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Strategic Planning in School Improvement: A Phenomenological Study of Principals' Experiences in Davao Del Norte

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the experiences, coping mechanisms, and beneficial insights of principals in the Division of Davao del Norte, Philippines, who participated in strategic planning for School Improvement Plans (SIPs). The study utilized a phenomenological approach, employing purposive sampling to select a sample of seven principals from public schools in Davao del Norte. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and analyzed using a phenomenological method. The study's findings revealed that the principals' experiences with strategic planning for SIPs were characterized by collaboration and communication, emotional management, and a focus on teacher professional development. However, they also encountered difficulties, including limited resources and a lack of support. The study concluded that the findings had significant implications for school administrators, policymakers, and researchers, highlighting the need for further research and support in strategic planning for SIPs.

Keywords: *strategic planning, school improvement plan, phenomenological study, principals' experiences, Davao del Norte*

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INTRODUCTION

School Improvement Plans (SIPs), which outline schools' tactics and steps to address problem areas and raise student success, are essential to educational reform initiatives (Sullivan, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the significance of SIPs as schools adapted to unprecedented challenges

to support ongoing education and well-being (Rainey, Hill, & Lake, 2023). Even amid disruptions, SIPs have been crucial in helping schools concentrate on areas needing development.

Research has emphasized the impact of SIPs on student outcomes. For instance, one study found increased academic achievement in schools receiving federal grant funding as part of their SIPs (Pandemic Impact on Public K-12 Education, 2022). Another report stressed the importance of ongoing investment in SIPs to promote academic success during the pandemic (Oregon Statewide Report Card 2022-23, 2022). These findings underscore SIPs' role in fostering student achievement and school-level change.

However, creating and implementing SIPs can be a complex process influenced by various circumstances. The pandemic's aftermath and the need to close learning gaps and promote students' social-emotional well-being are among the challenges schools face (Rainey, Hill, & Lake, 2023). Principals play a crucial role in these initiatives, and their viewpoints and experiences significantly impact the SIP process and its outcomes (Sullivan, 2020).

This phenomenological study aimed to explore the experiences of school principals in Davao del Norte, Philippines, in formulating and implementing School Improvement Plans (SIPs). SIPs were a crucial component of educational reform initiatives, as they outlined schools' strategies and steps to address problem areas and improve student success (Sullivan, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic had further highlighted the importance of SIPs, as schools had to adapt to unprecedented challenges to support ongoing education and well-being (Rainey, Hill, & Lake, 2023).

The significance of this study lies in its potential to advance knowledge of school improvement planning, ultimately guiding the creation of more efficient, contextually sensitive strategies that promote student achievement (Sullivan, 2020). By elevating principals' perspectives and experiences, this study was able to inform policy and practice, supporting the development of effective SIPs that addressed the complex needs of schools and students in the Philippine context. Furthermore, the study's findings contributed to the global endeavor to promote lifelong learning opportunities and guarantee high-quality education for all, as emphasized in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) (UNESCO, 2020).

Research Questions
The research questions formed the core of this study as they were essential for gathering the necessary data. The following research questions were addressed:
1. What are the experiences of school principals in Davao del Norte regarding the strategic planning process for school improvement?
2. What coping mechanisms do school principals use to address the challenges associated with strategic planning in school improvement?
3. What significant insights can principals share about implementing strategic plans within their schools?

Study Design

This study used a qualitative phenomenological methodology to investigate strategic planning in the School Improvement Plan among secondary school principals in the Division of Davao del Norte. This approach enabled a thorough examination of the intricacies, experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and valuable insights. The study aimed to understand the strategic planning processes of principals through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Creswell (2012) described qualitative research as a methodology focused on specific events, places, problems, or other constraints. This study included semi-structured interviews to explore the strategic planning in the School Improvement Plan of secondary school principals. The inductive process employed by qualitative research methodologies was used to gather, analyze, and evaluate the principals' strategic planning data, identifying patterns of similarity and difference in their experiences.

A phenomenological study was selected to examine situations with distinct boundaries. Yin (2015) categorized case studies into explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive types. The researcher gathered rich data through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, including principals' perspectives on strategic planning, personal experiences, and any obstacles they had to overcome.

This qualitative phenomenology study comprehensively analyzed the experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and valuable insights of secondary school principals in the Division of Davao del Norte regarding strategic planning within the School Improvement Plan. The study aimed to understand the existing strategic planning processes and the factors influencing them through comprehensive interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Population and Sample

This study involved seven principals from Davao del Norte public elementary and secondary schools. The number of participants was determined through purposeful sampling. According to Creswell (2012), a phenomenological study should involve six to ten participants. Seven principals shared their experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights in strategic planning for the School Improvement Plan. Participants were required to be public school principals currently working for the Department of Education in Davao del Norte, having served for more than five years, and with at least three years of experience in creating school improvement plans. This ensured a representative and varied sampling of Davao del Norte's principals. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing strategic planning and helped identify coping strategies and beneficial insights.

Instrumentation

The researcher conducted one-on-one in-depth interviews using validated guide questions to examine the strategic planning in the Division of Davao del Norte's School Improvement Plan. This qualitative data-gathering method successfully obtained comprehensive and nuanced information about principals' experiences, coping strategies, and beneficial insights. In-depth interviews or one-on-one discussions are invaluable for thoroughly examining specific experiences and points of view (Showkat & Parveen, 2017).

Using in-depth interviews provided a robust methodological approach to understanding the strategic planning of principals in the Davao del Norte division. This approach enabled an extensive investigation of the contextual elements impacting strategic planning by gathering thorough and detailed data

through tailored and adaptable interactions. The information gathered from these interviews helped design strategic planning to improve the School Improvement Plan.

Data Analysis

Before a thorough analysis, all notes, interviews, and results from the qualitative case study were recorded. Data analysis began following the data-gathering period. The gathered data were examined, combined, and documented to maintain meticulous and precise records. This was crucial given the short time window for data collection. After completing the systematic data collection process, the analysis began.

A thematic approach was used to examine the qualitative data. The study aimed to find, analyze, and document data tendencies, or 'themes' (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Group analysis of the data generated a consistent perspective. All data were collected, including audio recordings transcribed into English, field notes from in-depth interviews and responses provided by research participants.

The research questions transcribed the results. The transcription process gave the researcher a thorough grasp of the collected information, including what was included in the transcript, how participants were represented, the rationale behind the conclusions, and how the study and its participants were positioned within the transcript.

RESULTS

The general substantial data necessary for the study, which aimed to investigate and characterize the experiences of principals in Davao del Norte, was presented in this section. The data collected from participants was obtained through in-depth interviews, which yielded information about their coping strategies, helpful insights, and recommendations.

Lived Experiences of Principals in Davao del Norte
During the in-depth interviews, questions were posed to facilitate a thorough discussion of the study problem. Table 1 shows three major themes from the information gathered about the study participants' experiences. These themes helped determine the central concepts to cover. The themes included leadership roles and responsibilities, teamwork and communication, and professional and personal tactics.

Table 1. Major Themes and Core Ideas of the Experiences of Principals in The Division of Davao del Norte

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Collaboration and Communication	• Aligning all stakeholders (IDI_1)
	• Setting clear goals (IDI_2)
	• Teamwork (IDI_4)
	• Prioritize relationship building (IDI_3)
	• Open communication (IDI_6)
Personal and Professional Strategies	• Building relationship and trust (IDI_5)

Leadership Roles and Responsibilities	• Developing a growth mindset (IDI_1) • Building capacity and expertise (IDI_4) • Prioritizing and managing time effectively (IDI_7) • Managing Stress and burnout (IDI_3) • Building Trust and Credibility (IDI_5) • Fostering a Collaborative Culture (IDI_1) • Managing Conflict and Resistance (IDI_3) • Evaluating Collaboration and Communication (IDI_2) • Effective communication and strategies (IDI_4)

A. Collaborative and Communication

Strategic planning in School Improvement Planning (SIP) requires collaboration and effective communication. School principals had to collaborate closely with diverse stakeholders, including teachers, parents, students, and community members, to formulate and execute a comprehensive SIP that addressed their school's specific needs and challenges. This subject highlighted the importance of collaboration and communication in the SIP process;

> *"One of the fundamental experiences is fostering collaboration between various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, local government officials, and community members."*
> IDI_2 stated;

> *"Some of my experience as a school principal in strategic planning is defining goals for achieving school implementation that aligns with school environment needs, how to establish linkages to support school accounts and how to develop a goal that sustains harmonious relationship within."*
> IDI_4 says;

> "Build *a productive school climate. Promote collaboration and professional learning. Develop strategies and action plans."*
> IDI_3 said;

> *" I experience different levels of difficulties when it comes to planning, especially during my first year of being a school head. I experienced resistance from the teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. It is also unavoidable to copy and modify other's work because planning itself is complex work. Thankfully, I overcame and learned from those experiences."*
> IDI_6 stated that;

> *"The most significant challenge in the implementation of every pap in the school but through the collaboration effort of all in the SIP team so we can overcome it."*

Effective School Improvement Planning (SIP) requires collaborative and communicative methods; however, principals in Davao del Norte encountered particular difficulties when implementing these

strategies. By recognizing and addressing these issues, principals developed plans to overcome obstacles and maintain teamwork, ultimately ensuring the success of the SIP.

Research consistently demonstrated that collaborative planning and decision-making were crucial for effective SIP implementation. Studies showed that when principals, teachers, and other stakeholders engaged in collaborative planning and decision-making, it increased teacher buy-in, improved student outcomes, and enhanced school performance (Brewer & Xiang, 2020; Hall & Hord, 2020). Collaborative planning and decision-making were also linked to improved teacher morale, reduced teacher turnover, and increased sustainability of SIP implementation (Grogan & Andrews, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Furthermore, studies highlighted the importance of principals embracing a distributed leadership strategy, enabling educators and other stakeholders to assume leadership positions and promoting stakeholder cooperation and trust-building (Bryk et al., 2020; Tschannen-Moran, 2020).

B. Personal and Professional Strategies

Educators continually strive to improve their practices and enhance student learning. Within the School Improvement Planning (SIP) framework, professional and personal tactics are essential for success. Principals are responsible for leading and overseeing the SIP process, which requires a unique blend of professional and personal skills.

Personal strategies refer to individual characteristics, traits, and habits that enable principals to lead and manage the SIP process effectively. These may include skills such as self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and resilience. On the other hand, professional strategies pertain to the technical skills and knowledge principals need to implement SIP initiatives effectively.

This section discusses the professional and personal tactics that principals might employ to promote SIP success. It reviews the literature on effective management and leadership techniques and offers real-world examples and case studies of principals who have successfully carried out SIP projects. By the end of this section, readers will better understand the professional and personal tactics required for SIP success, as well as the knowledge and skills needed to apply these tactics in their practice. IDI_5 revealed:

> *"The most significant challenge I encounter during strategic planning is effectively engaging external stakeholders. Many of them are unfamiliar with the intricacies of school planning, which requires me to first explain the school's current situation and strategic direction and context. This effort is crucial to ensure they can provide meaningful insights, contribute to solving school-related issues, and help in achieving our objective."*
> IDI_1 said;

> *"The most significant challenge faced during the strategic planning process was aligning all stakeholders – teachers, parents, students, and local officials toward a shared vision for school improvement."*
> IDI_4 expressed;

> *"When there's a limited resources available. To overcome is to be successful and look for some beneficiaries or initiate some programs that would supply the needed."*
> IDI_7 stated;

"In Davao Del Norte regarding the strategic planning process for school improvement reveals a multifaceted approach that emphasizes collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and adaptability. I face challenges such as data gathering, communication gaps, and resource management, yet they employ various strategies to navigate these hurdles effectively."
IDI_7 said;

"The most significant challenge in the implementation of every PAP's in the school but through the collaborative effort of all in the SIP team so I can overcome it."

Principals' personal and professional strategies were crucial in effective School Improvement Plan (SIP) implementation. Research indicated that principals with high emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and resilience were better equipped to manage the emotional demands of SIP implementation, build strong relationships with stakeholders, and create a positive school culture (Goleman, 2020; Tschannen-Moran, 2020). Professionally, principals who employed data-driven decision-making, coaching and mentoring, and distributed leadership approaches could build capacity, improve instructional practice, and sustain improvement efforts over time (Brewer & Xiang, 2020; Hall & Hord, 2020; Bryk et al., 2020). By developing these personal and professional strategies, principals improved student outcomes, enhanced school performance, and increased the sustainability of SIP implementation (Grogan & Andrews, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Furthermore, studies highlighted the importance of principals managing stress, maintaining a positive attitude, and balancing their personal and professional responsibilities to successfully apply SIP (Tschannen-Moran, 2020). Using these personal and professional tactics, principals promoted cooperation and teamwork, fostered a welcoming and inclusive school culture, and increased student learning and achievement (Brewer & Xiang, 2020; Hall & Hord, 2020).

In summary, employing personal and professional tactics was essential for success in both personal and professional life. Individuals could enhance their well-being, job satisfaction, and performance by creating and implementing effective personal and professional strategies.

C. Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Principals are also expected to be curriculum experts, assessment specialists, and instructional leaders who work closely with teachers to develop and implement successful educational initiatives. They need to be adept at managing staff, finances, and resources, making data-driven decisions, and navigating the complexities of school politics and policy. Consequently, principals have various challenging leadership duties that require a unique combination of business acumen, interpersonal skills, and pedagogical knowledge.

By investigating the diverse leadership roles and responsibilities of principals, we can better understand the intricacies of school leadership and the strategies successful principals employ to promote student achievement.
IDI_5 shared that;

"All groups and sectors within the school community, both internal and external, are properly represented in our planning process. This includes student organizations, clubs, the Parent-Teacher Association, Indigenous communities, local businesses, religious groups, and women's groups. Every sector is invited to be part of the school planning team, ensuring that their voices

are heard. We take into account their concerns and priorities, especially those related to their students, and address them in our School Improvement Plan. This inclusive approach ensures that the plan reflects the needs and aspirations of the entire school community."
While IDI_1 expressed;

"Involving teachers, students, parents, and community stakeholders fostered collaboration and ownership but extended decision-making and revealed conflicting priorities. Next time, I would streamline the process with a core team and use online tools for broader participation."
And IDI_3 emphasized that;

"I always emphasized collaboration and student- centered focus, and with that, I did not face any resistance because I always looked forward to the benefit of students and I handled this through always follow-up outputs and feedback from the persons involved through meetings/LAC".
IDI_2 said;

"Through our School Improvement Plan /Strategic Plan, we have established a culture of collaboration among stakeholders. Planning and decision-making are not solely the responsibility of the school staff but are shared with the entire school community. This inclusive approach has strengthened our ability to work together toward common goals."
Finally, IDI_4 stated that;

"Be connected with our stakeholders, the students, parents, and teachers because we are partners in the success of the strategic planning of SIP."

Coping the Mechanisms of Principals
To address the challenges experienced by the participants, three major themes were identified: emotional management methods, social coping techniques, and proactive coping mechanisms.

Table 2. Major Themes and Core Ideas on Coping Mechanisms in Strategic Planning for School Improvement Plans

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Emotional Management Method	• Emotional Intelligence(IDI_ 5)
	• Self-awareness (IDI_ 2)
	• Building resilience(IDI_3)
Social Coping Techniques	• Communication(IDI_ 4)
	• Seeking support(IDI_ 1)
	• Teamwork (IDI_ 5)
Strategic Coping Techniques	• Seeking opportunities(IDI_5)
	• Anticipating challenges(IDI_ 2)
	• Taking Initiative(IDI_4)

A. Emotional Management Method
When asked to identify mechanisms for enhancing the School Improvement Plan, principals overwhelmingly cited the importance of proactive and strategic planning. Specifically, they emphasized the need for ongoing education and training in strategic planning.
IDI_5 said;

"The school improvement planning process has greatly deepened my understanding of the importance of equity and cultural competence in educational leadership. It highlighted the need to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have access to quality education and feel valued in the school community. For example, in our strategic plan, we made it a priority to engage with the local indigenous community, listening to their needs and incorporating their cultural perspectives into school programs."

While IDI_2 shared;

"I involved teachers, students, and stakeholders in strategic planning through meetings and conferences. The good side of involving them in structuring strategic planning is they can give you different insights and additional information about the problems of the school that are sometimes overlooked by the school principal"

Lastly. IDI_3 explained that;

"The strategic planning process for school improvement requires balancing various priorities and interests of diverse stakeholders effectively. Identifying needs through assessments, setting clear priorities, facilitating open communication, empathy, conflict resolution, data literacy, and visionary thinking are essential in managing this complex process effectively."

School principals being interviewed shared various ideas regarding building resilience, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence, highlighting their importance in effective leadership. Principals underscored the necessity of fostering resilience under challenges, highlighting the significance of establishing coping methods and support structures (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). They emphasized that resilience encompasses recovery from challenges, personal growth, and learning from such experiences (Day et al., 2016). Principals underscored the need for self-awareness, stressing the necessity of comprehending one's strengths, shortcomings, and emotions (Goleman, 2000). Self-awareness is the cornerstone of emotional intelligence, which fosters robust interactions with educators and learners (Hall, 2017).

Social Coping Techniques
School principals in strategic planning for School Improvement Plans (SIPs) relied heavily on coping techniques to manage the stress and uncertainty associated with this process. According to a study by Hargreaves (2018), principals employed various coping strategies, including emotional regulation, self-awareness, and social support, to navigate the challenges of SIP implementation. Another study by Kicenski (2020) found that principals who used proactive coping techniques, such as problem-focused coping and seeking social support, were more likely to experience success in their SIP efforts.

Furthermore, a study by Guillén et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in principals' coping strategies, finding that principals with high emotional intelligence were better equipped to manage the emotional demands of SIP implementation.

These studies suggest that school principals' ability to cope with the challenges of SIP implementation is critical to their success in this endeavour. By employing effective coping techniques, principals can better manage the stress and uncertainty associated with SIP implementation and ultimately achieve their goals.

IDI_4 clearly stated;

"The most important aspect of any change management process is that you end up with something better than what you had in the first place. A leader whose vision becomes reality by stating clear goals, outlining a strategic plan for achieving those goals and equipping and empowering each member to take action on the plan at the school, team and individual levels."
With the ideas supported by IDI-1;

"The strategic planning process challenged my belief in top-down directives when teachers resisted new initiatives. I learned the value of listening and involving them in decision-making, which led me to prioritize collaboration and adaptability in my leadership".
IDI_5 elaborated that;

"From my experience with school improvement planning, the most important leadership skills for lasting change are teamwork, clear communication, and flexibility. Teamwork ensures that everyone's ideas are included, communication helps keep everyone focused on the school goals, and flexibility allows us to adjust when challenges come up. I've built these skills by listening to feedback, learning through training, and encouraging teachers to take on leadership roles. This has helped us create a team that works well together and adapts to the school's needs."

According to a school principal's experience, the most crucial leadership skills for lasting change in school improvement planning are teamwork, clear communication, and flexibility (Hargreaves, 2018). By fostering a collaborative environment, listening to feedback, and learning through training, principals can develop these skills and create a cohesive team that adapts to the school's needs (Kicenski, 2020). Effective communication also plays a vital role in keeping everyone focused on the school goals, while flexibility enables the team to adjust when challenges arise (Guillén et al., 2022). By empowering teachers to take on leadership roles, principals can build a collective capacity for leadership that sustains over time (Rivera-Méndez et al., 2020).

3.2.3 Strategic Coping Techniques
Strategic coping techniques are essential for school principals to manage the complexities of their role, particularly in elementary and secondary public schools in Davao del Norte. Strategic planning is critical to effective school leadership, enabling principals to navigate challenges, prioritize tasks, and make informed decisions.
IDI_5 shared his insights by saying;

"Through our School Improvement Plan/Strategic Plan, we have established a culture of collaboration among stakeholders. Planning and decision-making are not solely the responsibility of the school staff but are shared with the entire school community. This inclusive approach has strengthened our ability to work together toward common goals."
IDI_2 added that;

"The key leadership skills I used in handling differences in preparing our strategic plan are patience and understanding. I need to be patient in balancing different outlooks or scenarios in the school. I also need to help myself to understand that differences are normal and their options matter. I just need to stay focused on preparing an effective framework that everyone agreed on."
IDI_4 expressed;

"Identify first the specific areas that might need improvement."

Principals are essential in promoting school achievement and creating a supportive learning environment since they are educational leaders. For principals to succeed in their position, they must be proactive, foresee obstacles, and look for possibilities. A study by Leithwood et al. (2017) found that proactive principals have a higher chance of raising teacher morale and student achievement.

A study by Robinson et al. (2020) found that principals encouraging experimentation and risk-taking are likelier to see improved student outcomes. A report from the National Association of Elementary School Principals (2019) emphasizes the necessity of foreseeing obstacles, asserting that "principals must be proactive in identifying potential problems and formulating strategies to address them." By implementing this, principals may cultivate a culture of innovation and continuous enhancement.

Principals can foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement, as evidenced by a study by Robinson et al. (2020), which found that principals who support experimentation and risk-taking are more likely to see improved student outcomes. Additionally, a report by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (2019) highlights the significance of anticipating challenges, stating that "principals must be proactive in identifying potential problems and developing strategies to address them." Principals must also actively pursue opportunities for professional development if they want to remain on the cutting edge. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2022) stated in its report that "Principals must be committed to ongoing learning and professional development to stay current with best practices and research-based strategies."

Beneficial Insights of the Principals
The principals who participated in the strategic planning process gained valuable insights that can inform and enhance the development of School Improvement Plans (SIPs).

Table 3. Major Themes and Core Ideas on The Insights the Participants Gained as Strategies in Strategic Planning for School Improvement Plans

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Focus on Teacher Professional Development	• Coaching and Mentoring (IDI_4) • Ongoing Support and Feedback (IDI_ 2) • Teacher Leadership Development (IDI_5)
Community Engagement and Partnerships	• Develop a Community Engagement Framework (IDI_6) • Foster Partnerships with Local Businesses and Organizations (IDI_ 3) • Establish a Parent and Community Volunteer Program (IDI_ 4)
Focus on Student-Centered Learning	• Personalize Learning Experiences(IDI_5) • Active Engagement(IDI_1) • Self-Directed Learning(IDI_7)

A. Focus on Teacher Professional Development
Teacher Professional Development (TPD) is a critical component of Strategic Planning for School Improvement Plans (SIPs) as it enables teachers to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to improve student outcomes (Guskey, 2016). Effective TPD programs focus on coaching

and mentoring, ongoing support and feedback, and teacher leadership development (Harris & Jones, 2017).

Research highlights the importance of ongoing, job-embedded professional learning aligned with school goals and teacher needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Furthermore, TPD programs incorporating coaching, mentoring, and peer feedback are particularly effective in improving teacher practice (Killion & Harrison, 2017).

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on personalized and technology-enhanced professional learning, which can help to increase teacher engagement and motivation (Tondeur et al., 2020). As schools develop their SIPs, incorporating evidence-based TPD strategies can help drive teacher growth and improve student outcomes (Wayman et al., 2019). By prioritizing teacher professional development, schools can create a culture of continuous learning and improvement, leading to sustained student success (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020).
IDI_4 shared that;

> *"Spent time to learn the school's culture, mission, and vision. Be inclusive and value the diversity of the internal and external stakeholders."*
Additional ideas by IDI_2;

> *"It enhances my ability to work in a diverse environment and I conclude this factor by enabling fairness in implementing strategic planning in school".*
IDI_5 elaborate;

> *"To help teachers and staff feel responsible for the strategic plan, I encouraged them to lead specific initiatives and provided opportunities for collaboration. When facing resistance or doubts, I addressed concerns through open communication and shared how their roles contributed to the larger goals of the school."*

In conclusion, Teacher Professional Development (TPD) is a critical component of Strategic Planning for School Improvement Plans (SIPs), playing a vital role in focusing on coaching and mentoring, ongoing support and feedback, and teacher leadership development (Guskey, 2016). Effective TPD programs can improve teacher efficacy, increase student achievement, and create a positive school culture (Harris & Jones, 2017). By prioritizing TPD in SIPs, schools can foster a culture of continuous learning, collaboration, and innovation, leading to sustained student success (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020).

As research highlights, TPD programs incorporating coaching, mentoring, peer feedback, and technology-enhanced learning can be particularly effective in improving teacher practice (Killion & Harrison, 2017; Tondeur et al., 2020). By investing in TPD, schools can reap long-term benefits, including improved teacher retention, increased student engagement, and enhanced academic achievement (Wayman et al., 2019). Ultimately, integrating TPD into SIPs can help schools create a roadmap for teacher growth, instructional excellence, and student success.

B. Community Engagement and Partnerships

School principals should prioritize community engagement and partnerships when creating a School Improvement Plan (SIP) as a crucial tactic to promote student achievement. Principals can find particular needs and collaboration opportunities that complement the school's aims and objectives by interacting with parents, community organizations, and local stakeholders.
IDI_6 said;

> *"We should always put in our minds that strategic planning is the collaboration of everyone because we bear the name of the school, so if we are united in one purpose or goal for the welfare of our learners there is something good happen."*

Added by IDI_3 that:

> *"Always consider the benefits of your teachers and people around your school setting and always build good relationships."*

Lastly IDI_4 shared;

> *"School leaders make it clear to internal and external stakeholders that they are an equal partner in the children's development, the result is a solid school-community relationship."*

In conclusion, Community Engagement and Partnerships are essential to a school's success, as they provide opportunities for students to learn from and engage with the broader community (Sanders & Lewis, 2018). Community engagement and partnerships can increase student motivation, academic achievement, and social outcomes (Epstein, 2018). By partnering with local businesses, organizations, and community groups, schools can access resources, expertise, and support that enhance teaching and learning (Grayson & Martínez, 2019).

Moreover, community engagement and partnerships can help schools address social and emotional learning needs, promote diversity and inclusion, and support the well-being of students and families (Barton & Levstik, 2020). Research highlights that schools prioritizing community engagement and partnerships tend to have higher levels of student achievement, parental involvement, and community satisfaction (Wayman et al., 2020).

Because it can result in better student results and a stronger sense of community, schools should prioritize community engagement and partnerships in their strategic planning (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2022). Schools may establish a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere that benefits students, families, and the community at large by cultivating strong ties with the community (Tondeur et al., 2023).

C. Focus on Student- centered Learning

Student-centered learning (SCL) prioritizes students' needs, interests, and autonomy in the educational process. This strategy recognizes that students actively engage in their education instead of passively consuming knowledge. Educators may create a more dynamic, inclusive, and productive learning environment by shifting the focus from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered learning.
IDI_5 explained that;

> *"The strategic planning process requires balancing the different priorities of stakeholders like parents, teachers, students, and community members. Each group has its concerns, such as curriculum needs or student safety. I manage these challenges through active listening, clear*

communication, and finding common ground. Key leadership skills like empathy, negotiation, and strategic thinking help me understand perspectives, find compromises, and keep our decisions aligned with the school's goals."
IDI_4 shared;

"Spend time to learn the school's culture, mission, and vision. Be inclusive and value the diversity of the internal and external stakeholders."
Lastly, IDI_3 expressed;

"Measure success through achievements, and performance rating among teachers and also in me."

To create a learning environment that prioritizes students' needs, interests, and talents, a student-centered learning strategy is essential while designing a School Improvement Plan (SIP). This method acknowledges that students are distinct individuals with a range of learning styles, strengths, and challenges and that instruction should be modified to accommodate these needs, as Duckworth and Seligman (2018) highlighted. Teachers can adapt instruction to each student's unique needs and interests by implementing a customized learning framework, as proposed by Harrison and Thomas (2019). This enables students to assume control of their education and determine their academic path. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2020) advocates for competency-based progression, allowing the students to move at their own pace, whether more rapidly or slowly.

Additionally, inquiry-based learning, as discussed by Bereiter and Scardamalia (2018), encourages students to explore, investigate, and discover concepts and ideas, developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity.

Lastly, as stressed by Hattie and Timperley (2007), frequent feedback and chances for reflection are critical in assisting students in establishing objectives and pinpointing areas in which they need to grow. School principals can establish a more effective, inclusive, and engaging learning environment that puts students' needs and interests first by implementing these student-centered learning strategies into a SIP. This will ultimately improve academic results and boost student motivation and engagement (Taylor et al., 2022; McCombs et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggested that principals in Davao del Norte faced unique challenges in integrating strategic planning into their School Improvement Plans (SIPs). Despite these challenges, principals recognized the importance of strategic planning in improving school performance and achieving their vision and mission. The study's themes and core ideas highlighted the need for principals to contextualize their strategic planning, align it with their school's vision and mission, and carefully plan and monitor its implementation.

In discussing the implications of this study, it was clear that principals required support and resources to integrate strategic planning into their SIPs effectively. This included professional development

opportunities to enhance their strategic planning skills and access to resources and expertise to support the implementation and monitoring of their SIPs.

Moreover, the study underscored the need to involve community members, parents, educators, and students in strategic planning. The study's findings indicated that strategic planning was vital for school reform, with administrators playing a pivotal role in leading and implementing this process. By being aware of the opportunities and difficulties of strategic planning, principals could create successful SIPs that enhanced school performance and helped them realize their vision and mission. The study highlighted the importance of stakeholder engagement and participation in the strategic planning process, including teachers, students, parents, and community members.

A principal remarked, "Strategic planning is not just about planning; it is about creating a better future for our students and school community." This study concluded that strategic planning was essential for school improvement and that administrators were integral to leading and executing this process. By comprehending the challenges and possibilities inherent in strategic planning, principals could formulate successful SIPs that enhanced school performance and fulfilled their vision and mission.".

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