Leading with Integrity Experiences of School Heads in Promoting Accountability

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Abstract — This study explores the experiences of school heads in promoting accountability through integrity driven leadership. Focusing on the challenges they encounter, the coping mechanisms they employ, and the insights they gain. Accountability plays a critical role in ensuring quality education, but it is often influenced by leadership practices, resource limitations, and cultural factors. A qualitative research design was used, involving in-depth interviews with selected public-school heads. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes related to challenges, coping strategies, and insights. The study revealed five key challenges: difficulty balancing teacher autonomy and accountability, limited resources and inadequate support systems, resistance and lack of buy-in from teachers, challenges in monitoring and evaluating performance, and cultural and interpersonal barriers. Coping strategies included fostering open communication, maximizing resources and external support, building trust, providing clear and constructive feedback, and practicing cultural sensitivity. Insights gained emphasized that accountability works best when paired with trust, that support improves performance, flexibility is essential, clear expectations reduce misunderstandings, and strong relationships foster a positive accountability culture. The findings highlight the significance of integrity in leadership, its impact on school culture and the ways in which school heads can promote transparency, responsibility and academic excellence. It Suggest that promoting accountability in requires balancing firmness with relational leadership, adequate resources, and context-sensitive approaches. The study recommends targeted support for school heads, improved policies from the Department of Education, and further research to explore the perspectives of teachers and students. This research contributes to the understanding of effective leadership and provides insights for educational policy makers, administrators, and stakeholders seeking to promote accountability and integrity in school.

Keywords — Accountability, school leadership, coping strategies, teacher performance, trust, cultural sensitivity

I. Introduction

This study focuses on the experiences of school heads in promoting accountability among teachers in schools, investigating the strategies they use and the challenges they encounter. Accountability refers to the obligation of individuals to report, explain, and take responsibility for their actions, ensuring transparency and trust in their roles (Bovens, 2015). I chose this study to explore how school leaders navigate the complexities of maintaining professional standards while fostering supportive environments. The findings will benefit school heads, teachers, and

educational policymakers by providing insights on effective accountability practices that enhance teacher performance and student outcomes.

For example, in the United States, principals are required to balance high-stakes testing policies with teacher evaluations and professional development, which can create friction and reduce the overall effectiveness of accountability measures (Jones & Brown, 2022). In countries like Japan and South Korea, where digital education is highly advanced, principals face the challenge of ensuring accountability while encouraging innovative teaching practices that utilize technology (Lee & Kim, 2023). This dual responsibility requires a nuanced approach that takes into account both traditional teaching methods and modern technological advancements.

In the Philippine context, the issue of accountability among public teachers is compounded by several factors unique to the country's educational landscape. One major challenge is the lack of sufficient resources and support systems for both teachers and school heads. According to recent studies, many public schools in the Philippines suffer from overcrowded classrooms, insufficient instructional materials, and inadequate teacher training programs, which hinder the effective implementation of accountability measures (Garcia & Reyes, 2023).

Research Questions

The study aimed to explore the experiences of school heads in promoting accountability through integrity driven leadership, with a particular focus on the challenges they face, the coping mechanisms they employ, and the insights they gain through these experiences. The following research questions will guide this investigation:

1. What are the experiences of school heads in promoting accountability?

2. What coping mechanisms do school heads employ in promoting accountability?

3. What insights can be generated from the experiences of school heads in promoting accountability?

II. Methodology

The research design for this study is a qualitative research design using phenomenology, which is particularly suited for exploring the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals within a specific context (Van Manen, 2016).

The research instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore the experiences of school heads in promoting accountability through integrity driven leadership. The interview guide included open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives, allowing participants to share their challenges, coping strategies, and insights in detail.

The participants for this study were 10 school heads who are directly involved in promoting accountability through integrity driven leadership: five were in-depth interview participants and another five were FGD participants. The inclusion criteria for selecting these participants are based on specific characteristics to ensure relevance and depth of insight. First, the school heads must have a minimum of three years of experience in their current role, as this duration allows them to have substantial experience and understanding of the accountability practices and challenges within their schools (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Second, the school heads must be currently serving in public elementary schools, as the study focuses on accountability within public education settings. Third, the participants should have demonstrated involvement in policy implementation or initiatives related to teacher performance and accountability, which is crucial for obtaining rich, context-specific insights (Patton, 2015). These criteria ensure that the selected school heads can provide comprehensive and nuanced perspectives on the phenomenon being studied.

I gathered data through in-depth interviews (IDI) using an interview guide with pre-formulated open-ended questions. In-depth interviews (IDI) are a qualitative data collection method that involves conducting comprehensive, one-on-one conversations to explore participants' perspectives, experiences, and insights in detail (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

I analyzed the data using a systematic and iterative approach, following several steps to ensure a thorough and accurate interpretation of the collected information. The first step in data analysis is data preparation, where I transcribed the recorded in-depth interviews verbatim to ensure that all verbal and non-verbal cues are captured accurately (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

III. Results and Discussion

For the first figure, the findings imply that school heads need targeted leadership training to help them balance accountability with teacher autonomy and navigate cultural sensitivities in the workplace. Addressing resource limitations and improving monitoring systems also require support from higher education authorities, as school heads alone cannot resolve these structural challenges. There is a need for policies that provide schools with more resources and practical tools to fairly evaluate teacher performance while respecting local cultural dynamics.
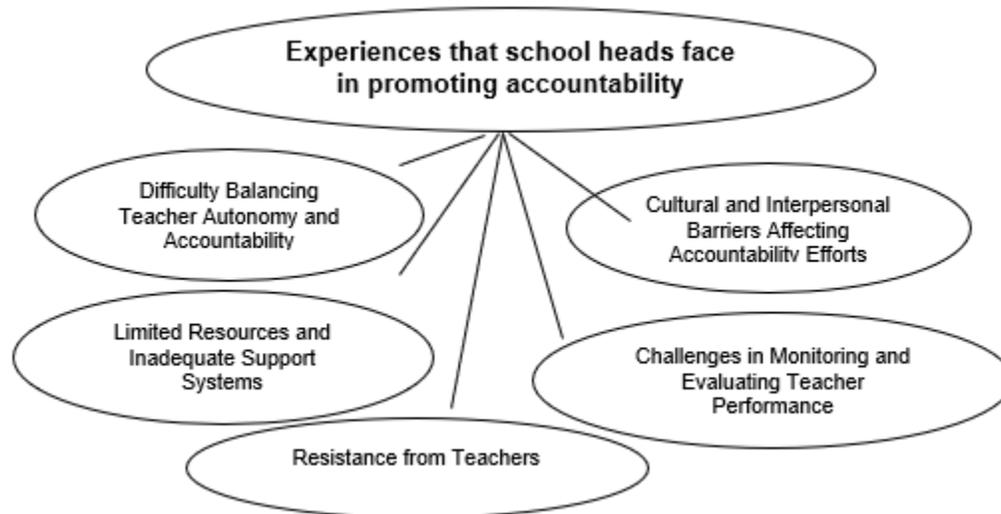
Figure 3. Challenges that school heads face in promoting accountability

For the figure 4, the coping strategies suggest that strengthening communication skills and relationship-building should be a focus of professional development programs for school heads. Encouraging collaboration between schools, local governments, and communities can also help school leaders maximize available resources. Additionally, creating spaces for teacher involvement and improving feedback practices can help build a more positive accountability culture at the school level.
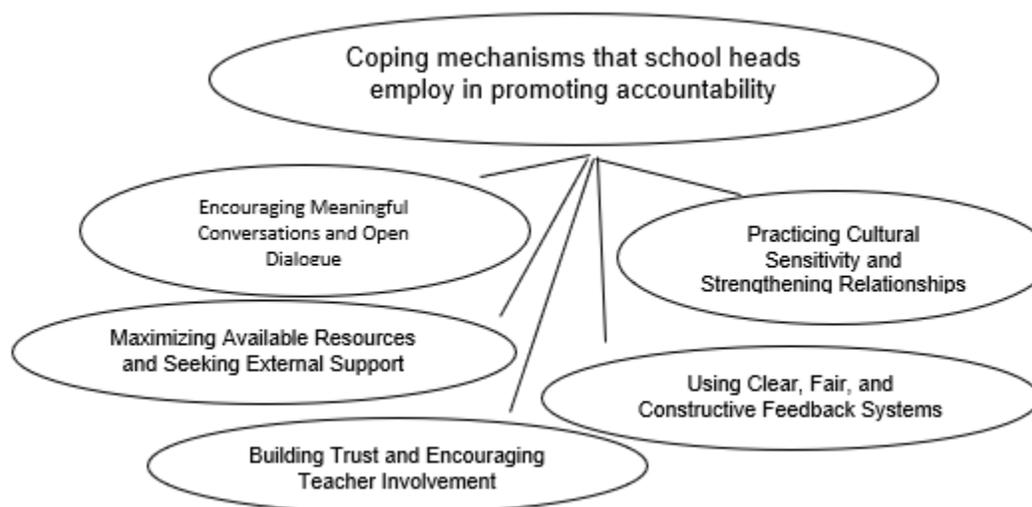

Figure 4. Coping mechanisms that school heads employ in promoting accountability

For the figure 5, the insights gained by school heads point to the importance of promoting trust-based accountability systems in public schools. Policymakers and education leaders should support practices that balance clear expectations with flexibility, ensuring that accountability measures are realistic and context sensitive. Moreover, strengthening relational leadership skills

among school heads can contribute to long-term improvements in teacher performance and school outcomes.
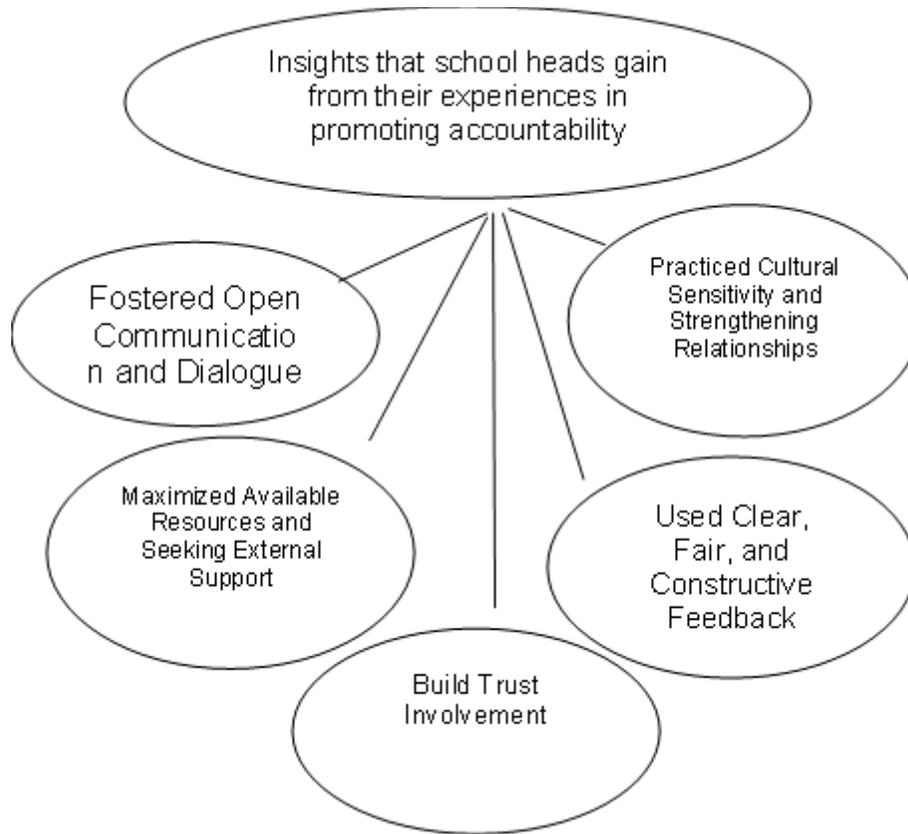
The findings of this study strengthening relational leadership skills among school heads can contribute to long-term improvements in teacher performance and school outcomes.

For school heads, it is important to continue improving their leadership and relational skills, with a focus on building trust, providing constructive feedback, and practicing flexibility in addressing diverse school needs. School heads are encouraged to foster collaborative environments where teachers feel valued and supported in meeting accountability standards.

For teachers, embracing accountability as a shared responsibility and actively participating in school improvement initiatives will help strengthen the accountability culture. Teachers are encouraged to engage in open communication with school heads, seek feedback for growth, and participate in professional development opportunities that enhance their practice.

For students, promoting a culture of accountability in schools can indirectly benefit their learning experience by ensuring that teachers are consistently supported and guided toward high standards. Students can also be encouraged to take an active role in their own learning, understanding the importance of accountability in both academic performance and behavior.

For future researchers, it is recommended to explore the long-term impact of accountability practices on teacher performance and student outcomes, as well as to investigate how cultural factors shape accountability in different regions. Further research can also examine the perspectives of teachers and students to provide a more holistic understanding of accountability in the school setting.

For Department of Education officials, it is recommended to develop and implement policies that provide schools with adequate resources, clear accountability guidelines, and professional development programs focused on leadership, communication, and culturally responsive practices. Strengthening support systems for school heads will also help ensure accountability efforts are fair and sustainable.

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