthermore, the average standard deviations across domains (~0.49) suggest a moderate variability in responses. This indicates that while most school heads exhibit high levels of performance, disparities in leadership practice exist, which may be attributed to contextual factors such as geographic location, access to professional development, and resource availability.

The findings affirm the strong alignment of school leadership practices in Bislig with the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). While the "Very High" overall rating is commendable, the relatively lower rating in instructional leadership signals the need for targeted leadership capacity-building, particularly in fostering a culture of high expectations and instructional innovation.

Problem 2. What is the general understanding and perceptions of the school heads regarding the implementation of PPSSH across domains?

Thematic analysis was used to get the general understanding and perceptions of the school heads regarding the implementation of PPSSH across domains. Five schools' heads were taken as participants per district. Table 8 shows the results.

Table 8

General Understanding and Perceptions of the School Heads Regarding the Implementation of PPSSH Across Domains

Codes	Actual Responses	Sub-theme	Major Theme
Framework/ Compass	<p><i>It serves as a comprehensive framework that outlines the key competencies, behaviors, and professional values expected of school leaders in the Philippines, guided by reflective leadership and responsiveness to learners' needs. The standards serve as a compass that shapes my actions, strengthens accountability, and ensures that all school activities contribute to better learning outcomes for every Filipino child. -R1</i></p> <p><i>The PPSSH is a comprehensive framework that defines the competencies expected of school leaders across five key domains. From my perspective, these standards are rooted in their purpose: to guide school heads toward becoming effective, ethical, and visionary leaders who ensure quality and inclusive education. In my leadership practice, these standards serve as my guide in the crafting of school plans and policies and decision-making. It guides me in maintaining high standards of professionalism and responsiveness, ensuring that the school I lead becomes a safe, inclusive, and effective learning environment for all. -R3</i></p> <p><i>My overall understanding of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) is that it serves as a comprehensive framework guiding school leaders in delivering quality and inclusive education. It outlines the expected competencies and behaviors of effective school heads across five key domains. -R13</i></p>	Guiding Values and Practice	Professional and Ethical Leadership
Practical Application	<p><i>I have a clear grasp of the PPSSH, which is a holistic guide that directs the school heads to become effective in their roles. I utilized these standards through my day-to-day practice of leadership in conformity with its areas—prioritizing the establishment of a learner-centered culture, teachers' development, and shared responsibility. I utilize the standards as a guide in the setting of school improvement plans, tracking the learning-teaching activities, and the allocation of resources in a more effective way. -7</i></p> <p><i>PPSSH outlines the expectations for school leaders in the Philippines. School leaders can apply the PPSSH by fostering a culture of teaching and excellence, developing and implementing strategic plans, and</i></p>		Transformational

	<p><i>building partnerships with stakeholders. -8</i></p> <p><i>I understand the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) as a guide that outlines what school leaders should know, do, and value to lead effectively. I apply these standards by trying to ensure good school management, supporting teachers in improving instruction, creating a safe and learner-friendly environment, helping staff grow through training and mentoring, and involving parents and the community in school activities. These help me make better decisions and lead the school towards continuous improvement. -10</i></p> <p><i>It serves as a guiding framework in leading, managing, and transforming the school towards excellence, and by living out these domains in leadership, it aims to create a positive impact on the school community and continuously grow as an instructional and transformational leader. -12</i></p>	Instructional and Managerial Guidance	Leadership in Practice
Accountability & Ethics	<p><i>I use the PPSSH as a roadmap for continuous improvement, guiding how I lead, manage, and collaborate. Applying these standards ensures that my leadership is ethical, effective, and learner-centered, ultimately contributing to improved student outcomes and school success. -R4</i></p> <p><i>It is a leadership-centered framework, as a school head is not just an administrator but a key leader in ensuring quality education through shared vision and collaboration. -R1</i></p>	Guiding Values and Practice	Professional and Ethical Leadership
Improving Teacher Development and Community Involvement	<p><i>I believe the PPSSH is both effective and relevant. It provides a clear set of expectations and competencies that help me, as a school head, maintain focus on quality education. In instructional leadership, it emphasizes evidence-based decision-making and professional development. In school management, it guides us in maintaining operational efficiency, while in community involvement, it underscores collaborative partnerships and shared goals for learner success. -R7</i></p> <p><i>I find the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) to be highly effective and relevant in guiding school leadership, especially in instructional leadership, school management, and community involvement. These standards have become my guiding principles in fulfilling my Key Result Areas (KRAs) as a school leader. They help me make informed decisions, support teacher development, manage school operations efficiently, and strengthen partnerships with stakeholders. -10</i></p> <p><i>It is perceived as a powerful and necessary tool in guiding school leadership. Its practical applications have led to improvements in instruction, management, and stakeholder collaboration. It remains relevant, responsive, and aligned with the goals of the Philippine education system, especially in promoting learner-centered, inclusive, and transformational leadership. -12</i></p>	Multi-stakeholders' collaboration and support	Inclusive and Participatory Governance
Domain 3: Teaching &	<p><i>Focusing on Teaching and Learning. As a school head, ensuring the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of learning is at the heart of my role. This domain guides me in fulfilling my responsibility as an instructional leader, not just as an administrator. I actively supervise classes, conduct classroom observations, and provide feedback and coaching to teachers. I also lead the planning and facilitation of Learning Action Cell (LAC)</i></p>	Instructional and	Instructional Leadership

Learning	<p>sessions based on observed learning needs and performance data. -R3</p> <p><i>Instructional Leadership is the most relevant in day-to-day activity. Ensuring quality teaching and learning is at the core of my responsibilities. Conduct classroom observations, both formal and non-formal; provide feedback to teachers; monitor learner progress; and create professional development plans. This domain keeps me anchored in improving instruction, which ultimately impacts learner outcomes. -R7</i></p> <p><i>Instructional leadership is the most important domain. This affects the academic performance of our learners. Proper instructions and giving appropriate technical assistance are essential to improve teachers' performance domino effect will take place. -R9</i></p> <p><i>I find Instructional Leadership the most relevant in my day-to-day responsibilities because it directly affects the quality of teaching and learning in school. As a school head, I regularly observe classes, give feedback to teachers, and help plan learning activities to improve student performance. Supporting teachers and ensuring effective instruction are key to achieving our school goals, which is why this domain is always part of my daily focus. -R10</i></p> <p><i>While all PPSSH domains are important, Instructional Leadership is the most immediately felt and practiced in my daily work. It ensures that I stay connected to the core of our mission as educators. By consistently prioritizing this domain, I help build a culture of excellence, accountability, and learner success in our school. -R12</i></p> <p><i>PPSSH prompted me to prioritize teaching and learning more deliberately. I conduct regular classroom observations, provide constructive feedback, and lead Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions to build teacher capacity, as aligned with Domain 3. -R13</i></p> <p><i>The core goals of every school are instruction and learning. Ensuring that every classroom receives top-notch education is, in my opinion, my main responsibility as the captain of the ship. This domain directs my efforts to oversee instruction, foster professional growth, and guarantee that education is inclusive and current. -R15</i></p>	<p>Managerial Guidance</p>
Instructional Leadership Enhancement	<p><i>The PPSSH is a valuable tool/guide in improving both school performance and instructional leadership. It sets a clear direction for professional growth and school development. By aligning leadership practices with the standards, we ensure that our decisions and actions are focused on learner achievement, teacher effectiveness, and organizational excellence. It serves as a roadmap for continuous improvement and accountability. -R7</i></p> <p><i>The PPSSH emphasizes the crucial role of school heads in instructional leadership, focusing on areas like curriculum development and teaching practices. -R14</i></p> <p><i>I believe that improving instructional leadership and school performance may be achieved via the use of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). Its well-organized framework makes it clear what skills school administrators need to acquire, which makes it an effective manual for both professional development and school reform...PPSSH is more than a set of standards—it is a roadmap for transformative leadership. Its usefulness lies in how it aligns leadership</i></p>	<p>Instructional Leadership</p> <p>Instructional and Managerial Guidance</p>

behavior with desired school outcomes, enabling school heads to become instructional leaders, strategic managers, and community builders all at once. -R15

It can be gleaned from Table 8 that the general understanding and perceptions of the school heads regarding the implementation of PPSSH across domains. The general understanding and perceptions were grouped into four major themes, namely, (1) professional and ethical leadership; (2) transformational leadership in practice; (3) inclusive and participatory governance; and (4) instructional leadership. These themes collectively illuminate how the PPSSH functions as both a conceptual framework and a practical tool shaping the leadership landscape in public basic education.

The first and most foundational theme to emerge is that of professional and ethical leadership. School heads described the PPSSH as more than a list of competencies; it was regarded as a *“comprehensive framework outlining competencies”* and a *“compass shaping actions and a holistic guide directing school heads”* (Participants 1, 3, 7, and 13). This characterization suggests that the PPSSH supports reflective leadership by grounding school heads in values that transcend managerial duties.

Importantly, school leaders noted that the framework enhances their sense of accountability and ethical responsibility. As shared by Participants 1 and 3, the PPSSH *“strengthens accountability and professionalism,”* while Participants 4 and 11 highlighted its role in ensuring that *“leadership is ethical and learner-centred.”*

Norman and Niesche (2021) emphasize the need for ethical leadership amidst neoliberal educational reforms, advocating for decision-making that centers on equity, inclusiveness, and moral responsibility.

Furthermore, Torrance (2022) underscores the role of ethical school leadership in fostering inclusive and reflective school environments, highlighting the PPSSH's capacity to guide school heads toward practices that prioritize transparency, integrity, and learner welfare. This supports a broader understanding of leadership that goes beyond compliance and positions ethical leadership as a transformative force in school governance.

The second theme centers on transformational leadership in practice. School heads frequently referenced the PPSSH's utility in structuring daily operations, crafting School Improvement Plans (SIPs), supervising instruction, and managing resources efficiently. According to Participants 3 and 10, the PPSSH *"provides structure for efficient operations and safety protocols,"* while Participants 4 and 8 affirmed that it *"guides operational efficiency and resource use."*

More recently, Bush (2022) emphasizes that transformational leadership is particularly well-suited to educational environments, as it inspires innovation, motivates stakeholders, and fosters adaptive change in response to evolving challenges.

Day and Gu (2023) also explore how transformational leadership can improve school culture and learning outcomes by strengthening the professional identity and motivation of both leaders and teachers. Within the PPSSH context, such leadership manifests in strategic planning, shared vision-building, and the integration of leadership values into everyday school operations.

The third emergent theme is inclusive and participatory governance. School heads consistently acknowledged the PPSSH's role in fostering multi-stakeholder

collaboration. Participants emphasized their support for engaging parents, barangay officials, and other local actors in decision-making processes. Quotes such as *“involves parents/barangay officials in decision-making”* (Participants 3 and 8) and *“builds partnerships for resource mobilisation”* (Participants 3 and 10) illustrate the emphasis placed on democratic governance and community involvement.

It aligns with Mincu’s (2021) analysis of school governance models, which underscores the value of decentralization and community engagement in promoting responsiveness to local educational needs.

Moreover, Spillane and Shirrell (2022) argue that distributed leadership, characterized by shared roles and collaborative networks, enhances organizational learning and community trust. Within the PPSSH framework, this participatory ethos not only promotes democratic values but also strengthens accountability and sustainability through local ownership of school programs and decisions.

The final theme, instructional leadership, captures how the PPSSH guides school heads in improving teaching and learning processes. Participants reported a strong focus on mentoring teachers, conducting Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, and implementing data-driven instructional practices. As stated by Participants 3, 7, and 13, the PPSSH *“guides mentoring, LAC sessions, and data-driven instruction,”* and according to Participants 10 and 14, it *“improves teaching quality through supervision.”*

These practices demonstrate alignment with the research of Darling-Hammond et al. (2021), who argue that school leaders play a critical role in shaping instructional quality and student outcomes. Hallinger and Wang (2023) further

contend that instructional leadership—when systematically assessed and supported—has a significant impact on teaching performance and learner achievement.

More recently, Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan (2022) provide empirical evidence through meta-analysis showing that teacher coaching and school-based leadership development significantly enhance instructional effectiveness and student learning. Thus, the PPSSH's emphasis on supervision, coaching, and continuous professional development positions school heads as key agents of instructional transformation.

Collectively, these four themes reflect a robust endorsement of the PPSSH as a transformative and responsive leadership framework. It not only delineates clear competencies but also fosters ethical practice, strategic transformation, community collaboration, and instructional excellence. The integration of recent literature underscores the dynamic and evolving nature of school leadership and affirms the PPSSH as a timely, values-based, and impactful tool for guiding school heads in their pursuit of equity and quality in education.

Problem 3. What are the challenges encountered by the school heads in the attainment of the domains and targets under the PPSSH adoption?

Table 9 shows the challenges encountered by the school heads in the attainment of the domains and targets under the PPSSH adoption.

Table 9

Challenges Experienced by the School Heads in the Attainment of the Domains and Targets Under the PPSSH Adoption

Codes	Actual Responses	Sub-theme	Major Theme
Time Management and Work-Life Balance	<i>It's very hard sometimes to balance family and work. There are times that we can't anymore spend quality time para sa family- R1</i> <i>Bisan pa sa years of experience, still there comes a time that time for work eats most of our lives. Losing sufficient time for the family. -R2</i> <i>Sa kadaghan sa workload, sometimes, we really have to sacrifice family time and spend much for work and accomplishments. -R3</i>	Balancing Act with Limited Resources	Constraints Hindered Effective Leadership
Resource Limitations	<i>It's honestly very hard to manage schools with limited budget. -R2</i> <i>We can't move things easily because of meager budget nga ge allocated for the school. -R5</i>		
Leadership and Management Skills	<i>Still needing leadership support especially in handling toxi can mga subordinates. – R8</i>	Strengthening Leadership with Support	
Technical Assistance and Guidance	<i>It's hard to lead when you feel like you don't receive much support needed. -R7</i>		
Professional Development and Training	<i>Professional growth opportunities are not for all. Labi na sa teachers, it's very hard to optimize ana nga area- R5</i>	Growth through Collaboration	Collaborative Capacity Building Difficulties
Stakeholder Engagement and Support	<i>Kini pd support from stakeholders such as parents, LGU, and alumni, kay weather-weather lang. Really difficult to sustain. -R9</i>		
Understanding and Alignment with PPSSH	<i>Naa usahay gap sa pag understand regarding the PPSSH with a lot of deliverables in OPCR, SMEA, and other measures. – R6</i>	Building Capacity for PPSSH	
Capacity Building and Mentoring	<i>Mo kalit rajd ang Deped implement trainings and tasks without ensuring high capability and mentoring of the implementers and frontliners in the ground- R5</i>		

It can be gleaned from the table that the challenges were grouped into two major themes, namely, (1) constraints hindered effective leadership and (2) collaborative capacity building difficulties.

The first theme is that constraints hinder effective leadership. The school heads were constrained in a balancing act with limited resources. School heads struggle to balance multiple roles and responsibilities, leading to difficulties in managing time effectively and maintaining a work-life balance. There is a lack of sufficient instructional resources, physical facilities, and budget allocations, which hinders the effective implementation of PPSSH. The school heads were also constrained in strengthening leadership due to inconsistent technical support. The limited opportunities for professional development and training for both school heads and teachers impede the adoption of PPSSH standards. The inconsistent engagement and support from stakeholders, including the community and higher authorities, pose challenges to the smooth implementation of PPSSH.

During the online survey, school heads shared experiences and challenges related to constraints in obtaining effective leadership. Participant 4, an NQESH passer, Principal 1, with five months of school head experience, noted:

“It is difficult to consistently follow the mandate of PPSSH because of limited time.”

Likewise, Participant 6 (NQESH Category B, Head Teacher I, 11 years in position) noted:

“Time management, lack of resources and workload stress.”

Participant 8, an NQESH Category B, Head Teacher 3 with eight years of school head experience, noted:

“Several areas need improvement in school to facilitate the adoption of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). These include enhancing the leadership capabilities of school heads.”

These sentiments underscore the operational reality that, despite their mandate to lead strategically, school heads are often consumed by administrative duties and emergency concerns that pull them away from instructional and visionary leadership.

Further, participants highlighted inconsistent technical and stakeholder support as a key limitation. Participant 1 (Principal I, 8 years of experience) emphasized:

“Proper guidance and technical assistance, as well as support.”

These qualitative findings resonate with the observations of Dellomas and Deri (2022), who described the demands placed on school heads as “herculean,” highlighting the intertwined burdens of time, resource management, and professional development needs. Their study found that without appropriate training and systemic support, school leaders find themselves underprepared to fully implement PPSSH standards, particularly in complex school environments.

The second theme is collaborative capacity-building difficulties. There is difficulty in terms of facilitating growth through collaboration. School heads face challenges in enhancing their leadership capabilities and managing school operations effectively, especially when dealing with the legacy and proper turnover of previous school heads. This increases the need for proper guidance, technical assistance, and support in the implementation of programs and projects aligned with

PPSSH. School heads also face challenges in building capacity for PPSSH. Some school heads and educators may not fully understand the content, purpose, and implications of PPSSH, leading to misalignment in its implementation. Thus, there is a need for regular capacity-building programs, mentoring, and coaching to support school heads in their professional growth and effective adoption of PPSSH.

During the online survey, school heads shared experiences and challenges related to collaborative capacity-building difficulties. Participant 6, an NQESH Category B, Head Teacher 1 with 11 months of school head experience, noted:

“Poor stakeholders’ engagement, limited professional development opportunities, lack of school vision and strategic planning.”

Furthermore, the lack of consistent capacity-building efforts among teachers and school leaders surfaced as a significant issue. School heads identified gaps in training, mentoring, and understanding the framework and practical applications of PPSSH.

Participant 2, an NQESH Category C, Head Teacher 3 with 11 years of school head experience, added:

“Some of the weaknesses in the school that hinder the adoption of PPSSH include limited professional development opportunities for teachers, a lack of sufficient instructional resources, and an outdated data management system. Additionally, inconsistent stakeholder engagement and limited community support. Capacity Building and Training, Mentoring and Coaching, Resource Allocation, Recognition and Incentives”

These findings are corroborated by Nalla and Camaya (2023), who observed that many novice school heads in the Philippines still struggle to implement key leadership functions due to insufficient mentoring and a lack of targeted capacity-building support. Their research emphasized the importance of coaching, technical assistance, and community-based professional learning in enabling school leaders to translate the PPSSH framework into practice effectively.

Participant 5, an NQESH Category C, Head Teacher 2 with 11 years of school head experience, recommended:

“Provide accessible resources for easier understanding.”

This suggests that while policy frameworks like the PPSSH are conceptually robust, their operationalization requires better translation into practice through user-friendly guides, context-based tools, and sustained leadership support mechanisms.

Problem 4. What are the strengths experienced by the school heads in the attainment of the domains and targets under the PPSSH adoption?

Table 10 shows the strengths experienced by the school heads in the attainment of the domains and targets under the PPSSH adoption.

Table 10

Strengths Experienced by the School Heads in the Attainment of the Domains and Targets Under the PPSSH Adoption

Codes	Actual Responses	Sub-theme	Major Theme
Commitment to Lifelong Learning	<i>Teachers are committed towards lifelong learning. Makita man sa ilang mga actions and responses-R2</i> <i>You can see sa mga efforts sa teachers apil pd mga heads regarding their interest and passion to learn. Most of them are willing to participate in training and workshops. -R3</i>	Continuous Growth through Effective Communication	Growth, Positive Environment, Communication, and Engagement
Effective Communication and Collaboration	<i>The school implements and practices a clear communication structure and plan. -R4</i> <i>Things are clearly communicated sa mga appropriate personnel. -R5</i>		
Positive Learning Environment	<i>I believe that promoting a positive learning environment is one of our strengths. Makita siya in the efforts of our teachers. -R5</i>	Positive Environment through Stakeholder Engagement	
Resource Mobilization and Stakeholder Engagement	<i>I consider how stakeholders are so supportive in our programs. Dako ilang role sa school. Though dili siguro same in all schools, but with our strong partnership we are able to achieve more. -R8</i>		Strategic and Proactive Leadership
Strong Leadership and Strategic Planning	<i>We practice good leadership with clear vision and corporate decision making. All personnel sa school are given the chance na mag salita and mag suggest during planning. -R7</i>	Strategic Leadership with Community Support	
Supportive School Community	<i>Siguro one of the best things in our school is the very consistent and clear strong support system ss students, teachers, and parents. -R4</i>		
Clear Guidelines and Consistent Implementation	<i>We made sure that guidelines and school ordinances are well implemented. Mao jd ni ang amo makita nga strength that resulted to significant results. -R6</i>	Proactive Leadership with Clear Implementation	
Proactive and Competent School Heads	<i>I think we have competent school leaders. Not only being the school principal but with the department heads. -R5</i>		

The Table 10 shows the strengths experienced by the school heads and was categorised into two themes, namely, (1) growth, positive environment, communication, and engagement and (2) strategic and proactive leadership.

A prominent strength lies in the school heads' commitment to personal and professional growth, particularly through open communication and active stakeholder engagement. School leaders reported maintaining a strong orientation toward lifelong learning, allowing them to adapt effectively to evolving policies,

innovations, and expectations outlined in the PPSSH. This adaptive learning stance facilitates effective leadership in complex and dynamic educational environments. Participant 2, an NQESH Category C, Head Teacher 3 with 11 years of school head experience, noted:

“I recognise several personal strengths that support the adoption of the PPSSH. My strong commitment to lifelong learning allows me to adapt new policies and continuously improve my leadership practice.”

Moreover, the development of positive interpersonal relationships and collaborative cultures was seen as a core enabler of PPSSH adoption. Effective communication with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders contributed to a supportive and inclusive school climate, promoting mutual understanding, openness to feedback, and collective action toward shared goals.

Participant 4, an NQESH Passer, Principal 1, with five months of school head experience added:

“Constant communication with teachers and parents to build a smooth relationship among others.”

Participant 5, an NQESH Category C, Head Teacher 2 with 11 years of school head experience, noted:

“Positive learning Environment.”

Participant 6, an NQESH Category B, Head Teacher 1, with 11 years of school head experience added:

“The school also maintains strong community partnerships, which enhance stakeholder engagement and resource mobilisation.”

These insights are corroborated by the study of Indon (2024), who found that PPSSH fosters competencies in communication, growth orientation, and resource mobilization by promoting exemplary leadership models that school heads can emulate. This finding underscores the role of PPSSH in enhancing school-community linkages, as school heads build trust and shared accountability with stakeholders such as parents, local government units, and civic organizations.

The second theme is strategic and proactive leadership. There is a strength in strategic leadership with community support. School heads exhibit strong leadership qualities, making strategic decisions and maintaining a commitment to continuous improvement, which aligns with the PPSSH domains. The presence of supportive parents, barangay officials, and other stakeholders enhances the school's ability to implement PPSSH effectively. There is also a strength in Proactive Leadership with Clear Implementation. Clear guidelines provided to school heads facilitate consistent implementation of PPSSH, ensuring that everyone is aligned with the standards. School heads who are proactive, competent, and have a deep understanding of PPSSH are essential in leading their teams and implementing the standards effectively.

During the online survey, school heads shared their experienced strengths related to strategic and proactive leadership. Participant 6, an NQESH Category B, Head Teacher 1 with 11 years of school head experience, noted:

“Highly organised and capable of strategic planning, which aids in aligning school goals with PPSSH domains.”

Participant 8, an NQESH Category B, Head Teacher 3 with eight years of school head experience, added:

"A school needs a strong foundation of effective leadership, a supportive school community, and a commitment to continuous improvement. These strengths are crucial for ensuring that school heads are not only knowledgeable and skilled but also able to lead their teams and implement the standards effectively. A school that has teachers and support staff who are open to feedback, CI, and innovation. It also has a functional SGC and PTA who are involved in decision-making and the presence of competent and proactive SH who can exemplify the PPSSH domains."

Participant 3, an NQESH Category C, Head Teacher 1 with nine years of school head experience, noted:

"It's the clear guidelines being given."

This perspective reflects the principles of distributed leadership, which are central to the PPSSH. According to Mojica et al. (2024), the PPSSH advocates for shared and participatory leadership, empowering school heads not just as managers but as catalysts for collective school transformation. Similarly, Dellomas and Deri (2022) emphasized that the framework enables shared management practices, where decision-making and leadership are co-constructed with stakeholders and school personnel.

The strategic orientation of school heads—combined with their proactive behaviour and community-centred approach—has proven instrumental in

successfully integrating PPSSH domains into school management, teaching quality assurance, and stakeholder participation.

Problem 5. Based on the findings of the study, what intervention or action plan can be proposed?

The study findings underscore critical areas in which school leaders require support and development to enhance their overall effectiveness in adopting and implementing the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). These opportunities for improvement reflect both systemic and individual-level challenges that, if addressed, can contribute significantly to sustainable school leadership and educational outcomes. The following key areas emerged as crucial points for development:

1. Time Management and Work-Life Balance – One of the most pressing concerns expressed by school heads is the challenge of balancing administrative tasks, instructional leadership duties, and personal responsibilities. The multitude of roles that school leaders fulfil often leads to time constraints, role strain, and stress. These findings align with Dellomas and Deri (2022), who emphasized that school heads face “herculean” responsibilities, underscoring the need for policies and support systems that promote realistic workload distribution and institutionalised time management strategies.

2. Optimizing Resources – Limited access to physical, financial, and instructional resources remains a persistent barrier to effective school leadership. School heads struggle with insufficient materials, outdated infrastructure, and constrained budgets, which hinder their ability to implement PPSSH-aligned

initiatives. This challenge calls for more efficient resource allocation mechanisms and stronger advocacy for equitable funding, particularly in resource-deprived schools.

3. Technological Assistance and Leadership Innovation – The rapid pace of educational innovation and digital transformation has highlighted the need for school leaders to receive consistent technological support. There is a growing demand for capacity-building programs that focus on emerging trends in educational leadership, data-driven decision-making, and digital tools that enhance school operations. Addressing this gap can equip school heads with the tools necessary for leading 21st-century schools and integrating technology into pedagogical and administrative practices.

4. Opportunities for Professional Growth and Development – Consistent with the findings of Nalla and Camaya (2023), school heads expressed a strong desire for structured, ongoing professional development. While many demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning, the lack of accessible and relevant training opportunities hinders their capacity to deepen their leadership competencies. Targeted mentoring, coaching, and leadership training that aligns with the PPSSH framework should be prioritized to support career-long development.

5. Strengthening Stakeholder Partnerships and Collaboration – School leadership does not occur in isolation. The study revealed that many school heads experience difficulty in mobilizing community support and sustaining stakeholder engagement. Strengthening partnerships with parents, local government units, non-government organizations, and private sector entities is essential for resource

mobilization, shared governance, and collective accountability. As noted by Mojica et al. (2024), the PPSSH promotes distributed leadership, making collaborative engagement a vital domain in effective school management.

Table 11 presents a proposed program based on the findings of the study entitled “***Leading with Excellence in the Generation’s Emerging Needs and Demands***” or the ***L.E.G.E.N.D.*** program.

The proposed L.E.G.E.N.D. program is firmly anchored in the empirical findings of the study and the assessment of leadership domains under the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). The results reveal that although school heads in Bislig public elementary schools exhibit "Very High" proficiency in most domains, including Leading Strategically (Mean: 4.40), Developing Self and Others (Mean: 4.35), and Building Connections (Mean: 4.35), the domain Focusing on Teaching and Learning received the lowest mean rating of 3.93, categorized as only "High." This gap indicates a pressing need to reinforce instructional leadership competencies—especially in areas such as curriculum supervision, teaching innovation, and assessment literacy. This slight disparity also underscores the ongoing challenge of balancing instructional leadership with administrative responsibilities, a theme echoed in qualitative findings, which cited time constraints, role overload, and limited training as persistent barriers.

The intervention program is also informed by the high variability in responses (standard deviations averaging 0.49), which reflects contextual disparities in leadership practices—likely driven by unequal access to professional development and resource allocation. These findings collectively justify a comprehensive

capacity-building approach. The L.E.G.E.N.D. program responds to these challenges by embedding targeted strategies for time and resource management, technology integration, and continuous professional growth. Most critically, it will directly address the instructional leadership gap through activities that cultivate high expectations, foster innovative teaching strategies, and empower school leaders to focus more on teaching and learning without being overly burdened by managerial functions.

It specifically aims to:

1. Strengthen school heads' time-management and work-life balance;
2. Enable efficient resource optimization;
3. Incorporate technological advancements into leadership practices;
4. Foster continuous growth through professional development; and
- 5.** Promote stakeholder engagement and collaboration.

Table 11

*Leading with **E**xcellence in the **G**eneration's **E**merging **N**eeds and **D**emands or the **L.E.G.E.N.D.** program*

Objectives	Programs/ Activities	Means of Verification	Persons involved	Time frame	Budget	Source of Funds	Expected outcome
To strengthen school heads' time-management and work-life balance.	Conduct of regular activities relative to time management and work-life balance.	Approved activity proposals with budget appropriation in school improvement plans.	-School heads and -division focal persons	Quarterly	Php 100,000	HRTD Funds	Enhanced work-life balance resulting in the highest quality of school leadership.

To enable efficient resource optimization .	Conduct of resource management training, benchmarking, and resource mapping exercises.	Approved activity proposals with budget appropriation in school improvement plans.	-School heads and -division focal persons	Annually	Php 50,000	HRTD Funds	Improved resource utilization.
To incorporate technological advancements into leadership practices.	Conduct of hands-on training on latest tools for communication , administration, and instruction. Use of data management systems, virtual meeting platforms, and digital communication tools.	Approved activity proposals with budget appropriation in school improvement plans.	-School heads and -division focal persons	Annually	Php 50,000	HRTD Funds	Increased technological proficiency and competence in the context of school leadership.
To foster continuous growth through professional development	Crafting of Human Resource Development plan for school heads and teachers, optimizing the conduct of Learning Action Cell (LAC), and access to online courses and certifications.	Approved Human Resource Development plan and strict implementation of the Learning Action Cell (LAC) by utilizing online courses and certification.	-School heads, - teachers, and - division focal persons	Quarterly	Php 50,000	HRTD Funds	Provision of clearer career developmental pathways for school heads and its subordinates.
To promote stakeholder engagement and collaboration.	Conduct of stakeholder's engagement workshops, and collaborative projects.	MOU/MOA with stakeholders	-School heads, -teachers, -parents, - Brgy. officials, and - Alumni	Quarterly	Php 50,000	MOOE	Foster strong and sustainable partnership with stakeholders, resulting in improved leadership and resource

allocation.

The first component of the program asserts that effective school leadership is the linchpin of a thriving educational environment. School heads are continually challenged by a multifaceted array of responsibilities that demand adeptness in managing their time, balancing professional duties with personal well-being, and maintaining high standards for their schools. By focusing on enhancing time-management skills and promoting work-life balance, school leaders can improve their decision-making capacity, reduce stress, and serve as role models for their staff and students. Building this resilience enables them to sustain high performance over time and foster a positive school climate.

The optimal utilization of resources is vital for the successful functioning of any school. School leaders who can strategically analyze and allocate these resources ensure maximum impact, promote efficiency, and support innovative teaching and learning environments. Training in resource management, along with creative problem-solving approaches, allows school heads to overcome limitations and leverage community partnerships or funding sources to uplift their schools' standards.

The rapid evolution of technology introduces new opportunities and challenges in school leadership logistics. Familiarity with the latest digital tools, data

management systems, and communication platforms is essential for modern leaders. Equipping school heads with technological assistance enables them to streamline administrative tasks, facilitate effective communication, and implement innovative instructional and management practices. Staying abreast of technological trends helps schools adapt to the digital age and enhances their capacity for data-driven decision-making.

Opportunities for ongoing growth and professional development are critical to sustaining high standards among school leaders. Continuous learning through workshops, seminars, and online courses helps leaders stay updated with current educational policies, leadership strategies, and pedagogical innovations. Additionally, mentoring programs and peer networks foster collaborative learning, reflection, and sharing of best practices, empowering school heads to lead with confidence and vision. Cultivating a growth mindset ensures that leadership quality continuously evolves in response to changing educational needs.

Lastly, fostering strong stakeholder partnerships and collaboration enhances shared responsibility and creates a cohesive school community. Engaging teachers, parents, students, local government, and community organizations in decision-making processes builds trust, garners support, and aligns efforts toward common goals. Building a culture of collaboration ensures that leadership extends beyond the school administration to encompass a broad base of stakeholders committed to educational excellence. This collective approach sustains high standards and promotes holistic development for students and the broader community.

Taken together, these components form a cohesive and responsive framework for developing competent, adaptive, and resilient school leaders. The proposed program not only addresses current leadership gaps but also nurtures the transformative capacities of school heads to lead inclusive, future-ready schools. Anchored in the principles of the PPSSH and supported by empirical evidence, this program offers a strategic pathway for elevating leadership standards and advancing educational quality across Bislig's public elementary schools.

Monitoring and Evaluation Component

To ensure effectiveness, the L.E.G.E.N.D. program will incorporate a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework designed to track implementation progress, measure impact, and inform iterative improvements. This component will include baseline and post-training assessments of leadership competencies using PHIPPS-aligned rubrics, regular feedback loops through surveys and focus group discussions, and quarterly performance reviews conducted by division focal persons. Each program activity will be documented and evaluated against predefined success indicators, including increased instructional leadership effectiveness, improved stakeholder collaboration, and enhanced digital competence.

In addition, a program dashboard will be developed to consolidate quantitative and qualitative data, enabling stakeholders to visualize trends and make evidence-based adjustments. Continuous M&E will also guide resource reallocation, ensure accountability, and provide transparency to partners and stakeholders. With these mechanisms in place, the L.E.G.E.N.D. program will remain responsive to the

evolving needs of school leaders and will serve as a sustainable model for leadership enhancement across the region

AUTHORS

First Author – REX C. APILLANES, PhD -Education Program Supervisor
Department of Education - Schools Division of Bislig City
rex.apillanes@deped.gov.ph