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Exploring the lived experiences of school heads in supporting the Implementation of re-entry plan

Eva G. Gutierrez * and Belen D. Tado

Saint Mary's College of Tagum, Inc., Tagum City, Davao del Norte, Philippines.

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Abstract

This qualitative study employed a phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of school heads in supporting the implementation of re-entry plan. Guided by the research questions on their experiences, coping strategies, and insights, the study involved 10 school heads from the Kapalong West District, Davao del Norte, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected primarily through face-to-face in-depth interviews, then transcribed, translated, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Results of the study revealed that the experiences of school heads in supporting the implementation of the re-entry plan revolve around ensuring coordination for re-entry, maintaining clear communication, collaborating closely with stakeholders and staff, and empowering teachers to actively participate in school re-entry initiatives. In carrying out these responsibilities, school heads cope with challenges by applying varied leadership styles, leveraging community and financial resources, prioritizing staff and student well-being, practicing adaptive and shared leadership, and strengthening institutional preparedness. These experiences demonstrate that effective re-entry implementation requires both strategic management and relational leadership anchored in collaboration, flexibility, and resilience. The insights drawn from their experiences highlight the importance of inclusive strategic planning, continuous evaluation, adaptive and resilient leadership, sustained teacher empowerment, and systematic monitoring and evaluation to ensure long-term school improvement and effective re-entry practices. The findings suggest that effective re-entry implementation requires adaptive leadership, inclusive planning, teacher empowerment, systematic monitoring, strategic resource management, and strong stakeholder collaboration, while future research should broaden perspectives, explore technology and policy roles, and examine long-term outcomes to support sustainable school improvement.

Keywords: Educational Management; Re-Entry Plan; Support; School Heads; Phenomenology; Thematic Analysis; Kapalong District; Davao Del Norte Division; Philippines

1 Introduction

In the educational setting, re-entry programs support educators overcome problems after extended school leaves by providing backing such as professional development, wellness initiatives, mentoring, and coaching [1]. However, it has to be considered that their success pivots suggestively on school heads, whose management and leadership play important roles on its realization. Currently, re-entry plans comprise action plans from short-term and long-term courses, educational scholarships, training and seminars like those of Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH), which aims to improve instruction and learning outcomes. Yet, without school heads' administration, resources, and encouragement, these plans often do not make an effect. Study affirms that principal leadership is really important for utilizing training-based initiatives into school culture [2,3].

* Corresponding author: Eva G. Gutierrez

Although SEAMEO has supported training and short-term courses through the Regional In-Service Training Modules (RISTM), its non-binding nature and limited resources have constrained teachers' re-entry into schools, leaving gaps in applying training, sustaining outcomes, and advancing digitalization [4]. Similar challenges are observed in Vietnam, where teachers struggle to maintain motivation, integrate learning into daily practice, and align training with ongoing priorities due to insufficient resources and support [5]. These constraints, including inadequate access to financial and material resources and partial sustainability of professional development programs outcomes persist, underscore the value of constant school head support in realizing teacher-led action plans [6]. Functional reintegration also rests on the robust communication and planning amongst the teachers and management [7], along with excellent headship and compassionate supervision [8].

When it comes to the Philippine context, in Region XII, although the Gearing Up Responsible and Outstanding Teachers in Southeast Asia in the 21st Century (GURO21) program builds foundational competency, scholars struggle with planning after the course due to insufficient continuous mentorship and lack of support in adapting strategies to local contexts [9]. Guiani and Robles [10] emphasize the need for contextualized policies based on teacher competency assessments, underscoring the importance of sustaining and institutionalizing programs like GURO21 within school settings. But there were numerous concerns relative to this such as insufficient funding, infrastructure shortages, and unbalanced teacher enthusiasm. These issues definitely have affected both national and school-based efforts. Given these realities, school heads play a critical role: their leadership ensures that the action plans of teachers are efficiently and successfully aligned with broader policies. School campuses with hands-on school heads achieved smoother reintegration, while those lacking such leadership often confronted rough or unmanageable initiatives [11,12].

The role of school heads in Kapalong West District in supporting the implementation of teacher re-entry plans has been critical, yet these plans often face challenges because they are not prioritized or embedded in the School Improvement Plan. Implementation is further constrained by limited school budgets, insufficient access to necessary materials, and lack of monitoring, which frequently results in re-entry plans not being fully carried out. Teachers reported that even when local initiatives, such as communal information hubs and online platforms, were made available, their ability to implement re-entry plans depended heavily on school heads providing clear guidance, direction, and sufficient resources. Many also shared that unclear policies, competing school priorities, and limited engagement from stakeholders often made it difficult to put their re-entry plans into practice effectively.

While existing studies have examined the roles of school heads or principals in educational management and leadership, there is limited research on how school heads support the implementation of teacher-led re-entry plans. Addressing this gap is crucial to ensure that SEAMEO INNOTECH training and seminars can be translated into tangible improvements in schools and meaningful investments in professional development programs. The lack of guidance and support from school heads often prevents teachers from effectively executing their re-entry plans, leading to low uptake, misallocation of training resources, and diminished motivation to sustain innovative practices [4].

This problem reinforces the urgent need for better strategies and policies that supplement a culture of sustainability and collaboration between teachers, parents, students, other stakeholders and school heads. The urgency of this study further lies in the certainty that having inadequate support from school heads, teachers struggle to implement their re-entry plans, resulting in low uptake, misused budget allocations in training, and weakened educator inspiration to sustain ground-breaking practices.

Because of these, the significance of the study is anchored on its potential to respond to the challenges in education by emphasizing the role of school heads in supporting the implementation of teachers' re-entry plans. By exploring their experiences and approaches, this study can share real-world insights for solidifying leadership and management practices that assure training outputs are efficiently interpreted into instructional developments and policies. The results are socially appropriate as they highlight equity, flexibility, and partnership within schools, particularly in preparing for and addressing forthcoming disruptions in education. In line with the United Nations SDG 4 (Quality Education), this research may also contribute to making more adaptive, comprehensive, and sustainable education systems that respond to the developing needs of both teachers and learners. To maximize its impact, the findings will be shared through research conferences and published in educational and social science journals, offering stakeholders accessible insights to inform policy and practice.

2 Theoretical Lens

This study was viewed through the lens of Transformational Leadership Theory of Burns, expanded by Bass [17], to understand how school heads inspire, guide, and support teachers in implementing re-entry plans. The theory highlights four core dimensions—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and

individualized consideration—that enable leaders to build collaboration, trust, and innovation during periods of institutional change. In this study, school heads acted as transformational leaders by aligning teacher-initiated re-entry plans (e.g., outputs from SEAMEO INNOTECH activities) with school goals, motivating educators to apply innovative pedagogies, mentoring staff, and fostering shared accountability. These dimensions are reflected in practices such as clear communication with stakeholders, participatory planning, strategic decision-making, and teacher empowerment, which were central to the successful implementation of re-entry plans. This aligns with DepEd's Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan [10], emphasizing leadership in supervising teachers to maintain instructional continuity while promoting innovation.

The study's perspective is further reinforced by Resilience Theory [15], which explains how individuals and systems adapt to challenges through flexibility, creativity, and social connectedness. Applied here, resilience theory underscores the need for school heads to practice adaptive leadership, addressing obstacles such as limited resources, varied teacher readiness, and gaps in support structures. This adaptive approach is evident in the ways school leaders monitored and evaluated re-entry plans, realigned schedules, mobilized resources, and provided psychosocial support to staff and students.

Local policies further reflect these theoretical principles. DepEd Regional Memorandum No. 354, s. 2023 (DepEd Region VIII) guides the construction of action and re-entry plans with attention to local contexts and stakeholder participation. DepEd Memorandum No. 050, s. 2020 emphasizes flexible professional development to meet specific school and community needs, while DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2025 strengthens professional growth and collaborative planning structures. The establishment of Learning Action Cells (LACs) through DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016 reinforces this by institutionalizing school-based professional learning communities (PLCs), where teachers share practices, reflect on experiences, and adapt innovations to their unique contexts. Together, these frameworks underscore the responsibility of school heads to foster PLCs, mobilize resources, engage stakeholders, and sustain teacher-led re-entry plans—demonstrating transformational and resilient leadership in practice.

2.1 Research Questions

- What are the experiences of school heads in supporting the implementation of re-entry plan?
- How do school heads cope with the challenges they encountered in supporting in the implementation of re-entry plan?
- What insights can school heads draw from their experiences in supporting the implementation of the re-entry plan?

3 Methods

3.1 Research Design

This qualitative investigation utilized the phenomenological design. Phenomenological research design focuses on the shared lived experiences of people to reveal the essence of a phenomenon [13]. Its chief purpose is to offer a portrayal of the nature of an explicit experience [14]. Phenomenology also clarifies both what is experienced and how it is experienced by the target participants [15]. In conducting a phenomenological study, researchers collect detailed accounts of participants' experiences through interviews or reflective narratives, focusing on capturing their perspectives without imposing preconceived notions. The data is then systematically analyzed to identify significant statements and themes that reveal the essence of the phenomenon under investigation.

In this study, phenomenology was utilized to explore the support extended by school heads in the implementation of teacher-initiated re-entry plans. This method permitted the researcher to capture how school heads practiced, understood, and steered their support roles, as well as the approaches they employed in addressing the challenges of school re-entry. Data was collected principally through in-depth interviews with school heads, permitting their lived experiences and insights to form the basis for understanding the phenomenon under investigation.

3.2 Participants

The participants of this research were 10 school heads or school principals from various schools in the Kapalong West District, Davao del Norte Division. The sample size was in accordance with phenomenological research guidelines that recommend five to 25 participants [16]. Qualitative exploration puts premium on the depth and richness of data rather than the number of respondents [17]. Thus, a sample of 10 school heads or school principals is acceptable to capture wide-ranging yet meaningful viewpoints for the study.

Participants were chosen using purposive sampling, a technique defined as the careful identification of persons based on characteristics aligned with the research problem [18]. Purposive sampling also allows researchers to target participants who are most knowledgeable about the phenomenon under investigation [19,20]. In this case, purposive sampling ensures that only school heads or principals with direct experience in implementing re-entry plans are included.

The pre- inclusion criteria for participant identification were as follows: a) serving as school heads/ school principals in schools within the Kapalong West District, Davao del Norte Division during the conduct of the study; b) having at least three (3) years of experience in school leadership and management to verify satisfactory familiarity with administrative and instructional roles; c) having directly contributed in the implementation of re-entry plans in their schools; and d) willing to share their lived experiences associated to the support they provided during implementation.

3.3 Data Sources

In many qualitative studies, data is usually gathered through interviews, which offer a direct and clear method for collecting detailed, rich information about a phenomenon [21]. Common data sources in qualitative studies comprise in-depth interviews (IDIs), focused group discussions, document reviews, and participant and non-participant observations [22]. For this study, IDIs were the main data source, with 10 school heads from different schools in the Kapalong West District, Davao del Norte Division participating.

An IDI is a qualitative procedure that allows face-to-face, one-on-one discussions, presenting deeper insights into persons' feelings, thoughts, and behaviors regarding significant problems or phenomena. Given that IDIs are often semi-structured or unstructured, the interviewer will have the sole task to encourage participants to elaborate or explain further on the subject of study, promoting a richer understanding of their viewpoints [23]. IDIs are considered one of the most efficient means for collecting primary data, as they aim to prompt wide-ranging accounts of the participants' viewpoints and experiences [24].

The data for this research were gathered from 10 participants who are school heads or school principals from the different schools in the Kapalong West District through face-to-face interviews. In addition to the primary data and to support the findings of the research, secondary sources were also employed. These secondary sources included journals, articles, and books cited in the literature review and other parts of the paper. Secondary sources provide significant second-hand evidence and analysis from other scholars, often contributing interpretations, conclusions, or syntheses of primary sources [25]. These resources and materials facilitated validation and supplementation of the insights attained from the primary data.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection is a systematic process that is used to gather information and acquire first-hand insights into the research problem [26]. In qualitative research, this process is naturally non-structured and flexible, necessitating close contact with participants in their natural settings [27]. For this study, I was guided by a step-by-step data collection process as outlined below:

First, formal authorization was sought from the College President and the Dean of the Higher Education Department to conduct the research. Seeking this approval was a requisite to guarantee that the data collection process was officially sanctioned and compliant with school protocols.

Second, research participants were carefully selected based on the pre-inclusion criteria and communicated with through Facebook Messenger or by visiting their respective workplaces. An Informed Consent Form (ICF) was emailed to participants, clearly outlining the study's purpose, their role, and their rights as research participants. The form also included a provision inviting their agreement to record the interview process. Participants physically or electronically signed the ICF as authentication of their voluntary participation and agreement to be audio-recorded. IDIs were conducted face-to-face as requested by the school heads.

Third, an interview guide was developed to serve as a structured framework for the IDIs. This guide was checked and validated by research experts in the field of educational management. Prior to the IDIs, notices were sent to the research participants with details about the face-to-face interview. To uphold confidentiality and lessen disruptions, the IDIs were conducted in a quiet, private area as suggested by the participants.

Finally, all IDI sessions were recorded and the audio recordings securely stored on a password-protected computer. Access to the information was limited to the researcher, the research adviser, and the data analyst. After the interviews

were transcribed, data analysis proceeded, ensuring that all data was handled with strict privacy. Through these measures, ethical standards in qualitative data collection were upheld.

3.5 Data Analysis

This study utilized thematic analysis for the data analysis. Qualitative data analysis includes exploring and organizing non-numerical material, such as interview transcripts or observation notes, to better comprehend the phenomenon being investigated [28]. Thematic analysis focuses on reading transcripts, coding responses, and identifying patterns, and naming themes within the data to capture meaningful insights related to the research problem [29].

Adhering to the framework of Braun and Clarke [30], this method is suitable for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. It presents a methodical yet flexible approach that lets the investigator move beyond simply summarizing the data to interpreting its broader meaning in responding to the research problem.

In this study, the four imperative steps in analyzing qualitative data were applied: management of raw data, data reduction, interpretation of data, and data representation.

First, raw data management focused on transcription. Transcribing, which means encoding spoken responses, is a significant part of qualitative research [31]. All replies from the IDIs were manually transcribed by listening to the complete audio recordings, and the transcriptions were prepared using Microsoft Word and checked according to the agreed rules of the college.

Second, data reduction, also called data cleaning, was conducted. Data cleaning involves translating unstructured data into a format that is easier to assess and visualize [32,33]. During this process, the data were reduced to meaningful terms by removing immaterial or unusable parts of the transcripts, such as filler words or fragmentary expressions that did not contribute to the analysis. These selections were made carefully to preserve the veracity of the data.

Third, data interpretation included coding and theming. Coding is a technique of sorting text to form a framework for thematic ideas and their relationships [34], while thematic analysis involves recognizing frequent matters, thoughts, and patterns in textual data [35]. Participants' responses were inspected, a coding structure was produced by finding the core meaning of each account, and the codes were then incorporated into categories and overarching themes.

The procedure involved five steps: 1) reading and re-reading the transcriptions several times, 2) fragmenting the text into segments, 3) assigning labels or codes to each part, 4) condensing redundancy by categorizing analogous codes into categories, and 5) incorporating these into major themes or emergent themes.

Finally, data representation, or "telling the story," was applied [36]. Tables were used to present the major themes and core ideas that directly addressed the research questions. A two-column table displayed the major themes in the first column and the core ideas in phrases in the second column.

After completing these steps, the research adviser and data analyst reviewed the major themes, core ideas, and the entire Chapter 3 to confirm accuracy. This process ensured that the analysis was valid, grounded, and aligned with the research objectives.

3.6 Trustworthiness

The integrity and dependability of the study were anchored on the four constructs of trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Credibility was ensured by accurately reflecting the participants' perspectives and experiences. The researcher used iterative questioning during in-depth interviews with school heads to clarify responses and gather more detailed information. Member checking was also conducted, allowing participants to review, verify, and revise their transcripts to ensure that their statements were correctly represented. These strategies strengthened the accuracy and authenticity of the data.

Dependability was established by clearly documenting the research procedures and methodology. A detailed explanation of the methods allowed others to review and assess the consistency of the process. The researcher also consulted with the research adviser and subject-matter experts to validate the data analysis and findings, reinforcing the study's reliability.

Confirmability was maintained by ensuring that the findings were grounded in the data rather than influenced by researcher bias. An audit trail was kept to document each step of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Guidance from the research adviser and data analyst further ensured that interpretations remained objective and data-driven.

Transferability was supported by providing a thorough description of the research setting, participants, and procedures. By offering a detailed account of the study context and the educational support provided by school heads in implementing re-entry plans, the research enables readers and future scholars to determine the applicability of the findings to other educational settings.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

This study strictly observed ethical standards to protect participants' rights, dignity, and well-being. It underwent review and approval by the St. Mary's College of Tagum, Inc. – Research Ethics Committee and adhered to national ethical guidelines for health-related research. The study upheld key ethical principles, including social value, informed consent, protection of vulnerable participants, risk-benefit assessment, privacy and confidentiality, justice, transparency, researcher competence, adequacy of facilities, and community involvement. By focusing on the role of school heads in implementing re-entry plans, the research ensured that its purpose contributed meaningfully to educational improvement and community development.

Participants were fully informed about the nature, purpose, and procedures of the study before taking part. Written informed consent was obtained, and they were assured that participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Recognizing that school heads could feel pressured due to their professional roles, the researcher exercised sensitivity, neutrality, and respect throughout the interviews. Measures were implemented to minimize risks, ensure safety, and maintain fairness in participant selection. Tokens of appreciation were provided in recognition of their time and contribution.

Strict confidentiality and data privacy measures were observed. Personal information was anonymized, securely stored, and accessible only to the researcher, with plans for proper data disposal after the study's completion. Transparency was maintained by clearly explaining participants' roles and sharing the study's findings with relevant stakeholders. The researcher's academic preparation, professional experience, and guidance from an adviser ensured competence and ethical rigor. Adequate facilities, resources, and institutional support further strengthened the responsible conduct of the research, while active communication with school heads and stakeholders promoted meaningful community involvement.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Experiences of School Heads in Supporting the Implementation of Re-Entry Plan

Table 1 shows the essential themes and core ideas on the experiences of school heads in supporting the implementation of re-entry plan. In total, there were four themes that were gathered in this group. The themes contain: a) Ensuring Coordination for Re-Entry, b) Having Clear Communication with Stakeholders, c) Coordinating with Stakeholders and Staff, and d) Empowering Staff for School Re-entry.

Table 1 Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Experiences of School Heads in Supporting the Implementation of Re-Entry Plan

Essential Theme	Core Ideas
Ensuring Coordination for Re-Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning re-entry plans with school goals • Mobilizing stakeholders to address resource and communication challenges • Collecting insights from teachers to gather ideas • Facilitating teacher participation in regional and division trainings and ensured resources were included in app and sip • Planning and allocating budget through lac while managing overlapping deped and school activities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligning waps with sip and app, ensured proper use of funds, and evaluating success through feedback and qms results
Having Clear Communication with Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informing staff, students, parents, and stakeholders through meetings, circulars, and online platforms Promoting effective communication, collaboration, and teamwork to ensure smooth implementation Conducting consultative meetings and forming committees to clarify goals and strengthen partnerships Maintaining regular consultations, follow-ups, and open communication with stakeholders and the community Orienting teachers and staff first, then engaging stakeholders to gain full support
Coordinating with Stakeholders and Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging stakeholders to gain full support Coordinating with school leaders, sgc, pta-bod, and local officials for academic, financial, and logistical support Implementing participatory planning and community outreach to enhance engagement Providing continuous guidance, updates, and advisories to ensure proper implementation
Empowering Staff for School Re-entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowering staff through participatory planning, decision-making, and management Providing guidance and supporting teachers in completing tasks Establishing safety culture and empowering teachers through leadership Guiding program owners and supported teachers in developing competence and potential

4.1.1 Ensuring Coordination for Re-Entry

School Heads leverage their prior experiences, such as participation in SEAMEO courses and implementation of re-entry plans, to address challenges in resources, communication, and the needs of learners and teachers. They actively support teachers by facilitating Work Application Plan (WAP) approvals, integrating programs into the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and Annual Procurement Plan (APP), and ensuring proper allocation of financial and technical resources. Through careful planning, stakeholder mobilization, and consistent post-training monitoring, school heads ensure the effective implementation and success of professional development programs.

In terms of experience, IDI-03 emphasizes that their involvement in previous professional development programs, such as SEAMEO courses, capacitate them to address constraints in resources, communication, and the needs of both students and educators.

(Based on my experience, I am not just a simple school head; I also have experienced enrolling in SEAMEO courses and implementing the re-entry plan. As a school head, I make sure that the re-entry plan is aligned with our school goals, mobilize stakeholders, and address challenges related to resources, communication, and the needs of both learners and teachers.)

IDI-06 actively coordinates with stakeholders during trainings, such as SEAMEO programs, to ensure smooth implementation. They take the initiative to request necessary budgets and, despite challenges posed by remote locations, make efforts to gather stakeholders for proper communication and shared understanding.

(During trainings, like SEAMEO, I coordinate with the stakeholders. There are times when I request a budget from them. Since we are in a remote area, I make the effort to call them and gather everyone so we can understand each other.)

Additionally, IDI-07 specifies that supporting the implementation of teachers requires regular reporting and documentation. School heads gather post-training or post-program reports, ensure school leader approval, and integrate insights into long-term plans such as the SLAC plan, addressing budget and preparation limitations to enable school-based programs.

(When my teachers return from training, I usually ask them to report on what they learned—for example, if they attended RAEL or any other training. For instance, after a science training, I have to ask for their report because no one automatically brings the approved WAP the day after training. I also ask them to have the supervisor sign it first. In terms of implementation, it is challenging as a school head because we already have targets and programs reflected in our School Improvement Plan (SIP). If a training attended by teachers is not included in the SIP or lacks a budget, it becomes difficult. To address this, I collect the common points from the trainings to come up with one plan that can be implemented, such as re-echoing the training or integrating it into the LAC plan.)

In addition, IDI-08 illustrates that school heads facilitate the approval of teachers' Work Application Plans (WAPs) by higher authorities while ensuring that plans and financial resources are properly integrated into the school's APP or SIP for successful implementation.

"My experience in sending the teachers to training in higher-ups like regional level or division level so they could have their WAP in the school level. The support that I can give was to help the teachers so the WAP could be approved by the higher-ups for implementation and see to it that the plan or financial resources needed can be attached to the APP or SIP of the school so that the implementation of their WAP is somewhat a success."

Similarly, IDI-07 notes that proactive budget planning through the LAC plan helps address challenges posed by overlapping DepEd activities and community-related school events, although full implementation may sometimes be limited.

(As a leader, it is important to understand the challenges in implementing programs. Now that I understand these challenges, I make sure to plan and allocate a budget, particularly in the LAC plan. For the next year's trainings and seminars, we try to provide some funding through the LAC plan. I need to support them, maybe not 100%, because sometimes DepEd activities overlap with school activities, especially those related to community involvement, which can hamper our plans. As a result, some aspects may not be fully realized during implementation.)

Moreover, IDI-08 emphasizes that careful alignment between the WAP, financial resources, and the school's SIP and APP ensures that funds are spent appropriately, the right personnel are assigned, and teachers' satisfaction is verified through Quality Assurance immediately after training.

(As a school head, I ensure that what is in the plan and the WAP—especially the financial resources—aligns with the SIP and APP, and that it is spent appropriately according to the teacher's plan. This makes it measurable, as we can verify that the allocated funding was used properly, that the right person was tapped for the teacher's intended topic, and that our clients were satisfied during Quality Assurance immediately after the training. We can say that the success of the activity depends on what the teachers report or reflect through the QMS.)

Finally, IDI-02 reinforces that school heads provide both financial resources and technical guidance to assist teachers in conducting planned activities, ensuring that the implementation of their WAPs is guided and supported.

"Being a school head, I already have full support for the teachers in terms of their trainings and the implementation of what they learned from the trainings they attended. So, my support is to provide them with financial resources for the teachers to use in conducting the activity, and some technical advice also for the teachers to be guided in the implementation of the plan that they are going to conduct."

Through these collective efforts, school heads demonstrate that functional re-entry preparation requires not only systematic alignment with school objectives and vision and careful stakeholder mobilization but also considerate resource provision, constant support for teachers, and incorporation of programs, activities and projects into existing school plans to ensure the fruitful implementation of PD programs and related initiatives.

4.1.2 Having Clear Communication with Stakeholders

School heads supporting the implementation of teacher re-entry plans provide clear communication and coordinate with stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and the community. They use strategies such as regular

meetings, circulars, online platforms, follow-ups, consultative sessions, working committees, and participatory planning to implement the plans. Staff are oriented first on processes and expected outputs before stakeholders are engaged, ensuring everyone is informed and involved in the implementation.

IDI-05 shares how support was provided for the re-entry plans in a certain school, stressing the central role of communication and information dissemination to keep teachers, students, and parents informed of the plan, its purposes, and safety protocols. These actions encompassed conducting regular meetings, issuing memoranda, and using online platforms such as *Facebook Messenger* for follow-ups, monitoring, and stakeholder partnership.

*“As a school head of N**r* NHS, my experience in supporting the re-entry plans involves several areas. Number one is communication and information dissemination. As a school head, it is very important to ensure that all of my staff, students, and parents are well-informed about the re-entry plan, its objectives, and the safety protocols in place. This involves regular meetings, issuing circulars, and utilizing the school’s online platforms—such as communicating with everyone through group chat, conducting follow-ups, monitoring, and collaborating with stakeholders.”*

IDI-01 supplements that the arrangement of actions in executing programs and projects, beginning with operational communication, trailed by teamwork and cooperation, and closing with monitoring to evaluate growth and identify areas for enhancement.

(First, effective communication is key. For me, effective communication must come first, followed by collaboration and teamwork, and then monitoring to determine how we can improve and what needs to be done in the next phase, so that we can consider our program successful. That is what I did.)

IDI-03 describes additional strategies in implementing school re-entry plans, including consultative meetings, working committees, and partnership building with parents and the community to ensure clarity in plan outcomes.

(The strategies that I utilized were providing clear communication, conducting consultative meetings, and creating working committees. After that, I strengthened partnerships with parents and the community to ensure that the output or outcome of the plan was clear.)

Likewise, IDI-05 reiterates the strategies used to implement the re-entry plan, which involved regular consultations, follow-ups, participatory planning during LAC sessions, and maintaining open communication channels through monthly or quarterly stakeholder meetings and community outreach.

“As a school head, to employ the implementation of the re-entry plan, these are the following strategies that I made. Number one is regular consultations, follow-ups, participatory planning during our LAC sessions, and open communication channels—for example, during our monthly or quarterly meetings with stakeholders and the community outreach—to achieve the objectives of the re-entry plan and its impact on our school.”

IDI-06 highlights the engagement of staff and stakeholders by first ensuring that staff are oriented about the process and expected outputs of programs, and then inviting stakeholders to understand and support these implementations.

(In terms of the strategies we use to engage staff and stakeholders in the implementation of the re-entry plan, what I basically do is first prioritize the staff—explaining the process and expected outputs for conducting the particular training or program. Then, once the staff understand what needs to happen, that’s the time we also invite the stakeholders to share with them the expected outputs and the process of that particular implementation. This way, the stakeholders are at least aware and can fully support the various implementations we are carrying out in the school.)

School heads emphasized that clear and systematic communication with staff, parents, and stakeholders—through meetings, consultative sessions, online platforms, and regular follow-ups—was central to the successful implementation of teacher re-entry plans. This approach not only ensured stakeholder awareness and engagement but also facilitated coordinated action, effective monitoring, and strengthened community partnerships, implying that transparent communication is critical for achieving school program objectives.

4.1.3 Coordinating with Stakeholders and Staff

School heads play a central role in ensuring the successful implementation of re-entry plans by coordinating with academic leaders, student councils, and community stakeholders. They provide continuous guidance and support to teachers, keeping all participants informed, offering reminders, and assisting with procedural questions to ensure

proper execution. In addition, they actively engage the wider community, including the barangay and PTA, to secure resources, foster collaboration, and maximize participation in school initiatives.

IDI-07 illustrates how academic and school events are coordinated through consultations with Master Teachers, the Head Teacher, and the SGC, while financial matters are addressed by engaging the PTA-BOD president to negotiate funding or explore additional support opportunities.

(In those instances, if time permits, I immediately call my three Master Teachers and one Head Teacher when it concerns academics. We first discuss what is needed to realize the particular event, especially if it's a training. We also invite the SGC because they are part of the planning and monitoring. If financial support is required, I contact the president of the PTA-BOD to negotiate, present proposals for possible allocation, or explore other initiatives that might provide support—even if not originally in the budget. It is especially advantageous that our PTA president is also a Councilor, which gives the school a close connection and additional opportunities.)

In addition, IDI-06 emphasizes the importance of keeping all participants informed throughout the program implementation, ensuring that everyone is guided in executing their responsibilities.

(I always advice, inform, and update all participants in the implementation so that everybody is guided on how this specific activity or program is carried out.)

IDI-09 shares about how school heads involve the community in the implementation of teachers' Work Application Plans (WAPs). During these activities, they engage local stakeholders, including the barangay, to support the process, resulting in high participation and collaborative involvement from the community.

(When we conducted the WAP with our teacher, we went to the community because they were part of the implementation. We were also assisted by the barangay. The best part was that many people participated with us.)

IDI-05 explains that school heads provide continuous support to teachers by guiding them through processes, offering reminders, and encouraging them to ask questions to ensure proper implementation.

(Not everyone knows. I need to support them. For the teachers who conducted it, I told them to always ask me if they have questions. I also gave them reminders about how to follow the process.)

Effective coordination and continuous support from school heads foster smooth implementation of school programs and high stakeholder engagement. This suggests that strong leadership, clear communication, and community involvement are critical for ensuring program success and maximizing participation in school initiatives.

4.1.4 Empowering Staff for School Re-entry

School heads empower teachers during the implementation of school re-entry plans by providing guidance, support, and opportunities for active participation in planning and decision-making. They ensure teachers can complete Work Application Plans (WAPs) and action plans, led by example in following safety protocols, and adapt instructional methods to meet learners' needs. Furthermore, school heads act as facilitators, resource managers, and instructional leaders while allowing teachers to take ownership of planning and develop their professional competence.

Indeed, IDI-02 points out that this method begins with equipping teachers, stimulating their active participation in preparation, choice selection, and management, reflecting the school head's principle of all-encompassing leadership.

“Actually, I am more focused on empowering people. In other words, I am very happy when my subordinates participate in planning, decision-making, or even in management. It is actually my principle to adopt that kind of management and leadership in school.”

IDI-01 shares how school heads provide consistent support during meetings, emphasizing the importance of completing all activities, including Work Application Plans (WAPs) and action plans. They guide teachers to ensure that tasks are properly executed and outputs are achieved, discouraging incomplete or improvised work.

(During our meetings, I always point out that for all their activities, especially the WAPs and action plans, I am always supporting them. I emphasize that they need to accomplish, complete, and finish these tasks. They cannot just make things up, and this way, they are able to produce proper outputs.)

Building on this precept, IDI-05 underlines that school heads set the tone for a culture of security, accountability, and teamwork, while concurrently enabling teachers to adapt their instructional approaches to meet learners' needs. Leading by example assures observance to safety procedures and exhibits commitment to the school community.

“These involve setting the tone, establishing the culture of safety, responsibility and collaboration, and empowering teachers because providing teachers with autonomy, support to adapt of their teaching methods and techniques to the new learning environment that is suited to our learners here in my school. Leading by example, as a school head, it is very important to adhere to the safety protocols and demonstrating the commitment to the well-being of our school community.”

Similarly, IDI-03 underscores the multifaceted roles of the school head, acting as planner, facilitator, resource manager, instructional leader, policy enforcer, and advocate for learners' welfare, while maintaining a student-centered focus throughout the process.

(The planning we execute comprises acting as planners, facilitators, resource managers, instructional leaders, policy enforcers, and advocates for learners' welfare throughout the implementation process. We cannot make a re-entry plan without concentrating on the learners, as it must be student-centered.)

Finally, IDI-08 explains the sympathetic and leading role of the school leader, permitting program owners or teacher initiators to plan while providing support and cultivating teacher competence. This style capacitates educators to realize their potential and ensures that leadership nurtures professional growth.

(I am present as a guide. I allow the program owner to plan everything, and I am there to supplement resources for improvements. This means that I am not the one doing the preparation; I am simply there to push the teacher. I am just there to let the teacher develop his or her competence because I believe that every teacher has potential that needs to be unleashed.)

Through these integrated approaches to supporting the implementation of re-entry plans, school heads demonstrate participatory leadership by merging empowerment, leadership, hands-on engagement, and teamwork, ensuring that the re-entry implementation remains learner-centered, secure, and reactive to the needs of the school community.

4.2 School Heads Coping with Challenges they Encountered in Supporting the Implementation of Re-Entry Plan

Table 2 presents the essential themes and core ideas which answer the research question on the coping of school heads on the challenges they encountered in supporting the implementation of re-entry plan. There were five themes that were formulated in this category. The themes comprise: a) Applying Different Leadership Styles, b) Leveraging on Community and Financial Capital to Address Re-Entry Challenges, c) Prioritizing Staff and Student Well-Being, d) Adaptive and Shared Leadership as a Coping Strategy, and e) Strengthening Institutional Preparedness as a Coping Mechanism.

Table 2 Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the School Heads Coping with Challenges Encountered in Supporting the Implementation of Re-Entry Plan

Essential Theme	Core Ideas
Applying Different Leadership Styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing strong and flexible leadership to make the transition smooth and effective • Ensuring organized and well-monitored implementation • Doing supportive supervision and continuous evaluation • Managing and planning under institutional constraints • Providing hands-on support for effective program implementation • Ensuring accountability and safety through regular communication

Leveraging on Community and Financial Capital to Address Re-Entry Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcoming financial constraints through collaboration and resource mobilization • Putting premium on careful resource planning to prevent issues • Utilizing and managing different types of resources • Strategizing resource management and organized planning • Compensating for financial shortfalls to ensure program continuity and teacher support
Prioritizing Staff and Student Well-Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting well-being and positive engagement • Integrating consistent mental health practices into school routines and programs • Prioritizing holistic well-being to foster resilient school community • Managing staff workload, training, and ongoing support
Adaptive and Shared Leadership as a Coping Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading adaptively through resourcefulness and collaboration • Adapting schedules and coordinating stakeholders to ensure program implementation • Balancing higher-level priorities and participant availability • Providing constructive feedback through positive and balanced leadership • Practicing participative leadership by engaging stakeholders
Strengthening Institutional Preparedness as a Coping Mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing problems appropriately, tailoring solutions to each school's context while following DepEd policies and guidelines • Overcoming challenges through communication and continuous plan adjustment • Managing resources and using communication to solve school challenges • Systematically assessing school performance through ongoing evaluation and SWOT analysis

4.2.1 Applying Different Leadership Styles

School heads demonstrate strategic leadership in the implementation of re-entry plans by monitoring activities, coordinating programs, engaging stakeholders, and managing limited resources. They highlighted their roles in supervising teachers, ensuring compliance with DepEd protocols, facilitating meetings, and institutionalizing review and evaluation processes. They also noted the need for creativity, responsiveness, and careful planning to address both human and material resource constraints while supporting hybrid learning and program execution.

Focusing on showing strong and flexible leadership to make the transition smooth and effective, IDI-09 highlights how school heads adapt and remain resilient in implementing re-entry plans. Despite limited resources and administrative challenges, they ensure compliance with Department of Education policies, mentor teachers, engage stakeholders, and strengthen monitoring systems to support a smooth and effective transition.

“We balance compliance with DepEd, mentor teachers, and engage stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition. The process challenges us to innovate with flexible learning modalities, strengthen monitoring systems, and foster collaboration among staff and parents, while administrative and resource constraints test their resilience.”

Similarly, IDI-01 emphasizes the school head’s essential role in helping and supervising and monitoring re-entry plan implementation. They are accountable for handling every aspect of the program, certifying that procedures are carried out successfully.

(During implementations, my role is to monitor what is happening. You should know how the program runs because it is yours. Before any activity, we already finished the meeting about it. Everything has also been set.)

Emphasizing supportive supervision and ongoing evaluation, IDI-10 highlights the need to respond effectively to teachers’ plans while maintaining systematic monitoring and assessment. The school head exercises strategic oversight by guiding plan implementation and establishing regular review and evaluation processes to identify successes and areas needing improvement. IDI-10 expressed:

(I am always responsive to the teachers’ plans. I try to be strategic whenever we implement them. As part of the plan, I institutionalize a review and evaluation process. Through this, I can identify what went wrong and what went right.)

Building on these responsibilities, IDI-01 highlights the multifaceted role of the school head in managing planning within institutional constraints. They balance limited resources and human capacity, facilitate programs, identify qualified speakers for specialized topics, and implement continuous monitoring and evaluation to address the school’s needs.

(When we talk about roles, there are many roles to consider. For me, it rests heavily on our shoulders because school heads are the ones who plan. In planning, we have to consider various resources, including human resources, especially in a small school like ours. Today, in DepEd, our resource speaker must have a master’s graduate, so it becomes difficult to look for a speaker right for the topics.)

Connecting to the previous discussion, IDI 5 also highlights the need for creativity in managing limited resources, taking initiative, and asking questions to ensure smooth re-entry implementation.

(With the limited resources we have, you need to be creative. I take the lead in all re-entry activities. I make sure to ask how things are going so I know and can address them properly.)

Similarly, IDI-07 underscores the school head’s role in providing hands-on support to ensure the effective implementation of programs. This involves caring for staff and teachers, coordinating activities, and optimizing available resources to guarantee smooth execution.

(I strive to take care of them so they don’t feel left out. I coordinate all our programs and constantly remind them to maximize all available resources to carry out the program or plan.)

Correspondingly, IDI-03 highlights the school head’s role in ensuring accountability and safety by maintaining regular communication with program owners and monitoring program progress. This continuous oversight helps protect both staff and students while supporting ongoing activities.

(Never forget to communicate with your program owner. When I went for training, they were the only ones at the school, so I would always call and monitor how they were doing to ensure the children were protected. The teachers were also conducting activities.)

Through these responses, school heads exemplify how leadership styles—encompassing visionary leadership, careful planning, effective communication, supply management, and constant monitoring—allows the effective implementation of re-entry plans notwithstanding administrative, logistical, and resource constraints. These practices highlight the need for continuous capacity-building, structured support systems, and collaborative stakeholder engagement to sustain program effectiveness and ensure smooth transitions in future re-entry initiatives.

4.2.2 *Leveraging on Community and Financial Capital to Address Re-Entry Challenges*

School heads leverage financial, human, and technological resources, as well as community partnerships, to ensure the smooth implementation of re-entry plans. Participants highlighted strategies such as activating the School Governance Council, engaging the PTA, soliciting support from the barangay and LGU, aligning MOOE with procurement plans, and creatively using small income-generating projects to address financial and logistical challenges. These practices demonstrate how strategic resource management and collaboration with stakeholders sustain program execution despite fiscal and operational constraints.

IDI-02 highlights the school head's approach to overcoming financial challenges by fostering collaboration and mobilizing resources. Through consultations with teachers, external stakeholders, and the School Parents-Teachers' Association (SPTA), as well as activating the School Governance Council, the school head seeks win-win solutions to ensure adequate support for programs, particularly in fiscal matters.

(One of the challenges is financial resources. Sometimes it becomes a question of finding a win-win solution: whether to do something for the benefit of the teacher or strictly follow the rules. In such cases, we look for other sources to provide support, always in consultation with other teachers or external stakeholders, particularly the PTA. Here, we also activate the School Governance Council, which provides significant support, especially in financial matters.)

To address challenges in program implementation, school heads actively mobilize resources and adapt their leadership practices to fit specific situations, ensuring that both staff and learners' well-being remain a priority. As described in IDI-03, this flexibility and resourcefulness support the smooth execution of re-entry programs.

(As a school head, I cope by mobilizing resources, adjusting my leadership practices when my usual style does not fit the situation, and prioritizing the well-being of both staff and learners to ensure the smooth implementation of the re-entry plan.)

Even with available resources, shortages may still occur. IDI-06 illustrates how school heads seek assistance from stakeholders, such as the PTA, School Governing Council, Alumni Association, and the local barangay, especially for large logistical needs.

(Even though the school provides various materials, there are still shortages. To cope with this, we always ask for assistance from our stakeholders, such as the PTA, our School Governing Council, or even the Alumni Association. These are the people we can rely on. One more thing, another supportive stakeholder is our barangay; we approach them for our needs, particularly for major operational issues that the institution cannot cover. I am happy because this stakeholder is very supportive of the school.)

Putting a premium on careful resource planning, school heads ensure that financial provisions are aligned with planned programs and activities. As highlighted in IDI-04, the school's Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) should correspond with the Annual Procurement Plan (APP) and Project Procurement Management Plan (PPMP); however, unplanned months can create challenges in resource allocation.

(When we talk about resources, the school MOOE is aligned with the APP and PPMP, but if there is a month that was not planned, problems will inevitably arise.)

School heads draw on a range of resources—financial, human, technological, and community partnerships—to support the effective implementation of school programs. As highlighted in IDI-05, managing this variety of resources is essential to meet the needs of staff, students, and the broader school community.

(As a school head, I rely on a variety of resources. First is financial resources, as they are the most important for allocating budgets to requests. Next is human resources; this cannot be done without coordinators. Of course, technological resources, communication platforms, and partnerships with the community are also essential. These are the resources we need and use in the school.)

In addressing organizational and operational challenges, IDI-09 described the variety of resources which includes financial support from the Department of Education, Local Government Units (LGU), and the community; human resources such as teachers, staff, and parent-volunteers; technological tools for communication and learning; and partnerships with businesses, organizations, and health agencies to supplement school needs.

“To address logistical issues associated with the re-entry plan, I rely on different resources. We depend on financial resources allocated by DepEd and the LGU to procure necessary supplies, such as sanitizers, masks, and cleaning equipment. We also leverage human resources, including teachers, staff, and parent-volunteers, to assist with tasks such as temperature screening, classroom disinfection, and traffic management. Additionally, we utilize technological resources, such as online platforms and communication tools, to facilitate remote learning, disseminate information, and coordinate activities. Finally, we rely on communication and community partnership, collaborating with businesses, organizations, and health agencies to access additional resources and support.”

In fact, IDI-10 also do the same. When school resources are insufficient, they may seek supplementary support from Local Government Units (LGUs), such as through the Special Education Fund (SEF), to ensure that logistical needs are met.

“I can rely on addressing the logistical issues by asking support from the local government unit aside from the utilization of school MOOE.”

Strategic resource management and organized planning are key to effective program implementation. As highlighted in IDI-07, school heads assign clear roles and designations to teachers to ensure a structured flow of activities, make use of available financial and alternative resources, and conduct consultative meetings to generate and refine relevant ideas for smooth program execution.

(In our school scenario, I am grateful that the PTA is supportive. When we lack funds, for example in the MOOE, which is used for mandatory expenses, some parts have to be sacrificed. For our part, we have small sources of income, such as from our garden (our IGP) and the canteen, which provide some share for the school, and that is where we draw resources. My staff are trained in their assignments, with clear designations and program flow, because I do not allow programs to run without proper organization. We also hold consultative meetings to solicit ideas, because while my idea might be good, there may be even better suggestions from others.)

Compensating for financial shortfalls is essential to maintain program continuity and support teachers. As highlighted in IDI-08, school heads must demonstrate ingenuity in finding alternative solutions to meet critical needs, ensuring that re-entry plans and activities proceed smoothly despite budget constraints.

(First and foremost, as a school head, you cannot succeed without being resourceful. We cannot assume that everything is already in place; due to the school's financial limitations, some activities may not be feasible. As a school head, you must know how to pursue different initiatives, and part of that is finding ways to cover needs because teachers require them. Without funds, we cannot buy food or snacks, nor can we rent a venue for training.)

School heads manage and mobilize resources by referring to educational stakeholders, activating school councils, and aligning MOOE with expected activities to address financial limitations. They utilize different forms of resources such as financial, human, and technological. Likewise, the effect of community partnerships to support program implementation and logistical needs is highly evident. Resourcefulness and alternative approaches are utilized when shortages arise, ensuring continuity of school programs, activities and projects.

4.2.3 Prioritizing Staff and Student Well-Being

School heads prioritize the mental health and overall well-being of teachers and learners by creating a supportive and nurturing school environment. Participants highlighted strategies such as managing personal stress, fostering positive relationships, clearly communicating program objectives, implementing wellness programs, providing counseling services, and promoting social-emotional learning and healthy lifestyles. Continuous monitoring and timely interventions ensure that both staff and students feel valued, motivated, and adequately supported throughout the re-entry process.

IDI-01 highlights the critical role of school heads in promoting the well-being of staff and students while fostering positive engagement. This involves managing personal stress, maintaining a supportive and nurturing environment, cultivating strong relationships, and clearly communicating program objectives to ensure that teachers and learners feel valued and motivated to participate.

(Mental health is very important. As a leader, this is my top priority because I was once a teacher. By providing a supportive and nurturing environment, I make sure that even when I feel stressed from considering many factors, I do not show it to others so they are not affected. If we appear frustrated, teachers may feel uneasy. By fostering positive

relationships, school heads help teachers and students feel valued. From the beginning, we clearly state the objective of a program and explain why it is being conducted, helping them feel appreciated. In return, they coordinate and collaborate with you.)

School heads implement programs to support teachers' well-being, encouraging psychosocial support, work-life balance, and a positive school climate to protect staff and learners from stress, as described in IDI-03:

(As a school head, I implement programs for teachers. School heads facilitate psychosocial support programs, encourage work-life balance—because teachers sometimes forget to attend to their own needs while focusing constantly on teaching—and promote a positive and safe school climate to protect staff and learners from stress and emotional strain during re-entry sessions.)

Mental and psychological wellness is integrated into the re-entry process through structured activities. IDI-02 notes that wellness activities are conducted weekly to provide consistent support.

“Part of the re-entry process must include mental and psychological wellness activities, and we do that every Friday weekly.”

Access to counseling, social-emotional learning, and promotion of healthy physical activity are also provided. IDI-05 highlight strategies to ensure overall well-being.

“Ensuring the mental health and well-being of staff and students during the re-entry process is the top priority of me as a school head. We implemented several strategies to achieve this goal: we provide access to counseling services for students and staff who may be experiencing anxieties, stress, and other mental health challenges. We also promote social-emotional learning in the classroom, teaching students skills like self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy. Additionally, we encourage physical activities and healthy life choices.”

Immediate support is provided if children or staff show emotional or mental difficulties. Monitoring mental and physical well-being is equally important. IDI-07 illustrates how school heads observe staff and students for signs of distress and provide immediate support.

(I have to consider not only the mental but also the physical aspect. For example, if the program owner or members become physically ill, their mental state is automatically affected. I also check the children to see if they are mentally prepared; if they have problems, gaps, or suddenly start crying, we address it immediately.)

Mental health practices are consistently integrated into school routines to ensure readiness and motivation during re-entry activities. As explained in IDI-08, school heads begin by assessing the mental health of participants through questioning and physical exercises, and incorporate energizers or mind games to support both teachers' and students' motivation and well-being, enabling effective engagement in learning and program activities.

(In the re-entry plan, it is already binding. When implementing the plan, we start with training by assessing the mental health of the participants. We do this through questioning and preparing physical exercises. In the WAP, there are energizers, or upon arrival, we can offer play or mind games to address mental health. If mental health is not assessed, how can participants learn what they are supposed to? Both the children and the teachers need to be motivated.)

IDI-09 highlights that school heads prioritize the holistic well-being of staff and students to foster a resilient school community during the re-entry process. This includes providing counseling services, promoting social-emotional learning, encouraging healthy lifestyles, and maintaining a supportive and safe school environment where everyone feels respected and valued.

“Ensuring the mental health and well-being of staff and students during the re-entry process is a top priority of the school. We implement several strategies to achieve this goal: we provide access to counseling services for learners and teachers who may be experiencing anxiety, stress, and other mental health challenges. We also promote social-emotional learning in the classroom, teaching students skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy. In addition, we encourage physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices, recognizing the importance of physical health and promoting mental well-being. Furthermore, we foster a supportive and conducive school environment where students and staff feel safe, respected, and valued.”

Finally, school heads prioritize the mental health and well-being of both teaching and non-teaching staff by carefully managing workloads, providing adequate training, and offering ongoing skills-development opportunities. As described in IDI-10, this approach ensures that staff are mentally prepared and supported, fostering a healthy and resilient school environment that enables effective program implementation.

"I have to make sure that all teaching and non-teaching staff must be mentally healthy, and therefore, I should not implement projects in the school if the teachers are also not mentally healthy. So, I should invest my trust in the teachers, and I should not give them a heavy assignment. I will have to make it sure that there is enough training and seminars in addressing their mental health and well-being, and I should always give them capacity-building activities that will strengthen their mental health and well-being."

Prioritizing mental health and stakeholder well-being is the top priority of the school heads. It can be done through providing a supportive environment, fostering positive relationships, and clearly communicating program goals. They implement wellness programs, counseling services, social-emotional learning opportunities, and PD programs to support both teachers and learners. Mental health is being monitored continuously, and interventions and innovations are provided by schools to address stress, illness, or emotional problems during the re-entry implementation.

4.2.4 Adaptive and Shared Leadership as a Coping Strategy

School heads demonstrate adaptive and collaborative leadership to address challenges in re-entry plan implementation, emphasizing flexibility, resourcefulness, and stakeholder empowerment. Participants highlighted strategies such as adjusting leadership style to circumstances, mobilizing the SGC and PTA, consolidating opinions, fostering participatory decision-making, and providing timely feedback to teachers and learners. These approaches ensure that program execution is responsive to scheduling conflicts, participant availability, and evolving needs, while promoting empathy, transparency, and shared responsibility among all school stakeholders.

IDI-01 highlights that school heads lead adaptively by being resourceful and collaborative in overcoming challenges during program implementation. Effective leadership requires finding solutions to obstacles while actively engaging supporting personnel, recognizing that successful outcomes depend on teamwork rather than individual effort.

(There are many challenges we may encounter, but as a leader, we have no choice but to be adaptable and find solutions to these challenges. We have to be resourceful, and finally, I must never forget that we must be collaborative, because I cannot do it alone. Although I am the school head, I cannot succeed without the collaboration of the people supporting me.)

Building on adaptive and collaborative leadership, IDI-03 illustrates how school heads adjust their leadership style according to the situation. By empowering teachers through distributive leadership, they enable staff to take responsibility, make quick decisions, and respond effectively to emerging learner needs, ensuring that program implementation remains flexible and team-driven.

(As a school head, I adjust my leadership style depending on the circumstances, such as empowering teachers through distributive leadership. I do not take on everything myself; instead, I empower other teachers to do their best and contribute their share, involving teams in quick decision-making and shifting priorities based on emerging learner needs.)

During crucial moments like school re-entry, partnership and compassion guide decision-making. IDI-05 uses a collaborative and inclusive approach, involving teachers, non-teaching personnel, and stakeholders in decision-making. Flexibility, adaptability, empathy, and compassion are emphasized to address overlapping DepEd activities and the concerns of teachers.

(To effectively meet the challenges of the re-entry, as a school head of N**** NHS, we embraced a collaborative and participatory approach. This includes teachers, non-teaching personnel, and other stakeholders in the decision-making process; they are involved, and we cannot make decisions on our own. We also adopt a flexible and adaptive mindset, recognizing that the re-entry plan requires ongoing adjustments. Additionally, another important aspect is empathy and compassion, understanding the anxieties and concerns of teachers, especially today when DepEd activities often overlap.)

In supporting the implementation of the re-entry plan, school heads demonstrate adaptive leadership by combining resourcefulness, collaboration, and sensitivity to meet the needs of teachers, non-teaching personnel, learners, and

parents. As highlighted in IDI-09, transparent communication and partnership are prioritized, creating a supportive environment where staff can voice concerns and share experiences. Flexibility and adaptability guide ongoing adjustments based on real-time feedback and emerging needs, ensuring that the re-entry process remains responsive and inclusive.

"In navigating the challenges associated with supporting the implementation of the re-entry plan, our school utilizes a multi-faceted approach. We prioritize open communication and collaboration, fostering a supportive environment where teachers and non-teaching personnel can voice their concerns and share their experiences. We also emphasize flexibility and adaptability, recognizing that the re-entry process is dynamic and based on on-going adjustments from real-time feedback and emerging needs."

Adaptive scheduling and stakeholder coordination are essential for effective program implementation, especially when plans cannot be executed as initially scheduled. As described in IDI-07, school heads adjust timelines and communicate with involved parties, including the School Governance Council (SGC) and the Parents-Teachers' Association (PTA), to ensure participation without disrupting students' classes.

(Regarding coping 100%, there are instances when we have a plan that cannot be implemented on time. In such cases, I call the group and reschedule, especially if activities are deferred. I make sure that when the SGC and PTA are involved, their participation is accommodated. We set another time if conflicts arise, such as the unavailability of a speaker or schedule clashes that cannot compromise the students' classes.)

Balancing higher-level directives and participant availability is a critical aspect of program implementation. As highlighted in IDI-08, school heads must navigate time constraints when approved schedules conflict with Division Office activities, giving priority to top management's directives while acknowledging that full participant attendance may not always be possible due to unforeseen circumstances like illness. As reflected in the statement:

(The number one challenge is time, because sometimes our approved WAP schedule conflicts with the Division Office's calendar of activities. This prevents us from implementing it at the school level, as we must prioritize the higher-ups' memoranda. Another challenge is the participants; we cannot expect 100% attendance—for example, teachers who fall sick. Therefore, our vision of full teacher participation cannot always be achieved due to unforeseen important events related to family, home, or work.)

Also, IDI-01 highlights that effective leadership involves providing constructive feedback through a positive and balanced approach. School heads exercise flexibility, responsiveness, collaboration, and transformational leadership when giving feedback to teachers and learners, ensuring that guidance addresses lapses in a supportive manner while clarifying the purpose of the feedback.

(For me, it is important to be flexible, responsive, collaborative, and a transformational leader. When giving feedback—especially to teachers or learners—it should be balanced, highlighting both positive and negative aspects. However, we must ensure that our feedback is delivered positively, so that even when there are lapses, the recipients clearly understand our purpose.)

Empowering stakeholders is a key element of adaptive and participative leadership. As described in IDI-02, school heads mobilize the School Governance Council (SGC) and the Parents-Teachers' Association (PTA) to actively participate in shared management, decision-making, and the planning and implementation of school programs and projects, ensuring collaborative governance and collective ownership.

"Actually, I adhere to the principle of empowerment, meaning there will be a consent of shared management, shared leadership, and shared decision-making. That is why I mobilized here in school the SGC as proof of adapting that kind of leadership. Another one is the PTA; I mobilize them to support the school. That is why I let them get involved in the planning, especially in the planning of the School Improvement Plan, even in implementing some programs and projects of the school. I let the PTA as well as the SGC do their roles in implementing the projects of the school."

Ingenuity complements teamwork. IDI-07 prudently seeks support from stakeholders within legal bounds and involves teachers to progressively resolve issues.

(Being a resourceful school head with a heart. I am careful about asking for help because, according to the law and Republic Acts, solicitations are prohibited. So I approach it indirectly, presenting the problem to the stakeholders who can help. I also involve the teachers, and gradually, the problem gets resolved.)

Moreover, IDI-09 also makes use of a participatory and collaborative approach, involving teachers, students, non-teaching personnel and other stakeholders in policy decisions. Adaptability, compassion, and awareness are utilized to address the changing needs and concerns of teachers, learners, and parents.

"We embraced a more collaborative and participatory approach, concerning teachers, staff, and other stakeholders in the decision-making process to foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibilities. We also adopted a more flexible and adaptive mindset, recognizing that the re-entry process is constantly evolving and requires ongoing adjustments. Furthermore, we prioritized empathy and compassion, understanding the anxieties and concerns of our teachers, learners, and parents, and providing them with the support and reassurance they need."

School heads face constraints in implementing programs because of scheduling conflicts, Division Office orders, and inadequate teacher involvement. They utilize leadership strategies such as adaptability, resourcefulness, collaboration, distributive leadership, and shared decision-making with stakeholders, including the SGC, PTA, teachers, staff, students, and parents. Feedback is carried through beneficially and positively, plans are attuned as needed, and problem-solving is done within legal boundaries with active stakeholder contribution.

4.2.5 Strengthening Institutional Preparedness as a Coping Mechanism

School heads reinforced school readiness and enabled rapid problem-solving by evaluating readiness, organizing resources, and modifying solutions to each school's priorities.

IDI-04 highlights that school heads address challenges by tailoring solutions to the unique context of each school, whether large or small, while ensuring compliance with Department of Education (DepEd) policies and by-laws. This approach emphasizes problem-solving that is context-sensitive, systematic, and aligned with regulatory guidelines.

(You have to deal with it in the right way, addressing the problem appropriately. Every school has its own challenges: big schools are different, and small schools are different. Either way, you find a way to resolve the issue in accordance with DepEd by-laws. That is what I do.)

IDI-06 highlights that school heads overcome challenges in re-entry plan and program implementation by maintaining constant communication with participants and support personnel. They periodically revisit and adjust plans to address minor issues, workload pressures, and evolving needs, ensuring that programs remain aligned and effectively executed.

(Basically, there are many challenges we always face in the re-entry plan, trainings, or implementation of various programs. What I do is maintain constant communication with the people involved in the programs to ensure they have the support they need. Sometimes I may be too lenient, but there are still minor issues. At the end, the challenge is that everyone tends to cram, making it difficult to focus on work. As the plan progresses, later on, we review the planning and ensure alignment with all the different programs.)

IDI-01 underscores that effective school leadership requires strategic management of both human and logistical resources, supported by clear and continuous communication. While logistical concerns may be easier to address, human resource challenges demand tapping available personnel, coordinating effectively, and, when necessary, seeking assistance from external sources to ensure school operations and programs run smoothly.

(First, as a school head, we really have to think about and review the available resources in the school. Logistics are not too stressful because there are many ways to manage them, but human resources are what I find most challenging, even if I have a master teacher. Although it is difficult, there are other people we can tap, and we always return to effective communication. Even if someone is not in our school, we can still request their assistance and communicate until the problem is resolved.)

Building on managing school resources, IDI-06 relies on available school resources to support implementation. Focus is placed on ensuring that all plans are prepared, organized, and ready before execution.

(In terms of school preparedness, we basically rely on the resources available in the school. What we focus on is how we deliver and whether everything is truly ready, so that when we implement a particular plan, everything is prepared, organized, and ready.)

School heads ensure operational readiness and continuous improvement by systematically assessing school performance. As highlighted in IDI-02, this involves conducting SWOT analyses, safety inspections, learner profiling,

and monitoring school facilities to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, providing a structured basis for decision-making and planning.

“Actually, every now and then, we keep on evaluating the data of the school as to the status using the SWOT analysis. We are identifying how the school stands in terms of its strengths, weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats. We document those, and those are the basis in the assessment of our school.”

Likewise, systematic evaluation of school and teaching readiness is essential to ensure smooth re-entry. As described in IDI-03, preparedness is assessed through safety inspections, learner profiling, monitoring of school facilities, teaching readiness, community support, and SWOT analysis, allowing school heads to identify issues and take necessary actions before the re-entry process.

(Preparedness is examined through readiness of services, safety inspections, learner profiling, and constant monitoring of school facilities. Teaching readiness and community support are also assessed to ensure operational readiness before re-entry. A SWOT analysis should also be conducted to identify the problems that need to be addressed.)

School heads fortify school readiness by addressing limitations and concerns appropriately, keeping constant communication, and ensuring alignment of programs and activities. They assess preparedness through reviews and inspections, SWOT analysis, learner profiling, and monitoring of infrastructure while surveying feedback from teachers, learners, and parents. Planning is usually organized using monitoring checklists, informing teachers and other stakeholders and providing necessary materials for the curriculum delivery for a productive program implementation.

4.3 Insights of the School Heads that can be Drawn from their Experiences in Supporting the Implementation of the Re-Entry Plan

After thorough analyses of the data gathered from the participants, the insights of the school heads were drawn from their experiences in supporting the implementation of the re-entry plan. Table 3 displays the essential themes and core ideas that reflect the insights of school heads taken from their experiences in supporting the implementation of the re-entry plan. In this category, five themes were gathered identified. The themes contain: a) Implement Inclusive Strategic Planning for School Improvement, b) Conduct Ongoing Evaluation to Enhance School Practices, c) Demonstrate Adaptive and Resilient Leadership, d) Provide Teacher Support and Empowerment, and e) Monitor and Evaluate Re-Entry Effectiveness.

Table 3 Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights of the School Heads that can be Drawn from their Experiences in Supporting the Implementation of the Re-Entry Plan

Essential Theme	Core Ideas
Implement Inclusive Strategic Planning for School Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice inclusive and unbiased decision-making by gathering input from teachers, PTA, SGC, and stakeholders • Foster collaboration and shared decision-making to build trust and collective problem-solving • Strengthen committee teamwork through active participation and mutual support • Leverage stakeholder commitment and maintain positive staff engagement • Prioritize feasible re-entry plans that maximize student benefits within time and resource limits • Promote shared accountability by linking personal and staff performance • Apply collaborative approaches with teachers, students, parents, and community partners • Ensure teamwork in all school activities to support shared governance and collective success

<p>Conduct Ongoing Evaluation to Enhance School Practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support teachers, students, and community by surveying, consolidating, and addressing shared concern • Address small challenges promptly, improve minor gaps, and ensure collective collaboration • Enhance strategies through strong monitoring and evaluation systems to strengthen mental health programs and stakeholder engagement • Apply lessons learned to improve future plans and prevent repeated challenges • Envision future support strategies as personalized, data-driven, and technology-enabled • Conduct classroom observations, regular meetings, and focus group discussions to assess performance • Implement monitoring and evaluation systems based on the school plan with multi-stakeholder indicators • Hold post-implementation feedback sessions to improve future program implementation
<p>Demonstrate Adaptive and Resilient Leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice flexible, proactive, and collaborative leadership to support learners and sustain re-entry success • Develop capacity, resilience, and well-being to adapt to evolving challenges • Apply a holistic and resilient approach to manage human and logistical demands • Strengthen adaptability to adjust leadership practices across contexts • Prioritize proactive communication and the mental health and well-being of students and staff • Ensure adaptive, innovative, and holistic support strategies for lasting improvement • Apply adaptability in aligning strategies with deped mandates and emerging challenges • Grow through continuous learning and shared adaptation with staff to strengthen collective performance
<p>Provide Teacher Support and Empowerment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translate professional development into effective school practices by applying training to address identified needs • Practice servant leadership to support and empower teachers in implementing re-entry plans • Continue providing guidance to help teachers perform classroom tasks effectively • Provide resources, moral support, and technical assistance to strengthen teacher capacity • Mentor and guide teachers to ensure proper program execution • Develop empathy, strategic thinking, and innovation in managing limited resources and urgent needs • Strengthen re-entry implementation through personalized support to ensure quality outcomes
<p>Monitor and Evaluate Re-Entry Effectiveness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and evaluate implementation using surveys, feedback, reports, and observations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use m&e tools and participation data to assess re-entry effectiveness • Analyze parent feedback and involvement to improve governance and programs • Assess teacher and parent support through attendance, performance, health, fgds, and classroom data • Conduct post-implementation reviews to identify gaps and guide future programs • Review documentation and provides constructive feedback to enhance implementation • Establish success indicators based on efficiency, timeliness, and outcomes • Measure success through student progress, stakeholder satisfaction, safety, and protocol compliance
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4.3.1 Implement Inclusive Strategic Planning for School Improvement

School heads implement comprehensive strategic planning by engaging teachers, non-teaching personnel, learners, parents, and other stakeholders to promote collaboration and shared responsibility. They practice non-biased decision-making, reflective listening, and consultative approaches to gather insights, foster positive relationships, and ensure equitable consideration of all programs and activities. By coordinating committees, consolidating feedback, and encouraging teamwork, school heads facilitate effective re-entry plan implementation while maximizing stakeholder participation and support.

IDI-04 practices non-biased decision-making by considering the insights and perspectives of other members of the school. Communication is used to gather input and reach a common ground for effective planning and conflict-resolution.

(I always practice non-biased decision-making. Decisions are made by considering the insights of others—‘two heads are better than one.’ You cannot organize a system while planning solely based on your own ideas or experiences. Non-biased decision-making involves communicating with others, gathering their insights, and finding common ground to address the situation.)

IDI-06 expresses the necessity for gaining strong support from teachers, non-teaching personnel, parents, students, and other stakeholders during the implementation of the re-entry plan. To add, IDI-06 notes that once commitment is requested, stakeholders respond positively and freely contribute their time and effort. This shared support is central in ensuring the effective implementation of school programs.

(In terms of support from teachers, staff, parents, and other stakeholders, I am very delighted because whenever I ask for their commitment, they respond positively—willing to support, work, and stretch their full assistance in implementing the plan we are carrying out.)

IDI-08 highlights giving equal consideration to all programs and activities to balance quality and governance, including financial administration. Ensuring teacher presence and active involvement in re-entry preparation is viewed as essential for professional development and improving student outcomes.

(One reflection I think of is that activity design, or the WAP, should be given equal opportunity alongside other activities. In doing so, we can balance quality and good governance, particularly in the financial management of the school. I also want teachers to remember that if they believe their activity or coordinatorship is really important, they should not be absent during the planning phase, so that all coordinatorships receive equal footing—particularly those that are indispensable to the school. This will uplift our professionalism, bring us closer to promotion, and, of course, advance the children’s reading level. Let’s do better together.)

IDI-02 highlights the view on the impact of individuals in school improvement. Sharing ideas and fostering positive relationships are emphasized as crucial for the overall development and effectiveness of the school.

“Actually, the person has a big impact on the improvement of the school, especially in sharing ideas and fostering positive relationships with one another.”

Moreover, IDI-04 supplements by sharing the importance of reflective listening with teachers, the SPTA officers, and the SGC officers. Two-way listening is seen as important for promoting synergy and effective cooperation.

(When you listen to them; if you listen to your fellow teachers, the SPTA, and the SGC, they will also listen to you. When there is two-way listening, collaboration and teamwork certainly follow.)

In addition, IDI-05 stresses the same approaches such as utilizing collaboration and teamwork. Working together with teachers, students, non-teaching personnel, parents, and the entire community aids in understanding their needs and perspectives, permitting for the development of successful support approaches while fostering shared accountability and ownership.

“Collaboration and teamwork play a very important and significant role in shaping my insights on support to our school. By working collaboratively with teachers, students, staff, parents, and the community itself, we gain a deeper understanding of their needs and perspectives. These collaborative approaches allow us to develop more effective and relevant support strategies. Furthermore, teamwork fosters a sense of shared responsibility and ownership.”

Additionally, IDI-06 shares that in planning, different committees actively team up, indicating eagerness and teamwork from the beginning.

(One thing I observed is that even during the planning stage, we already have different committees, and they collaborate. There is always teamwork within these committees. From the start, I can see their eagerness to help, collaborate with each other, and build teamwork within the committees they are part of.)

IDI-08 emphasizes that educating children requires teamwork, as no one can achieve it alone. Teamwork ensures smooth operations and maximizes the potential of both students and teachers.

(Collaboration is very important because no one can do it alone, and it takes a village to educate a child. In the academe, we believe that people trust us, knowing that when their children leave school, their full potential has been realized by the teachers. This can only happen with teamwork, because teamwork achieves great results. If you work alone, nothing much will happen, but when the school works as a team, everything runs smoothly.)

IDI-09 also agrees that collaboration with teachers, non-teaching personnel, learners, parents, and community stakeholders is really vital to understand the needs and develop effective support strategies. Having a shared responsibility becomes essential for successful school support, particularly for re-entry plans.

“Collaboration and teamwork play a critical role in shaping school heads’ insights on support. By working collaboratively with teachers, students, staff, parents, and community partners, we gain a deeper understanding of their needs and perspectives. This collaborative approach allows us to develop more effective and relevant support strategies. It fosters a sense of shared responsibility and ownership, which is essential for the successful implementation of our support efforts.”

Furthermore, the success of school programs depends on strong alliances, shared responsibility, and collective effort across the school community, as cited by IDI-010.

“It is very important that there is collaboration and teamwork in every institution because the success of any activity depends on it being a shared responsibility and a collective effort, or a shared governance performed by the school community.”

In this theme, school heads really implement comprehensive strategic planning by fostering collaboration and shared responsibility among teachers, non-teaching personnel, learners, parents, and other stakeholders. By utilizing non-biased decision-making, emphatic listening, and solidarity, re-entry plans can be effectively executed. Through these concerted approaches, both competency building and learning performance can be boosted, making school improvement a shared endeavor.

4.3.2 Conduct Ongoing Evaluation to Enhance School Practices

School heads gather feedback through surveys, questionnaires, suggestion boxes, FGDs, and meetings to understand the needs and concerns of teachers, learners, and the community. Monitoring and evaluation systems, including mid-year assessments, coaching, mentoring, and post-implementation reviews, track instructional support, program

implementation, and stakeholder participation. Collected data from performance indicators, attendance, health reports, and observations inform refinements in school practices and strategies for re-entry and long-term improvement.

In the case of IDI-05, provision of support to the school community through the use of surveys and questionnaires to understand the concerns of teachers, learners, and the community is highly recommended. Partnership among the school head, teachers, and other stakeholders is identified as key to attaining better school performance.

(The lesson I've learned is that it is very important for the school head to always provide support to the teachers, students, and the community—through regular surveys and questionnaires to truly listen to their concerns. This is crucial because the outcomes or results of the school are always achieved through the collaboration of the school head, teachers, and the community.)

IDI-10 boasts the value of having a structured M&E, including mid-year evaluations of the school, coaching and mentoring opportunities, and SLAC sessions. These activities improve the support scheme to make sure that teachers receive instructional support tailored to their needs.

"First, I can make a monitoring and evaluation. Of course, there is what we call a mid-year evaluation. I can also do coaching and mentoring activities so that I can gather feedback. Most importantly, I can also do SLAC sessions to collect feedback just to refine my support because I need to be specific in my support system, as teachers also need specific support, particularly in their teaching and learning process—both pedagogical support as well as material support."

Building on this, IDI-06 always observes the implementation procedure, noting that minor faults are addressed while overall actions remain smoothly. School staff and other stakeholders actively help each other, guaranteeing the successful implementation of the re-entry plan.

(It is just a minor fault that only needs to be improved. Even so, I can still see that everybody is taking action, helping each other, and that the plan we are executing is carried out positively.)

IDI-03 foresees developments in school strategies through a more robust monitoring system for daily or weekly checking. This system supports mental health agendas, sustains stakeholder collaboration, and ensures the long-term success of school initiatives.

(The school head envisions enhancing strategies through a more robust monitoring system, permitting for daily or weekly monitoring. Sometimes, you conduct monitoring or make a monitoring and evaluation system to strengthen mental health programs, continue stakeholders' collaboration, and ensure long-term effectiveness.)

Correspondingly, IDI-06 also reflects on some lessons learned from past challenges, noting that prior difficulties provide valuable inputs to guide the preparation and implementation of future re-entry activities.

(For sure, the things we were not able to cope with before have now become learning experiences. We have learned from those different challenges. I envision that in our future plans, we will use what we have gained from the flaws we experienced.)

IDI-09 emphasizes that support strategies need to be personalized, evidence-based, and technology-driven. Plans have to be tailored to the unique needs, learning preferences, and problems of students and teachers, with data analytics and technology enhancing availability, productivity, and effectiveness.

"Based on my insights, I envisioned the future of our support strategies as being more personalized, data-driven, and technology-enabled. We aim to develop support strategies that are tailored to the individual needs of our students and staff, taking into account their unique learning styles, challenges, and goals. We also plan to leverage data analytics to recognize students and staff who may be at risk and provide them with targeted interventions. In addition, we intend to integrate technology in our support strategies to enhance accessibility, efficiency, and effectiveness."

IDI-01 highlights efficient strategies for providing support, including class observations, coordinative meetings, and FGDs, which help monitor instruction and guide developments in school programs.

"There are several ways, but as for me, conducting classroom observations, regular meetings, and focus group discussions are what I think are very effective."

Continuing this context, IDI-02 implements a tailored monitoring and evaluation (M&E) scheme with clearly defined factors, regularly tracked by parents, teachers, learners, and other stakeholders.

“Actually, we have our own monitoring and evaluation system. It is a process based on the plan of the school; indicators are reflected in the monitoring, and these are monitored by parents, teachers, pupils, and all involved in the school.”

To support this, IDI-03 elaborates that M&E is conducted through surveys, consultations, school performance data, and dialogues. The collected feedback from these activities helps polish strategies, address concerns, and ensure alignment with learners’ needs.

(I collect surveys and conduct consultations. I also listen to the teachers’ voices. And, I also gather performance data with relevant indicators. I also hold dialogue sessions, where this feedback helps refine strategies, address gaps, and ensure alignment with learners’ needs.)

Further, IDI-04 also notes the importance of actively listening to feedback during meetings, requesting stakeholders about gaps in organizational operations or leadership, and using this input to inform decisions for the subsequent school year.

(When conducting meetings, I ask each of them if there is anything lacking in the school, what they observe about my leadership, or any other gaps they notice. I am willing to listen and willing to put their feedback into practice in the next school year.)

IDI-05 describes using suggestion boxes alongside regular surveys and questionnaires to gather feedback. Consolidating inputs monthly allows the school head to identify real concerns and address them to improve service delivery.

“As a school head, I conduct regular surveys and questionnaires. I have templates for client satisfaction. We also have a suggestion box, and by reading that monthly and consolidating the inputs, we identify the real concerns and needs of our clients and address them to provide better service.”

IDI-06 highlights feedback sessions conducted after program implementation to discuss successes and areas for improvement. These sessions guide future plans and ensure smoother implementation.

(We always conduct feedback sessions after a program ends. We hold meetings to discuss what went right and what went wrong in that particular implementation. Through these feedback sessions, we identify our next steps and plans on how to improve and ensure that future implementations run smoothly.)

IDI-07 notes the need for a structured feedback system, such as a feedback box, alongside verbal feedback collected in meetings, to capture monthly insights from teachers, students, and parents.

(At this time, feedback is mostly verbal, but what is lacking in the system is a feedback box for my clients—teachers, students, and parents. Partly, feedback is already gathered through meetings, but having individual written feedback, such as a survey form, is something I plan to implement and collect monthly. Whether negative or positive, this will help us become aware of areas that need improvement.)

IDI-08 adds that feedback is conducted after every WAP through evaluations, checklists, interviews, and meetings to generate recommendations and identify areas for improvement.

(Feedback is conducted after every WAP through evaluation. From this, we can gather negative feedback and provide recommendations on how to improve. Another method is using feedback forms, such as checklists, to gather information. Feedback can also be collected through interviews and meetings.)

This is also the same with IDI-09. The school head utilizes gathering feedback through diverse approaches, including questionnaires, client satisfaction forms, surveys, FGDs, and data on attendance, academic performance, and health reports. Casual observations and discussions also help understand the institutional practices.

“As the school head, I gathered feedback to improve our support practices through a variety of methods. We conduct regular surveys and questionnaires, and we have client satisfaction forms to solicit feedback from teachers, staff, students, and parents. We also hold FGDs to gather more in-depth insights and perspectives. Additionally, we analyze data on students’ attendance, academic performance, and health indicators to identify areas for improvement. We also conduct

informal observations and conversations to gain firsthand understanding of the challenges and successes of our support practices.”

In this theme, school heads implement ongoing evaluation using multiple feedback systems to improve school practices. By integrating surveys, formal and informal observations, team discussions, and structured monitoring and evaluation, they can ensure that support is custom-made, effective, and receptive to stakeholders' needs. With these, it can strengthen collaboration, improve performance, and guide the school toward continued growth and effectiveness.

4.3.3 *Demonstrate Adaptive and Resilient Leadership*

School heads demonstrate adaptive and resilient leadership to navigate the complexities of the re-entry process. IDI data highlight responsive decision-making, flexibility, proactive problem-solving, and strong partnerships with teachers, staff, and stakeholders as essential practices. Capacity building, holistic management of human and logistical demands, and prioritizing mental health are emphasized to ensure effective school operations and support student learning.

IDI-03 highlights the importance of responsive leadership, strong partnerships, and student-centered support during the complex re-entry phase. It demonstrates flexibility and proactive decision-making, focusing on solutions rather than challenges. Partnerships are emphasized as key factors in overcoming difficulties and ensuring the success of the re-entry process.

(School heads gain a deeper understanding of responsive leadership, collaboration, and learner-centered support as they navigate the complexities of the re-entry phase. One important lesson learned is that school heads must be flexible and practical in problem-solving, avoiding negativity because problems cannot be solved by concentrating on the negative first. Partnerships are also essential in overcoming challenges and sustaining the success of the re-entry process.)

In going through difficult periods, IDI-04 emphasizes the importance of strength, ability, and well-being to adjust to various circumstances. IDI-04 addresses problems using appropriate strategies, recognizing that resolutions must remain flexible and adaptable.

(You need to have strength, capacity, and well-being to adapt to any situation during re-entry process. It is not the case that once something is done, it is lasting. You must learn to handle the demands of various issues and address each problem using the appropriate method.)

Likewise, IDI-01 also talks about the of resilience in handling both human and logistical demands. This strategy ensures that all aspects of institutional operations are effectively accomplished.

(Resiliency. You really have to be resilient all the time. Aside from being resilient, I would also like to stress the value of taking a holistic approach in managing both human and logistical demands.)

Furthermore, IDI-04 elaborates on flexibility, noting that fine-tuning to different conditions is key, as administration and leadership practices vary between rural and urban schools. Capacitating teachers and other stakeholders are viewed as a learned skill necessitating time and proper understanding of the school context.

(Adaptability is key to making progress. You learn to adapt in different situations. Personally, I came from a far-flung area before coming here. The management characteristics are different in lower-level schools compared to higher-level ones. It took me about 4 to 6 months to adapt here at A** Elementary School, but even then it was not enough. Having the capacity to adapt means learning it the right way.)

Adding to this, IDI-09 also puts priority on proactive communication and prioritizes the mental health of students and teachers as critical components of positive re-entry support.

“From the challenges we faced in providing support to the re-entry plan, we have learned the importance of proactive communication, and we have learned the critical importance of prioritizing the mental health and well-being of our students and staff.”

When it comes to strategy, IDI-01 explains that adaptive, groundbreaking, and all-inclusive approaches guide the implementation of the re-entry process to guarantee lasting improvements in teaching, learning, and total school management.

“Support strategies such as adaptive, innovative, and holistic, ensuring that the re-entry process leads to lasting improvement in teaching-learning and school management.”

IDI-04 emphasizes adaptability as the primary strategy, adjusting to both personal and school circumstances while following DepEd-mandated support strategies, making modifications when necessary to optimize outcomes.

(First and foremost is adaptability. Support strategies follow in such a way that you learn to adapt to your own circumstances, as there are still support strategies mandated by the DepEd system. Even though in some cases adjustments are made to adapt, meeting the system halfway is better than not addressing the situation at all.)

IDI-07 adds that growth, learning, adaptation, and implementation in collaboration with the school team are essential, stressing mutual support between the school head and team members as vital for collective progress.

(For me, it is to grow more, learn more, embrace more, adapt more, and implement more with my team so that everyone can progress. I need them, and they also need my support.)

School heads emphasize the value of adaptive and resilient leadership by combining flexibility, proactive problem-solving, and alliance with their teams. In ensuring a holistic and effective re-entry process, school heads prioritized both operational demands and the mental well-being of the educational stakeholders. Adaptability and continuous improvement are anticipated to serve as key mechanisms for navigating complex challenges successfully.

4.3.4 Provide Teacher Support and Empowerment

School heads emphasize that teacher support and empowerment are central to effective re-entry implementation. The data highlight their provision of continuous guidance, mentoring, resources, and moral support to ensure teachers remain confident and capable in delivering instruction. Personalized and empathetic leadership practices are prioritized to address diverse classroom needs, enhance professional performance, and sustain meaningful school outcomes.

IDI-01 emphasizes the relevance of effective management in translating training and seminars into meaningful outcomes in the school performance. Recognizing problems that need to be solved ensures that in-house training achieves its intended objectives.

(There are numerous lessons learned. I find effective leadership very significant in translating training into meaningful outcomes in the school. For me, it is our duty to identify the problems that have to be addressed, so that the training implemented in the school will be meaningful and attain our objectives.)

IDI-10 points out that has to practice servant leadership. The school head added that this helps teachers feel relaxed and self-assured in implementing their re-entry plans.

(The insight that I can share is that a leader must provide support and perform servant leadership, because this lets teachers to feel comfortable and confident in implementing their re-entry plan.)

In a similar context, IDI-02 shares that sustaining support practices makes a better re-entry implementation. Also, school heads need to stress that ongoing guidance empowers teachers to perform their tasks successfully in the classroom.

“As to the practice that I have, I believe that it will be continued. The support I give must be continued, and the teachers will continue to empower themselves to become effective and efficient in delivering their tasks inside the classroom.”

IDI-10 further shares the role of school heads in providing resources, moral support, and technical assistance to teachers. It will guarantee that they are well-equipped to implement the re-entry plan effectively.

“I envisioned myself supporting my teachers by being a good provider of everything in terms of resources, moral support, and technical assistance.”

IDI-01 applies mentoring and guiding educators during the implementation of the program, ensuring that prearranged activities are carried out efficiently.

“Mentoring and guiding teachers in implementing the program.”

IDI-03 reflects on the challenges during the re-entry process such as limited resources, urgent decision-making demands, and varied student needs. These experiences fortified leaders to adopt sympathetic, tactical, and innovative support approaches, highlighting the inevitability of proactive action.

(Experiences such as limited resources, urgent decision-making demands, and diverse learner needs have shaped leaders to be more empathetic, strategic, and innovative in their support approaches. If you do not act, you become unproductive, and nothing gets done in the school, particularly affecting the learners and teachers.)

IDI-05 capitalizes on personalized support in strengthening the implementation of the re-entry plan. Albeit support, accomplishing quality outcomes in school curriculum and governance is not possible.

(Strengthening the implementation of the re-entry plan highlights the importance of personalized support, because without support, nothing can be done. This is really the root cause: without support, there is an absence of quality service.)

School heads advise to ensure the employment of effective leadership by providing continued, empathetic, and adapted support to teaching personnel. They may integrate mentoring, resource provision, and practical leadership to empower teachers in effectively implementing the re-entry process. Through these decisions, teachers are expected to be better prepared to deliver quality education and manage class demands competently.

4.3.5 *Monitoring and Evaluating Re-Entry Effectiveness*

School heads use monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to assess the effectiveness of re-entry plans and ensure they meet the needs of learners and stakeholders. M&E practices include surveys, feedback forms, progress reports, classroom observations, and data on participation and learning outcomes. Parent involvement and feedback are also considered to align programs with community expectations.

IDI-01 mentions that assessment starts with a combination of monitoring and evaluation tools, including quantitative surveys, feedback forms, progress reports, performance checklists, and classroom observations. These tools help determine the impact of the plan on teaching, collaboration, and student learning while identifying areas for improvement.

(When we talk about assessment, for me as a school head, it is challenging. However, through a combination of monitoring and evaluation, there are many feedback mechanisms. It is very important to listen to our stakeholders so that we know what improvements need to be made. Also, surveys will determine whether their support has strengthened collaboration, improved teaching performance, and positively impacted students' learning. We also utilize several tools, such as teachers' progress reports and feedback forms, to evidently see the outcome of our re-entry plan in the school. Classroom observations and performance checklists are utilized to assess the effect on our students. There are numerous assessment tools accessible that guide us in determining whether we have achieved our objectives and recognizing areas that need further improvement.)

Correspondingly, IDI-03 presents that monitoring and evaluation include getting feedback not only from educators but also from learners through the use of progress reports, classroom observations, and data on classroom participation and proficiency to assess the success of support during re-entry.

(To assess the effectiveness of our support for the re-entry process, we use monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools. Through M&E, we collect feedback from teachers and learners. Also, we use progress reports, classroom observations, and data on participation and learning outcomes.)

Furthermore, IDI-04 emphasizes the value of parental inclusion in evaluation activities. By ensuring parents' participation and feedback, school heads gauge whether programs are aligned with community expectations and are well-received.

(If you can see the participation of parents—for example, when a letter shows that more than half of the population signed it—it implies that more than half of the population is listening to your good governance in the school. You take into consideration how the parents feel—whether what you are doing is enough or if you should implement other projects. Parents’ perspectives must be taken into account because if you act alone, you won’t know how the community feels, whether they are upset or satisfied.)

In alignment with this, IDI-05 emphasizes analyzing multiple data sources, including student attendance, academic performance, health incidents, and feedback from students, parents, and staff. Focus group discussions (FGDs) and class observations during school-based learning action cell (SLAC) sessions further steer the evaluation practice.

“As a school head, I assessed the effectiveness of support from the teachers and the parents through data analysis, tracking key metrics such as student attendance, academic performance, health incidents, feedback collection from students and parents, and staff, and somehow FGD during LAC sessions and classroom observations.”

Expanding this discussion on improvement, IDI-06 demonstrates that post-implementation conferences are indispensable for reviewing effectiveness, recognizing deficiencies, and revising minor mistakes for succeeding implementations.

(Basically, what we do is base our actions on the assessment conducted at the end of a particular implementation. We hold after-meetings or discussions regarding the effectiveness of the implementation we carried out. Most often, we focus on identifying gaps. In these post-conferences, we pinpoint what did not go well during implementation so that in the next implementation, we can make improvements. In terms of the support I provide, any shortcomings in what we implemented can be addressed or corrected in the next implementation, especially the minor errors that occurred during the previous program.)

Additionally, IDI-07 emphasizes the use of documentation and categorized feedback to evaluate programs, identifying positive outcomes and minor areas for improvement.

(In assessing, I rely on the actual documentation as well as feedback. Once they provide feedback and share their thoughts, I personally evaluate whether it is negative, positive, or acceptable—for example, whether the training was good—and I also point out any minor areas that need improvement.)

Furthermore, IDI-10 stresses the use of clear indicators of success, including quantity, efficiency, and timeliness, to guide evaluation and ensure that objectives are met.

(First, I must have indicators of success. These include indicators in terms of quantity, efficiency of implementation, and timeliness. The most important aspects are these three: quantity, efficiency, and timeliness of the implementation.)

Tracking outcomes is equally important, as IDI-03 notes, including learner attendance, academic performance, timely completion of activities, stakeholder engagement, and achievement of targets outlined in the plan.

(Of course, we track improvements in learners—for example, their attendance, better academic performance, and timely completion of activities as outlined in the re-entry plan—along with stakeholders’ engagement levels, achievement of targets, and other elements specified in the plan.)

Similarly, IDI-04 highlights feedback from teachers, parents, and students, noting that satisfaction from the majority serves as a key indicator of successful implementation.

(In school governance, you can see feedback from teachers, parents, and students. Not all feedback will be positive, as there are always some who look for faults, but when you see that the majority are satisfied, that itself is already significant feedback.)

IDI-05 and IDI-09 consolidate the criteria for measuring success, focusing on improved student outcomes, positive stakeholder feedback, and the creation of a safe and well-managed school environment.

(The success is measured through improved student outcomes. This is apparent in the outcomes of the students, as they are the main recipients of the re-entry plan. First, we monitor improvements in the attendance, academic performance, and overall well-being of students. We also recognize the positive feedback from stakeholders,

evaluating their level of satisfaction. Are our stakeholders satisfied with the services provided and the successful implementation of our re-entry plan? This helps appraise the effect and identify whether the plan is appropriate for N**r* NHS.)

IDI-09 details how the school head evaluates the victory of the re-entry plan. The school head assesses enhanced learner outcomes, positive response from stakeholders, and the formation of a safe school environment. The school head also reflects on the implementation of procedures as part of the assessment.

“As a school head, I measured success through improved students’ outcomes, positive stakeholders’ feedback, a safe environment and effective implementation of protocols.”

Through these procedures, school heads show that methodical monitoring, evaluation, and feedback gathering—integrated with clearly specified indicators of success—ensure that re-entry plans are implemented effectively, responsive to the needs of stakeholders, and capable of generating meaningful improvements in instruction.

5 Implications

5.1 Implication for the Administrative Practice

The experiences of school heads in supporting re-entry plans offer valuable insights for administrative and curriculum practices, particularly in navigating complex and dynamic school contexts. Adaptive and resilient leadership emerges as a critical approach, where flexibility, proactive problem-solving, and collective decision-making enable school heads to respond effectively to challenges. Providing professional development in adaptive leadership and resilience-building can further empower leaders to implement initiatives positively, sustainably, and in alignment with the needs of their school communities.

Prioritizing teacher support and empowerment is essential for translating initiatives into effective classroom practice. This includes offering coaching, technical assistance, resource provision, psychological support, and structured avenues for training, collaboration, and feedback. Such measures equip teachers to apply professional development insights, improve learning outcomes, and foster a culture of professional growth and shared accountability.

Inclusive strategic planning strengthens stakeholder participation in school activities. Actively engaging teachers, learners, parents, and community members through transparent communication, collaborative committees, and impartial procedures ensures that diverse perspectives shape school improvement strategies, optimize resource use, and enhance synergy across the school community.

Coordinated and systematic monitoring and evaluation enhance program effectiveness and institutional responsiveness. Using formalized tools, data collection systems, and timely assessments allows schools to track performance, identify gaps, refine strategies, and ensure that re-entry initiatives align with the school’s vision, mission, and goals while informing data-driven policy and process improvements.

Purposeful management of human, fiscal, physical, and technological resources further strengthens school preparedness. Strategic allocation of resources and partnerships with government agencies and local organizations support rapid problem-solving, maintain program continuity, and promote collaborative stakeholder engagement, contributing to the smooth reintegration of teachers into the school environment.

While these strategies offer actionable guidance, their implementation will depend on each school’s context, including size, classification, stakeholder engagement, available resources, and existing conditions. Sustained support, ongoing professional development, and strong collaboration among stakeholders are vital to translating these approaches into meaningful and lasting improvements in school performance.

5.2 Recommendation for Further Research

Increasing the scope of participants in future studies may be important for gaining a more wide-ranging understanding of the support provided in the implementation of re-entry plans. While the current exploration focused on school heads, including teachers, non-teaching personnel, and students may supplement the findings by offering varied perspectives. Each group encounters distinct challenges and chances, and their insights could disclose additional magnitudes of support, management, and engagement that impact the success of re-entry plans in schools.

Additionally, investigating the incorporation of technology in supporting re-entry plan implementation may be a significant area for further examination. Future studies could inspect how digital tools, learning management systems, professional learning communities, and online communication platforms may ease coordination and information sharing among school heads, teachers, learners, and other personnel. Understanding the role of technology in enhancing alliances and monitoring can identify innovative approaches to overcome organization challenges, especially in geographically isolated and disadvantaged schools.

Investigating the contribution of local government units, education units, division office personnel, and other policymakers is another significant direction for future research. These entities play a crucial role in providing supervision, resources, and oversight for school initiatives such as the re-entry implementation. Further studies may focus on the specific policies, programs, and support schemes implemented by these groups and how they may influence the effectiveness of re-entry plan implementation.

PD training, courses and seminars may also be observed in future research. Exploring the impact of targeted training programs for school leaders, teachers, and administrative personnel may provide valuable insights into how skills development initiatives fortify leadership skills, crisis management, and adaptive practices essential for re-entry processes.

Conducting a longitudinal study may offer extra benefits by trailing the experiences and perceptions of school heads, teachers, students, and community over time. This approach may help evaluate the sustainability and long-term efficiency of re-entry plans and provide insights into how constant support and performance tracking contribute to improved outcomes.

Furthermore, future research may explore learners' perspectives on the re-entry progression. Examining how learners experience the support provided by school heads, teachers, and other school personnel may offer critical insights into how these approaches affect their education, health, and socialization. Including students' voices can apprise the development of more receptive and learner-centered interventions.

Lastly, working together with policymakers and school heads may be noteworthy for translating research findings into practical strategies. Sharing insights from this research may advise the design of targeted rules, procedures, measures, programs, and support systems that improve the implementation of re-entry plans and eventually enhance educational outcomes in schools and in the entire department.

6 Concluding Remarks

School heads' experiences in supporting the implementation of the re-entry plan shed light on the multifaceted dynamics of school leadership and administration and the critical role school heads play in enabling successful teacher reintegration. Reflecting on these experiences highlights the limitations and responsibilities intrinsic in guaranteeing that re-entry programs are excellently executed, inclusive, and responsive to the targets of the school. The study validates that school heads not only lead and manage programs but also foster a supportive and sympathetic environment that puts premium to communication, shared governance and accountability, and stakeholder engagement.

Notwithstanding their best efforts, school heads face many challenges in realizing re-entry plans. These include resource restrictions, scheduling conflicts, policy obscurities, and the need to address both teaching personnel, non-teaching personnel and learner well-being under dynamic and often changeable conditions. Managing these challenges necessitates adaptive leadership, strategic planning, and problem-solving skills, as well as the ability to maximize school resources effectively. Their capacity to steer these challenges is important to guaranteeing continuity, responsiveness, and impartiality in school programs.

On a personal level, the results of this research foster a deeper gratefulness for the commitment, flexibility, and commitment of school heads. Their leadership practices reveal not only professional capability but also an honest concern for the welfare of the members of the school community. Distinguishing these efforts highlights the importance of cultivating a culture of respect and dedication which serves as a model for educational leaders determined to support complex activities like re-entry initiatives.

This research would not have been possible without the irreplaceable support of school heads who contributed to the research progression. Their assistance, sincerity, and will to share experiences improved the study, providing

dependable and meaningful data that truthfully reflects the authenticities of re-entry program implementation. Their involvement underscored the value of collective research approaches in understanding educational practices.

I would like to thank the participants of this investigation. Despite their busy schedules, they eagerly and willingly dedicated time to respond to questions and share their experiences. Their openness and support provided thoughtful insights into the strategies, challenges, and accomplishments involved in supporting re-entry plans. I am sincerely grateful for their honesty and the trust they placed in sharing their accounts, which form the groundwork of this study.

The study found that school heads use strategic, adaptive, and participatory leadership to implement re-entry plans, concentrating on transparency, comprehensive planning, fiscal management, resource mobilization, and monitoring and evaluation. These results point to the need for PD, personalized strategies, and structured support to reinforce school leadership, management and administration. It is indorsed that the Department of Education, agencies, and local governments provide ongoing training, improved resources and facilities, and promote stakeholder co-creation, in unique local contexts. Addressing these zones can help school heads lead successfully, support teacher reintegration, and foster a cooperative school culture that values the growth, community of practice, and well-being of both learners and teachers.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of Conflict of interest

We, Eva G. Gutierrez and Belen D. Tado, declare that we have no conflicts of interest or competing interests to disclose regarding the publication of this manuscript or any institution, product, or entity mentioned therein. Furthermore, we have no affiliations or financial interests in any products or organizations that could influence the study outcomes presented or compete with those discussed in the manuscript.

Statement of ethical approval

All ethical standards were strictly followed in the conduct of this study. All sources and authors referenced in the manuscript were properly cited in accordance with academic and ethical guidelines.

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