

SCHOOL HEADS' STRATEGIES, INNOVATION, AND RESILIENCY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

AIZA PALMA, Ed.D

aiza.palma001@deped.gov.ph

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3310-8766>

Guimaras State University

Buenavista, Guimaras, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the strategies, innovations, and resilience of school heads in the Schools Division of Iloilo in implementing inclusive education. Utilizing a descriptive-survey research design, the study involved 295 school heads selected through stratified random sampling. The findings indicate that collaboration among educators, particularly between general and special education staff, is a key strategy for fostering inclusive classrooms. Despite demographic variations, there were no significant differences in strategies based on gender, civil status, educational attainment, or school size. School heads across all categories demonstrated high levels of innovation and resilience, with a particular focus on future-oriented skills, technology integration, and crisis management. Additionally, the study found moderate positive correlations between the strategies, innovations, and resilience of school heads, suggesting that these factors collectively enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education. The results underscore the importance of a consistent, collaborative approach to inclusive education across different geographic regions and demographic groups.

Keywords: Inclusive education, school leadership, resilience, innovation, collaboration, educational strategies, Iloilo, descriptive-survey, school heads

INTRODUCTION

The study underscores the pivotal role of resilient school leaders in fostering a culture of resilience within educational institutions, particularly in implementing inclusive education. School principals, by demonstrating adaptability, problem-solving, and perseverance, serve as role models for their staff and students, inspiring them to view challenges as opportunities for growth. This collective resilience not only helps the school community navigate change but also enhances the adoption of inclusive education practices, creating a more supportive and equitable learning

environment for all students, including those with special needs.

Educational institutions are uniquely positioned to foster innovation and resilience, particularly when functioning as central hubs within collaborative networks of stakeholders and services. By empowering educators to drive innovation and create dynamic learning experiences, schools can better respond to disruptions and continuously improve the quality of education. The adoption of inclusive education reflects a deep commitment to equity and accessibility, fundamentally transforming the educational landscape and

promoting diversity and improved outcomes for all learners.

School leaders play a crucial role in constructing inclusive educational environments that support the holistic development of all students. As key architects of these environments, principals ensure that inclusive practices are integrated into the fabric of the school community, thereby expanding access to education and promoting a more just and equitable society. Resilience, as highlighted by developmental psychologist Marilyn Price-Mitchell, is essential for school leaders, enabling them to turn adversity into growth opportunities and effectively implement inclusive education initiatives.

The study investigates the resilience, strategies, and innovations of school heads in the Schools Division of Iloilo in implementing inclusive education. Specifically, it seeks to understand how these factors vary according to demographic characteristics such as sex, civil status, educational attainment, school size, and congressional districts. The study also examines whether there are significant differences in these factors and their relationships, providing insights into the effectiveness of school heads in fostering inclusive education.

The research is grounded in resiliency theory, which emphasizes a strengths-based approach to understanding development and designing interventions. The theory highlights the importance of promotive factors—assets and resources—that help individuals overcome risks and achieve positive outcomes. The study applies this framework to analyze how school heads' resilience, strategies, and innovations contribute to the successful implementation of inclusive education, drawing on both individual and contextual attributes.

The study also incorporates the diffusion of innovations theory to understand how new practices, such as inclusive education, spread within the educational system. This theory, often used in marketing and public health, explains how early adopters of new ideas or practices can influence broader adoption within a community. In the context of this study, the diffusion of innovations theory helps explain how innovative strategies for

inclusive education can be effectively implemented and scaled within the Schools Division of Iloilo.

By and large, this research aims to provide valuable insights for various educational stakeholders, including curriculum implementation divisions, school heads, and teachers. By identifying the factors that contribute to effective inclusive education, the study offers practical recommendations for enhancing resilience, strategic planning, and innovation in schools. These findings will also serve as a foundation for future research, contributing to the ongoing efforts to improve educational outcomes for all students, particularly those with special needs.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of school heads' resilience, strategies, and innovations in the implementation of inclusive education in the Schools Division of Iloilo for the school year 2023-2024. Furthermore, it specifically seeks to:

1. To evaluate the level of resilience among school heads in the implementation of inclusive education, considering factors such as sex, civil status, educational attainment, school size, and congressional districts.
2. To identify the strategies employed by school heads in monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment of inclusive education practices, and analyze how these strategies vary according to demographic factors like sex, civil status, educational attainment, school size, and congressional districts.
3. To determine the level of innovation demonstrated by school heads in the implementation of inclusive education and assess whether there are significant differences based on sex, civil status, educational attainment, school size, and congressional districts.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive-survey research design to gather facts and analyze relationships among non-manipulative variables. This method is valuable for providing a factual basis on which professional judgment can be made, involving comparison and contrast, and discovering relationships among variables. The respondents of the study were school heads from the Schools Division of Iloilo, selected using stratified random sampling. Out of the total population of 1,124 school heads, 295 were chosen as the sample for the study during the school year 2023-2024.

The stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure that specific subgroups within the population were adequately represented in the sample. This method involved randomly selecting participants within each subgroup or stratum to reflect the diversity of the population. The primary data collection instrument was a researcher-developed questionnaire, adapted from existing instruments and validated by experts in the field. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: one for demographic information and the other for assessing school heads' resiliency, strategies, and innovations in inclusive education.

The validity and reliability of the research instrument were rigorously tested. Initially reviewed by the researcher's advisor and validated by a thesis committee, the questionnaire underwent content validation based on the framework provided by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006). A reliability test was conducted with 30 school heads from the Schools Division of Passi City, who were not included in the final administration of the questionnaire. The instrument was then administered to the selected respondents, and the data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, with a significance level set at 0.05.

Data gathering involved obtaining necessary permissions from relevant authorities and personally distributing and collecting the questionnaires. The responses were categorized and assigned numerical values, which were then interpreted using a scale of means. This scale provided descriptions and interpretations of the school heads' resiliency, strategies, and

innovations, ranging from "Very High" to "Very Low." These interpretations helped in analyzing the overall effectiveness of the school heads in implementing inclusive education within their schools.

The study utilized various statistical tools, including frequency count, percentage, mean, t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson r, to analyze the data. Frequency count and percentage were used to determine the distribution of respondents across different variables. The mean was used to assess the overall levels of resiliency, strategies, and innovations among the school heads. T-tests and ANOVA were employed to identify significant differences based on demographic factors such as age, sex, civil status, and educational attainment. Pearson r was used to measure the relationships among the school heads' resiliency, strategies, and innovations, providing insights into how these factors interrelate in the context of inclusive education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Level of resilience among school heads in the implementation of inclusive education

The research focuses on the profiles of school heads in Iloilo's Schools Division, specifically regarding sex, civil status, educational attainment, and congressional district. The majority of respondents were female (63.1%), married (73.9%), and held a master's degree (71.5%). They primarily led medium-sized schools, with the Third Congressional District having the highest representation at 27.5%. This demographic data suggests that most school heads are well-educated women in stable marital relationships, leading schools across various districts.

The strategies employed by school heads in implementing inclusive education showed a strong emphasis on collaboration. The top strategies included planning time for collaboration among general and special education teachers and providing various models for delivering special education services. These strategies were rated very highly, reflecting the importance of teamwork in creating inclusive educational environments.

However, areas like direct classroom observation and personal motivation were less emphasized, indicating potential gaps in support and development for these leaders.

According to the study of Amabile, (2018), Ongoing professional development and support are vital for maintaining an inclusive classroom environment. Teachers should participate in continuous learning opportunities that focus on inclusion and diversity. Providing access to resources, technology, and mentorship can build teachers' confidence and capacity to implement inclusive practices effectively.

2. Strategies employed by school heads in monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment of inclusive education practices

2.1 In terms of Gender

When analyzing these strategies by sex, both male and female school heads demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusive education, though with different focuses. Male school heads prioritized professional development and collaboration, especially in areas requiring specialized training for teaching students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). On the other hand, female school heads focused more on creating engaging and accessible learning environments, with a strong emphasis on student support regardless of disability severity.

2.2 In terms of Civil Status

The study also examined strategies based on civil status, revealing that single, married, and widow/er school heads each exhibited high levels of commitment to inclusive education, though their approaches varied. Single school heads excelled in engaging students and translating strategies into actionable steps, while married school heads emphasized collaboration and diverse learning opportunities. Widow/er school heads focused on practical implementation, particularly in creating balanced classroom compositions and fostering strong relationships with special education teachers.

2.2 In terms of Educational Attainment

Educational attainment also played a role in how strategies were implemented. School heads with master's degrees prioritized professional development and collaboration, focusing on student engagement through varied instructional approaches. Those with doctorate degrees emphasized visual aids and support for all students, indicating a strong commitment to inclusive education across all educational levels. When considering the size of the schools they led, school heads in small, medium, and large schools all demonstrated very high levels of commitment to inclusive education, but with different emphases. Small school heads prioritized student engagement and collaboration, medium-sized school heads focused on practical strategies and support for all students, and large school heads excelled in strategic planning and creating balanced classrooms.

In the study of Wiseman, (2018), Fostering cultural responsiveness and understanding is another critical strategy. Teachers are encouraged to acknowledge and value the diverse backgrounds of their students and integrate culturally relevant materials into the curriculum. This approach includes encouraging dialogue, addressing cultural biases, and promoting an inclusive environment where all students feel respected and understood.

3. Level of innovation demonstrated by school heads in the implementation of inclusive education

The study further explored the innovation practices among school heads. There was a strong emphasis on future-oriented skills and technology integration, with the highest-rated innovation being keeping pace with changing economic demands. However, less attention was given to areas like receiving feedback from parents and improving academic performance, suggesting that while school heads are forward-thinking, there might be a need for a more balanced approach that includes stronger parental partnerships.

Innovation practices varied slightly based on sex, with male school heads showing a strong focus on aligning curricula with economic demands and leveraging community resources, while female school heads emphasized collaboration and the overall student experience. Both groups, however, demonstrated a high level of innovation in integrating technology and preparing students for the future.

Civil status did not significantly influence innovation practices. Single, married, and widow/er school heads all showed a strong commitment to future-oriented and community-centered approaches. Their innovations included fostering collaboration within the school community and preparing students for the evolving job market, with no significant differences in innovation levels among these groups.

Educational attainment also did not significantly impact innovation. School heads with master's degrees and those with doctorates both demonstrated a strong focus on preparing students for future economic demands and integrating technology into the classroom. This consistency suggests that innovation in inclusive education is driven by factors beyond academic qualifications. School size did not significantly affect innovation practices either. Whether leading small, medium, or large schools, all school heads demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering inclusive education through technological advancements, future-oriented skills, and community engagement. This indicates that innovation can be successfully implemented regardless of school size.

The study found no significant differences in strategies, innovation, or resilience when comparing school heads across different congressional districts. This suggests that these practices are consistent across various geographic locations, with school heads in all districts demonstrating a strong commitment to inclusive education.

Resilience among school heads was also a key focus of the study. School heads demonstrated high levels of resilience, particularly in managing crises and leveraging workplace support. Male and female school heads exhibited similar levels of resilience, with both groups effectively managing the challenges associated with inclusive education.

The resilience of school heads was consistent across different civil statuses, with single, married, and widow/er heads all showing strong capacities to manage challenges and crises. This highlights the importance of both internal and external factors in supporting resilience among school leaders. Educational attainment did not significantly influence resilience either. School heads with master's degrees and those with doctorates both demonstrated strong resilience in managing crises and maintaining supportive work environments. This suggests that resilience is a key attribute of school leadership, regardless of educational background.

School size also did not significantly impact resilience. School heads in small, medium, and large schools all exhibited high levels of resilience, indicating that effective leadership in inclusive education is possible across schools of varying sizes.

The study revealed that school head strategies, innovation, and resilience are interrelated, with moderate positive correlations between these factors. Effective strategies were found to contribute to higher levels of innovation and resilience, highlighting the importance of a holistic approach to inclusive education.

Thus, the research emphasizes the consistent commitment of school heads in Iloilo's Schools Division to implementing inclusive education, regardless of their demographic profiles or the size of their schools. While there are slight variations in focus areas, the overall dedication to fostering inclusive and innovative educational environments is evident across all groups.

Likewise, Garcia (2018), reiterates that Innovation in inclusive education is crucial for addressing the diverse needs of students. School leaders must foster a culture of creativity and innovation, encouraging collaboration across disciplines and continuously seeking out training and research to enhance educational practices. This approach ensures that all students, especially those with disabilities, receive an equitable education.

In the study of Amabile & Gryskiewicz, (2018), Environmental and individual characteristics contribute significantly to the dissemination of innovation. Creative environments



that promote autonomy, collaboration, and risk-taking are essential for sustaining innovation. School leaders must be open to new ideas, pragmatic in their approach, and focus on building teams that can drive continuous improvement.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that:

1. The majority of school heads in Iloilo's Schools Division are female, married, and hold a master's degree, indicating that these demographic factors may influence the leadership style and focus on inclusive education within the division.
2. School heads place a high value on collaboration among teachers, particularly between general and special education staff, as a key strategy for implementing inclusive education effectively.
3. There are no significant differences in the strategies employed by male and female school heads, suggesting that gender does not play a critical role in the approach to inclusive education.
4. School heads, regardless of civil status, demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusive education, with varying strengths in areas such as collaboration, student engagement, and practical implementation.
5. School heads with both master's and doctorate degrees exhibit similar levels of commitment to inclusive education, indicating that educational attainment does not significantly affect their strategic approach.
6. The size of the school does not significantly impact the strategies used by school heads, with leaders across small, medium, and large schools showing strong commitment to fostering inclusive environments.
7. School heads emphasize future-oriented skills and technology integration as key areas of innovation, though there is a noticeable gap in addressing parent feedback and student academic performance.
8. School heads across all demographic categories demonstrate high levels of

resilience, particularly in crisis management and maintaining supportive work environments.

9. There is a moderate positive correlation between school head strategies, innovation, and resilience, indicating that these factors are interrelated and collectively contribute to the success of inclusive education.
10. There are no significant differences in the implementation of inclusive education strategies, innovation, and resilience across different congressional districts, suggesting a uniform approach to inclusive education throughout the division.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With these findings and conclusions, the researchers offer these recommendations

1. School heads should increase efforts to involve parents and guardians in the process of inclusive education, addressing the current gap in seeking and utilizing parental feedback.
2. Provide more opportunities for school heads to engage in direct classroom observation and support, particularly in inclusive settings, to better understand and address the needs of both teachers and students.
3. Introduce targeted professional development programs that focus on enhancing the personal motivation and resilience of school heads, ensuring they are equipped to lead in challenging educational environments.
4. Place greater emphasis on strategies aimed at improving students' academic performance within inclusive education frameworks, balancing future-oriented skills with immediate educational needs.
5. Continue to integrate and expand the use of technology in classrooms, providing teachers and students with the tools necessary to support diverse learning needs effectively.
6. Promote the adoption of innovative teaching models that can be adapted to various school sizes, ensuring that all students receive a



- high-quality inclusive education regardless of the resources available.
7. Foster stronger peer collaboration among school heads, enabling them to share best practices, challenges, and solutions related to inclusive education across the division.
 8. Implement programs focused on building resilience among school heads, particularly those in geographically isolated or resource-constrained areas, to ensure they can maintain their leadership effectiveness.
 9. Undertake additional research to explore the specific needs and challenges of school heads in different congressional districts, tailoring support and resources to address these unique contexts.
 10. Establish a robust system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of inclusive education strategies, ensuring continuous improvement and adaptation to the evolving needs of students and educators.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE

Dr. Aiza Palma is a dedicated educator with the Department of Education (DepEd) and holds a Doctor of Education (EdD) from the Guimaras State University. Guided by her teaching philosophy, "Discipline is essential for helping students acquire knowledge and skills that will benefit them throughout their lives," she fosters a structured and supportive learning environment. Dr. Palma is committed to nurturing students' growth and preparing them for future success by emphasizing the value of discipline and lifelong learning. Her passion for education and dedication to her craft continue to inspire her students and colleagues alike.

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