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# The Experiences of the School Principals on the Implementation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) in Lanao Del Sur, Philippines

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## Abstract

This qualitative study addressed a significant research gap in understanding the experiences of school principals in Lanao del Sur, Philippines as they navigate the implementation of the SIP (School Improvement Plan). Employing a purposive selection, the study engaged twenty-nine (29) school principals in an interview to unravel major findings in three key areas. Firstly, participants' experiences unveiled the importance of strategic governance for sustainable growth, enhanced education excellence, strategic self-assessment, and effective resource management, including considerations for educational capacity and sustainability. Secondly, the facilitation of the school improvement process involves stakeholder engagement, collaborative support and development, and addressing challenges to achieve excellence. Thirdly, participants offered insights into enhancing SIP implementation, emphasizing strategic excellence, educational empowerment, and safety and sustainability. Based on these findings, the study proposes the PrinciPulse SIP Implementation Model, an eight-cluster framework encompassing key aspects like leadership, academics, assessment, resources, capacity building, stakeholder engagement, support systems, and comprehensive planning. This dynamic framework empowers principals to proactively guide SIP implementation, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, collaboration, and adaptability in Lanao del Sur's educational landscape.

**Keywords:** School Improvement Plan, School Principal, Experiences, SIP Implementation Model

## 1. Introduction

One of the determiners for a successful organization or institution or implementation of any educational program is to have a plan for its improvement. The education sector in the Philippines has long been on a mission to implement policies and programs that would benefit learners and improve the literacy rate of Filipino learners. A significant policy being implemented by the Department of Education (DepEd) is the school improvement plan.

The School Improvement Plan or SIP is a DepEd policy that guides stakeholders on the specific intervention that schools can implement. It is evidence-based and aligns with the principles of learner-centered. The interventions are participated in by the students, teachers, community members, and other stakeholders, and typically run within a period of three (3) consecutive school years. The SIP is created with the hope of improving three significant key result areas in basic education: access, quality, and governance. Central to the SIP is the School-Based Management (SBM) which is prepared by the School-Community Planning Team (SPT) as the basis for the school's annual implementation plan.

The ultimate objective of the school improvement process is to achieve the desired learning outcomes by enhancing the way curriculum is delivered by competent, committed, and caring teachers by creating a safe and nurturing environment for learning, and by increasing the stakeholders' participation in the entire school improvement process. It also aims to help school heads, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in the school community to participate in a continuous improvement process by identifying potential barriers to improvement and by finding ways to move the school from where it is now to a condition in which students can achieve their highest potential.

The process of SIP primarily requires constant analysis of school needs, planning and implementing appropriate actions, and monitoring and evaluating results and outcomes. It also involves comparing existing school practices with those of others and obtaining information about best practices to raise standards and ultimately improve school performance. The learner as the focus of the school improvement process reinforces the child-centered and child-rights-based education which is emphasized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child: "Education needs to address the development of the child to his or her fullest potential and promote respect for human rights, the child's own culture and the natural environment and to promote values of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality, and friendship. In other words, education must not be limited to the basic academic skills of writing, reading, mathematics and science" (DepEd Memorandum No. 386, s. 2009).

In light of the SIP issue, there have been reports that many educators question the efficacy of school improvement plans. According to a RAND survey, nearly half of teachers and 67% of principals believe school reform goals affect teaching methods. In addition, 70% of teachers and 81% of administrators agreed that school development plans improved schools over five years (Doss et al., 2020). The Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) is being implemented by the Department of Education (DepEd) following the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 (R.A. 9155), which mandates the enforcement of shared governance. The SIP is required by the same Act (Article 7, Section e, paragraph 4) as a method to supplement School-Based Management (SBM).

The implementation of the SIP requires a collaborative effort among the school principals, teachers, School-Community Planning Team (SPT), project team members, and other stakeholders. With proper planning and constant monitoring of the School Improvement Plan implementation, schools' performance could improve (Abalorio, 2022). Despite the claim of Abalorio (2022), Guzman (2022) argued that the large extent of stakeholders' involvement in the SIP, still may not guarantee a very high school performance.

The study gap from prior studies revealed a lack of comprehensive understanding of the elements that impede or limit the efficiency of SIP implementation, despite coordinated efforts by school administrators, teachers, SPT, project team members, and other stakeholders. Existing research, as cited by Abalorio (2022) and Guzman (2022), recognizes the importance of collaboration and monitoring in SIP implementation, but there appears to be a gap in understanding why, despite such collaborative efforts, there may still be difficulties in achieving very high school performance. In the context of the province of Lanao del Sur, the researchers have not found yet a published related study that assessed the performance of the SIP implementation, which led the researchers to find out the experiences of the school principals in the province. This could serve as a stepping stone for future researchers to assess the performance of the school principals on the implementation of the SIP.

Moreover, the SIP goes beyond administrative considerations, as highlighted by DuFour and Marzano (2011). They emphasized the crucial role of effective instructional leadership in the school improvement process. Simultaneously, fostering leadership capacity within the school is equally vital, providing districts with the assurance of a plentiful supply of potential leaders (Gray & Streshly, 2010). Administrative mentors offer teachers

real-world learning opportunities in a secure environment, guided by experienced professionals in the field (Gray & Streshly, 2010). Research, including studies by Leithwood et al. (2004) and Marzano et al. (2005), reveals the significant impact principals have on faculty and academic success. Moreover, a quarter of academic success is directly linked to the instructional leadership of the school, influencing the effectiveness of the faculty (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). This impact is further heightened when administrators actively cultivate the leadership capacity of teachers (Ikemoto et al., 2012).

This study addresses the significant research gap by investigating the experiences of the school principals on the implementation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) in Lanao del Sur. Despite the recognized importance of collaboration and monitoring in existing literature, there is a dearth of studies within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), particularly in Lanao del Sur. The researchers asserts that the BARMM context offers an opportune site for the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE-BARMM) and the Department of Education (DepEd). Motivated by a commitment to enhance the quality of education services in the community and the broader field, the study aims to investigate the SIP implementation, and how it is facilitated, and formulate recommendations to improve the educational process in Lanao del Sur.

## 2. Method

This study utilized the qualitative research design to explore the experiences of participants grounded on the interview conducted. The qualitative research method is appropriate for this study because it aims to explore the experiences of school principals regarding implementing their school improvement plan. Creswell (1998) points out that the essence of qualitative study is “the central underlying meaning of the research participant’s experience.” Leedy and Omrod (2001) stress that the purpose of qualitative study is to understand an experience from the research participant’s point of view. Thus, the focus on the research participant is more pronounced in this kind of qualitative research.

This study took place in public schools across three divisions in Lanao del Sur: Lanao del Sur I, Lanao del Sur II, and the Marawi City Division in the Philippines. Among the public schools in Lanao del Sur school divisions, the participants of this study, which are the school principals, were purposively selected. The participants of this study consisted of a sample of twenty-nine (29) public school principals out of the total population of school principals in Lanao del Sur Schools Divisions who were asked to share their experiences on the implementation of the school improvement plan. According to Creswell (2007), in qualitative studies, it is recommended to interview 5 to 25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon being studied, this approach helps establish the legitimacy of the study.

The sampling procedure of this study employed a purposive sampling technique, specifically targeting school principals in Lanao del Sur who have direct experience with the implementation of School Improvement Plans (SIP). Purposive sampling is chosen due to the specific focus on individuals who possess the relevant knowledge and firsthand experiences related to the research topic. The selection criteria included school principals who have actively participated in the development, implementation, and evaluation of SIPs within their respective schools. This targeted approach aims to gather in-depth insights and rich qualitative data from participants who can provide nuanced perspectives on the challenges, successes, and overall experiences associated with SIP implementation in the context of Lanao del Sur.

The study utilized thematic analysis to examine the qualitative data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) as cited in Kiger and Varpio (2020), thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that identifies, analyzes, and reports on repeating patterns within a data collection. This strategy entails explaining and evaluating the data while selecting codes and creating themes.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Experiences of the School Principals on the Implementation of the School Improvement Plan

### 3.1.1. Strategic Governance for Sustainable Growth

Effective implementation of a School Improvement Plan (SIP) is a critical component of strategic governance for sustainable growth in educational institutions. School principals play an important role in the formulation and implementation of SIPs. They regard them as necessary roadmaps for the improvement of their institutions. The opinions voiced by school administrators underline the importance of SIPs in identifying areas for growth, measuring accomplishments, and building a thorough grasp of the institution's strengths and limitations. This study investigated school principals' experiences with SIP implementation, including their opinions on the obstacles, successes, and overall influence of SIPs in developing strategic governance for sustainable growth.

Of the 29 school principals interviewed, 15 emphasized the importance of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) in educational administration. These administrators highlighted the importance of the SIP, regarding it as an essential component of their strategic governance for sustainable growth. Their united sentiment indicated that schools without a well-structured SIP may have difficulties in accomplishing goals and encouraging development. The constant theme among these 15 principals is that the SIP is more than a theoretical concept, emphasizing its practical value as a tangible roadmap or plan for the school. This common perspective positions the SIP as an important tool for finding areas for improvement, reviewing completed initiatives, and assessing strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, the recognition of the SIP as a comprehensive guide that includes factors such as access, quality, and governance demonstrate a holistic approach to improvement planning shared by a sizable proportion of the questioned school leaders.

The findings revealed a common mode among these administrators, emphasizing the SIP's significance not only in problem resolution but also in facilitating a comprehensive view of an institution's strengths and weaknesses. Collectively, these perspectives highlighted the SIP's diverse role in promoting strategic governance for sustainable growth inside educational institutions.

The perspectives of school principals are consistent with the broader educational framework, highlighting the critical role of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) in the context of strategic governance for sustainable growth. The success of planning and implementation, as noted by Coscos (2016), is critical in providing basic education services. This achievement is critical for accomplishing Coscos' three core components: ensuring access to complete basic education, preparing graduates for further education and the world of work, and promoting effective, transparent, and collaborative governance in basic education.

### 3.1.2. Enhancing Education Excellence

Among the 29 school principals who took part in the study, 13 shared common experiences that shed light on the problems experienced during the implementation of the SIP, which had the overriding theme of enhancing education excellence.

The initial idealism expressed by some participants aligns with the high expectations for academic programs, but the tremendous hurdles encountered during the implementation emphasize the necessity for nuanced strategies tailored to the province's distinguished condition. Furthermore, the emphasis on budget management issues and the importance of collaboration from co-teachers and local government units (LGUs) highlights resource-related complexities that may be especially prominent in Lanao del Sur.

Furthermore, the mention of community cooperation concerns highlighted the need for clear communication in building collaboration, which is critical for successful SIP implementation in Lanao del Sur's unique socio-cultural milieu. Addressing these issues and promoting stakeholder engagement becomes crucial in reaching the province's overarching aim of education excellence, demanding context-specific interventions and strategies for sustainable growth.

### 3.1.3. Strategic Self-Assessment

Among the 29 school principals interviewed, six principals shared common experiences regarding the challenges faced in implementing the SIP under this theme. The stories they shared collectively highlighted the difficulty in fully realizing the plans outlined in the SIP due to various impediments.

The experiences of school principals in Lanao del Sur in implementing the School Improvement Plan (SIP) highlighted common challenges, as reported by six out of 29 principals interviewed. These constraints hindered the full realization of SIP objectives, shedding light on the formidable task of strategic self-assessment within the context of school improvement plans. This finding aligns with the conclusions drawn from a related quantitative study conducted by McBrayer et al. (2020), which explored instructional leadership practices and their influence on school leaders' self-efficacy. The research delved into various strategies aimed at enhancing school performance, such as monitoring teacher effectiveness and analyzing student learning outcomes. This becomes particularly significant when a school aims for greater transparency regarding its performance. McBrayer et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of bolstering leadership confidence to address challenges effectively and make substantial strides toward improvement in schools.

### 3.1.4. Resource Management

Among the 29 responses from school principals, four unique voices converged on a shared concern, underlining the critical role of financial resources in implementing the SIP under the resource management matter. The school principals emphasized the difficulty of obtaining support from the local government, pointing out the insufficient MOOE allocation for the various schools.

The experiences of school principals indicated the complex problems associated with resource management during the implementation of the SIP. They stressed the important link between projects and financial resources, expressing dissatisfaction with the lack of support from the local government and insufficient MOOE for necessary school renovations. The school principals complained about the budget shortage, with the majority of expenses covered by the school itself, limiting intended improvements. Other participants provide a more nuanced perspective, acknowledging the problem of being unable to undertake programs without adequate financial resources. Despite these issues, participants believe that SIP's strength lies in offering a framework for evaluating plan completion and creating transparency about successful implementation. This collective narrative emphasized the critical role of financial resources in achieving educational changes, as well as the strategic advantage SIP provided in evaluating the results of these efforts.

Daca and Pacadaljen (2020) corroborate the firsthand experiences of the participants, emphasizing the pivotal role of effective resource management in implementing the School Improvement Plan (SIP). Their study highlights the significant strides participants made towards their objectives by adeptly allocating resources, thereby holding schools accountable for their performance. Emphasizing teamwork between schools and communities, the research underscores the importance of collaboration in fostering opportunities and ensuring the success of diverse initiatives. To optimize SIP implementation, the study suggests establishing a committee tasked with organizing the plan and devising strategic approaches to engage stakeholders in providing financial support. However, participants encountered challenges due to inadequate support from local government and funding sources. Recognizing the critical role of financial resources in school improvement, the study emphasizes the SIP's role as a guiding framework to monitor progress, akin to maintaining balance in resource allocation.

### 3.1.5. Educational Capacity and Sustainability

School principals' accounts portrayed the numerous obstacles and strategic approaches connected to educational capacity and sustainability as they implemented the School Improvement Plan (SIP). The administrators highlighted the challenges of maintaining student enrollment due to economic issues, as parents in the province frequently rely on their children for a living, contributing to high dropout rates and early marriages. They also highlighted the difficulties of minimum-age students in reading, which were aggravated by the obstacles of distant

learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to these problems, one of the participants implemented the unique technique of Parent-Learner Coordinators (PLC), who are elected parents who actively participate in child mapping, reaching out to problematic students, and coordinating with parents. This collective narrative emphasized the critical role of educational leaders in navigating diverse socioeconomic circumstances, resolving educational gaps, and developing sustainable strategies for academic success.

This study highlights the importance of piloting solutions before full implementation within the SIP's "Act" phase, aligning with Enago Academy's (2020) emphasis on small-scale testing. This allows for refining solutions like Parent-Learner Coordinators before wider adoption, ensuring their effectiveness and alignment with best practices for educational improvement. The findings' implications for Lanao del Sur included an awareness of the need for focused interventions that address economic barriers, use innovative ways, and actively engage the community, particularly parents, to improve educational capacity and sustainability. Policymakers and educational leaders should examine context-specific methods to address difficulties and promote a resilient and sustainable educational environment in the province.

### *3.2. Facilitating the School Improvement Process*

#### *3.2.1. Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration*

The experiences given by principals shed light on the critical issue of stakeholder engagement and collaboration in facilitating the school improvement process. The principals' declaration of stakeholder cooperation indicates a good collaborative atmosphere, highlighting the shared commitment of many organizations involved in the school improvement process. They also provided a practical viewpoint, emphasizing the importance of good time management by school leaders in guaranteeing stakeholder participation and demonstrating adaptation even when scheduling is not optimal. Other participants emphasized the importance of personal engagement in planning and executing projects, as well as principals' proactive approach to coordinating orientations during class openings. These accounts highlighted the critical importance of stakeholder involvement, strategic communication, and proactive leadership in effectively navigating the challenges of school improvement process implementation and cultivating an environment of collaboration within educational institutions.

This study aligns with previous research highlighting the complexities of stakeholder involvement in School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and their relationship to school performance. Guzman (2022) found high stakeholder involvement across all SIP stages, yet significant performance variations and no correlation between involvement and overall performance were observed. Similarly, Nicdao et al. (2019) noted diverse practices across schools reflecting high stakeholder engagement, suggesting context-specific approaches.

#### *3.2.2. Support and Development*

The school principals' experiences shed light on the essential theme of support and development in facilitating the school improvement process. The participants' repeating comments highlighted the widespread recognition among school leaders of the critical importance of support, development, and inclusive stakeholder involvement in the school improvement process. Principals such as P5 stressed some instructors' initial reticence during seminars and the significance of encouraging them to pursue higher education for future rewards. P17 emphasized the importance of SLAC sessions in identifying teachers' needs and weaknesses for targeted professional learning, resulting in a more personalized approach to growth. Furthermore, P18 acknowledged the difficulties in empowering teachers despite instruction and support, acknowledging the individual disparities in reactions. Furthermore, P21 highlighted the difficult issue of acquiring data that is consistent with barangay office information, highlighting the importance of incorporating all sectors and stakeholders in successful SIP implementation. This collective insight emphasized the diverse nature of supporting and developing educators, highlighting the complex relationships involved in encouraging growth within a school community.

Despite global efforts towards universal education, barriers persist for girls, indigenous populations, and disadvantaged communities. Initiatives like Education for All aim to address these disparities in low-income

countries (Hanshek & Woessmann, 2007). These findings emphasize the need for specialized support, ongoing professional development, and inclusive collaboration to navigate Lanao del Sur's unique educational landscape.

### 3.2.3. Addressing Challenges and Constraints in Pursuit of Educational Excellence

The replies of 11 out of 29 school principals provided insight on the issue of "addressing challenges and constraints in pursuit of educational excellence" while facilitating the school improvement process. For example, P3 addressed the difficulty of implementing numerous projects due to the school's private property status, highlighting the difficulties in securing unanimous support for external efforts. For example, P20 highlighted the complex task of managing multiple programs and activities, emphasizing the importance of effective coordination. Furthermore, P24 implemented a proactive strategy through orientation and planning sessions, whereas P28 stressed a collaborative decision-making process to handle challenges, demonstrating a team-oriented approach. These shared experiences highlighted the common obstacles faced by school leaders, as well as the many tactics used to overcome limits in their ongoing quest for educational excellence.

This study, aligned with Stoll and Fink (1996) and Hussen and Postlwaite (2004), highlights the complex challenges faced by school leaders in their pursuit of educational excellence through school improvement plans (SIPs). School principals noted unique challenges like navigating external initiatives due to private property status and managing concurrent applications, reflecting the need for adaptability and coordination. However, proactive strategies like orientation meetings and collaborative decision-making were employed to address these complexities. These actions emphasized fairness, collective input, and a team-oriented approach to problem-solving. These findings underscore the inherent complexities of SIPs and the diverse challenges that arise based on a school's unique context. The study emphasizes the importance of adaptation, teamwork, and systematic planning as key strategies for successfully navigating these hurdles and achieving educational excellence.

## 3.3. *Suggestions to Enhance the School Improvement Plan (SIP) Implementation Process*

### 3.3.1. Strategic Excellence

The majority of school principals, 21 out of 29, agreed on the theme of strategic excellence in enhancing the SIP implementation process. For example, P5 underlined the necessity of doubling attention and proactive planning, pushing for contingency measures such as Plan B and Plan C to guarantee that SIP objectives are met. P7 broadened the strategic approach by suggesting further training for Barangay Chairmen, acknowledging their responsibility not just in providing financial support but also in protecting the school from security risks. Similarly, P23 emphasized the collaboration aspect, highlighting the notion of "two is better than one" and the importance of critical planning that takes into account both the school's immediate and future needs. This collective insight highlighted school principals' consensus on the importance of strategic excellence in SIP implementation, emphasizing adaptability, collaboration, and proactive planning as critical components of a strong school improvement process.

This finding aligns with Meza and Springfield (1998) regarding the importance of collaboration in crafting School Improvement Plans (SIPs). They advocate for combining self-studies with external expert input to develop accessible strategies and adapt plans to each school's context. This collaborative approach resonates with the "collective strategic attitude" of Lanao del Sur's principals, who emphasize shared commitment from diverse stakeholders for successful school transformation.

### 3.3.2. Educational Empowerment

Many, or 11 out of 29 school principals, suggested ways to improve the SIP implementation process by focusing on educational empowerment. The principals stressed the vital need for teacher assistance, citing issues such as insufficient staffing and infrastructure that prevent effective implementation. They also called for teacher involvement from the start of SIP development, claiming that their contributions during brainstorming sessions increase enthusiasm and cooperation. Meanwhile, they emphasized the collaborative character of SIP



implementation, emphasizing the significance of engagement from all stakeholders, notably teachers, who serve as the key implementers.

Furthermore, the school principals made suggestions for educational empowerment at the school level, highlighting the significance of a thorough understanding of SIP for its implementation. These findings highlighted the critical importance of educational empowerment, collaborative engagement, and informed participation in promoting effective SIP implementation in the educational setting.

### 3.3.3. Safety and Sustainability

Four participants of the study underlined the importance of "safety and sustainability" in the context of the SIP implementation process. The principals expressed the urgent need for safety measures to protect the school from damage caused by external sources. They indicated efforts to engage with local officials, such as the Peace Order Council and DILG, in the pursuit of improved security, but frustrations arose owing to organizational barriers. Furthermore, some of them highlighted broader sustainability difficulties, such as old infrastructure, a lack of teachers and resources, and the reoccurring issue of flooding, underscoring the complex nature of concerns. Collectively, these responses highlight the critical need for comprehensive programs to address safety and sustainability issues, reflecting common challenges experienced by principals across the province.

This study aligns with Hopkins (2004) and the National School Climate Center (NSCC) in highlighting the importance of a positive school climate for student learning and engagement. However, the experiences of school principals in Lanao del Sur reveal unique challenges that necessitate context-specific solutions for effective School Improvement Plan (SIP) implementation. The need for targeted safety measures like infrastructure protection reflects the vulnerability of school facilities, suggesting a requirement for localized solutions beyond generic plans. Additionally, concerns about navigating local regulations point towards the need for smoother cooperation and more efficient processes between schools and governing bodies.

## 3.4. Recommendations from the Experiences of the School Principals

### 3.4.1. Comprehensive SIP Development and Implementation

Among Lanao del Sur's school principals, 10 out of 29 shared common recommendations centered on the theme of "comprehensive SIP development and implementation." Notably, P3's perspective shed light on the challenges associated with child mapping, proposing its removal to reduce burdens. P17 emphasized the need to examine written projects for reliability and feasibility, as well as taking into account each school's specific needs and problems. Furthermore, P22 stressed the importance of conducting rigorous checks to verify SIP implementation, underlining a common issue for refining and adapting the SIP process to ensure its effectiveness.

This study confirms that School Improvement Plans act as selective instruments, prioritizing urgent needs while considering future aspirations. Nico et al. (2010) support this view, highlighting SIPs' role in setting current priorities, planning for the future, and monitoring student progress. Grounded in comprehensive needs assessments, SIPs enable schools to cater to diverse student, teacher, and parent needs.

Supporting this, the DepEd SBM Manual (2002) emphasizes the significance of thorough needs assessments involving various stakeholders. This collaborative approach, encompassing school administrators, teachers, students, parents, local governments, and NGOs, forms the foundation for SIPs. As comprehensive overviews, SIPs define key areas for improvement and resource allocation over five years, demonstrating a shared commitment to quality education delivery.

However, recommendations from school principals in Lanao del Sur highlight the challenges and complexities requiring context-specific solutions. Additionally, their call for rigorous SIP implementation checks underscores the importance of accountability. Collectively, these recommendations suggest that successful SIPs in Lanao del Sur require flexibility, context-specific tailoring, and robust accountability mechanisms that address the province's

unique educational challenges. This ensures SIPs are not only feasible but also responsive to the diverse educational landscape, ultimately driving long-term, impactful reforms in the school system.

#### 3.4.2. Collaborative Engagement and Resource Management

The experiences that emerged of school principals in Lanao del Sur highlighted a recurring theme of collaborative engagement and resource management, with 9 of 29 participants sharing similar perspectives. The principals stressed the need for shared responsibility, teamwork, and collaboration, especially in managing a school with over 2000 learners. This opinion was shared by other principals, who acknowledged an increase in Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) but raised worries about a perceived lack of resources when implementing comprehensive plans. Furthermore, the financial factor emphasizes personal contributions to various educational expenses, highlighting a common issue in resource management. These shared responses emphasized the importance of collaborative involvement and effective resource allocation in the context of SIP implementation in the province.

This study aligns with Abalorio's (2022) findings on successful SIP implementation in Lanao del Norte, emphasizing collaboration among school leaders, teachers, and stakeholders. His research highlights the importance of planning and monitoring for improved school performance.

#### 3.4.3. Professional Growth and Development

Fourteen out of 29 participants, expressed similar insights. For example, P9's emphasis on having regionally assigned teachers aligns with the value of community connections for professional development. Meanwhile, P10 advised limiting fund utilization, highlighting a shared concern among participants and calling for enhanced SIP budget allocation. Furthermore, P25 emphasized persistent commitment and leading by example, which was echoed by a sizable proportion of the participants, underlining the long-term significance of effective leadership practices in their professional development. These common recommendations underlined the universal need for teacher localization initiatives, more financial support, and sustained leadership practices to promote professional growth and development among Lanao del Sur school principals.

This study aligns with Deming's and Knowles' theories on effective professional development, emphasizing job-embedded approaches tailored to teachers' needs and context. This aligns with school principals' recommendations, suggesting its potential to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Knowles, 1980).

This study on School Improvement Plans (SIPs) in Lanao del Sur aligns with Anebo's (2019) research on leadership challenges, highlighting shared needs such as effective leadership, financial support, and community involvement. This finding suggests building relationships with stakeholders for a supportive environment, addressing resource limitations, and ensuring sustainability and effectiveness. By addressing these points, Lanao del Sur can foster more effective SIPs and enhance the professional growth of its school leaders.

#### 3.4.4. Community Involvement and Support

The experiences that emerged and recommendations from a subgroup of school principals, comprising four of the 29 participants, focused on the issue of community involvement and support. For example, P1 stressed the importance of appreciating the work of individuals within the school community as a means of improving. P7 fought for a policy that required Barangay Chairmen to participate in the development of School Improvement Plans (SIPs), emphasizing the importance of local leaders in the planning process. Furthermore, P25 gave a perspective on maintaining positive relationships with instructors by appreciating and supporting them, emphasizing the importance of enthusiasm in creating a conducive learning atmosphere. While these responses may represent a small subset of the participants, they all underlined the importance of community engagement and supportive policies in the context of SIP implementation in Lanao del Sur.

Thus, these findings emphasized the importance of community engagement, supportive policies, and a culture of appreciation in improving the entire educational experience in Lanao del Sur. Nicdao et al. (2019) supported these findings by claiming that stakeholders usually understood the SIP as a process, with practices exhibiting high to very high levels of stakeholder involvement. The study highlighted numerous practices used during different stages of SIP, emphasizing the significance of engaging stakeholders. Furthermore, Abalorio (2022) highlights common themes in studies on school improvement plan implementation, such as motivation to improve skills, collaboration with stakeholders, implementation challenges, the role of guidance from education officials, and faith in achieving desired outcomes.

#### 3.4.5. Data-Informed Decision Making

Seven of the 29 participants agreed on the theme of data-informed decision-making. The principals stressed the necessity of being directed on long-term school objectives, and they raised concern over the lack of recent NAT (National Achievement Test) results and other performance indicators affecting the SIP. Other principals pushed for simplifying the creation of SIPs, with an emphasis on goals and objectives as key components. This contrasts with P19, which reported positive improvements in SIP enhancement, such as the elimination of unsuitable features and the implementation of user-friendly templates. These implies a common need among Lanao del Sur school administrators for greater data availability, streamlined SIP development, and improved guidance to assist successful decision-making.

The findings suggest that simply increasing resource allocations will not necessarily lead to an improvement in the quality of education. This is supported by evidence from various international learning tests, including TIMSS, PIRLS, and PISA, which have shown that students from developing countries often struggle with their studies, particularly in the case of the Philippines.

Hanushek and Woessmann (2007) contend that institutional reforms are critical to achieving equity and boosting educational quality. Furthermore, Kochan et al. (2001) underline the value of process data in understanding and improving school performance. According to Upadhyaya et al. (2005), social auditing is an effective approach for ensuring transparency and evaluation of educational activities. Eliminating fear, as proposed by Deming (2000), is another critical component of fostering a learning culture and effective transformation within educational organizations. Implementing the aforementioned recommendations can help Lanao del Sur's educational system become more effective, responsive, and streamlined, encouraging data-driven decision-making and eventually improving the province's quality of education.

#### 3.4.6. External Collaboration and Policy Compliance

The recommendations based on school principals' experiences underscored the need to cultivate healthy external relationships and adhere to policies. This is supported by 13 of the 29 principals. For example, P4 emphasized the necessity of maintaining positive connections, particularly with Local Government Units (LGUs), which are critical external collaborators. P13 stressed the need to seek donors to sustain initiatives and improve activities beyond the limits of the school budget, indicating a reoccurring issue among participants. Furthermore, P28 emphasized the need for adaptation in the field and praised the division office's close monitoring, emphasizing the need for policy compliance. Collectively, these responses demonstrated the widespread acknowledgment among Lanao del Sur school principals of the critical importance of external collaboration and policy adherence in effective school management.

The findings highlighted the importance of external collaboration and policy adherence as fundamental components of effective school leadership in Lanao del Sur. This aligns with Deming's (2000) focus on proactive process improvement over reactive inspections. Professional development, clear protocols, and stakeholder involvement ensure quality from the start, minimizing the need for inspections. Also, distributed leadership empowers teachers through collaborative structures like PLCs. These allow them to monitor student outcomes and adjust curriculum for individual success. This fosters professional engagement and excellence, unlike top-down approaches that often lead to compliance without innovation (Millitello et al., 2009).

#### 3.4.7. Safety and Technological Advancements

The findings highlighted common concerns among several principals or 5 out of 29 participants. The principals underscored the need for a skilled nurse in each school, as well as the value of a registered nurse in improving health management. Some principals express periodic concern about the impact of election-related activities on school infrastructure and demand reimbursement from the LGU for damages sustained during elections. Other principals proposed simplifying the School Improvement Plan (SIP) process and implementing various tools that align with the common mode of streamlining administrative procedures. Furthermore, the widespread lack of understanding and readiness for SPED revealed a common worry about the need for improved preparation and knowledge dissemination in schools, particularly in SPED. These findings highlighted Lanao del Sur school principals' common concerns and ambitions in terms of technological integration, safety measures, and administrative efficiency.

According to Upadhyaya et al. (2005), the 'Welcome to School' and 'Door to Door Visit' initiatives integrated into the SIPs have helped promote student enrollment from underprivileged groups. The SIP's scholarship program targets dropout and retention difficulties, helping to ensure the success of social inclusion. These programs also help to raise parental awareness of education, which is consistent with SIP's success in tackling social inclusion concerns.

Finally, the observation of a lack of awareness of Special Education highlighted the importance of comprehensive training programs to ensure that schools are completely prepared for inclusive education. These consequences emphasized the significance of addressing health, safety, administrative efficiency, and inclusive education initiatives to improve Lanao del Sur's educational setting.

#### 3.4.8. Strategic Planning and Sustainability

Within the theme of "strategic planning and sustainability," four out of 29 school principals gave remarkable insights. They underlined the importance of extensive brainstorming and preparation, as well as being aware of school-specific challenges before getting into the School Improvement Plan. Furthermore, they indicated a reliance on external support to accommodate demands for amending or replacing the SIP, implying potential difficulties in the process. Although some participants expressed negative views based on their recommendations, P26 expressed satisfaction with the SIP's comprehensive nature, stating that it contains all necessary data and information based on a three to five-year plan, resulting in a lack of specific recommendations. These shared experiences highlighted the diversity of perspectives among Lanao del Sur school principals on strategic planning and sustainability, demonstrating various levels of satisfaction and obstacles in the implementation of SIPs.

The findings validated Stevenson's (2019) argument. Stevenson (2019) underlines the need to comprehensively reflect on the plan's activities and instructional focus, assuring clarity on objectives, roles, progress indicators, and timetables. Furthermore, presenting a clear path to the vision of success, including strategy and precise stages, is critical for successful execution. Furthermore, Daca et al. (2020) discovered that successful implementation of SIP has a positive impact on enrollment, participation rate, cohort survival rate, graduation rate, and NAT MPS; however, their study also found that certain components of SIP, such as goals and objectives, performance targets, and implementation strategies, are moderately implemented, emphasizing the importance of strategic planning and effective execution in school improvement initiatives.

#### 3.4.9. Continuous Improvement and Adaptation

According to the findings, 13 out of 29 school principals, or nearly half of the participants, had similar answers to the theme of "continuous improvement and adaptation." The principals' responses demonstrated a collaborative willingness to embrace positive improvements. They prioritize academic growth, particularly in reading, and advocate for the use of ICT and the involvement of community members for tutorial support, emphasizing a collaborative approach to addressing educational issues. They also supported close monitoring at various

administrative levels and proposed sanctions for schools that did not have a SIP, demonstrating a desire for responsibility and commitment to reform plans. These recommendations show that school principals in Lanao del Sur are committed to ongoing improvement, adaptability, and proactive steps for educational advancement.

In line with this idea, Pelayo (2018) supports this method, stating that the SIP, with its three phases of assess, plan, and act, serves as a vehicle for a continuous improvement cycle, guaranteeing that each year's implementation progress is systematically examined and adjusted. These ideas, along with the SIP framework, demonstrate a comprehensive commitment to long-term progress in educational processes in Lanao del Sur.

This study also aligns with Van Dyke's (2020) research using Appreciative Inquiry in a rural school, highlighting the effectiveness of flexible and continuous improvement and collaborative approaches. The findings had significant implications for the province's educational system. Furthermore, the principals' recommendation for close monitoring and sanctions for schools that lack SIP emphasized the significance of accountability and systematic improvements at all administrative levels. These recommendations represented a province-wide commitment to developing a dynamic and adaptive educational system in Lanao del Sur, where continuous improvement is not only encouraged but also enforced through accountability measures.

### 3.5. PrinciPulse SIP Implementation Model: A Proposed Model Drawn from the Findings

Based on the study's identified themes, the researchers clustered them and developed an implementation strategy for school principals. This model is known as PrinciPulse (pronounced as "*principals*"). It is an empowering concept designed specifically for school principals, providing a strategic and dynamic approach to School Improvement Plans (SIP) implementation. This approach, which serves as the pulse of leadership, provides principals with the knowledge, enthusiasm, and direction required to manage the intricacies of improvement initiatives.

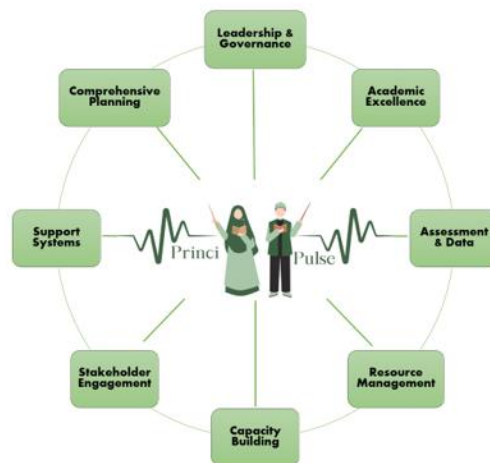


Figure 1: PrinciPulse SIP Implementation Model

The PrinciPulse School Improvement Plan (SIP) Implementation Model above establishes a comprehensive and interconnected framework for improving educational institutions. Figure 1 shows that the model is divided into several clusters. Leadership and Governance (Cluster 1) serve as the foundation for all other clusters, both influencing and being influenced. Academic Excellence (Cluster 2) is defined by strong leadership, policies, and activities that promote learning outcomes. Assessment and Data (Cluster 3) provide critical insights into academic performance that affect decision-making across the board. Resource Management (Cluster 4) is tightly linked, with leadership driving optimal allocation for sustainable growth. Capacity Building (Cluster 5) and Stakeholder Engagement (Cluster 6) thrive with effective governance, promoting a collaborative and empowered educational community. Leadership steers support systems (Cluster 7) to ensure overall well-being and safety. Finally, Comprehensive Planning (Cluster 8) brings everything together, with leadership steering the development and adaption of the SIP, resulting in a cohesive and integrated approach to school improvement. In this concept,

clusters are not independent entities, but rather interrelated features that work together to enhance the educational institution as a whole.

The PrinciPulse School Improvement Plan (SIP) implementation model puts school leadership at the center of improving educational institutions. The comprehensive framework, divided into eight clusters, specifies precise performance indicators for school principals, ensuring alignment with strategic goals and encouraging a holistic approach to improvement. Each cluster encompasses major components of school administration and development, ranging from leadership and governance to comprehensive planning. These indicators help principals manage student enrollment, academic excellence, assessment practices, resource allocation, capacity building, stakeholder engagement, support systems, and comprehensive planning. The indicators, which emphasize the interconnection of these clusters, serve as a road map for principals to navigate and improve various aspects of school management, assuring sustainable development and continuous improvement in the pursuit of educational excellence.

This model includes a holistic approach to School Improvement Plan (SIP) implementation, assisting school principals in navigating the many dimensions of educational leadership. It emphasizes the value of Leadership and governance, academic excellence, assessment and data, resource management, capacity building, stakeholder engagement, support systems, and comprehensive planning. By combining these clusters, PrinciPulse provides a comprehensive method for sustained improvement, establishing a dynamic and responsive educational environment led by school principals.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study looked into the experiences of school principals in the province of Lanao del Sur as they implemented the School Improvement Plan (SIP). The outcomes of qualitative research and interviews with twenty-nine (29) school principals highlighted essential elements such as strategic governance for sustainable growth, enhancing education excellence, strategic self-assessment, resource management, and educational capacity and sustainability.

Participants demonstrated successful facilitation of the school improvement process by engaging and collaborating with stakeholders, providing support and development, and addressing challenges and constraints in pursuit of educational excellence. Valuable suggestions emerged to enhance SIP implementation, with an emphasis on strategic excellence, educational empowerment, safety, and sustainability.

The interviews also revealed extensive recommendations based on the experiences of the participants in this study, which provide an extensive guide to enhance the implementation of the SIP. The identified themes, which include comprehensive SIP development and implementation, collaborative engagement, resource management, professional growth and development, community involvement and support, data-informed decision-making, external collaboration and policy compliance, technological advancements and safety, and strategic planning and sustainability, form a strong framework.

The study's key findings led to the development of the PrinciPulse SIP Implementation Model, which includes eight critical clusters and provides a comprehensive framework for school principals to navigate the challenges of educational leadership and SIP implementation. This model defined performance indicators for principals to help them play a more active role in school improvement by creating an atmosphere conducive to sustainable development and continuous improvement of educational excellence. This proposed model is a great tool for school leaders committed to improving educational outcomes in Lanao del Sur. It synthesizes the study's findings and provides practical suggestions.

The shared experiences of the school principals on the implementation of the SIP in Lanao del Sur call for several recommendations that can be made to improve the effectiveness of SIP initiatives in the province of Lanao del Sur, and eventually to the whole MBHTE - BARMM. These recommendations are informed by the insights gathered from the experiences of the participants, addressing the various facets of SIP implementation. School

principals should proactively use the findings of this study to inform best practices and interventions for the successful implementation of the SIP. For example, by incorporating the findings into the strategic planning and decision-making processes, they can improve their performance.

Moreover, teachers are encouraged to consider their professional and personal development plans in context with the study's findings. They may concentrate on strengthening job-embedded responsibilities and addressing identified strengths and needs; pursue continuous learning and skill development to contribute to improved learning outcomes, such as achievement rates, retention rates, and lower dropout rates; and apply the study's findings to improve teaching practices. Also, stakeholders, especially parents and community members, are urged to recognize the significance of their support and participation in the success of the SIP implementation. The study underlines the importance of community engagement in the success of the SIP. As a result, stakeholders are encouraged to understand the special needs of their local schools and take the required steps to support and improve their educational settings.

Any future researchers investigating SIP implementation in various countries are encouraged to use this study as a secondary reference. It can be used as a reference to conduct similar research, apply procedures, and analyze findings. A more detailed and nuanced investigation of SIP experiences is recommended, using qualitative research design, mixed-method design, and data analysis tools such as MAXQDA. Future researchers might build on the findings of this study to better understand effective SIP in various contexts.

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