

## Leaders Circle In Facilitating School Heads' Instructional Supervision Practices For Continuing Professional Development

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### ABSTRACT

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Instructional supervision is the process of ensuring that a school's educational mission is carried out by supervising, equipping, and empowering teachers to provide students with meaningful learning experiences. The study explored school heads' instructional supervision practices for continuing professional development through Leaders' Circle via a learning management system, which provides school leaders with opportunities to communicate, collaborate, critically think, be creative, and share experiences related to instructional supervision. The process owners of the instructional supervision process encountered a problem that they resolved using the Continuous Improvement (CI) learning cycle. The participants were chosen based on the prioritization matrix. Asynchronous style via Schoology and face-to-face sessions were used. The data collection tools for this study were the leaders circle manual, in-depth interviews (IDs), and Focus Group discussions (FGDs). Qualitative analysis identified recurring themes. The circle of the leaders promotes the following: (1) professional development; (2) character development; and (3) collaboration with other school administrators.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Student learning is a primary concern in schools, particularly in basic education in the Philippines. The literature demonstrates that the quality of teaching is the most critical factor in determining whether students learn well.

All public elementary and secondary schools in the Division of Cagayan de Oro City face significant challenges related to classroom instruction and low student achievement. The national achievement test demonstrates how academic performance of Kagay-anon students varies across learning areas from 2008-2009 to the present (Planning & Research, 2017).

Significantly more students fall short of the expected mastery level or national passing standard established by the Department of Education. In the 2017 National Achievement Test, a greater percentage of students failed in core subjects such as Science, Mathematics, and English. It has been observed that learners struggle when the medium of instruction is

English, such as in the following subject areas: (a) Mathematics; (b) Science; and (c) English. This is further supported by the 2018 diagnostic test results, which indicate that English is the weakest of all learning areas in elementary, while Mathematics is the strongest in secondary. This subject requires reading, writing, and comprehension abilities.

Thus, to ensure the effectiveness of the classroom teaching-learning process and the quality of education in our elementary education system, greater emphasis should be placed on these factors, particularly in the context of instructional supervision.

The instructional supervision process is a critical component and process of how each school operates (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998). Numerous authors used a variety of terms to describe instructional supervision. According to Glickman (1992), instructional supervision is defined as actions that enable teachers to improve the quality of their instruction for students and an act that strengthens relationships and meets personal and organizational needs. Sergiovanni and Starratt (2015) stated that opportunities for instructional supervision enabled teachers to hone their abilities to contribute to their student's academic success. It must also promote collaboration, professional growth, and trust among teachers and school leaders (Tesfaw & Hofman, 2014).

In this context, the instructional supervision process is essential, considering that proper and appropriate supervision can influence the learner's performance. Most of all, it impacts teachers' professional growth and development. Effective instructional supervision is linked to increase in teacher engagement, which in turn is associated with improved learner outcomes (Orphanos & Orr, 2014). As the teacher is one of the components that determine student learning outcomes, instructional supervision must be reinforced. Assistance must be provided for teachers to contribute to the development of the learning process and environment, leading to the improvement of the learner's performance (Maisyaroh et al., 2021). At the same time, instructional supervision contributes to the efforts on improving teachers' classroom instruction and providing feedback to their learners (Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010).

Thus, there is an urgent need to strengthen school leaders' instructional supervision competence and character in the twenty-first century. As instructional supervision and professional development are linked together, instructional supervision provides different efforts to build and enhance school leaders' professional development (Zepeda, 2007). To be able to keep up with the demands placed on them, professional development is important. School leaders must be the lead learner in the school community, ensuring that learning is occurring in the classrooms (Zepeda, Jimenez, & Lanoue, 2015) and building a collaborative and conducive learning culture (Cruickshank, 2017) within teachers and learners.

The study explored school heads' instructional supervision practices for continued professional development by integrating I am HIPHOP (Honest, Industrious, Polite, Helpful, Obedient and Punctual) into the leader circle and learning cycle.

### **OBJECTIVES OF PROJECT STUDY**

The study facilitated the school heads' instructional supervision practices through leaders' circle, a learning cycle for continuing professional development. Specifically, it aimed to: (1) create a framework for online and offline learning management systems; (2) utilize Schoology as an online platform in facilitating the Instructional Supervision (IS) practices of school heads for continuing professional development; and (3) assess the school heads' learning experiences when exposed to the Leaders' Circle.

## **2. METHODS**

The study facilitated conversations between school leaders who have encountered similar or dissimilar situations (in this case, instructional supervision) and elicited insights from diverse perspectives.

### **2.1. Research Design and Sampling Procedure**

The study was qualitative-descriptive in nature which described the situation and experiences of target participants. The first leaders' circle purposely includes ten school heads from each of the ten school districts in the division of Cagayan de Oro who meet the following criteria: (1) elementary school head of the most urgent school in need of technical assistance; (2) school heads' interests; (3) school heads' access to the internet; and (4) school heads' ability to manipulate gadgets. School heads in the identified most priority schools were invited to participate in the Leaders' Circle, Learning Cycle, which included enrollment in an online-offline learning management system.

### **2.2. The intervention employed in the study**

Schoology was used as an online platform for them to brainstorm, discuss, and share instructional supervision-related ideas, insights, and personal experiences. They discuss the difficulties they encountered and how they overcame them. As revealed in the study, information communication technology (IT) management can be a critical factor in the development of an innovative organization (Boonkua et al., 2020).

Schoology is an online learning space where they can connect professionally and collaborate using the CI learning cycle of Assess, Analyze, Act. At the assess stage, problem assessment took the form of quantified estimates to demonstrate the scope and magnitude of critical problems and issues. Document analysis, as well as qualitative descriptions gleaned from interviews and observations, were critical, particularly in cases where problems are not quantifiable due to a dearth of quality information and data. Following that is the analyze stage, which emphasizes Root Cause Analysis (RCA). It is an iterative process that delves into

a problem by analyzing what caused it until the root cause of the negative effect is identified. Third was the act stage, during which participants implemented critical insights gained during the discussions and reported on their progress on a regular basis. If a change was beneficial, they would scale it up and continuously evaluate the results. Finally, there was the reflect stage, which enables participants to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and use them to guide their ongoing learning. They will improve their self-directed learning abilities, their motivation, and the quality of care they are able to provide through reflection. Each meeting, whether online or in person, began with participants sharing their personal experiences of becoming HIPHOP (Honest, Industrious, Polite, Helpful, Obedient, and Punctual) while supervising their instructional staff.

During the first four weeks, participants met at their convenience via online-schoolology and once a week in person, preferably on Fridays from 2:00PM–5:00PM in the division's mini-conference space. The following are the steps for establishing a leaders' circle and learning cycle, as outlined in the contextualized manual: (1) orientation, which included an opening prayer, attendance verification, a statement of purpose, the circle's history, legal foundation, internet connectivity, and a time frame; (2) online registration in Schoology, in which the LC moderator would log in to [www.schoology.com](http://www.schoology.com), sign up as an administrator, fill out the required data, create an online learning space/course/group/community/circle, enroll the target participants by providing them with an access code, and monitor participant attendance; (3) registration of LC participants, in which they would log in to [www.schoology.com](http://www.schoology.com), sign up as students, enter the access code, and fill out the required information.

The circle's members are expected to possess the following: (1) Intellectual Fortitude. Each member would participate actively, take calculated risks, challenge others respectfully, and think creatively; (2) Intellectual Leadership. Each member would take the initiative, be prepared, and assist others in their learning; (3) Intellectual Humility. Each member would demonstrate scholarly behavior and refrain from robbing others of their opportunities to learn and think; and (4) Intellectual Aggression. Each member would cite evidence to substantiate their points; defend their own positions; and, if possible, cite multiple credible sources.

Additional rules for an effective leaders circle are as follows: (1) Deference. Each member shall conduct himself or herself with deference, consideration, and respect at all times; (2) Engagement. Everyone contributes, and everyone listens actively; (3) Time. Make the most of your time. Maintain focus and refocus as necessary; (4) Preparation. Each member would be responsible for completing objectives and tasks. Individuals must hold one another accountable. Establish a goal for the group meeting, whether online or in person, and (5) Telling of virtues. During instructional supervision, each member is encouraged to share their I am HIPHOP (Honest, Industrious, Polite, Helpful, Obedient, and Punctual) experiences. Through this strategy, school leaders will strengthen their instructional

competence (IS) while also emphasizing certain aspects of their IS activities, resulting in improved teacher performance and learning outcomes for students.

### **2.3. Data Gathering**

The data collection for this study included both in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). According to Creswell (2012), interviews are the most effective method for qualitative research because they enable you to explain, better understand, and explore the opinions, behavior, experiences, and phenomena of research subjects. Interview questions are typically open-ended in nature in order to elicit detailed information. On the other hand, a focus group discussion brings together individuals with similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a particular subject. It is a type of qualitative research in which participants are asked questions about their perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and ideas.

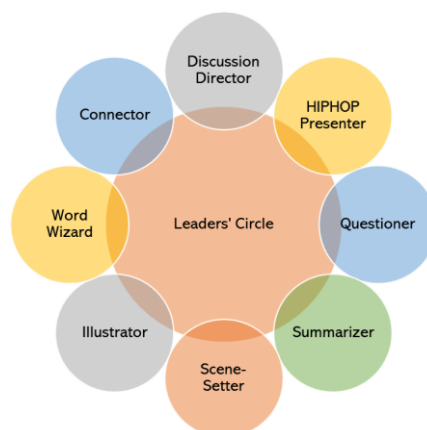
### **2.4. Data analysis**

The interviews and Focus Groups (FGs) with LC participants revealed several major themes. Braun and Clarke (2006)'s five-stage process of familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and finally defining and naming themes was used in this study. This procedure would capture all critical elements in conjunction with the LC participants' experiences. Additionally, the FG results were cross-checked using online tasks. Throughout the focus groups, ten SHs participated. Finally, this project incorporated the use of consent forms and authorizations. All discussions in the leaders circle are kept strictly confidential among the participants.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1. Framework for an Online and Offline Learning Management System**

The leaders' circle (LC) provided a space for school heads to brainstorm and discuss their experiences with instructional supervision. The LC framework enabled meaningful interactions between school leaders in both online and offline settings. Each member of the circle plays a critical role during the online and offline encounters, as illustrated in the schematic diagram



**Figure 1.** Framework for the Online and Offline Learning Management System

These are the fundamental roles of the leader's circle: (1) Presenter of HIPHOP. During the Instructional Supervision, all members are encouraged to share their HIPHOP experiences. (2) Facilitator of discussion. The discussion director chooses an interesting central idea or event to discuss with the group - all of which are related to Instructional Supervision. The discussion director serves as a reminder to the group to stay on track and encourages participation from others; (2.1) School principals shared their experiences with instructional supervision, including pre-con/con (general observations)/post-conference; (2.2) The school head listed all of the observed strengths and weaknesses, TA provided, and their agreement reached; (2.3) If possible, describe the differentiated supervision model that was used to meet the professional development needs of an individual, such as directed/clinical supervision; mentoring; administrative monitoring (walkthroughs); peer coaching (collegial consultation); self-directed supervision (individual contracts); instructional leadership (internship); professional colloquium (book talks/study groups); (3) Questioner. While reading the posted instructional supervision experience, the questioner considers pertinent questions: How did this happen? Why was this teacher behaving in this manner? and much more... (4) Connector. The connector establishes text/post-to-self connections (How does this relate to my feelings, experiences? ), text-to-text connections (Have I read something similar in another source, such as books, journals, or magazines? ), and text-to-world connections (How does this relate to recent news events?). (5) Vocabulary Builder/Word Finder (Word Wizard). The vocabulary enricher selects and defines new or interesting Instructional Supervision terms that contribute to the text's/interest. post's The term finder identifies critical instructional supervision terms (localized, novel) that can be shared with others. (6) Artist (Artful Artist). The illustrator collaborates with the other members of the group to create visual interpretations of the story; (7) Writer of summaries. The summarizer compiles an overview of the day's online conversations; (8) Specialist in research. The researcher identifies pertinent information/themes pertaining to the school heads' experience with information technology; (9) Setter of the scene. The scene-setter keeps track of when and where actions occur, as well as when/if the scene changes; (10) Professional profiler. The objective is to maintain an

awareness of the presenter's persona. The profiler delves into the presenter's mind, taking note of his or her thoughts, feelings, plans, strengths, and weaknesses.

At the end of the week, each member completed the assessment rubric roles for the leaders' circle. This evaluated each member's progress in terms of role fulfillment and discussion. Additional questions were raised during the face-to-face reflection session to ascertain the circle's strengths and weaknesses.

### **3.2. Schoology was used as a mobile learning platform to facilitate school heads' Instructional Supervision (IS) practices for continued professional development.**

Schoology is a web-based learning management system developed in 2007 by Jeremy Friedman, Ryan Hwang, Tim Trinidad, and Bill Kindler. Additionally, it is considered an online learning platform that is utilized by professionals worldwide. According to Sarrab et al. (2016), Schoology has over seven million users from over 60,000 K-12 schools and higher education institutions worldwide. The system may be a cloud-based platform accessible via websites, Android, Apple, or Kindle Fire devices. This enables the extension of traditional learning processes and the development of mobile learning experiences beyond the confines of the classroom. Additionally, integration of information communication technology (IT) in learning can advance learning. It allows learners to practice autonomy and produce innovative outcomes (Biswas, 2013).

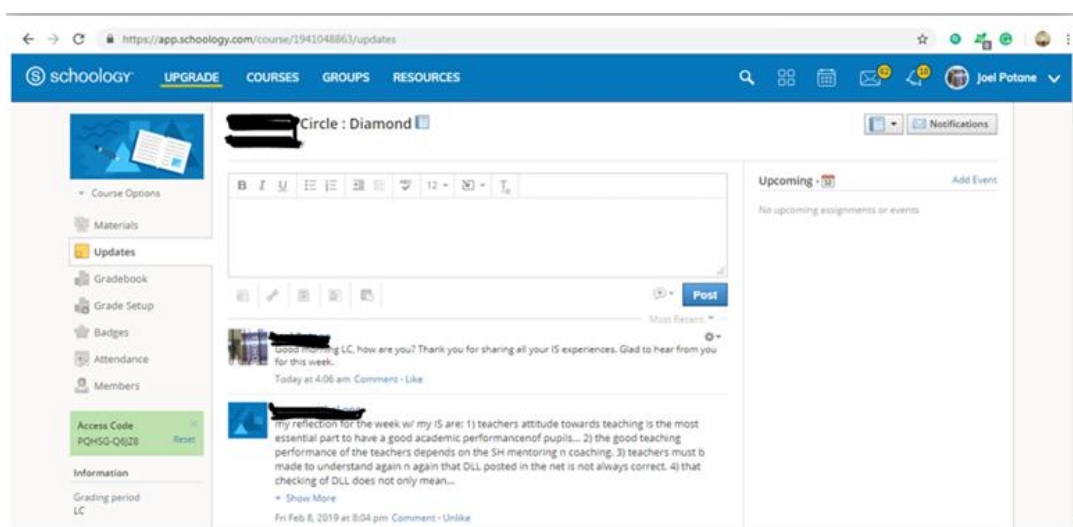
Schoology has been recognized by the Software Information and Industry Association (SIIA) and was named the 2014 CODiE winner. It was named the best education solution for K-12 and higher education, as well as the best learning management system, in 2015, and was a finalist in the categories of best K-12 course or learning management solution and best postsecondary learning management solution (Schoology, 2015).

The school heads were enrolled in the online platform Schoology as part of this study. Each district is represented by a single principal. These school heads were purposefully chosen based on the analysis of the priority matrix. While members were enrolled as student-participants, the lead proponent served as the lead facilitator and school administrator. This spawned the idea of a leaders circle, in which a group of professionals meets online or in person to collaborate and learn as a single professional learning community. As Krutka and Carpenter (2016) emphasize, Schoology as a mobile learning network has the potential to provide a professional learning network aimed at enhancing professionalism through connections and communication with educators and experts from around the world in a variety of interest groups.

However, the primary objective of this study is to facilitate and process the diverse practices and experiences of school administrators in the context of Instructional Supervision (IS). Through online interactions, we can all learn about IS. In their respective schools, participants used cellphones and computers. They have downloaded the Schoology apps to their smartphones for easy and convenient access. As with Facebook, it is a social learning

management system for mobile devices that enables pedagogically and socially sound mobile learning. It is a hybrid of social networking and learning management systems.

The Schoology includes a variety of instructional tools, including customizable lessons and self-paced learning, threaded discussion boards, microblogging, content migration and import, and more (Sarrab et al., 2016). Self-paced interactions are considered in this project because school heads were given one week to share and interact with other colleagues. Participants share their perspectives, insights, and experiences at their own pace and according to their available schedule and internet connection. The online platform also included threaded.



**Figure 2.** Screenshot of the threaded discussions via schoology

As previously stated, the online platform provides opportunities for school heads to interact, communicate, and collaborate on a continuous basis. Each participant updated their shared links, photos, and status, which the other participants could comment on or simply like. The system actively promotes engagement and connectivity among school heads. Participants discover how simple it is to collaborate, communicate, share educational materials (i.e. photos, SIM cards, and videos), and connect from any mobile device. Each member would be notified if new materials, comments, or updates were received from their colleagues.

### **3.3. School principals' learning experiences as a result of their exposure to the Leaders' Circle**

#### **3.3.1. Continuing Professional Development**

The circle via Schoology enables participants to: (1) comprehend one another's contexts, particularly in Instructional Supervision (IS); (2) share common problems they have encountered; (3) discuss and brainstorm ways to handle and resolve the raised problems; (4) summarize the insights and important points; (5) collaborate in a professional learning circle



where everyone's experience is valued and acknowledged; (6) extract key points from the schoology.

As divulged by one of the participants: *"As a neophyte administrator, I was able to gain more knowledge and insights about instructional supervision which definitely help me grow professionally."* (6)

Other participants divulged that:

*"It made me reflect the kind of School Head I am and compare my Instructional Supervision style and strategy with other members."* (1)

*"I gained the confidence to open-up my ideas and share it to others for learning"* (5)  
*"Benchmark on how other school heads conducted their COT in their school"* (3)

*"With this circle, I have in-depth learning from the various sharing related to improving instructional supervision."* (9)

*"I improved to communicate and share ideas with the other school heads with a high degree of professionalism. This is at a higher level than the conventional way."* (2)

The participants confirmed that the leaders circle through school assists them in continually improving their professional skills. The weekly processing of their various roles honed their professionalism. The following are the observed patterns in terms of their assigned tasks: (1) fulfilled their role and task independently; (2) completed tasks thoroughly and thoughtfully, demonstrating an extension of the role; (3) provides insightful, scholarly, and thoughtful opinions and makes pertinent connections to recent discussions; (4) addressed issues raised; and (5) participated enthusiastically in discussions. According to Gobena (2017), principals and supervisors of the system's implementing unit should act morally, practically, professionally, ethically, responsibly, and critically in order to meet the nation's professional needs for bringing about behavioral changes and providing quality education.

### **3.3.2. Strengthening Good Character**

The circle's reflection session allowed participants to become more receptive, confident, humble, competent, dedicated, and optimistic. The sharing of HIPHOP (Honest, Industrious, Polite, Helpful, Obedient, and Punctual) experiences in schools enabled them to reflect on the virtues they demonstrated to their teachers, particularly during the various stages of IS, beginning with the pre-conference, actual observation, and post-conference.

Some of the participants shared that,

*"I am so glad today that one of my teachers has put into practice what she has taught to her pupils, the act of being helpful. I was informed by our PSDS to contribute snacks for our contenders in journalism. Since I am talking to that teacher, she immediately told me to be the in-charged of everything and not to worry anymore. I find it amazing, HIPHOP really works in the hearts of our teachers."* (6)

*“Obedience is one of the iconic values that teachers should have in order to make a drastic increase in COT rating, he/she must consider the agreement/ technical assistance given during post-conference. One of my teachers yesterday innovated the lesson she had in class that made her get a good rating in COT. She did almost all of our agreement during the previous COT and I was delighted with how she was able to manage the class with an excellent result.” (4)*

Instilling virtues in instructional supervision requires instructional leaders to exhibit admirable characteristics such as honesty, accountability, and courage. Character is advantageous for a leader. Being honorable and honest at work and maintaining positive relationships with others are critical components of this endeavor. As Kurtus (2012) confirms, people are typically judged on the basis of their character. Leaders must be trustworthy and dependable, as well as accountable and courageous. Teachers who trust and sense support from their school leaders feel at ease with cooperating with the management and become willing to try new practices, thus potentially improving teacher efficacy (Ma & Marion, 2021). People's perceptions of you are influenced by your reputation, and having good character results in increased respect from others and self-esteem. Maintaining a good character, on the other hand, requires constant effort and sacrifice.

### **3.3.3. Collaborative efforts with other principals**

Through the leaders circle, it fostered collaboration among the heads of the participating schools, particularly in resolving pressing issues that arose in real-world situations. As Balyer et al. (2015) emphasize, establishing professional learning communities built capacity and improved students' academic performance. It is one of the administrative responsibilities of instructional leaders. In terms of capacity development, it is more critical than ever for school leaders to establish collaborative professional learning circles.

*The school-head participants disclose that “I am helped by soliciting opinions and suggestions from the other school heads on how to overcome the challenges and problems I encountered” (10)*

*“I am more enlightened on the various practices of instructional supervision through this unique circle among school heads” (6)*

Working together in the same system provides a compelling reason to form bonds, particularly in this circle, along with the mutual benefits for the circle's members. Collaboration is critical in helping school heads improve because professional development occurs through it (Goddard et al., 2010). Collaboration ensures that each member has an equal opportunity to participate and communicate their ideas.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Through the Leaders' Circle, this study facilitated school heads' Instructional Supervision (IS) practices for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The circle is an

Instructional Leader Circle in which school heads can communicate, collaborate, think critically, and be creative, as well as share their experiences with instructional supervision. This project developed the framework for an online and offline Learning Management System and used Schoology as a mobile learning platform to support school heads' Instructional Supervision (IS) practices for continued professional development. Qualitative analysis identified recurring themes. The leader's circle promotes the following: (1) ongoing professional development; (2) character development; and (3) collaboration with other school administrators.

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