Evaluating Teachers' Performances: Travails of School Heads in the New Normal

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Abstract:- This study explored the lived experiences, challenges encountered, coping mechanisms and insights of public elementary school heads on evaluating teachers in schools using the RPMS-IPCRF in the new normal. The participants were coming from DepEd Region XI, Division of Davao City, specifically in the schools of Paquibato District. There were eight (8) school heads who participated in the study, and were purposely selected. This study made use of a phenomenological approach to extract the ideas from the participants. The virtual in-depth interview was employed to gather significant information with regard to their respective lived experiences. Using the thematic analysis, the following themes emerged pertaining to their lived experiences: evaluation for performance improvement, evaluation as a difficult task, teachers providing outstanding educational services, and hurdling evaluation challenges. Further, there were also three (3) subthemes that emerged on the challenges experienced by the participants. These are the lack of RPMS-IPCRF orientations, unattainable key results areas, and rater-ratee relationship issues. The coping mechanisms of participants on the challenges they experienced were: RPMS-IPCRF re-orientations, team building for strengthening relationships, and regular coaching and monitoring. The educational management insights drawn from the participants were the importance of LAC sessions in schools and the value of rater-ratee collaborations. Thus, it is crucial to provide effective evaluation strategy training to school heads with additional support and continual professional development endeavors to boost their effectiveness and foster desirable management and evaluation skills amidst the pandemic.

Keywords:- *RPMS-IPCRF, School Heads, Elementary Schools, Lived Experience.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the 21st century, public education has undergone a tremendous transformation, particularly in the areas of accountability and evaluation in relation to education reforms. The No Filipino Child Left Behind (NFCLB) Act of 2010 and the reformation of the curriculum to the latest K to 12 basic education curriculum in 2012 are the nationwide changes in education that have influenced how educators create curriculum, evaluate student accomplishment statistics, and invest their professional energies. These programs have enhanced accountability in public schools and extended obligations for educators, especially building-based administrators. School administrators are now more than challenged to take responsibilities in evaluating teachers' performance in schools.

In the Philippines, the Philippines Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) created a rating system for teachers called the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS), which was just passed into law by the Department of Education via DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017. This rating tool was implemented for the first time during the 2018-2019 school year and continuously modified up to the present, causing confusion among teachers and school heads. They found it extremely difficult and demanding because there are numerous obstacles to achieving and fulfilling the required outputs for each key result area (KRA), given the daily routine or duties of teachers, much more in the new normal (Lacayanga, 2022). The recommendations describe the systems, criteria, and processes for defining performance targets, monitoring, evaluating, and planning development. Through the RPMS, the DepEd ensures that work activities are directed toward accomplishing its vision, mission, values, and strategic priorities in order to provide Filipino students with outstanding educational services.

The study titled, "Evaluating Teachers' Performances: Travails Of School Heads In The New Normal" was to explore the lived experiences, challenges encountered, coping mechanisms, and insights of elementary school heads in evaluating teachers' performance in schools in the new normal. The participants were coming from DepEd Region XI, Division of Davao City, specifically in the schools of Paquibato District.

This study highlighted the need for the Division of Davao City's Department of Education (DepEd) to review their teacher evaluation practices and training programs to better support school heads in assessing teachers, particularly in the new normal. It aims to provide insights into the real challenges faced by public elementary school heads and teachers and offers guidance for future capacity-building programs. Additionally, the study served as a valuable resource for future researchers interested in exploring teacher evaluation and performance, especially through qualitative research methods like phenomenology. Key terms, such as teachers' evaluation and performance, were clearly defined to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the study's focus.

In conclusion, the study provided valuable insights into the lived experiences and challenges faced by elementary school heads in assessing teachers' performance during the new normal. Conducted in the Paquibato District under

DepEd Region XI, Division of Davao City, the study shed light on the coping strategies and perspectives of school leaders as they navigate the complexities of teacher evaluations. The findings offered a deeper understanding of the difficulties school heads encounter and may serve as a basis for improving evaluation practices and support systems within the education sector.

II. METHOD

The study employed a qualitative-inquiry-based phenomenological research design that included open-ended questions. A type of inquiry known as phenomenological research involves the researcher distilling the main points of participants' accounts of a phenomenon.). By highlighting the similarities in their experiences, the researcher was able to describe the common meanings of the school heads regarding their evaluation processes (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenological techniques are especially good at challenging structural or normative assumptions by highlighting individual experiences and perceptions from their own perspectives.

Furthermore, this study made use of participants' observations during an In-Depth Interview (IDI). This method entails the utilization and collecting of a range of interviews, observations, history, interactional, and visual texts that depict routines, issues, and the significance of individual lives, according to Denzel & Lincoln (2000), as referenced by Lee (2007) in Pelobello (2015). It is a process of knowledge that investigates a social or human issue and is founded on several methodological traditions. It creates a comprehensive picture, examines reports, words, and informants' in-depth perspectives, and carries out the research in an organic environment.

This study was conducted in DepEd Region XI, Division of Davao City, specifically in the schools of Paquibato District. Only 8 (eight) participants who are school heads from different elementary schools as the key informants were included and were purposely selected based on the nature of their work as classroom teachers and who already experienced working in the Department of Education for at least three years or more. The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses.

To gain a variance in perspective from participants, the effort was extended to include both male and female as well as individuals with various levels of educational training, attainment, and rank. Specifically, the inclusion criteria include the following: (1) School heads who have been in a managerial position for three years or more; (2) had experienced managing a school in the old and new normal; and (3) elementary school heads who experienced challenges in rating or evaluating teachers performance in the new normal.

In gathering the data, I prepared the interview guide which is composed of three (3) main significant questions which inquired about the experiences of elementary school heads. A thorough deliberation was made on the aspect of determining the problems of school heads in their effort to become effective and efficient new normal leaders in schools. I made sure that my interview guide was validated by the experts. Moreover, I made sure that all ethical protocols were observed and implemented as I collected the data.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The participants revealed their experiences as they delved into their stories and learning from their lived experiences as elementary school heads assessing and evaluating teachers' performance amidst the pandemic. The participants' challenges encountered, coping mechanisms and insights were also presented in this part of the research specifically in DepEd Region XI, Division of Davao City, specifically in the schools of Paquibato District.

The first theme presented the lived experiences of the public elementary school heads in evaluating teachers' performances in the new normal. The researcher was able to identify four major themes. These are evaluation for performance improvement, evaluation as a difficult task, teachers providing outstanding educational services, and hurdling evaluation challenges. Further, there were also three (3) subthemes that emerged on the challenges experienced by the participants. These are the lack of RPMS-IPCRF orientations, unattainable key results areas, and rater-ratee relationship issues.

The second theme presented on the coping mechanisms or strategies of public elementary school heads on the challenges they experienced in evaluating teachers' performance amidst the pandemic. the coping strategies of school leaders are divided into three (3) major themes. These are RPMS-IPCRF re-orientations, team building for strengthening relationships, and regular coaching and monitoring. These summarized the coping strategies of the school heads as they deal with the challenges of the current research circumstances.

The third theme presented the insights or lessons learned by elementary school heads in evaluating teachers in schools amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on the experiences and challenges of the school heads in public secondary schools, the participants of this study had their respective insights to further improve their leadership experiences. These insights were some of the personal thoughts of the participants that they deemed significant in understanding their real situations in the new normal.

In conclusion, the lived experiences of elementary school heads in evaluating teachers in the new normal showed the following themes: evaluation for performance improvement, evaluation as a difficult task, teachers providing outstanding educational services, and hurdling evaluation challenges. Further, there were also three (3) subthemes that emerged on the challenges experienced by the

participants. These are the lack of RPMS-IPCRF orientations, unattainable key results areas, and rater-ratee relationship issues. The coping mechanisms of participants on the challenges they experienced were: RPMS-IPCRF re-orientations, team building for strengthening relationships, and regular coaching and monitoring. The educational management insights drawn from the participants were the importance of LAC sessions in schools and the value of rater-ratee collaborations.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only disrupted everyday lives for public school heads, teachers and pupils, but it also sent shockwaves across the whole educational system. In the face of utter uncertainty, principals felt the impacts from all sides as they worked to manage the situation especially in evaluating teachers' performances. Although schools faced challenges, school heads continue to believe and do their part believing that evaluation is done for teachers' performance improvement and continued competence.

Adjusting to the new situation or adapting to the changes in the new normal required the school heads to double their efforts to cope with the demands of their management roles. Elementary school heads needed to cope with multiple evaluation issues. They found relief in conducting RPMS-IPCRF re-orientations and updates, they also conduct school level team building activities to rebuild and sustain harmonious relationships in schools. Regular coaching and monitoring were also considered as a strategy to help teachers master the evaluation processes.

The findings of this study shed light on the various experiences of the elementary school heads in DepEd schools. The study looked into the school leaders' actions and reactions. These experiences, acquired through systematic interviews, can help other educators interested in the phenomenon under study, as well as other scholars pursuing comparative lines of study. Participants' coping techniques can be used as a resource for those who find themselves in a similar position.

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