School Heads' Competencies in the Lens of VUCA: Basis for Strategic Management Plan

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Abstract*: This study aimed to explore the management competencies of school heads in the lens of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity). It assessed the school heads' level of management competencies in terms of personnel development, financial and resource management, classroom instructional support, project and program implementation, and stakeholders' engagement. Additionally, the research investigated the differences on the school management competencies among school heads in the three Schools Division Offices (SDOs) in Quezon province. Furthermore, the study identified the issues and challenges encountered by the school heads in managing schools in the province of Quezon. The study used the descriptive multi-methods design with a researcher-made survey questionnaire as the primary data-gathering instrument, which was substantiated by interviews and a focus group discussion with the participants. Results revealed that school heads possess management competencies across most indicators to a great extent. It was also revealed that there is no significant difference among the school heads' management competencies. The study identified challenges and issues in school management such as insufficient funding, lack of classrooms and other school facilities, incomplete learning materials such as books, teachers' inability to use modern instructional equipment and applications effectively, teachers' lack of training in inclusive education, stakeholders' limited opportunities, and resources to participate in implementing school projects, programs, and activities. Based on the key findings, a strategic management plan was designed to enhance the school heads' competencies in handling challenges and issues brought by the VUCA environment.

Keywords*: School heads' competencies, VUCA, Strategic management plan.

1. Introduction

As an international organization, the United Nations (UN) aims to solve global challenges through its main initiative, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Within this framework, quality education is placed fourth on the list. By the year 2030, the UN aims to build and improve education facilities that are child-friendly, gender-sensitive, safe, inclusive, and effective learning environments for students around the world. The UN stressed that inclusive and quality education is one of the strongest and most proven tools for sustainable development (undp.org).

In support of these global efforts, the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines launched national programs and projects to deliver quality basic education to all Filipino learners. However, despite these efforts, several obstacles hinder the achievement of high-quality education. These challenges stem from various issues faced by school leaders. These include the lack of learning materials, insufficient classrooms, an imbalanced teacher-to-student ratio, a congested curriculum, unmet needs of learners, poor working conditions for the teachers, and unclear education policies.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought even greater challenges to school management. During this difficult period, the concept of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) gained importance. Introduced in 1987 by the U.S. Army War College and based on leadership theories by Warren Bennis and Burnt Nanus, VUCA describes unpredictable and complicated situations. The idea spread across various fields, including education, as part of strategic leadership thinking.

According to Cook (2022), as schools entered the 21st century, they began to embrace higher-level thinking, technology, problem-solving, and collaborative learning. Educators changed their perspectives on modern teaching methods. Without realizing it, schools were already responding to VUCA. In such an environment, leaders understand that sustainable progress depends on their ability to sense changes, adjust quickly, and help schools evolve to meet new demands.

The pandemic tested the resilience of school heads, as they worked to maintain quality basic education while prioritizing the safety of both students and teachers. Many school leaders encountered difficulties that needed to be resolved, especially in situations with limited resources and opportunities. The uncertainties brought about by distance learning highlighted the leadership skills of school heads across the country. Aside from existing concerns such as a shortage of classrooms and learning materials, school heads had to seek new resources to support the basic educational needs of their schools.

In this context, the role of school heads is vital in helping the Department of Education achieve its mission, vision, and core values. School heads play a central role in realizing national goals for quality basic education. Republic Act No. 9155, or "The Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001," clearly outlines the responsibilities of a school head, defining them as the individual in charge of both administrative and instructional supervision over a school or group of schools (Section 4). They hold the authority and responsibility for promoting personal and organizational effectiveness, guiding the school's direction,

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overseeing systems and processes, supporting teaching and learning quality, encouraging personal growth, and involving stakeholders in efforts that improve school communities.

School management is a major function of school heads as stated in RA 9155. Managing a school involves executing policies and aligning all components such as school guidelines, human and material resources, and school activities into a productive whole (Kirthika, 2022). The influence of school heads in school management strongly affects teachers' professional development and student learning outcomes. A school's success depends on how effectively school heads create opportunities and implement programs that strengthen teaching, promote a positive learning environment, and build active engagement from the community.

2. Objectives

The study aimed to design a strategic management plan that would help enhance the management competencies of heads in the three Schools Division in Quezon province.

To achieve this general goal, the study sought to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. Explore the school heads' experiences in school management under the lens of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity).
2. Assess the level of competencies of the school heads in the following domains as determined by the Schools Division Offices in the Quezon Province.
   1. personnel development;
   2. financial and resource management;
   3. classroom instructional support;
   4. project and program implementation; and
   5. stakeholders' engagement.
3. Determine if there are differences on the level of competencies among school heads.
4. Identify issues and challenges encountered by the school heads in school management.
5. Propose a strategic management plan.

3. Materials and Methods

This study employed a descriptive research design using both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine school management within the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) context. The qualitative phase aimed to understand personal experiences, perceptions, and meanings through interviews and thematic analysis. Criterion sampling was applied to select eight elementary school heads from Tayabas City, Lucena City, and Quezon Province based on position, gender, and years of service (Polincic, 2016; Creswell, 2018). Participants included four males and four females, holding titles ranging from Head Teacher III to Principal III, each with at least five years of experience.

For quantitative analysis, participants were randomly chosen from the same divisions. A researcher-developed questionnaire was administered to assess school heads' management competencies, including personnel development, financial and resource management, instructional support, program

implementation, and stakeholder engagement. Surveys also identified leadership challenges. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to reveal patterns and trends.

A focus group discussion (FGD), conducted both online and in-person, reinforced and elaborated on the survey findings. Themes from interviews, statistical data, and FGD insights were synthesized to create a strategic management plan tailored to the identified challenges faced by school heads in the three divisions. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative results, the study offered a comprehensive and validated foundation for guiding school leadership within a VUCA environment.

The research involved school heads in the Schools Division Offices (SDOs) in the province of Quezon. There were eight purposively chosen participants for the qualitative phase from the three SDOs: one from SDO Tayabas City, one from SDO Lucena City, and six from SDO Quezon province. The participants were selected based on their number of years as school head, current position held, and sex at birth to ensure that school heads were well represented. To determine the sample size from the total number of school heads, the study used a confidence level of 95 percent and a margin of error of 5 percent.

To calculate the appropriate sample size, the RaoSoft calculator was used. Based on the results, the study selected 250 respondents from SDO Quezon, 40 from SDO Lucena City, and 23 from SDO Tayabas City. This provided a total of 313 respondents for the quantitative phase of the research. Simple random sampling was applied in choosing the respondents. This method allowed every school head an equal chance of being selected. Using this approach helped ensure fair representation from each division and supported the accuracy and reliability of the study's findings.

The study utilized a researcher-made survey questionnaire as main data gathering instrument. This produced quantitative data, which were substantiated by qualitative responses from interviews and a focus group discussion. Additionally, thematic analysis was used to derive themes and subthemes from the qualitative phase

The quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistical procedure using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and test of difference. The data collected from google forms were encoded in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a data application software used to analyze data quantitatively.

4. Results and Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic serves as a clear example of a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) environment, as it involves rapid changes, unpredictable events, worldwide connections, and unclear information regarding the virus, its spread, and the proper strategies for control (Damaolao & Navarro, 2024). This type of environment can be managed by applying the ability of a leader to pause, observe, and listen carefully. To succeed in a VUCA context, leaders need to explore beyond their own expertise, understand the complexities involved, and guide their organizations with a

clear and adaptable vision. This approach requires leaders to maintain open communication across all levels of the organization and to show strong teamwork and cooperation in all their leadership practices.

Table 1
Exploration of School heads' Experience in School Management in the VUCA lens

	Theme	Subtheme	Implications
1. Volatility	Technological advancement in Education	1.1 teacher competency using modern technology 1.2 limited resources for instructional needs	The instructional competencies of teachers will be determined on how the school heads support their training needs and instructional needs
2. Uncertainty	Natural calamities and human induced hazard	2.1 challenges in school facilities and resources 2.2 abrupt changes in programs and policies	School facilities and equipment and consistent programs are very important to have positive learning environment that affect learning outcomes
3. Complexity	Multi-task of school head and teachers	3.1 problems related to curriculum implementation	School personnel should focus on their main responsibilities to ensure better learners' performance
4. Ambiguity	Shifting of DepEd Curriculum and Programs	4.1 problems related to organizing classes in time of difficulties and emergencies	Curriculum implementation must consistent and support learners' needs to ensure functional literacy.

Participants shared that many teachers are making strong efforts to understand new trends in education, especially by updating their skills to keep up with rapid changes. These changes are mostly seen in the use of computers and internet resources in modern teaching.

To adapt to the new learning environment, school heads and teachers participate in Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions focused on using modern tools such as internet resources, Google Forms, and various educational applications. These sessions help teachers understand how to apply technology in their teaching.

According to Apau (2017), as cited by De Castro E.S. (2024), teachers often do not have enough knowledge about how to use technology effectively in their lessons. The recommendation is for educators to model the use of technology so they can stay current with modern teaching strategies. Asorn et al. (2019) added that hesitation in adopting new technologies, along with limited training, creates serious problems. They also pointed out that some school leaders do not fully understand the importance of innovation and technological progress, which affects how well schools are managed and led.

Another challenge faced by participants involves limited resources caused by insufficient budget allocations. This issue becomes more serious during natural disasters, which restrict the school's ability to meet urgent needs. Because changes happen often and without warning, the participants regularly adjusted their financial plans to respond to demands. They also sought additional support by reaching out to local government units and other community partners such as the Parent-Teacher Association, alumni groups, and private individuals.

Based on their experiences, participants emphasized the importance of building strong partnerships with stakeholders to reduce the impact of daily school problems. These problems usually occur due to natural events that damage school facilities and equipment.

Findings from the study of Muparuri et al. (2021) supported these views by identifying economic crises, political interference, globalization, poor technology, and disasters—both natural and manmade—as key sources of volatility.

Other research also affirmed that complex problems in schools can be solved through careful coordination, thoughtful interventions, and innovative efforts. Rimita, Hoon, and Levasseur (2020) suggested that present and future leaders need strategies that are strong, agile, and able to adjust when situations become highly complex.

Because the Philippines is exposed to natural disasters such as typhoons and earthquakes, school heads are especially vulnerable to difficulties in running schools. These disasters interrupt learning activities and cause damage to school buildings and materials. In addition to natural events, human-related risks also threaten school operations. These challenges must be managed properly so learners can continue receiving quality education without risking their safety or that of school staff.

According to Damaolao and Navarro (2024), handling resource shortages represents the uncertainty aspect of the VUCA environment. It requires decisions to be made despite limited or unclear information. Schools that succeed in dealing with these uncertainties in resource planning are more likely to thrive in unpredictable conditions.

In addition to external hazards, schools face other unexpected challenges such as unclear policies. These include sudden changes in curriculum implementation and adjustments in school calendars, both of which disrupt school operations and scheduled activities. The participants responded to these problems by creating intervention programs and activities.

The complex tasks of teachers are completely affected their performance as well as the well-being of teachers. It also affects the students' performance due to conflict on schedules and actual teacher-pupil interactions. The complex task of school personnel will lead to burn out among its personnel. It also creates misconception of roles that may lead to misunderstanding and conflict among school head, teachers. Findings of the study of Dorado et al. (2024) revealed that school heads also commonly face the challenge of overlapping responsibilities, as they are tasked with overseeing various facets of school management.

To maintain alignment with national goals and objectives, school heads need to stay updated on all DepEd orders, circulars, memoranda, and advisories. However, participants pointed out that inconsistencies in these directives and their implementation in the field create confusion. Misinterpretation of such guidelines can lead to problems that disrupt school operations and decision-making processes.

Managing limited resources reflects the uncertainty aspect of VUCA, as school leaders must make strategic decisions despite unclear or incomplete information. Challenges such as inconsistent funding, unclear timelines, and shifting priorities require leaders to plan effectively and respond quickly. Schools that are capable of navigating these uncertainties with flexible resource planning and collaboration are more likely to succeed and remain resilient in unstable environments.

School heads carry heavy responsibility and accountability for all school programs and activities. As instructional leaders, they play a central role in planning, implementing, and

evaluating school projects and programs. They are also responsible for supporting the professional growth of both teaching and non-teaching personnel by providing development opportunities aligned with the school's goals.

Table 2

Assessment on the Level of School Heads' Management Competencies in Terms of Personnel Development

PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT	Lucena City		Quezon Province		Tayabas City	
	W.M.	V.I.	W.M.	V.I.	W.M.	V.I
1. Updates myself in BHROD (Bureau of Human Resource and Organizational Development) standards to assist teachers in their promotions.	3.78	GE	3.68	GE	3.61	GE
2. Provides training/activities that promote instructional competencies and teacher's well being	3.88	GE	3.72	GE	3.74	GE
3. Allots funds and resources for teachers' professional & development program	3.88	GE	3.83	GE	3.83	GE
4. Provides equal opportunities for teachers to attend trainings, seminars, and workshops	3.75	GE	3.61	GE	3.30	GE
5. Provides incentives and rewards to recognize teachers' effort, hard work and dedication	3.90	GE	3.88	GE	3.78	GE
6. Ensures equal opportunities for promotion among teachers through open communication & deviation from bias and favoritism	3.75	GE	3.72	GE	3.74	GE
7. Guides new and seasoned teachers in their career path through mentoring programs and provision of technical assistance	3.83	GE	3.78	GE	3.78	GE
8. Promotes a culture of professional growth among teachers who pursue post graduate school and short courses by giving them consideration and motivation	3.85	GE	3.80	GE	3.78	GE
9. Encourages teachers to excel in their field of expertise by providing moral support and guidance	3.88	GE	3.85	GE	3.78	GE
10. Implements gender equity, equality and gender-sensitive environment to foster inclusivity, equity and fairness in the workplace	3.83	GE	3.80	GE	3.78	GE
11. Encourages teachers to update themselves in using technology applications	3.73	GE	3.71	GE	3.61	GE
12. Asks for regular feedback to improve project/activities for teachers' development program	3.70	GE	3.74	GE	3.70	GE
13. Provides teacher a healthy work- balance to prevent burnout and exhaustion by doing team building and recreational activities	3.88	GE	3.87	GE	3.78	GE
14. Strengthen teachers' dedication and commitment by providing equal opportunities in promotions	3.95	GE	3.69	GE	3.83	GE
15. Uplifts teachers' commitment by giving support in their educational and professional endeavors.	3.95	GE	3.92	GE	3.87	GE
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.83	GE	3.77	GE	3.73	GE

Legend: GE= Great Extent, WM= Weighted Mean, VI =Verbal Interpretation

The results indicate that school heads from the three school divisions in Quezon Province show a great extent of effectiveness in managing personnel. Even though they work in a VUCA environment, many school leaders still carry out their duties with strong commitment and flexibility. They see their role in staff development as having many parts, which include giving technical support and organizing different professional development activities to improve the abilities and skills of their staff.

Overall, the results clearly show that school heads have an important role in staff development, especially by making sure teachers have equal access to seminars, training, and workshops. Mentoring is also a key way to support professional growth, giving both teaching and non-teaching staff valuable chances to improve and move forward within the school system.

The results show that school heads demonstrate a great extent of effectiveness in managing finances and resources. Among the divisions, Lucena City showed the highest level of performance in using the canteen fund to support school needs and programs. This highlights the ability of school heads to use available resources to improve school operations and promote learning.

Table 3

Assessment on the Level School Heads' Management Competencies in Terms of Classroom Instructional Support

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT	Lucena City		Quezon Province		Tayabas City	
	W.M.	V.I.	W.M.	V.I.	W.M.	V.I
1. Provides trainings and activities in using modern technology equipment, tools, gadgets and application to ensure teacher's competencies in teaching 21st century learners	3.65	GE	3.60	GE	3.61	GE
2. Offers appropriate Technical Assistance (TA) during Class Observation and other teaching learning related activities	3.83	GE	3.80	GE	3.74	GE
3. Provides consistent instructional supervision and monitoring by regular checking of DLP (Daily Leesson Plan) and other school reports	3.85	GE	3.67	GE	3.83	GE
4. Ensures that TA (Technical Assistance) will be provided not only during Class Observation but also during informal instructional supervision.	3.85	GE	3.78	GE	3.83	GE
5. Considers teachers, beliefs, needs and attitude in giving feedback and instructional support.	3.83	GE	3.80	GE	3.78	GE
6. Ensures the necessary learning materials and equipment were available to enhance teaching – learning process.	3.85	GE	3.74	GE	3.78	GE
7. Provides fund for instructional materials and other teaching resources to ensure effective delivery of learning	3.83	GE	3.70	GE	3.83	GE
8. Conducts pre and post assessment on pupils' learning and development to ensure pupils' progress monitoring	3.85	GE	3.83	GE	3.87	GE
9. Ensures that all teachers were given opportunities to express their own teaching strategy and methodology to promote learning diversity	3.85	GE	3.85	GE	3.91	GE
10. Ensures that constructive feedback is considered in giving technical assistance.	3.85	GE	3.82	GE	3.83	GE
11. Promotes instructional support by pairing new teacher to seasoned teachers through mentoring program	3.70	GE	3.67	GE	3.74	GE
12. Allots fund for teaching materials and equipment to teachers to support their instructional objectives.	3.80	GE	3.70	GE	3.78	GE
13. Keeps knowledgeable in teachers' strength and weaknesses as a basis of providing intervention and right instructional support	3.85	GE	3.73	GE	3.74	GE
14. Improves one's instructional support capabilities by attending training and seminar workshop	3.83	GE	3.84	GE	3.83	GE
15. Ensures that learning environment is safe and conducive for teaching and learning	3.85	GE	3.89	GE	3.78	GE
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.82	GE	3.76	GE	3.79	GE

Legend: GE= Great Extent, WM= Weighted Mean, VI =Verbal Interpretation

On the other hand, a study by Ephrahem and Bhoke-Africanus (2021) found that many school heads lack the necessary skills to manage school finances properly. The study suggests that training programs, workshops, and seminars should be provided to help school heads improve their financial management skills. These efforts would help school heads become more effective in handling school finances and supporting teaching and learning.

These findings differ from the results of the current study, suggesting that further research is needed to explore this topic more deeply.

The findings show that school heads in Quezon Province demonstrate financial and resource management competencies to a great extent. While they are able to use funds effectively and support school programs, challenges remain in following government procedures and sharing financial updates. Strengthening financial skills through training and promoting ethical practices in financial management can help school heads improve their performance and contribute to better learning outcomes. These efforts are essential in creating a stable and supportive learning environment that benefits both teachers and students.

The data collected showed the commitment of school heads to provide funds for instructional materials, equipment, and other resources that improve the teaching and learning process. The survey results highlight the support given by school heads to teachers by considering their beliefs, attitudes, teaching strategies, and methods. School heads also allocate funds to

support instructional and learning materials.

Table 4

Assessment on the Level School Heads' Management Competencies in Terms of Financial & Resource Management

FINANCIAL & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	Lucena City		Quezon Province		Tayabas City	
	W.M.	V.I.	W.M.	V.I.	W.M.	V.I.
1. Utilizes canteen funds allocation to support school needs and program	3.93	GE	3.74	GE	3.74	GE
2. Maximizes expenditure in the school MOOE by following government procurement guidelines and procedures	3.28	GE	3.61	GE	3.22	GE
3. Finds ways to support unexpected expenses in the school by allotting emergency funds from school operating expenses	3.88	GE	3.78	GE	3.74	GE
4. Supports fund raising activities such popularity contest (Mr. & Ms. United Nations) to ensure availability of fund for school projects, program and activities	3.90	GE	3.78	GE	3.61	GE
5. Allocates fund according to immediate needs of school through regular assessment of school buildings and facilities	3.85	GE	3.84	GE	3.78	GE
6. Ensures the availability of fund and material needed for school operations by seeking the support of internal and external stakeholders	3.83	GE	3.81	GE	3.78	GE
7. Updates oneself on DepEd order and issuances related to financial management and operations to ensure that funds will be used with proper expenditure	3.90	GE	3.86	GE	3.74	GE
8. Prepares necessary reports and action related to procurement and material disposal	3.88	GE	3.83	GE	3.78	GE
9. Understands responsibilities and accountabilities on government expenditure guidelines	3.90	GE	3.88	GE	3.91	GE
10. Ensures the safeguarding of school buildings and other school facilities to lessen school expenditures by regular assessment and monitoring	3.55	GE	3.62	GE	3.74	GE
11. Prioritizes budget allocation for priority needs and improvement areas in the SIP (School Improvement Plan)	3.90	GE	3.90	GE	3.83	GE
12. Asks the support of internal and external stakeholders by engaging them in fund raising project such as Alumni Homecoming	3.73	GE	3.68	GE	3.70	GE
13. Ensures that fund was properly liquidated, reported and posted in transparency board	3.88	GE	3.87	GE	3.87	GE
14. Conducts monthly financial report during meetings with teachers, parents and other stakeholders	3.73	GE	3.67	GE	3.61	GE
15. Ensures all school properties and resources were properly accounted and reported	3.85	GE	3.80	GE	3.74	GE
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.80	GE	3.78	GE	3.72	GE

Legend: GE= Great Extent, WM= Weighted Mean, VI =Verbal Interpretation

Furthermore, classroom instructional support is recognized as one of the most important responsibilities of school heads. Their past experiences and skills gained from teaching in the classroom help them guide teachers to become better classroom managers and instructional leaders. The results suggest that school heads should give priority to training and activities that involve the use of modern technology, tools, gadgets, and applications. This is important to ensure that teachers are prepared to teach 21st century learners effectively.

Ghavifekr et al. (2016) found issues and challenges related to ICT use in teaching and learning can assist teachers in overcoming the obstacles and become successful technology users. The key issues and challenges found to be significant in using ICT tools by teachers were: limited accessibility and network connection, limited technical support, lack of effective training, limited time and lack of teachers' competency. Their study supported the findings that teachers need training and activities using modern technology equipment, tools, gadgets and application to ensure teacher competencies in teaching with 21st century learners.

Based on the data, it can be concluded that school heads carry out project and program implementation to a great extent. The divisions of Lucena City, Quezon Province, and Tayabas City all received high weighted mean scores, showing strong commitment to conducting projects and programs that support both academic and non-academic performance of learners.

The table also shows that school heads ensure the implementation of the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) and the School Improvement Plan (SIP). These plans help create a learning environment that supports both curricular and co-

curricular activities. School heads actively support the implementation of school Projects, Programs, and Activities (PPAs), making sure they are aligned with the school's goals and objectives. These include efforts to promote teachers' welfare and pupils' well-being and overall development. School heads also carry out monitoring and evaluation to ensure that PPAs are implemented properly.

Table 5

Assessment on the Level School Heads' Management Competencies in terms of Project and Program Implementation

PROJECT AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION	Lucena City		Quezon Province		Tayabas City	
	W.M	V.I.	W.M.	V.I.	W.M.	V.I
1. Aware oneself the duties and responsibilities as PPAs (Project, Program & Activities) head implementer.	3.90	GE	3.87	GE	3.87	GE
2. Ensures that AIP (Annual Implementation Plan) are aligned to school, division, regional and national development goals.	3.85	GE	3.89	GE	3.91	GE
3. Implements programs that will help learners to perform better in their performance	3.95	GE	3.90	GE	3.87	GE
4. Ensures that PPAs (Project, Program & Activities) properly are delivered to meet the school goals and objectives	3.90	GE	3.88	GE	3.83	GE
5. Supports school clubs and organization to support holistic development of learners	3.83	GE	3.85	GE	3.78	GE
6. Creates positive learning environment that support both curricular and co-curricular	3.90	GE	3.87	GE	3.91	GE
7. Ensures that all learners are well nourished by providing healthy food in canteen and regular feeding programs for undernourished learners	3.83	GE	3.78	GE	3.87	GE
8. Creates contingency plan for school projects and program to ensure its implementation due to abrupt changes	3.75	GE	3.81	GE	3.91	GE
9. Guarantees that PPAs (Project, Program & Activities) implementation is according to DepEd orders and memorandum	3.90	GE	3.84	GE	3.91	GE
10. Ensures that PPAs (Project, Program & Activities) are flexible and with SMART objectives	3.88	GE	3.83	GE	3.83	GE
11. Certifies that PPAs (Project, Program & Activities) support the immediate needs of the learners and teachers	3.85	GE	3.81	GE	3.83	GE
12. Provides collaborative assessment and evaluation before crafting school PPAs (Project, Program & Activities)	3.80	GE	3.81	GE	3.91	GE
13. Conducts regular monitoring of school PPAs (Project, Program & Activities) and adjust them according to immediate needs	3.73	GE	3.77	GE	3.78	GE
14. Ensures that school PPAs (Project, Program & Activities) support the holistic development of all learners	3.78	GE	3.84	GE	3.83	GE
15. Conducts post evaluation of school PPAs (Project, Program & Activities) to ensure their quality and effectivity	3.70	GE	3.86	GE	3.74	GE
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.84	GE	3.84	GE	3.86	GE

Legend: GE= Great Extent, WM= Weighted Mean, VI =Verbal Interpretation

However, indicators related to regular monitoring and post-evaluation of PPAs received the lowest scores among the three school divisions. These indicators involve adjusting PPAs based on immediate needs and evaluating their quality and effectiveness. The results suggest that school heads need to improve how they monitor and evaluate school projects and programs. During the Focused Group Discussion (FGD), participants shared that the many tasks handled by school heads make it difficult to conduct regular monitoring. As a result, monitoring is often done informally due to the complexity of school activities and programs.

Gustiani et al. (2023) defined monitoring as the process of collecting and analyzing information based on indicators that are determined systematically and continuously related to activities or programs so that corrective action can be taken to improve the next program or activity.

The results show that respondents rated stakeholder involvement to a great extent, with high weighted mean scores across the divisions of Lucena City, Quezon Province, and Tayabas City. These findings support the dedication of school heads to promote shared school governance by actively involving stakeholders in school programs and activities. Groups such as the School Parent-Teacher Association (SPTA), alumni, local officials, and non-government organizations (NGOs) are encouraged to contribute to the development of

school facilities that help teachers and learners achieve better learning outcomes.

Table 6
Assessment on the Level School Heads' Management Competencies in Terms of Stakeholders Engagement

STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT	Lucena City		Quezon Province		Tayabas City	
	W.M.	V.I.	W.M.	V.I.	W.M.	V.I
1. Aware of the role of stakeholders in school program development	3.70	GE	3.73	GE	3.83	GE
2. Ensures that parents and other stakeholders have a place in the school's planning and development.	3.70	GE	3.72	GE	3.74	GE
3. Encourages stakeholders to support ADOPT A school, Brigada Eskwela and other DepEd programs	3.80	GE	3.81	GE	3.87	GE
4. Look for potential stakeholders that will support school physical facilities development	3.78	GE	3.71	GE	3.78	GE
5. Asks the support SGC (School Governing Council), PTA (Parent Teacher Association), LGU (Local Government Unit), NGO (Non-Government Organization) and other organization to support school programs and activities.	3.68	GE	3.80	GE	3.70	GE
6. Ensures that school and community create good relationship by supporting social activities and events.	3.75	GE	3.84	GE	3.78	GE
7. Provides varied activities for stakeholders' participation and support through flexible time and means such donations in cash or in kind	3.70	GE	3.71	GE	3.61	GE
8. Establishes rewards and recognition system that will encourage stakeholders to support schools by sharing their time, treasure, and talent.	3.78	GE	3.78	GE	3.65	GE
9. Uses social media platform to showcase the school milestone with the support of stakeholders.	3.73	GE	3.71	GE	3.61	GE
10. Invites civic groups that can provide trainings for learners and parents, and other stakeholders.	3.65	GE	3.59	GE	3.35	GE
11. Encourages stakeholders' participation in strategic planning during crafting of SIP (School Improvement Plan).	3.75	GE	3.76	GE	3.65	GE
12. Ensures that transparency of fund was implemented to solicit stakeholders' continuous support and mutual trust	3.83	GE	3.85	GE	3.83	GE
13. Encourages stakeholders to attend school gatherings to let them feel that they are part of shared governance	3.75	GE	3.83	GE	3.74	GE
14. Conducts regular meetings with stakeholders to report school achievements and needs to accomplish	3.60	GE	3.70	GE	3.65	GE
15. Provides stakeholders opportunity to be part in school committees that will promote school development program	3.78	GE	3.80	GE	3.74	GE
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.73	GE	3.76	GE	3.70	GE

Legend: GE= Great Extent, WM= Weighted Mean, VI =Verbal Interpretation

This result aligns with earlier findings on school heads' competencies in financial and resource management, instructional support, and project implementation. School heads have shown strong commitment to providing instructional materials, organizing training sessions, and implementing school improvement plans. Their ability to engage stakeholders further strengthens these efforts by bringing in additional resources and support. Stakeholder involvement not only enhances school infrastructure but also contributes to a learning environment that is safe, inclusive, and conducive to both teaching and learning.

Table 7
Differences in School Heads' Management Competencies Among the Schools Division Offices (SDOs) in the Province of Quezon

Variables	p-values	Computed f-values	Decision on Ho	Verbal Interpretation
Personnel Development	.358	1.030	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Financial and Material Resource Management	.535	.626	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Classroom Instructional Support	.577	.550	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Project and Program Implementation	.963	.038	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Stakeholders' Participation & Engagement	.692	.368	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

The results provide data on the effectiveness of school heads in key areas such as financial and resource management, instructional support, project implementation, and stakeholder engagement. Previous results revealed that school heads

demonstrate these competencies to a great extent. Identifying a significant difference in competencies can help guide training programs and development efforts. It also supports the goal of maintaining consistent standards in school governance across all divisions. By recognizing strengths and addressing gaps, educational leaders can ensure that all schools in the province deliver quality education and create supportive learning environments.

The data shows that there is no significant difference in the school heads' management competencies among the Schools Division Offices (SDOs) in Quezon Province. The p-values for different areas of school management such as personnel development, financial and resource management, classroom instructional support, project and program implementation, and stakeholder engagement are all higher than the standard significance level of 0.05. This means there is not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis. These results suggest that school heads across Lucena City, Quezon Province, and Tayabas City perform at similar levels in managing their schools.

These results are consistent with broader research. According to Retnawati (2023), transforming educational management is a continuous process that requires adapting to new trends and opportunities while addressing challenges. Key trends include personalized learning, technology integration, data-driven decision-making, and collaboration.

The results of this study imply that school heads in the three SDOs have no significant difference in their views on emerging trends in school management. Their competencies in personnel development, financial and resource management, instructional support, project implementation, and stakeholder engagement are nearly the same. This consistency exists regardless of the division's size, location, or type.

Table 8
Issues and challenges encountered by School Heads in terms of Personnel Development

Personnel development	Lucena City		Quezon Province		Tayabas City	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1. Teachers are always willing to attend training and development programs	33	82.50	226	88.98	20	86.96
2. Complete attendance among school personnel are always manifested	35	87.50	210	82.68	23	100.00
3. All teachers are dedicated due to equal workload and life balance	35	87.50	234	92.13	19	82.61
4. All teachers are financial stable that lead to very satisfactory performance	20	50.00	146	57.48	14	60.87
5. Most of the teachers have high level of self-control in dealing with challenging learners	32	80.00	209	82.28	19	82.61
6. All teachers have the capability and skills in using modern technology	27	67.50	174	68.50	13	56.52
7. Positive behavior among teachers are always manifested	31	77.50	216	85.04	19	82.61
8. Most of the teachers prioritize the education of their children rather than their graduate studies	35	87.50	223	87.80	21	91.30
9. Most of the teachers are motivated to achieve goals and objective	39	97.50	238	93.70	21	91.30
10. All teachers have high level of commitment to their profession	30	75.00	210	82.68	18	78.26

It revealed in the survey that many teachers were unable to

use modern technology as instructional tools. According to the survey, a large majority of respondents in SDO Lucena, as well as in SDO Quezon Province and Tayabas City, reported that most teachers were not able to integrate modern technology into their teaching. This was primarily due to the unavailability of modern equipment in classrooms and the lack of training in using technological tools for instruction. Furthermore, in the FGD conducted by the researcher, it was noted that aside from these factors, some teachers had served for many years without exposure to modern technology, unlike their newly appointed counterparts who were more familiar with contemporary teaching methods and digital tools.

This finding aligns with the study of Sahito (2025), which identified persistent issues such as limited access to internet resources, lack of online infrastructure, and a noticeable gap between urban and rural teachers. These challenges highlight the disruptive potential of ICT in teacher training, provided it is implemented contextually and supported by policy to ensure long-term impact and equity.

Similarly, Alam and Maglantay (2025) emphasized the need for equitable access to digital tools and updated educational resources to address performance gaps, especially in integrating technology into teaching and learning. Therefore, continuous professional development focused on modern technology integration must be prioritized by the Department of Education (DepEd).

Table 9
Issues and challenges encountered by School Heads in terms of Financial and Resource Management

Financial and material resource management	Lucena City		Quezon Province		Tayabas City	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1. Complete learning materials (books, instructional materials)	14	35.00	90	35.43	14	60.87
2. Sufficient MOOE funds for utilities, repair and maintenance and etc.	16	40.00	101	39.76	8	34.78
3. Sufficient instructional classroom for all learners	16	40.00	134	52.76	7	30.43
4. Availability of ancillary facilities such as library, clinic, laboratories etc.	8	20.00	63	24.80	4	17.39
5. Availability of contingency fund for maintenance of school buildings and facilities	15	37.50	93	36.61	6	26.09
6. Accessibility of local resources in the school	26	65.00	157	61.81	14	60.87
7. Sufficient canteen fund allocation	16	40.00	112	44.09	10	43.48
8. Availability of SPTA (School Parent Teacher Association) fund	26	65.00	188	74.02	16	69.57
9. Availability of school equipment to mitigate natural and human hazard	23	57.50	127	50.00	8	34.78
10. Availability school equipment and facilities to ensure safety of school properties	28	70.00	172	67.72	12	52.17

The table shows that the majority of problems related to school management stem from financial and resource constraints. These include insufficient Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) funds for utilities and upkeep, incomplete learning materials such as textbooks, limited canteen funds and other financial sources, and the absence of essential school equipment to address both natural and human-induced hazards. Additionally, the lack of equipment and facilities compromises the safety and security of school properties.

Respondents from the three School Division Offices identified ongoing problems related to learning resources,

classroom availability, funding, and other essential facilities. While these issues were reported by less than the majority of respondents, they remain significant and continue to affect school performance. Among the least available facilities were libraries, clinics, and laboratories, with schools in Quezon Province appearing to suffer the most from this lack of ancillary infrastructure.

Supporting literature reinforces these findings. Hussain and Afzal (2023) emphasized that children and young people learn more effectively when they have access to well-maintained classrooms, updated infrastructure, and clean, engaging environments. They argued that investments in school infrastructure directly influence student enthusiasm, attendance, and academic performance. Poor conditions such as broken buildings, outdated furniture, lack of clean drinking water, and absence of playgrounds can lead to low school enrollment. These issues are closely tied to government oversight and the proper utilization of funds.

Table 10
Issues and challenges encountered by School Heads in terms of Classroom Instructional Support

Classroom Instructional support	Lucena City		Quezon Province		Tayabas City	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1. Positive acceptance of teachers to new approaches in teaching and learning	37	92.50	237	93.31	22	95.65
2. Instructional materials were supported by school fund	37	92.50	231	90.94	19	82.61
3. Instructional support was given even there are bombarded administrative task	38	95.00	234	92.13	22	95.65
4. All school program and activities are DepEd programs and initiatives	37	92.50	205	80.71	16	69.57
5. School congested curriculum promotes high learners' performance	31	77.50	207	81.50	16	69.57
6. Sufficient time to give technical assistance even there are multiple tasks to accomplish	36	90.00	227	89.37	21	91.30
7. Teachers addressed short attention span and learning difficulty among pupils	38	95.00	243	95.67	22	95.65
8. Teachers are capable to handle classes leading to effective classroom discipline	31	77.50	209	82.28	17	73.91
9. Learner's study' habits were established among learners leading to high academic performance	36	90.00	209	82.28	19	82.61
10. Learners with special needs were properly addressed by the teachers	12	30.00	109	42.91	7	30.43

Presented in the table, the challenges and issues related to classroom instructional support, particularly in addressing the needs of learners with special needs. While some respondents noted that these learners were being properly supported by teachers, a significant portion indicated otherwise. In SDO Lucena, a small group of respondents reported that most teachers lacked training in handling learners with special needs. This concern was echoed by a considerable number of respondents in SDO Quezon Province and Tayabas City, suggesting that many teachers across these divisions have not received adequate preparation for inclusive education.

This finding aligns with the study conducted by Crispel and Kasperski (2019) in Israel, where ten teachers who had recently completed a special education training program were interviewed. The interviews revealed a shared sense of frustration among the teachers, stemming from the lack of preparation provided to mainstream educators for accommodating students with learning disabilities. Their experiences highlight the broader issue of insufficient

professional development in inclusive teaching practices, which continues to affect classroom instruction and the quality of support provided to learners with special needs.

Additionally, the interviewees in Crispel and Kasperski's (2019) study reported that after completing their coursework in special education, they experienced a positive shift in their attitudes and an improvement in their ability to effectively implement inclusive practices in their classrooms. This highlights the transformative impact of targeted training. Similarly, Van Mieghem et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of equipping teachers in mainstream education with the skills needed to address the special needs of their students. Their study concluded that inclusive education should not be limited to special education teachers alone. Instead, all teacher education programs should incorporate courses that prepare educators to support diverse learners. This suggests that teachers must undergo proper training before being assigned to handle learners with special needs.

Table 11
Issues and challenges encountered by School Heads in terms of Project and Program Implementation

Project and Program Implementation	Lucena City		Quezon Province		Tayabas City	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.Sufficient funds for school PPAs (Project, Program and Activities)	34	85.00	184	72.44	12	52.17
2.Availability of human resources in implementing school PPAs	15	37.50	113	44.49	11	47.83
3. There is sufficient time to conduct all school activities	26	65.00	205	80.71	14	60.87
4. Most of the teaches are willing to handle other activities aside from their teaching load	36	90.00	206	81.10	20	86.96
5. There are sufficient non- teaching personnel that will support the school program and activities	14	35.00	138	54.33	6	26.09
6. Parents have opportunities and resources to support school projects, programs and activities	27	67.50	187	73.62	15	65.22
7. Barangay officials and local government always support school activities	29	72.50	199	78.35	19	82.61
8. DepEd's project and program match on school context that led to successful outcome	36	90.00	225	88.58	19	82.61
9. DepEd's projects and programs of the school are clear and attainable	35	87.50	229	90.16	19	82.61
10. The school personnel are always ready during the implementation of PPAs (Project, Program & Activities)	37	92.50	229	90.16	22	95.65

The table above presents the challenges and issues identified by respondents regarding the implementation of school programs and projects. The results indicate that the availability of human resources for carrying out school PPAs (Programs, Projects, and Activities) was limited. In SDO Lucena City, a notable portion of respondents agreed that there was a lack of personnel to support implementation. This concern was similarly echoed by respondents from SDO Quezon Province and Tayabas City, suggesting that many schools across these divisions face difficulties due to insufficient manpower.

The survey further supported this finding, revealing that the shortage of non-teaching personnel significantly hinders the execution of school programs and activities. Respondents from all three divisions acknowledged that the number of non-teaching staff was inadequate to meet the demands of school operations. This lack of support staff places additional burdens on teaching personnel and affects the overall efficiency and success of program implementation within schools.

The study conducted by Alam and Maglantay (2025)

affirmed the dedication and adaptability of school heads and teachers in managing both instructional and administrative responsibilities. While this commitment is commendable, the study warns that sustaining such efficiency without adequate administrative support may result in overwork and eventual burnout.

Durisic and Bunijevac (2017) highlighted several factors that affect parental involvement in school activities. According to their study, many parents are overwhelmed by the demands of daily life, including low-income conditions and inflexible work schedules, which prevent them.

Table 12
Issues and challenges encountered by School Heads in terms of Stakeholders' Engagement

Stakeholders' Participation & Engagement	Lucena City		Quezon Province		Tayabas City	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1. Parents working status supports participation in school activities	36	90.00	206	81.10	20	86.96
2. School-community always participate in the school activities	28	70.00	186	73.23	19	82.61
3. Parents join school campaign and program because of they have good relationship with teachers	38	95.00	238	93.70	21	91.30
4. Parents have all resources to support school projects	23	57.50	153	60.24	13	56.52
5.Barangay and local officials prioritize school programs and activities	26	65.00	190	74.80	18	78.26
6. There is a strong commitment of stakeholders to support school activities	32	80.00	211	83.07	17	73.91
7. Stakeholders have high level of willingness to support DepEd programs	31	77.50	207	81.50	16	69.57
8. Open communication among parents and school personnel always manifested	38	95.00	243	95.67	21	91.30
9.There is a very strong community- school partnership	31	77.50	206	81.10	16	69.57
10. Complete attendance of stakeholders in school gathering and initiatives	20	50.00	132	51.97	11	47.83

Another issue identified by respondents was the limited involvement of parents in supporting school projects, programs, and activities. A significant number of respondents from SDO Lucena City, Tayabas City, and Quezon Province reported that parents lacked the opportunities and resources to actively participate in school initiatives. This concern reflects broader socioeconomic challenges that hinder parental engagement.

Durisic and Bunijevac (2017) highlighted several factors that affect parental involvement in school activities. According to their study, many parents are overwhelmed by the demands of daily life, including low-income conditions and inflexible work schedules, which prevent them from regularly participating in their children's education. Cultural norms, limited financial capacity, and low levels of educational attainment also serve as barriers to meaningful parental engagement in school programs.

The availability of funding plays a crucial role in the success of school programs and projects. These activities require financial resources to cover operational costs and ensure proper implementation. Without sufficient funding and human resources, schools struggle to carry out development initiatives effectively. Therefore, it is essential that every school is equipped with both financial and personnel support to achieve sustainable and impactful school development.

On the other hand, the respondents from three SDOs concluded that not all stakeholders were able to attend school

gatherings and initiatives. During FGD, the participants stressed out that only parents with free time were able to attend school activities.

According to study of Charles and Mkulu (2020) as cited by De Castro (2024) found out that school administrators face leadership challenges in maintaining student's academic performance, some of the difficulties faced are insufficient funding, limited collaboration with education partners, high student population, infrastructure problems, and teacher shortages.

These challenges and issues experienced by school heads in three school divisions create a great impact on the performance of school heads, teachers and learners. The school heads' management competencies will determine the success and failure of school programs, projects and activities. Their role as school leader will provide opportunities to deliver quality education amidst of issues and challenges that may arise in the school.

5. Conclusions

1. School heads faced constant change in a VUCA environment, including shifting to tech-based teaching, limited resources, unstable policies, and disaster-related disruptions. While these challenges put pressure on personnel and operations, school heads faced them with positivity.
2. The school heads exhibit great extent of management competencies in personnel management, financial and resource management, classroom instructional support, project and program implementation, and stakeholders' engagement.
3. There are no significant differences in the school heads' management competencies across the three school divisions in Quezon Province.
4. Key challenges in school management include teachers' difficulty with technology, financial instability, and lack of resources and facilities. Resistance to new teaching methods, limited staff, and weak stakeholder engagement further hinder effective school management.
5. A strategic management plan is proposed to be implemented with the participation of all school heads in the entire Schools Division Offices in Quezon province to enhance the management competencies among school heads.

6. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations were endorsed:
1. The proposed strategic management plan may be reviewed and analyzed by school administrators based on their school context prior to its actual use and implementation.
2. The extent of management competencies of school heads may be given careful attention through further research and by conducting comprehensive performance monitoring and evaluation to deepen understanding of its importance in school management and operations.
3. Local governments may be requested to prioritize education by revising policies, supporting teachers through training programs, and ensuring adequate resources, and facilities to enhance school management and learning outcomes.
4. The developed strategic management plan is also suggested to be implemented with participation of all school heads in the entire Schools Divion Offices in Quezon province to promote management competencies among school heads.

Further study may also be conducted to determine the impact of the output on the school heads management competencies upon the implementation of the strategic management plan.

Acknowledgment

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