



School Leadership and Bayanihan in Rural Philippine Reading Programs: A Narrative Review

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ABSTRACT

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Amidst a national learning poverty crisis, the Philippines has implemented reforms like “Catch-Up Fridays,” yet rural implementation remains challenging. This narrative review synthesizes literature to analyze how internal school leadership and external community engagement drive reading program success in resource-constrained settings. Utilizing a thematic analysis of peer-reviewed studies and government issuances (2015–2026), the study integrates Hallinger’s Instructional Leadership Model with the Filipino concept of *Bayanihan*. Results show that while

instructional leadership ensures program fidelity through supervision and protected instructional time, the *Bayanihan* spirit—manifested through volunteerism and resource generation—ensures sustainability by addressing “book famines” in provincial divisions. Consequently, the review concludes that success requires a “hybrid” leadership approach where principals act as



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both academic supervisors and community mobilizers. These findings offer critical implications for policy, suggesting that future training for school heads must prioritize both curriculum management and social capital cultivation to effectively bridge the policy-practice gap.

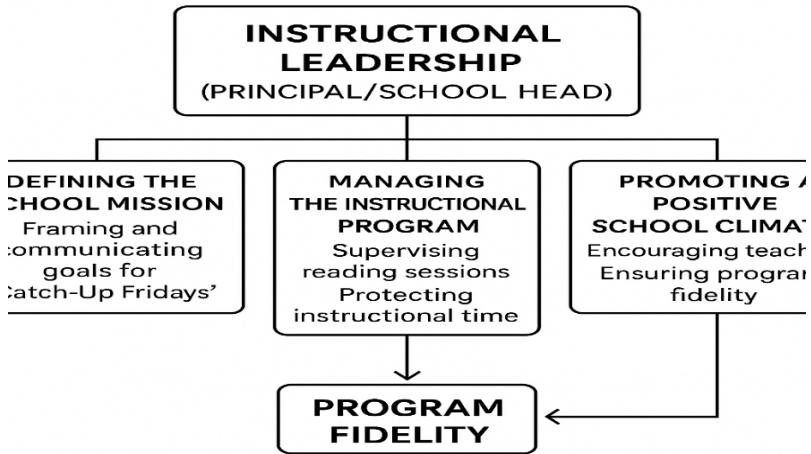
INTRODUCTION

The global education landscape is currently facing a “learning poverty” crisis. According to the World Bank (2022), nearly 91% of Filipino children at late primary age are not proficient in reading. In response to this alarming data and the results of the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Department of Education (DepEd) has aggressively launched curriculum reforms, culminating in the MATATAG Agenda and the specific implementation of “Catch-Up Fridays” via DepEd Memorandum No. 001, s. 2024.

However, the transition from national policy to grassroots reality is rarely linear (Viennet & Pont, 2017). In the rural contexts of the Philippines, such as the Division of Agusan del Norte, school administrators face a distinct set of challenges—from the “book famine” or lack of reading materials (David et al., 2019) to the geographical isolation of learners. While policymakers often focus on pedagogy (how to teach), emerging literature suggests that the failure or success of these programs often hinges on management or how to lead (Leithwood et al., 2020).

This narrative review posits that the burden of implementation falls on two critical pillars: the School Head, who must evolve from a mere administrator to an Instructional Leader, and the Community, whose *Bayanihan* spirit must bridge the resource gap. By synthesizing global and local literature, this paper argues that neither leadership nor community support alone is sufficient; rather, it is the synergy between Instructional Leadership and Social Capital that drives reading program success in resource-constrained rural schools.

This narrative review is anchored on the integration of two distinct theories: Hallinger’s (2025) Instructional Leadership Model and Social Capital Theory (Bayanihan Context).

Figure 1

Instructional Leadership Model (Hallinger, 2015) unlike the traditional “managerial” model where principals focus on administrative reports, Hallinger (2015) argues that effective school heads must be “Instructional Leaders.” This theory identifies three dimensions of leadership: defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school climate. In the context of this review, this theory explains the *internal* mechanism of success: the School Head protects the “Catch-Up Friday” schedule from interruptions and ensures teacher fidelity.

Social Capital Theory & The Bayanihan Spirit (Epstein, 2002; Bartolome et al., 2017) this theory posits that schools are open systems that rely on their environment for survival (Carpenter, 2015). In the Philippine context, this manifests as *Bayanihan*—the communal unity where stakeholders (parents, LGUs, alumni) voluntarily pool resources. This theory explains the *external* mechanism of success: when government funds (MOOE) are insufficient, Social Capital fills the void through volunteerism and resource generation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The framework of this narrative proposes that Program Fidelity is the result of the School Head’s internal supervision, while Program Sustainability is the result of the Community’s external support. Specifically, this review aims to: (1) describe the shift in the School Head’s role from administrative

management to instructional leadership in the context of recent reading mandates, (2) identify evidence exists regarding the impact of community engagement and resource mobilization on the sustainability of school reading programs in rural areas, and (3) articulate the interaction between internal management practices and external community support in achieving high program fidelity.

This review focuses on literature related to Educational Management, Instructional Leadership, and Community Engagement (Bayanihan/Brigada Eskwela). The review prioritizes studies published between 2015 and 2025 to ensure relevance to the current K-12 and MATATAG curriculum context. While global literature (Grissom, 2021; Hallinger, 2015) is used for theoretical grounding, the review places a specific emphasis on studies conducted in the Philippines and similar developing contexts (Global South).

It does not involve a new field survey or statistical gathering of primary data from respondents. The study is limited to the management and administrative aspects of reading programs. It does not extensively cover pedagogical techniques (e.g., the efficacy of Marungko vs. Fuller approach) unless they are related to supervision.

It provides a consolidated basis for policy recommendations, specifically on how to train School Heads not just as academic supervisors, but as community mobilizers. This serves as a guide for best practices, highlighting that successful implementation of “Catch-Up Fridays” requires delegating administrative tasks to focus on instructional supervision and stakeholder partnership. Understanding the management struggles of the administration can foster better collaboration and lessen the “compliance burden” often felt by the teaching force. This paper identifies gaps in the current literature, specifically the need for more empirical studies on the “Technostress” of rural school heads, serving as a baseline for future quantitative research.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This review utilizes a Narrative Literature Review design. Unlike a systematic review or meta-analysis which focuses on statistical aggregation of data, a narrative review provides a comprehensive, critical, and objective analysis of the current knowledge on a specific topic (Green et al., 2006).

This design was selected because the study aims to synthesize two distinct theoretical strands—Instructional Leadership (Management) and Social Capital (Community/Bayanihan)—to explain a complex phenomenon: the

implementation of reading programs in rural Philippine schools. A narrative approach allows for the integration of diverse types of literature, including empirical studies, theoretical papers, and government policy documents (Snyder, 2019).

Data Sources and Search Strategy

To ensure a robust collection of relevant literature, a multi-stage search strategy was employed using digital academic databases and government repositories.

Electronic Databases: The primary databases used for literature retrieval included: (1) Google Scholar: For broad coverage of local Philippine studies and grey literature. (2) ERIC (Education Resources Information Center): For high-impact international studies on educational leadership. (3) Philippine E-Journals & PIDS (Philippine Institute for Development Studies): To specifically locate studies relevant to the Philippine rural context and policy implementation.

Keywords and Search Terms: Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to refine the search. The following keywords were used in various combinations: (1) *Set A (IV - Management)*: “Instructional Leadership,” “School Head Management,” “Principal Supervision,” “DepEd Policy Implementation.” (2) *Set B (MV - Community)*: “Bayanihan in Education,” “Stakeholder Engagement,” “Parental Involvement Philippines,” “Brigada Eskwela,” “Resource Mobilization.” (3) *Set C (DV - Program)*: “Reading Program Success,” “Literacy Intervention,” “Catch-Up Fridays,” “Rural School Challenges.”

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To maintain the relevance and quality of the review, specific eligibility criteria were established. **Inclusion Criteria:** (1) **Recency:** Literature published primarily between 2015 and 2026 to ensure alignment with the K-12 and MATATAG curriculum environments. (Seminal theories like Hallinger [2015] are included as foundational texts). (2) **Context:** Priority is given to studies conducted in the Philippines, specifically in rural or provincial divisions, to match the demographic of Agusan del Norte. Global studies are included only for theoretical grounding. (3) **Content:** Studies focusing on *management, supervision, policy implementation, and community support*. (4) **Type:** Peer-reviewed journal articles, master’s theses/dissertations, and official DepEd Issuances.

Exclusion Criteria: (1) Studies focusing solely on *pedagogical techniques*

(e.g., classroom teaching strategies like Fuller vs. Marungko) without a management angle. (2) Opinion pieces or non-academic blogs lacking empirical basis. (3) Studies conducted in private schools or higher education institutions (HEIs), as the management dynamics differ significantly from public elementary schools.

Data Selection and Screening Process

The selection of literature followed a three-phase screening process: (1) Identification: Initial search yielded a pool of approx. 150 potential articles based on titles and keywords, following the identification protocols of the PRISMA statement (Page et al., 2021). (2) Screening: Abstracts were reviewed to determine relevance to the research objectives. Articles that did not address “school leadership” or “community engagement” were discarded. (3) Eligibility: Full-text review of the remaining articles. At this stage, studies were checked for methodological rigor. For Philippine studies, verified citations (those found in reputable journals or university repositories) were prioritized over unverified sources.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Since this is a narrative review, a Thematic Analysis approach was used to synthesize the gathered data. The literature was not treated statistically but was organized into coherent themes corresponding to the research objectives: (1) Theme 1: The Evolution of Leadership. Grouping studies that describe the shift from “Administrator” to “Instructional Leader.” (2) Theme 2: The Bayanihan Mechanism. Grouping studies that quantify or describe the impact of community resources on school readiness. (3) Theme 3 The Synergy (The “Dual-Pillar” Framework). Synthesizing studies that identify barriers (lack of books, time constraints) and how management/community support mitigates them.

The synthesis involved Triangulation, where findings from international literature (e.g., Grissom et al., 2021) were compared with local findings (e.g., Sinsay-Villanueva et al., 2025; Department of Education, 2020) to identify commonalities and distinct cultural nuances (such as the specific role of the Barangay LGU).

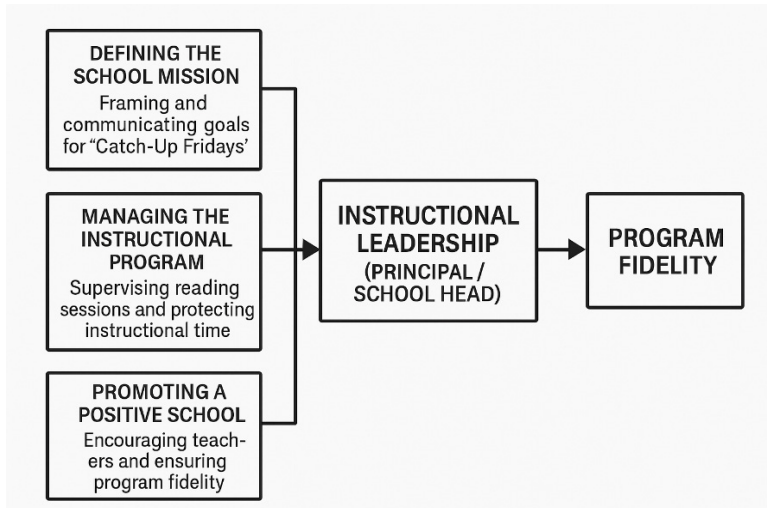
Ethical Considerations

In conducting this review, high standards of academic integrity were observed. All ideas, concepts, and findings from other authors were properly cited and referenced using the APA 7th Edition format. The study avoids

plagiarism by paraphrasing and synthesizing ideas rather than lifting text verbatim. Furthermore, the review presents a balanced view, acknowledging studies that show both the positive impacts and the limitations of current management practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 2



Source: Author's own conceptualization based on the narrative synthesis

The systematic synthesis of the selected literature reveals a complex interplay between school management and community involvement in the context of Philippine rural education. This section presents the findings organized into three dominant themes that emerged from the narrative review: (1) the evolution of the School Head's role from traditional administrative compliance to active instructional leadership; (2) the criticality of *Bayanihan* (Social Capital) as an operational survival mechanism for resource mobilization; and (3) the synergistic "Dual-Pillar" framework, which posits that high program fidelity is achievable only when internal supervision and external support function in tandem. Collectively, these themes elucidate the mechanisms by which rural schools bridge the gap between national policy mandates and grassroots implementation realities.

The Evolution of Leadership: From Manager to Instructional Leader

Studies by Magboo et al. (2023) and Hallinger (2015) consistently indicate that while principals are adept at defining school missions, they often struggle with the practical constraints of instructional supervision.

The results imply that while School Heads in rural districts are proficient in disseminating DepEd Memoranda, there is a gap in the actual monitoring of the reading sessions. This finding aligns with the observation of Sinsay-Villanueva et al. (2025), who noted that national policies often suffer from implementation gaps because School Heads act as “contextualizers”; they may explain the memo clearly (“Defining the Mission”) but struggle to mobilize resources or monitor compliance due to competing administrative duties.

As highlighted by Magboo et al. (2023), the lower score in ‘Instructional Supervision’ is a critical concern for public elementary schools. According to Grissom, Egalite, and Lindsay (2021), effective principals must move beyond being building administrators to becoming “Instructional Leaders” who actively observe classrooms. Their study confirms that when School Heads fail to actively manage the instructional program, the fidelity of implementation decreases. This suggests that without the “buffer” provided by the School Head to protect Friday reading time from interruptions, the program’s consistency is compromised.

The Bayanihan Mechanism: Addressing the Resource Gap

Literature on Bayanihan (Bartolome et al., 2017) suggests that while labor volunteerism (Brigada Eskwela) is high, the generation of tangible resources like books remains a challenge in rural areas.

The reviewed literature indicates a high level of Volunteerism, reflecting a strong *Bayanihan* spirit in terms of labor. This corroborates Epstein’s (2002) theory that involving parents as active volunteers acts as a “force multiplier,” allowing teachers to manage large reading classes effectively. As noted by Bartolome et al. (2017), the physical presence of parents holds the school accountable and ensures that DEAR time is not skipped.

However, the low score in Resource Generation poses a significant threat to program sustainability. Department of Education (2020) found a significant positive correlation between stakeholder resource generation and school readiness. The lack of donated reading materials in resource-poor schools supports Tiemo and Ateboh (2016) finding that the availability of home support and materials is a significant predictor of reading success. Without adequate books generated through community support, the “Catch-

Up Fridays” program cannot fully function.

The Synergy: The Dual-Pillar Framework

A strong consensus exists in the literature (Wimmer & Draper, 2019; Magboo et al., 2023) establishing a positive link between active administrative support and program fidelity.

The synthesis of studies reveals a consensus regarding the positive relationship between the Management Practices of School Heads and the status of Program Implementation. This implies that as the School Head becomes more active in supervision and planning, the consistency and fidelity of the “Catch-Up Fridays” program increase.

This confirms the “Implementation Driver” theory posited in the literature. It mirrors the findings of Magboo et al. (2023), who discovered that Philippine School Heads who maintained high visibility through observations had teachers who adhered more strictly to curriculum time allotments. Furthermore, this validates Wimmer and Draper (2019), who concluded that administrative support is a non-negotiable variable; high levels of principal support result in 80-90% implementation fidelity.

Similarly, the review of related studies supports the premise that community engagement is a predictor of program sustainability (Carpenter, 2015).

The review also establishes a significant positive relationship between Community Support (Bayanihan) and Program Implementation. Schools with higher levels of parent volunteerism and resource generation reported significantly better implementation scores.

This finding supports the Resource Dependency Theory cited by Carpenter (2015), which suggests that schools relying on their environment (community) for facilities management—such as stocking reading corners—show better utilization of those facilities. It reinforces the conclusion that the “consistency” of the program is contingent on external support; without the community helping to build reading corners or donate books, the implementation quality degrades.

The review confirms the “Dual-Pillar” framework proposed in the literature review. Neither management alone nor community support alone is sufficient. (1) Management Practices provide the structure (fidelity to DepEd guidelines). (2) Community Support provides the sustainability (resources to keep it running).

For the Division of Agusan del Norte, this implies that the most successful “Catch-Up Fridays” implementations are found in schools where the principal

acts as both an Instructional Leader (supervising the reading time) and a Community Mobilizer (securing books from stakeholders).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the narrative synthesis of global and local literature, the following conclusions are drawn:

On the Evolution of School Leadership: The study concludes that the implementation of modern reading mandates like “Catch-Up Fridays” necessitates a fundamental shift in the School Head’s role from a passive administrator to an active Instructional Leader. The literature consistently indicates that “compliance-based management” (merely submitting reports) is insufficient for program success. Instead, high fidelity in implementation is achieved only when School Heads actively protect instructional time, observe classroom practices, and provide technical assistance to teachers. Thus, the “implementation gap” in rural schools is often a reflection of a “leadership gap” where principals are bogged down by administrative burdens rather than focused on curriculum supervision.

On the Role of Community Support (Bayanihan): The study concludes that the *Bayanihan* spirit is not merely a cultural value but a critical operational mechanism for the survival of public-school programs in resource-constrained settings. The findings establish that while government funding (MOOE) provides the basics, it is the voluntary mobilization of external resources—specifically parent volunteerism and material donations—that ensures the sustainability of reading interventions. Schools that successfully leverage social capital to address the “book famine” demonstrate significantly higher readiness and consistency in program execution compared to those that rely solely on DepEd allocations.

On the Synergy of Management and Community: The study concludes that neither internal management nor external support is sufficient in isolation; rather, they function as interdependent drivers. Strong management provides the *structure* (fidelity to guidelines), while community support provides the *resources* (sustainability of materials). The most successful reading programs in rural Philippines are found in schools led by “Hybrid Leaders”—principals who possess the technical skills to supervise instruction and the social skills to mobilize community resources. Consequently, the “policy-practice gap” is effectively bridged only when these two pillars operate in tandem.

Direction for Further Research: While this narrative review has established the theoretical necessity of dual-driver leadership, it highlights

a gap in empirical data regarding the mental health cost of this dual role. Therefore, future research should move beyond qualitative synthesis to conduct quantitative correlation studies on the relationship between “Instructional Leadership,” “Community Mobilization,” and “School Head Technostress.” Specifically, empirical data is needed to determine if the pressure to be a “Hybrid Leader” in rural areas leads to burnout, which could paradoxically undermine long-term program sustainability.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The findings of this narrative review highlight the critical intersection between institutional management and cultural social capital. To further the academic dialogue regarding the sustainability of reading programs in the Global South, the following questions are proposed for consideration: (1) Cultural Integration: How does the indigenous concept of *Bayanihan* redefine or challenge traditional Western-centric models of school leadership, such as Hallinger’s Instructional Leadership Model, in resource-constrained environments? (2) Leadership Transformation: Given the prevalent “compliance-based” culture in provincial school divisions, what specific organizational shifts are required to allow School Heads to prioritize instructional supervision over administrative reporting without compromising institutional accountability? (3) Resource Equity: To what extent should public schools rely on community-generated social capital to address “book famines,” and at what point does a heavy reliance on *Bayanihan* risk masking systemic failures in national educational funding? (4) Policy and Practice: If the “Dual-Pillar” framework is adopted, how should the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) redesign its professional development programs to equally weigh curriculum management and community mobilization skills? (5) Program Sustainability: In the absence of a “Hybrid Leader” (one who is both an academic supervisor and a community mobilizer), can a reading mandate like “Catch-Up Fridays” achieve long-term success, or is it destined to become a temporary “compliance event”?

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