

# **A Case Study of the Personal Experiences on Instructional Leadership of Middle-Level Leaders during Pandemic**

**CATHERINE LLAVE**

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3096-5730>  
[crllave@pup.edu.ph](mailto:crllave@pup.edu.ph)/[llave.cr@pnu.edu.ph](mailto:llave.cr@pnu.edu.ph)  
Polytechnic University of the Philippines  
Philippine Normal University  
Philippines

**CYNTHIA GENON**

<http://orcid.org/0000-000-4768-529X>  
[genon.cc@pnu.edu.ph](mailto:genon.cc@pnu.edu.ph)  
JCSGO Christian Academy  
Philippine Normal University  
Philippines

Originality: 100% • Grammarly Score: 100% • Plagiarism: 0%

---

## **ABSTRACT**

The pandemic has brought disruption in the educational setting. This sudden disorder has to be handled properly and quickly by the management, specifically the middle managers, to ensure a smooth delivery of learning and teaching. Holding on to the assumption that middle managers have a special function during a crisis, this study explored the instructional leadership of middle managers during the pandemic in a private institution using the Philippine Professional Standards for Supervisors. Using qualitative phenomenological design and employing focus group discussion as a data gathering technique to inquire on the middle managers' handling of the academic condition, results reveal that implementation of the curriculum was smoothly done even if they are

not well-equipped with the current situation. This study clearly emphasized that middle managers' critical function, especially in turbulent times, for the smooth delivery of instructions by monitoring the teachers' well-being professionally and emotionally and providing needed academic assistance. Hence, we recommend that academic institutions enhance the managerial aspect of middle managers by including disaster and risk mitigation. It is also recommended to look after the welfare of the middle managers. The key role they play is crucial to sustaining the delivery of academic excellence.

**Keywords** — Instructional leadership, personal experiences, middle managers, case study, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

In times of crisis and uncertainty, school leaders must adapt quickly and flexibly to a rapidly changing situation. This new normal presents a unique challenge to every educational leader's decision-making process, so learning should never be stopped, and schools should continue to deliver quality education amidst the pandemic. As observed by Butcher and Loots (2020), innovations are taking place and we should acknowledge the 'positive impact' this COVID situation will bring. Amid a crisis, leaders should make sure that their organization is moving forward. Hence, leaders should foresee the demands and needs of the situation (Gurr, 2020).

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of middle-level managers and determine the effects of their instructional leadership, particularly in managing the instructional program, as they are the drivers of the educational agenda in schools. Instructional leadership is also known as Principal Leadership (Bulris, 2009) and leadership for learning (Loader, 2010). There are studies where instead of principals, the respondents were head teachers (Donkor & Asante, 2016). The characteristics of instructional leaders enumerated by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) were culture builders, goal-oriented leading, school and pupil achievement, and acting both as a leader and manager. The model of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) is the most widely used model for instructional leadership.

Studies on middle managers were more on the tertiary level (Mahdzir et al., 2022; Nguyen, 2013; Pham et al., 2019; Velasco, 2020; Reyes, 2019; Sackdanouong, 2013; Syharath, 2012) except for Singapore, which has limited studies (Ho et al., 2020; Koh et al., 2011; Choong, 2018; Goodwin et al., 2015; ). While there has been a great deal of research regarding instructional leadership

and much work has been done about the role of the principals, the need to study instructional leadership in this current academic condition is valuable, especially the role of middle managers as instructional leaders. Little knowledge is known about the clear-cut role of middle managers in the basic education setting during normal school operations, all the more in the midst of a crisis.

To address this purpose, this paper attempted to explore the experiences of middle-level leaders in terms of supervising instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress during the pandemic. This was explored through the lens of the Philippine Professional Standards for Supervisors.

The impetus for creating the Philippine Professional Standards for Supervisors was the call for global citizens and lifelong learning. The PPSS contains the vision of creating quality leaders in the field of education because, aptly stated, “Quality learning is contingent upon quality teaching” (Department of Education [DepEd], 2017). This standard is embodied in DepEd Order No. 025 Series of 2020, entitled “National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Supervisors.” Paragraph 2 of this Order states, “The DepEd recognizes the roles of supervisors in improving the quality of basic education in the Philippines. It upholds that quality student learning is contingent upon quality teachers who are supported by quality school leaders.” This quality supervisor is “expected to know, be able to do and value as they progress in their profession” (DepEd, 2020).

The qualitative study discussed in this article took a similar approach to Roofe (2021) regarding how instructional leadership practices are done during a crisis and how they respond to issues related to the digital skills and competencies of those they lead. Findings from the analysis of semi-structured interviews of four Jamaican school leaders revealed a narrow understanding of instructional leadership. The challenge that emerges from this paper is to explore the necessary leadership attributes and skills in managing the curriculum and instruction when crises arise. As observed, instructional leaders need a thorough understanding of their current responsibilities during the pandemic and validate their experiences in pursuing teaching and learning excellence.

Faced with a change in the educational paradigm, instructional leaders need to manage the Instructional Program, which focuses on the coordination and control of instruction and curriculum, and comply with these three leadership functions: Supervising and Evaluating Instruction, Coordinating the Curriculum, and Monitoring Student Progress. Along with this is to solve the following: learners have problems focusing on learning and have high feelings of

loneliness and anxiousness, parents are overwhelmed with the learning resources shared without knowing what to do, teachers are struggling to go digital without intensive training and support, and limited resources of the school. A paradigm shift is happening that goes beyond methodological. The DepEd Curriculum and Instruction strand has streamlined the K-12 curriculum by identifying the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) (DepEd, 2020).

The Philippine Professional Standards for Supervisors (PPSS) Domain One is used as guidelines for managing the instructional program. In this domain, supervisors are mandated to assist in the effective management and implementation of reforms in the curriculum. Strands under this domain are curriculum implementation, curriculum innovation, curriculum contextualization, learning resource development, learning resource management, and learning outcomes assessment. Further, teachers and school leaders were capacitated to carry out and adopt the multi-modal learning delivery approach. School leaders' responsibility is complicated in meeting new demands, but the key and foremost function is to manage the school's instructional mantra (Mestry, 2013). Knowing the experiences of middle-level leaders and the effect of their instructional leadership on the school agenda in these challenging times is essential.

A number of studies have used instructional leadership about teacher academic optimism (Allen, 2011), school culture (Sahin, 2011), and school academic excellence (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Cheboi, 2016; McCoy, 2011; Sotarar et al., 2018), the teachers' performance (Hejres et al., 2017), the leader's performance (Harris, 2014; Issa, 2014), comparison of one school leader to another school leader (Staples, 2005). Other studies have used teachers' perceptions in order to evaluate their respective leaders, whether principal or assistant principal (Atkinson, Jr., 2013; Bada et al., 2020; DeVries, 2017; Finley, 2014; Gurley et al., 2016; Howard-Schwind, 2010) while one study analyzed the policies involved for instructional leadership (Chuta, 2018). The succeeding paragraphs below will discuss the concept of instructional leadership and the application of instructional leadership in school effectiveness and difficult times.

The prevalent thread in effective school research is the importance of leadership, particularly instructional leadership. In an effective school review of research, Perez and Socias (2008) determined that high-performing schools had five common characteristics: strong instructional leadership. McEwan (2008), through a synthesis of effective school research—which included research on instructional leadership, case studies of highly effective schools, and interviews of principals, teachers, and district administrators developed ten trends of

effective schools that have performed and mastered. The first of the tenth is a strong display of instructional leadership. Instructional leadership is a crucial factor in determining the effectiveness of a school and its students.

Instructional Leadership is commonly defined as the management of curriculum and instruction. It is a condition where leaders focus on instruction to attain higher student achievement; thus, school leaders' roles should be defined. The concept of instructional leadership was known in the 1980s and 1990. Researchers developed theories and models pertaining to this type of leadership (Muda et al., 2017). The majority of the research used the model developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) as their main reference. Based on this model, instructional leadership has three dimensions: determining school missions, managing instructional programs, and creating a learning environment. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) characterized instructional leadership as the role and behaviors of the principal in promoting and improving the teaching and learning process. Principals manage the instructional program by supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) state the elements of Instructional Leadership that it is a specification of a bond, including management of teaching-learning and advancement of school climate. Weber (1996, as cited in Johnson, 2006) agreed with the view of Hallinger's adding two more additional elements: observation & teaching development and teaching assessment. Weber maintained that regardless of whoever upholds the instructional leadership style, the focus is still on improving teaching and learning.

Generally, instructional leadership is principal-centered. The functions demand that the principal has a strong involvement in teaching and learning and a commitment to the school's improvement. However, in today's complex time, leadership is distributed among department heads, supervisors, and subject coordinators as middle-level leaders. As such, instructional leaders need to emphasize improving the quality of instructional programs, which is the main thrust of every institution. Schools can only be effective if the students obtain maximum learning and benefit from the instructional program. Research on the effects of instructional leadership on student achievement is varied. Bartlett's (2008) study failed to find a correlation between the principal's instructional leadership practices to student achievement, specifically in English, Math, and Biology, to which he said that "this conclusion is in conflict with a large body of literature" (p. 96). While for Vilakazi (2016), upon studying the leadership practices and behaviors of principals in primary schools using mixed method

design, argued that instructional leadership should ensure concentration on teaching and learning heading toward improvement in student achievement. The presence of concrete goals monitors the supervision of teachers during instruction, and the use of instructional time has a positive bearing on students' academic performance.

The instructional leaders' practices and behavior are also linked to teachers' efficacy. Good instructional leadership practices related to developing and managing school climate and supervision of instruction positively influenced teachers' efficacy. Instructional leadership is important in the development of a conducive teaching environment. Manaseh (2016) studied the instructional leadership practices of school principals, particularly monitoring how much time they spend managing the instructional program. Respondents of this study were administrators of the school, supervisors, teachers, and students who were interviewed and observed. Manaseh (2016) suggested that any management of the delivery of instruction and good practice in teaching and learning processes could help teachers remain in the profession.

Pitpit (2020) found out that the important dimension in the components of instructional leadership is managing the instructional program as one aspect of supporting novice teachers. Goddard et al. (2021) studied the impact of instructional leaders' sense of efficacy on instruction development. Goddard et al. (2010) presented that the effectiveness of instructional leaders would directly indicate in advance the efficacy of teachers' beliefs and indirectly predict the achievement of students.

The role of instructional leaders in managing changes in 21st-century education toward maintaining the quality of education is important (Muda et al., 2017). School leaders' responsibility is complicated in meeting new demands, but the key and foremost function is to manage the school's instructional mantra (Mestry, 2013). The new normal challenges every educational leader's decision-making process, so learning should never be stopped. Schools should continue to deliver quality education amidst the pandemic. How is the management of instruction done during a pandemic? As transformational leaders, middle-level leaders, specifically the supervisors and subject coordinators, should create readiness and willingness for change. When instructional leaders show positive behaviors, teachers and students will support and help implement the programs of the school (Muda et al., 2017). The role of instructional leaders is to help teachers who are bewildered, confused, and shocked by the demands of the time and bring them back to their commitment to implementing change to develop

the students holistically, especially in their academic performance. In managing change, change readiness is a key factor that strongly influences the success of a project or its failure (Matthysen & Harris, 2014).

Contextualizing Hallinger and Murphy’s framework and Domain, 1 of the Philippine Professional Standards for Supervisors (2019), Figure 1 shows how the concepts interplay in this study.

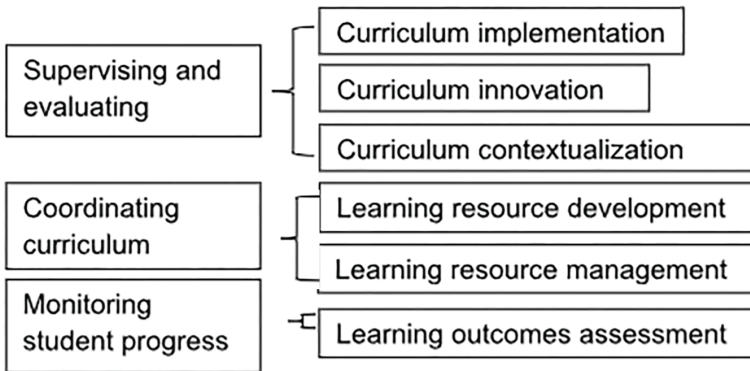


Figure 1. Contextual representation of PPSS Domain 1 and Hallinger and Murphy’s Framework

Even though various topics have been studied vis-à-vis instructional leadership, this paper highlights how instructional leadership is implemented in complex situations. The major difference is that the complex situation here is a pandemic where everyone is unprepared. With this concept in mind, we try to identify how middle managers promoted a smooth deployment of instruction/curriculum during this pandemic.

## FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework below shows the flow of the research. The study focused on the instructional area of the middle managers, which branches out into three: supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. This aspect became our focus as we took into consideration the current situation. This is a modification of the PPSS framework.

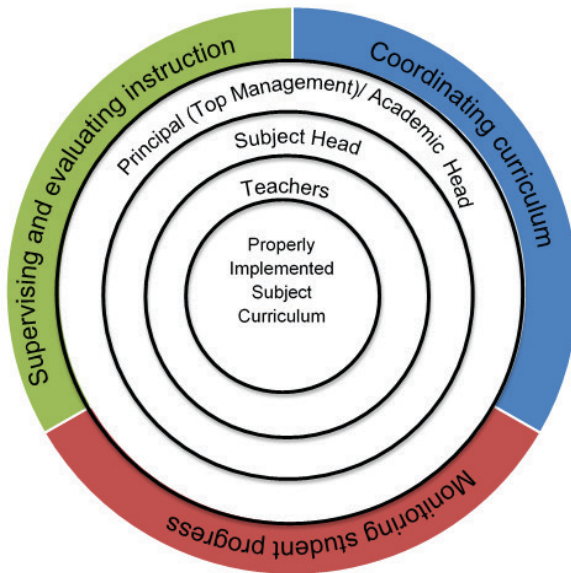


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

We examined the personal experiences of the middle managers on their instructional leadership by juxtaposing them with Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) framework. The study was done (1) to examine their supervision and implementation of the curriculum by determining what innovations were made to adapt to the pandemic and what safeguards were employed to ensure quality in delivering their curriculum. The second aspect evaluated was (2) to determine how they coordinated their curriculum by looking at the following aspects: development of their learning resources to guarantee that there are available resources to ensure smooth delivery of instructions and preparations done to equip the teachers, (3) to determine how the assessments of the students were conducted to maintain the integrity of learning, and last to identify the contribution of middle managers to learning.



## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study used a phenomenological approach to glean the experiences of middle managers during the pandemic in relation to their instructional leadership. As aptly explained by Qutoshi (2018), “the purpose is to illumine specific experience to identify the phenomena that are perceived by the actors in a particular situation,” which, in this case, the particular situation is the role of the middle managers in the delivery of instruction in times of crisis.

### Respondents

The investigation adopted a case study approach that focused on one school in Quezon City with an estimated population of 860 and 40 faculty members. The chosen respondents all came from a basic education non-sectarian school. Composed of seven female and one male middle manager, their length of service in the said position ranges from one year to five years.

### Instrumentation

An open-ended questionnaire using the Philippine Professional Standards for Supervisors (PPSS) (2020) framework. Upon obtaining the results of the respondents, follow-up questions were formulated for the focus group discussion.

### Data Gathering

The data was obtained first by asking for approval from the principal, upon which open-ended questions via Google form were sent to the respondents. The open-ended questions were statements from the Philippine Professional Standards for Supervisors (PPSS) (2020). After reviewing the answers to the open-ended questions, a focus group discussion using semi-structured interviews was conducted to further elucidate answers and experiences from the respondents. The semi-structured interview questions were guided by the PPSS and Hallinger and Murphy’s theory.

The data was obtained first by asking for approval from the principal, upon which open-ended questions via Google form were sent to the respondents. The open-ended questions were statements from the Philippine Professional Standards for Supervisors (PPSS) (2020). After reviewing the answers to the open-ended questions, a focus group discussion using semi-structured interviews was conducted to further elucidate answers and experiences from the respondents.

The semi-structured interview questions were guided by the PPSS and Hallinger and Murphy's theory.

Using the snowball sampling method, the responses from the target respondents, specifically the subject coordinators, were gathered. Before the focus group discussion started, the interviewers asked permission from the participants to record the session, to which the participants agreed. The participants in this study were able to openly impart their experiences because they were briefed about the rationale of this study, and it was repeated during the focus group discussion. The participants were also told that after the data had been transcribed, the transcription would be sent to them to confirm that what had been transcribed was true and accurate based on what they had said.

Data from open-ended questions and focus-group discussions have been collated, and keywords were determined to identify themes to answer the questions posed in this study. To ensure the anonymity of the respondents, the capital R was used, followed by a number. For example, R1 refers to Respondent 1. As part of ethical standards, proper names are withheld and replaced by “---.”

### **Ethical Considerations**

The participants were briefed before the interview that their participation was voluntary and that their identity would be kept confidential; hence, no names will be used or identified in the creation of the paper. Participants were also advised that copies of their responses would be provided to ensure that no modification or alteration from their answers was done.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Middle Managers, the Curriculum, and the Pandemic**

This pandemic brought a new environment for the educational setting. This change exposed different obstacles and leadership practices of the middle managers to deliver the school's mandate of quality education. The issues regarding curriculum were dealt with, followed by the solutions enforced by the subject coordinators.

### **Supervision and Evaluation of Instructions**

#### ***Problematic MELC but Fixable***

Regarding the implementation of the curriculum, the middle managers agreed that their curriculum still followed DepEd's Most Essential Learning

Competencies (MELC), even if the set up can be likened to distance learning. The middle managers ensured that the learning materials met the learners' desired learning competencies, even though there was difficulty matching the MELC and the available textbooks (R2). To contextualize the MELC, the subject coordinators also add competencies that they deemed necessary, as R7 puts it

*“may mga times na nasa MELC na competency na nararamdaman po naming teacher o ako po na mas kailangan pa ng bata na i-meet yung ganong competency ang competency na wala doon sa MELC, ina-add po namin yun kasi mas nararamdaman po namin na mas kailangan po ng bata na matutunan o ma-achieve yung ganong uri ng assessment”*

Or modify them to fit the students' capacity, especially if, according to their observation, it would be impossible to implement given the set up. An example of this is the science subject. R2 observed that

*“So medyo yung problema ko nga is hala galing na ‘to sa DEPED kaya lang paano to, yung ganun. So medyo ang ginagawa na lang po namin is naggagawa ng mga mini task na in-line pa din po sa content standard ng DEPED.”*

This mini task, an alternative activity on the actual usage of the microscope, helps them comply with the DepEd's requirements. R5 asserted that even though this is a new set up – an online set up – *“We didn't compromise any lessons, topics, or competencies, but instead, we found new ways to effectively implement the curriculum through the online set up.”*

### ***Misbehaving Students but Manageable***

Another aspect of supervising and evaluating the instruction is the interaction between teachers and students. This online set up made life easier for the teachers since they only needed an internet connection to deliver materials, unlike the face-to-face set up where physical books are needed to start the class. However, the behavior of the students was their main concern. The teachers complain that students would turn on and off their cameras, un-muting themselves, not answer emails, and make rude remarks (e.g., “ayoko,” “I will not do that,” “Never. I will never do that”). These problematic behaviors were solved by having a one-to-one conversation with the student or if the behavior is repeated, a conference with the parents.

### ***Unprepared but Obedient and Competent Subject Coordinators***

This pandemic has caught middle managers off guard. However, the presence of the mind kept them on their toes. Interaction with their fellow teachers was also observed among the subject coordinators. They remarked that as subject coordinators, they need to set an example. Obedience was the rule of thumb especially to the subject coordinators which according to R6 “*So, kung kami kasi mismo na bilang mga SC’s hindi kami marunong mag-obey doon sa mas nakakataas samín, what more ang mga teachers. How will they follow us, how will they obey us kung kami mismong hindi naming naipapakita yun.*” Both obedience and competency in their subject area are being transferred to their co-teachers. This transference of knowledge and skills was observed by R8 from his teachers. This was affirmed by R3.

*“Kung anong meron kaming qualities, kung anong meron kaming qualities ng aming mga leaders or academic leaders, yun yung meron kami and yun yung gusto namin i-provide. And at the same time, kung ano yung skills katulad ni sir (R7), yung mga na acquire naming skills at mga experience namin, we see to it na ibinababa din namin sa mga teachers namin and tinitrain din namin sila although baguhan din kami when it comes to online teaching.”*

As aptly stated by R3, “*we see to it that we are strong and we see to it na kami yung magiging modelo ng mga teachers namin.*” This was attested by R1, “*Ginagaya din po nila yung mga ginagawa namin*”

Mitigation of the situation was also self-imposed by the subject coordinators, as R1 stated “*halimbawa, may mga maliliit lang pong problema na hindi naman po kailangan na idating pa sa, yan po yang support na ginagawa namin eh, na hindi naman kailangang pang, kaya naman naming i-solve hindi na naming kailangan iparating pa sa principal or kung sinong mas mataas pa samín kung naman ay kaya naman naming solusyunan iyon*”.

They would also consider the observations of the classroom teachers. The subject coordinators discuss the memo first among themselves in order for them to relay the message to the administrators (R7). Another was when memos or notices were issued, especially if they contained unpleasant or difficult news.

The subject coordinators try to make the issue lighter. The subject coordinators become shock absorbers for the classroom teachers and a channel for venting questions/complaints/negative reactions. R8 remarked

*“So para hindi rin po mabigla ang mga teachers namin na magulat sa mga news na matatanggap nila. Okay kasi kunwari kami, kami yung unang na-shock so sa kanila, inaano na namin para mas lighter din po ung ano. And then, siguro isa din po yun sa part kasi mas less po, though hindi naman po sometimes natin maiiwasan na merong pa din pong nagtatanong or sometimes may nagrereklamo, hindi namn technically nagreklamo, male-lesen po yun kila ma’am or samin. If we manage those things na mas maganda at mas maayos ang pagbaba ng information pati na din po yung, ayun pagbababa ng information, that’s for me po.”*

In this case, the subject coordinators also served as brokers between the institution’s administrators and the implementation of the policy, “forging critical connections across sub-systems” and translators of the memo, making it operationalizable (Ho et al., 2020).

## **Coordination of Curriculum**

### *Stressful Procurement but Workable*

Procurement of learning materials was also a difficult task. Procurement in this part refers to having adequate physical resources and navigating the digital classroom. Aside from the common concern of limited teaching material, the subject coordinators also expressed their frustration in navigating their virtual classroom; as R6 succinctly puts it, *“We kept making changes along the way, and it caused too much work and stress to both the learners and educators.”*

The middle managers also observed that parents, students, and teachers struggle with the technological environment. As R7 stated, *“The outcome was not good [coz] the parents and students had a hard time coping up with [sic] the new set up....”* The digital classroom created mental and psychological distress for the participants.

To this, the subject coordinators asked the support of their IT staff to familiarize themselves with the different functions of G Suite. They also gathered feedback to upgrade their IT knowledge. Self-learning was also employed, such as attending webinars, spending time practicing the different applications,

used credible online sources to supplement their textbooks. Another important solution was peer motivation, which can also be termed collegiality which Ali (2017) defines as “the interpersonal relationship to help each other when a problem is faced. He maintains that it helps in providing competence to other teachers. Aside from this, the subject coordinators also depended on each other and their faculty members.

### *Challenge-Filled Development of Learning Materials but Accomplishable*

Another problem was the development of the materials, including quality assurance of the learning materials. The creation of study guides went through a trial-and-error stage (R7), the same with our ASEAN counterpart (Butcher & Loots, 2021). The subject coordinators delimited the length or scope of the learning materials. Feedback from the parents was considered, such as “*How [will] my child have his/her study habits kung limited ang info sa study guide?*”

Recording lectures also became a struggle for them due to the environment. R1 narrates “*At last year din medyo naging struggle din sa amin yung mga recorded lecture --- sa akin dahil nasa place ako na napakaraming tao dikit dikit ang bahay*” and the recording was done in the wee hours where there is minimal distraction. This dilemma was raised to the management, who decided it would be best if the teachers did the lecture in real-time.

The subject coordinator’s method employed collaboration and cooperative learning, which produced a conducive and positive learning climate, contributing to teachers’ efficacy (Manaseh, 2016). Supplementals, like recorded lectures, slide lectures, and actual discussions of concepts, were also provided. The middle managers’ proactive solution to the problematic situation brought a smooth learning outcome that, if not attended to at once, can bring deleterious results (Reyes, 2019).

### *Troublesome Technology but Viable*

After the development of the learning materials comes the distribution. In this case, resources are scarce since the school is a private institution; hence, they rely on online venues. As R5 opined, “*Some parents were asking us to provide books and printed resources, but truthfully speaking, we cannot do it since we also don’t have the resources for that, and printed resources were not part of the fees.*” This can be assumed that part of the students’ tuition fees is set aside for the logistics of the school. The subject coordinators also appreciated their management because as R1 said “*Si --- napaka supportive po nila sa amin kasi labat po ng kailangan ng*

*teachers ay prino-provide nila magre-request lang po talaga kami... ang school talaga ang nagbibigay nun sa amin.*" The generosity of their management was a big support to them since whatever they needed was provided by the management. Another notable concern from R6 is intellectual property rights since most of the materials they will use will be downloaded.

The subject coordinators also identified their faculty members' needs during this pandemic. Foremost is the technical side, such as good internet connection, outdated gadgets, and basic knowledge of software applications (e.g., email, troubleshooting, PowerPoint, Excel), followed by the teachers' well-being (mental, emotional, and health problems). In terms of knowledge, teachers don't have problems because the MELC provided the study guide (R7).

Aside from the technical difficulty, what made the situation more difficult, as observed by the subject coordinators, is that some learning materials were posted late online. This issue was addressed by identifying factors for the delay in posting, issuing warnings or memos, and developing a consensus on when to upload the materials.

The technical aspect was mitigated by providing other gadgets, such as cell phones, conducting basic training, allotting emergency loads, and substituting for other classes. However, the most important support for the teachers comes in the intangible aspects: spiritual and emotional/psychological support. The teachers' well-being was addressed through constant communication and encouraging one another, which will be enumerated in the next paragraphs.

Part of supervision is observation. R2 and R3 managed to have a virtual classroom visitation, much like the face-to-face set up.

On the part of the learners, they were trained how to use the digital platform, given ample time to understand the lesson, and addressed behavioral problems. R6 appropriately states this "*Constant communication with the student and their parents or guardians allowed the teacher to offer help and assistance to those who really need them the most.*" A survey was also conducted to help in improving the current situation. However, the subject coordinators failed to provide a significant answer regarding the copyright issue.

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the successful coordination of the curriculum can be seen in the following intangible aspects. The following themes were derived from the participants.

### ***Spiritual Support***

Spiritual support made them able to push through this pandemic situation. This support is the most important for them and the whole teachers. R3 said that this is what she appreciated the most, especially since the school staff felt frustrated by the current situation.

*“R1 aside don sa from the help ng sa mga gadgets siguro what I really appreciate the spiritual and emotions all support coming from leaders syempre alam po natin na biglang nag shift yung ating educational system from normal to online wala kaming idea how to do it, to tell you honestly the teachers really struggled kasi we don't know kung paano ba kami mag start, papaano namin e-engage yung mga student naming, and what I really appreciate is that our leaders were there during the time na we really crying”*

This spiritual support is where they get their strength as said by R5 *“everyday na prayer kasi we believed on this na ano man ang mangyare hindi natin to kakayanin hangga't wala ang ating panginoon.”*

### ***Constant Exploration of Techniques/ Initiatives***

Subject coordinators had regular meetings in order to identify techniques that would make the set up be more comfortable to both teachers and students. R3 attested *“when we had our meeting nag-iisip kami ng ways kung papaano namin matutulungan yung aming mga teachers”* which also R4 confirms *“every quarter mag iisip kami and mag a-adapt ng with another strategies, with another techniques para at least maging enjoy yung mga pag aaral ng mga bata and at the same time kaming mga teachers, maging effective”*.

The subject coordinators practiced clinical supervision in order to deliver their expected outcomes. Clinical supervision in the educational field aims to equip teachers with the skills necessary *“to assess their instruction effectively, to make improvements as needed”* (Wiedmer, 1995) and to improve education for all students. During this pandemic, clinical supervision is visibly seen to focus on the smooth delivery of instruction.

### ***Open Communication***

Open communication was seen between the subject coordinators and their superior and previous subject coordinators (R6). This was also encouraged between the subject coordinators and the classroom teachers they handle. The



hierarchy in their institution did not prevent them from voicing out their problems, suggestions, and observations, as R6 noted

*“walang hierarchy na kahit na mas matagal ako na nandito sayo, or mas matanda ako sayo, pwede mo kong i-correct, pwede mo kong i-lead... Na everyone can lead and everyone can also follow.”*

*R5: Pero kay [name of supervisor] ayan, napaka dali po “maam ganito po may problema kami” So parang magsu-suggest “ay ganun lang pala e kami na po mamromproblema ng labat” pag nag suggest siya, napakagaan po kasi parang kitang kita mo na walang label yung aming mga position, pareparehas po kami na madaling takbuban, madaling pagsabihan, madali naming makuha.”*

This open communication allows them to assess what went wrong, what strengths can be seen from the implemented strategies, and what can still be added.

### ***Adaptability/Flexibility***

The new situation forced everybody to change and adapt. This sudden change was the first time in the education system and nothing that could be done but embraces the change (R1). Middle managers and their immediate supervisors have to learn how to be adept with gadgets and online applications. Aside from this, they have to go the extra mile by substituting a class for a teacher who was suddenly cut off or had internet problems.

*R7: I am very thankful kay [name of immediate supervisor] kasi wala din siyang sawa samin sa pagtuturo though first timer din si maam, jurassic si maam. Pinipilit po niya na na matuto and yun, and yun po, talagang nakakatuwa kasi, napagtagumpayan po namin ng maayos. And I can say that we are distance learning and we can be better and excellent na po for the next school year po.*

*R5: At yung natutunan ko po for last school year ay nakita namin kung saan kami magaling, kung ano yung mga strength namin. At nakita din po namin yung mga kabinaan. So kami po as a --- mga leaders sa subject coordinators, kunin namin ang mga magaganda na yan at ano man yung mga mahihina o kabinaan namin, e-improve namin at i-focus namin.*

*R4: na exemplify yung pagiging adoptable and flexible ng bawat isa. Katulad nga po sa nabanggit ni Maam R5 na talagang andyan yung pagtutulungan at pag extend ng help at minsan kahit hindi mo na yun trabaho, hindi na naka assign sayo, you are willing to extend your ability and skills na meron ka para sa iba.*

These adaptations or flexibility in attitudes helped them get through the situation, which they evaluated and congratulated themselves on and said they were distance learning ready.

### ***Sense of Caring***

This act was brought by passion and dedication to teaching, which R3 referred to as a “ministry.” This also served as their motivation to bring quality education. The teachers established in themselves sensitivity to the needs of one another.

*R1: Yung pagtutulungan totoo. Talagang na witness po namin. Kahit na anong subject kung ano man po ang position ninyo. Labat yan ay na witness ang pagtutulungan...Pero masaya kasi nakikita po namin na yung aming mga co-teacher ay concern talaga sa amin diba at concern sa mga estudyante... napakahirap di ka sanay ng-- lalo na na season teacher ako, aaminin ko na ha. Syempre sanay ako sa face to face.. Pero netong pumasok ang online grabe ang pag aaral na ginawa ko talaga rito... At meron po kaming chitchat na tinatawag na “uy na discover ko to sh’share ko sa inyo”...” shinishare namin kung ano yung na e’explore namin... kaya po sabay sabay kaming nag g-grow, sabay sabay kaming natututo at ipapasa po namin yan sa aming mga teachers, kaya po ang mga teachers po namin talagang, sila po kasi mas mga bata sila..At ang dami din po nilang naituturo sa amin talaga. Kasi nga, nag e-explore na din sila. Ginagaya din po nila yung mga ginagawa namin*

*R2: one thing na natutunan ko is napaka importante nung tulongan. Kasi labat kami hindi kami ready e. Pero nakita ko po sa teachers na walang mataas. Wala sa position talaga ang --- so nakakatuwa po ang culture na ngayon sa --- na, nawalan ng internet si teacher, may sumasalong teacher may papasok sa classroom. Alam mo yun, nakikita po yung-- yung pagmamahal ng bawat isa. Na hindi habayaan na maiwan lng sa ere yung, yung isang teacher so yun po. Yun po yung isang aspect na nakakaproud sa --- na hindi mo maiisip o mararamdaman na mag isa ka. So nasurvive po namin yung online distance learning sa tulong din po ng bawat isa sa amin*

R6 labeled this act of caring as teamwork. She also noted that not only knowledge was shared but also the pain of one another in her own words, “sabay-sabay tayong iiyak”. The middle managers highly regarded the spiritual, physical, and emotional support from their leaders. This support is then transferred to their subject teachers. This performance of the basic education middle managers is the same as Velasco’s (2020) middle-level managers in an agricultural school.

This study confirms Naicker et al. (2014) study that the responsibility to ‘grow teachers’ are shared between the novice and the seasonal teachers. Both parties learn from each other. With the act of sharing, not only were they able to grow together, but they also survived the pandemic together, as in the words of R2, no teacher is left behind.

## Student Assessments

### *Nerve-wracking Assessment but Controlable Situation*

Assessing the students’ learning outcomes is a big hurdle in the online set up. One thriving problem is cheating by copying answers online, having surreptitious conversations with classmates, and even parents coaching their children to answer tests and recitation (R8).

To get authentic learning from the students, the subject coordinators made sure that instructions were clear to the students and applied real-time phasing (mini task), evidence-based outputs, and discipline. The mini-tasks, or phasing, let the teachers evaluate if the student has understood the lesson.

*R1: ang link ko po is sine-send ko sa chat box dito and then iki-cick nila kaya alamko pong sila ang sumasagot noon.*

*R3: Hindi po siya agad ibibigay na this is you PT dapat ito ipapasa mo na. Kailangan for this week eto muna gagawin ng mga bata then phase 1 and then sa susunod na meeting we gonna [do] na phase 2 before the final para hindi po mabigat sa mga bata.*

To closely monitor this phasing exercise, according to R3, “the most practical solution is magstick talaga sa rubric at mag-add ng discipline.” While for R8, he needs to have a video demonstration since his field is mathematics. According to him

*“...mahirap syang e-gauge na sila ba talaga ung gumawa. So what we do, yung ano, ung video po talaga demonstration... the fact na sila ung nag-present ng solution in the video is meron silang involvement to present the solutions and yun mas may... itatatak din yun sa kanila kasi magpa-practice pa un sila.”*

For summative tests, R2 and R3 both agree that “*summative assessments are not valid*” due to cheating, even though they require the camera to be “on” while taking the assessments and giving other precautions/instructions. R4 properly explains this “*the teacher cannot completely monitor how the student is working on the given task.*” To solve this written assessment is conducted.

*R3: we encourage our students to do it in handwriting and take a picture of them while doing the assessments.*

This pandemic has brought different dilemmas in coordinating the curriculum, which involves the development of learning materials. Two identified problems are technical difficulties facilitating the online classroom and ensuring quality assurance. These were lessened through constant learning, either self-learning or support from the organization.

Supervision of the learning materials was done online, and constant communication with the learners to address their academic and behavioral problems.

Monitoring learning outcomes is a dubious task. It is confronted through instilling honesty, discipline, and other values.

### **Effect of the Middle-Managers’ Instructional Program on the Institution’s Agenda**

Middle managers noted how the current shift in the educational paradigm had brought major changes in the classroom. R3 responded that “*the quality of the teaching-learning process is compromised.*” However, some have seen the light at the end of the tunnel. They adjusted and had a smooth teaching situation; as R8 remarked, “*Problems are lessened though not totally eradicated. Also, this will keep our students continue learning and cope up [sic] intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually despite the ongoing pandemic.*”

#### *Imbibing of School’s Goal*

Since there is strong collaboration between subject coordinators, subject coordinators and administrators, and subject coordinators and classroom

teachers, the school's goal of providing quality education has been imbibed by the subject coordinators. There is a sense of ownership. This is seen in the following statements.

*R6: Isa lang naman goal natin and service natin, and quality and excellence service natin sa mga students natin sa parents natin.*

*Kapag ka ang isa talaga helshe is not the same heart as everyone else talagang maliligaw siya... we have the same vision, we have the same mission. We have one heart and yung one service din po para dun sa JCA family.*

*R1; Parehas kami ng vision, parehas kami ng goal.*

### *Heightened Emotional Responsibility of the Middle Managers*

The pandemic has brought challenges to the instructional leadership of the subject coordinators. The subject coordinators could explore different engagements with their teachers and students. They have become more aware or sensitive and open to the needs of the teachers, school, and students, which affirms the study of Goddard et al. (2020). Pitpit (2020) noted the relationship between instructional leadership to novice teachers. At this time, teachers can be considered novices due to the pandemic. The subject coordinators in this study served as a guide and constant support of their teachers. Clinical supervision ensured a smooth learning environment to deliver the required outcome. The supervision by the middle managers served as the glue that held their school's educational systems in place (Makau et al., 2016).

Another important finding in this study was that subject coordinators have initiative, flexibility, and a sense of caring, which according to Quisenberry (2018), are important factors in a successful virtual set up. These positive attributes can also be the result of a positive working environment. Nguyen's (2013) result that the management of students and staff in a normal set up is marginal. In this pandemic situation, this management aspect sustained the school's performance.

This pandemic set up has proven and refutes Bartlett's (2008) that when the management takes care of their staff, the staff takes care of their clients, which in this case, the students. As perceived by the subject coordinators, the students were "having fun" and "(R5) they are excited to listen and attend to your class." Just like in any organization, the most important resource is human resources. As Arbuckle and Murray (1989) said, "A school is only as effective as its staff." This study also affirms Naicker et al. (2014) that the "quality of the input determines the quality of the output."

## **CONCLUSION**

If Cleopatra is the face that launched a thousand ships, the middle managers are the face of stability that propels an industry forward. Curriculum implementation was delivered smoothly, and the learning outcomes were accomplished through contextualized learning. Close monitoring and instilling values were implemented regarding getting authentic student assessments. This pandemic has exposed the most important feature in educational management that teachers in a healthy culture serve as learning resources. DepEd (2020) defines learning resources as learning material, teaching material, or professional development material. In this case, this study has shown that middle managers become sources of learning for each other and their fellow teachers as they discover and learn different software in an uncertain situation. Middle managers also served as the bearer of the school's goal and the emotional support of the upper and lower echelons in an emotionally charged situation. Standardizing the institution's policy and actualizing it is possible because of the subject coordinators' role as boundary spanners (Ho et al., 2020).

It is also important to note the significance of a healthy working environment. Literature has proven that a healthy learning environment affects students' performance. This study has shown that a healthy working environment – a healthy culture – plays a vital role in the success of the school, which is translated to positive student performance. This healthy working culture and environment is nurtured and sustained by the middle managers since they bridge the top management and the students.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the findings, three categories should be given attention—first, the technical aspects and skills. The perpetual problem of the facility and lack of financial support should already be addressed. Strengthening knowledge of technological advancements and competence should be given priority. Strategic managerial training for middle managers, like disaster mitigation, crisis management, and risk assessments, should also be included in the professional educational training of middle managers. Another recommendation is to practice intellectual property in creating instructional/learning materials. The second aspect involves emotional competence. Administrators should consider emotional competence as part of their hiring requirements for the middle manager position, as this will be shown and tested during difficult times. Different pathways to nurture and enhance teacher leadership should also be part of the government's

effort, just like in Singapore (Goodwin et al., 2015). The third aspect is the school culture. Constant collaboration, open communication, and a sense of caring should be emphasized and be part of the school's culture.

## TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The result of the study could be translated into conducting or including seminars or workshops on risk mitigation or disaster preparedness. Further, administrators can conduct emotional quotient tests to identify potential leaders or middle managers who can handle crises or emergencies. It is also suggested that school administrators be prepared for future disturbances, whether man-made or natural, by including leaders or middle managers who will plan risk mitigation and future-proofing of their institution. Another suggested topic is the direct role of instructional leadership in creating or fostering a positive culture.

## LITERATURE CITED

- Ali, N. (2017). Teachers' perceptions of the relationship between principals' instructional leadership, school culture and school effectiveness in secondary schools in Pakistan/Niaz Ali (Doctoral dissertation, University of Malaya).
- Alig-Mielcarek, J. M. (2003). *A model of school success: Instructional leadership, academic press, and student achievement*. The Ohio State University.
- Allen, A. M. (2011). Academic optimism and instructional leadership in urban elementary schools.
- Arbuckle, M. A., & Murray, L. B. (1989). Building Systems for Professional Growth. An Action Guide and Handouts, Transparencies, and Readings.
- Atkinson Jr, R. E. (2013). *An assessment of the perceived instructional leadership behaviors of assistant principals*. Virginia Commonwealth University.
- Bada, H. A., Ariffin, T. F. T., & Nordin, H. (2020). Teachers' perception of principals' instructional leadership practices in Nigeria. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(10), 4459-4469.
- Bartlett, J. C. (2008). *Principal leadership practices: A correlation study of specific instructional leadership practices and student achievement on the Tennessee Gateway Tests*. Liberty University.

- Bulris, M. E. (2009). *A meta-analysis of research on the mediated effects of principal leadership on student achievement: Examining the effect size of school culture on student achievement as an indicator of teacher effectiveness*. East Carolina University.
- Butcher, N. & Loots, S. (2021). East Asia and Pacific: Tertiary Education. *COVID-19 Coronavirus Response*. <https://bit.ly/3K1qMpb>
- Cheboi, S. T. *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* ISSN 2347-5374 (Online).
- Choong, P. L. (2018). Learning Beyond School in Mentoring for Leadership development of middle managers in Singapore primary schools.
- Chuta, V. H. (2018). *District-level policy and practice for supporting instructional leadership by school principals in South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Free State).
- Department of Education. (2017). National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. Pasig City: Philippines.
- Department of Education. (2020). Department Order No. 25 series of 2020 Philippine Professional Standards for Supervisors. Pasig City: Philippines.
- Department of Education. (2020). Learning Opportunities shall be available: The Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan in the Time of COVID-19. [https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/DepEd\\_LCP\\_July3.pdf](https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/DepEd_LCP_July3.pdf)
- DeVries, R. (2017). *The instructional leadership practices of elementary principals of average needs/resource capacity school districts in New York State*. Sage Graduate School.
- Donkor, A. K., & Asante, J. (2016). Instructional leadership of basic schools in Ghana: The case study of schools in Kwaebibirem district. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 6(4), 65-75.
- Finley, M. J. (2014). An exploration of the relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals' instructional leadership and transformational leadership behaviors.
- Goddard, R. D., Bailes, L. P., & Kim, M. (2021). Principal efficacy beliefs for instructional leadership and their relation to teachers' sense of collective



- efficacy and student achievement. *Leadership and policy in schools*, 20(3), 472-493.
- Goddard, Y. L., Miller, R., Larsen, R., Goddard, R., Madsen, J., & Schroeder, P. (2010). Connecting Principal Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, and Student Achievement. *Online Submission*.
- Goodwin, A. L., Low, E. L., & Ng, P. T. (2015). Developing teacher leadership in Singapore: Multiple pathways for differentiated journeys. *The New Educator*, 11(2), 107-120.
- Gurley, D. K., Anast-May, L., O'Neal, M., & Dozier, R. (2016). Principal Instructional Leadership Behaviors: Teacher vs. Self-Perceptions. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 11(1), n1.
- Gurr, D. (2020). Educational leadership and the pandemic. *Academia Letters*, 29.
- Hallinger, P. & Murphy, J. (1985). Assessing and Developing Principal Instructional Leadership, 45(1), 55–61. [https://files.ascd.org/staticfiles/ascd/pdf/journals/ed\\_lead/el\\_198709\\_hallinger.pdf](https://files.ascd.org/staticfiles/ascd/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_198709_hallinger.pdf)
- Harris, L. (2014). Instructional leadership perceptions and practices of elementary school leaders. *Unpublished doctoral dissertation*. University of Virginia.
- Hejres, S., Braganza, A., & Aldabi, T. (2017). Investigating the effectiveness of leadership styles on instructional leadership and teachers job expectancy in Kingdom of Bahrain. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 5(7), 694-709.
- Ho, J., Kang, T., & Shaari, I. (2021). Leading from the middle: vice-principals in Singapore as boundary spanners. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 59(2), 145-161.
- Howard-Schwind, M. (2010). *Instructional leadership responsibilities of assistant principals in large Texas high schools*. University of North Texas.
- Issa, R. M. (2014). *Educators' perceptions of their instructional leadership styles and their problem solving styles* (Doctoral dissertation, Western Connecticut State University).
- Johnson, D. M. (2006). Instructional leadership and academic performance in Tennessee high schools.

- Loader, D. (2010). Developing inner leadership. *Developing successful leadership*, 195-206.
- Mahdzir, M. N., Ghani, R. A., & Yazid, Z. (2022). Faced With Obstacles and Uncertainty: a Thematic Review of Middle Managers in Higher Education. *International Journal of Professional Business Review*, 7(6), e01129-e01129.
- Makau, N. N., Ronoh, A., & Tanui, E. (2016). Relationship between principals' instructional supervision and students' academic achievement in sciences in secondary schools.
- Manaseh, A. M. (2016). Instructional leadership: The role of heads of schools in managing the instructional programme. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, 30-47.
- Matthysen, M., & Harris, C. (2018). The relationship between readiness to change and work engagement: A case study in an accounting firm undergoing change. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 16(1), 1-11.
- McCoy, J. V. (2011). *A multiple case study of principals' instructional leadership in "Level 5" schools of excellence for improvement*. University of Arkansas.
- McEwan, E. K. (2008). *Ten traits of highly effective schools: Raising the achievement bar for all students*. Corwin Press.
- Mestry, R. (2013). The innovative role of the principal as instructional leader: A prerequisite for high student achievement. *International Proceedings of Economics Development and Research*, 60(25), 119-123.
- Muda, M. S. B., Mansor, N. R. B., & Ibrahim, M. Y. B. (2017). Literature review on instructional leadership practice among principals in managing changes. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(12), 18-24.
- Naicker, I., Chikoko, V., & Mthiyane, S. E. (2013). Instructional leadership practices in challenging school contexts. *Education as Change*, 17(sup1), S137-S150.
- Nguyen, T. L. H. (2013). Middle-level academic management: A case study on the roles of the heads of department at a Vietnamese university. *Tertiary Education and management*, 19, 1-15.

- Perez, M., & Socias, M. (2008). Highly successful schools: what do they do differently and at what cost?. *Education Finance and Policy*, 3(1), 109-129.
- Pham, T. V., Nghiem, T. T., Nguyen, L. M. T., Mai, T. X., & Tran, T. (2019). Exploring key competencies of mid-level academic managers in higher education in Vietnam. *Sustainability*, 11(23), 6818.
- Pitpit, G. M. (2020). *Elementary School Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices to Retain Novice Teachers in the Philippines* (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University).
- Quisenberry, W. L. (2018). Exploring how emotional intelligence contributes to virtual teams: interpretive analysis of a phenomenological study. *European Scientific Journal*, 14(5), 19-36.
- Qutoshi, S. B. (2018). Phenomenology: A philosophy and method of inquiry. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 5(1).
- Reyes, G. V. (2019). Management and Leadership Performance of Academic Middle Managers and the Attainment of their Trilogic Functions: An Input to an Enhancement Program. *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 7(3).
- Roofe, C. (2021). Instructional Leadership During Crisis: Jamaican School Leaders' Response. *Emergency remote learning, teaching and leading: Global perspectives*, 217-234.
- Sackdanouvong, K. (2013). *Middle managers: Managing change in a Lao higher education institution* (Master's thesis).
- Sahin, S. (2011). Instructional leadership in Turkey and the United States: Teachers' perspectives. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 34, 122.
- Sotarath, A., Buasuwan, P., Sarnswang, S., & Lapanachokdee, W. (2018). An influential model of instructional leadership affecting students' achievement in small-sized secondary schools under the office of the basic education commission in Thailand. *Asian Political Science Review*, 2(2).
- Staples, C. M. (2005). *A comparison of the leadership roles of public and private elementary school principals*. University of Central Florida.

- Syharath, S. (2012). *The middle manager's role and professional development needs in Lao higher education* (Master's thesis).
- Velasco, T. Y. (2020). Managerial Performance of Middle-Level Managers in Agricultural Schools in Northwestern Mindanao Philippines. *Indonesian Journal of Social and Environmental Issues (IJSEI)*, 1(3), 239-252.
- Vilakazi, N. S. (2016). *Exploring Principals' Institutional Instructional Leadership Practices in Primary Schools: A Case Study of Two Underperforming Township Primary Schools in Ekurhuleni South District, Gauteng Province* (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Faculty of Humanities, School of Education).
- Wiedmer, T. L. (1995). Instructional improvement: The goal of clinical supervision. *The Teacher Educator*, 30(3), 6-18.