

The Experiences of Selected Filipino Public Schools District Supervisors in the Implementation of the Rationalization Program

Bernabeth Manio¹, Inero Ancho^{2*}

¹ Department of Education – Philippines

² College of Human Ecology, University of the Philippines Los Baños – Philippines

Corresponding Author: Email Address ivancho@up.edu.ph

Abstract

This study aimed to explore the experiences of selected public schools district supervisors in a schools division in the Philippines in the implementation of the Rationalization Program. The researchers employed qualitative-phenomenological study wherein 10 public schools district supervisors were purposely selected as participants of the study. To gather data, the researchers used validated semi-structured interview guide questions. The data that were collected were subjected to thematic analysis using six phases of Braun and Clarke (2013). Results show that PSDSs experiences in the Rationalization were summarized as follows: confusing and challenging experiences, experiences lapses in management of resources and fulfilling experiences. The study will have implications on the improvement of policies related to rationalization.

Keywords: education supervisor, experiences, rationalization, public school

INTRODUCTION

Received: 10 January 2023

Accepted: 19 May 2023

Published: 30 June 2023

Every Filipino dreams of becoming successful in life and believes that education is the key to success; hence, even the poorest family strives in sending their children to school just to have a proper education thinking that their educated children will be the answer in alleviating poverty. It is clearly expressed in Article XIV of the 1987 Philippine Constitution that “the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and should take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all”.

In an effort to respond to the urgent need for a quality education and to improve the quality and efficiency of the government services, the Rationalization Program was enforced by the Department of Education (DepEd) through the issuance of DepEd Order No. 52, s. 2015, entitled New Organizational Structure of the Central, Regional, and Schools Division of the Department of Education. The Rationalization Plan was approved on November 15, 2013 by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). The approval included the rationalized structure and staffing pattern of offices at the central, regional, and school division levels. The rationalized organizational structures and staffing patterns were a result of the thorough study of the DepEd Change

Management Team (CMT) on the current structures, functions, and staffing complement of the DepEd offices vis-à-vis the long-term education reforms, requirements of the learners and the changing environment, and national government policies.

Over the years, government had the tendency to over-expand and self-perpetuate in almost every area of need of society. These areas have become regular government priorities and responsibilities. This situation results in a thin spread of government resources to a variety of concerns, especially in areas where government support is highly desirable, such as peace and order, national security and social services, among others. Government also has to keep pace with changing demands and technologies. What may have been a relevant undertaking for the government a number of years ago may no longer be necessary at the present time. For example, certain administrative functions done in the past require a number of clerks. With the advent of computers, these same tasks may need a lesser number of personnel. Moreover, global, and private sector developments may now require different regulatory frameworks. Some areas may need new regulations while other existing regulations have become counterproductive to sector growth. Hence, government must review its operations to remove redundancies / overlaps / duplication and improve its operations. In addition, the people are demanding better public services and more value for their money.

The Department of Education hires and mandates leaders to supervise all educational transactions within educational districts; they are called the public schools district supervisors. Their roles are primarily based on their respective key results areas such as instructional supervision, technical assistance in school management, monitoring and evaluation, curriculum development, enrichment and localization, learning outcomes assessment, research and technical assistance. These are found in the qualification standards for public schools district supervisors of the Civil Service Commission.

To provide more specific details on the function of the supervisor including the PSDSs, DepEd Order No. 25, s. 2020, or the National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Supervisor was released. It provides details on the functions of the supervisors which is divided into four domains: (1) Supporting curriculum and management implementation, (2) strengthening shared accountability, (3) fostering a culture of continuous improvement and (4) developing self and others. In

this memorandum, it is highlighted that public schools district supervisors have roles to perform to both the school heads and the teachers in terms of supervision and management.

Rationalization has been introduced in higher education since the 1980s (Cotton & Tuchman, 2015). In the rationalization of HEIs, the target is to give importance on the functions of managers to make things run and let the professors focus on the delivery of instruction. This gives the managerial sector of the HEIs the chance to devote their time on leadership, management and administrative functions for the benefit of the employees and the entire learning institution.

Kim, et al (2019) also mentioned that rationalization of education institutions is a global phenomenon and it reflects the kind of political system that a country has. When a higher educational institution applies rationalization, its core changes in organization include the expansion and differentiation of central administrations, the elaboration of faculty performance evaluation rules, and the emergence of engagement in vision statements. These changes, constructing universities as organizational actors, parallel the changes in higher education systems elsewhere.

One of the major leaps in organizational restructure in the Department of Education (DepEd) includes the implementation of the Rationalization Plan in 2015 which focused on the principles of decentralization and shared governance to ensure accountability and relevance to the context, and development needs of the learners and stakeholders of the various organizational levels. The cited literature and studies also magnified that rationalization is not a new concept in the world.

Higher education institutions also apply rationalization to improve their service for the clients and better quality of education for the learners. In addition, the shift to the rationalization affects personnel in the DepEd because the nature of their work has been changed. Public schools district supervisors are the ones who are most affected in the implementation of the rationalization. With the implementation of the rationalization, public schools district supervisors are pushed on the ropes because of the confusion on their primary functions. Their primary role of providing instructional supervision is being performed by the public schools district supervisors.

However, there are times that they need to perform managerial functions even though it is not clearly stated in their position description form. This gives an identity crisis on the role of the public schools district supervisor. Despite the available data in the rationalization, it was shown that there is still a need to conduct another investigation because there is scarcity of available information regarding the actual experiences of the public schools district supervisors on the implementation of the Rationalization Program.

In the Philippines, the five-year implementation of the DepEd Rationalization Program started from 2014 to 2018. In 2014 (Year 1), the DepEd prepared for actions to those affected employees, and released Notice of Organization Staffing and Compensation Actions (NOSCAs). In 2015 (Year 2), the DepEd underwent a transition to rationalized structure, specifically the ROs and SDOs transition, appointments, and drafting of office functions and job descriptions. Transition to new administration took place in 2016 (Year 3). From 2017 to 2018, DepEd ensured organizational strengthening through team formation, alignment to Basic Education M&E Framework, Compendium of Office Functions and Job Descriptions Version 2, and Establishment of Quality Management System (QMS).

The approved organizational structures are consistent with the provisions of RA 9155 in applying the principles of decentralization and shared governance to ensure accountability and relevance to the context, and development needs of the learners and stakeholders of the various organizational levels.

The introduction of the Rationalization Program to DepEd opens the path for the public schools district supervisors to have changes in their work. The primary goals and functions of the PSDSs focus now on instructional supervision. With the changes in their work, it is expected that they experience new things that are not familiar with them considering their previous functions. Confusion on the work of the PSDSs is also inevitable.

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of selected public schools district supervisors in a schools division in the Philippines in the implementation of the Rationalization Program. Specifically, it sought to provide answers on the central question: how do participant-PSDSs describe their experiences in the implementation of the Rationalization Program?

Methodology

Specifically, this study used the phenomenological approach. Phenomenological approach originated in the 20th century through the work of Edmund Husserl. It aims to “faithfully conceptualize processes and structures of mental life, how situations are meaningfully lived through as they are experienced” (Wertz, et al., 2011). The same concept is stated by Umanilo (2019) stating that phenomenology is the study of personal experiences that requires a description and interpretation of the phenomenon being assessed. The work of the researchers was to give meaning to the experiences.

Since this study explored what was experienced and how it was experienced by the selected public schools district supervisors, phenomenology was most apt to investigate the experiences and perceptions of PSDSs in the implementation of Rationalization Program. By looking through the significant experiences in their lives and careers, the study sought to understand the PSDSs point of view on the Rationalization Program and its effect in their function as well as their challenges, coping actions and desired assistance from DepEd Officials.

Selection Criteria and Participants

The participants were composed of ten (10) PSDSs from a schools division in the Philippines. They were chosen as the source of information because they were the center of the investigation. The researchers utilized a set of criteria in selecting the source of information. It was a paramount consideration that the right persons are asked to get pertinent information for the research undertaking. Frey (2018) states that the researchers could choose the participants that correspond to the objective of the study, which can provide a rich experience or data. This is done by setting parameters or qualification to be included as participants. When this is applied, valid and reliable data will be collected that will give a rich and comprehensive data analysis.

The participants, who are public schools district supervisors, were selected based on the following criteria. (1) The participants must have been a public schools district supervisor for at least five years and (2) assigned in at least two districts in his career as a public schools district supervisor.

Data Gathering Instruments

The researchers used a semi-structured interview guide which she personally developed. With qualitative research such as phenomenology, the researchers himself/herself was the research tool or the human instrument for data collection (Goulding, 2002). Thus, he or she should be able to respond and adjust during the data collection process as well as in the data analysis phase. This means that the researchers should be alert, mindful and flexible in responding to anticipated or unanticipated answers from participants for purposes of follow ups and deeper exploration of the study. He or she should also know how to process both verbal and non-verbal communications in an accurate and instantaneous manner (Usman, 2011). The interview guide consisted of preliminary questions and issues to be explored, which was expanded from the research problems. The interview guide was validated by five experts in qualitative research.

Data Gathering Procedure

When the research problems were established, the following steps were undertaken by the researchers in gathering data for the study:

1. Wrote a formal letter to the Schools Division Superintendent asking for approval of the proposed schedule of the interview and allow the selected participants who met the initial criteria set in the study to participate in the research;
2. From the list of possible participants, determined the final participants who met the criteria set by the researchers;
3. Sent the formal request to each of the participants asking for their permission to be part of the study; and
4. When the participants agreed, the researchers set a date in consideration of both interviewer's and interviewee's availability, convenience, and safety.

Data Analysis

The first phase was the familiarization with the data, which was more on ensuring that the researchers immersed themselves with the collected data through converting the recorded interview to transcripts and reading and re-reading the responses of the participants.

The second phase was coding. This entailed providing pithy labels on the salient responses of the participants that provided answers to the posted questions of the study. It was not a simple assigning a word or phrase to a response, but it was a summarized reflection of the information both in semantic and conceptual form. It was a long process because the researchers assigned codes on the responses of all the participants.

The third phase was searching for themes. The codes were arranged and grouped together to identify the similar codes. This means that the researchers needed to combine the similar responses of the participants. Themes were formulated once the researchers were done with the thorough analysis of the codes and identifying which codes were alike and different.

The fourth phase was reviewing themes. It was a tough part where the researchers needed to reanalyze and reevaluate if the themes were really providing the answers on the problem of the research. In this phase, there were constructed themes that were collapsed, combined or restructured.

The fifth phase was defining and naming themes. It allowed the researchers to explore the story behind the theme. It gave details and information about the theme that surfaced and finalized.

The final phase was writing up. This phase dealt with weaving together the analytic narratives of the data extracted from the themes. In addition, the researchers contextualized the themes through the available literature. In the end, a persuasive story on the presentation of themes was found in the final phase.

Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the results of the qualitative data gathering and analysis in reference to the aim of the study which is to describe the lived experiences of the PSDSs during the implementation of the Rationalization Program. The specific sub-aims of this study were to determine the experiences of the PSDSs in terms of leadership, management, and supervision, and the challenges that they encountered during the implementation of the Rationalization Program. The findings are to be presented in this manner.

As clearly stated in DO 24 s. 2005, there are continuing concerns in the field about how best to utilize PSDSs in relation to the SBM strengthening policy given the schools first initiative. Fast forward to several years later, although the functions of PSDSs have been clearly spelled out in the same DO, there have not been many changes in the implementation of the Rationalization Program in terms of PSDSs' function concerns.

Theme 1: Confusing and Challenging Experiences

There was a big change of the duties and functions that we used to perform. [When] RAT Program [was first implemented], we were confused [about] our mandates (PSDS 3).

The first reason for confusion that the PSDSs lamented was about their mandates. These obligations are too much but at the same time lessened at the same time. Quite ironic but understandable. For one, the PSDSs are unsure of their functions after the RAT program was implemented. As what PSDS 9 and 10 shared,

Feeling confused of our mandates, if where I really belong, what really is my main role now that I am at the division office (PSDS 9).

I struggled personally during the first 2 years, especially when it comes to some concerns and issues regarding our mandates as PSDS (PSDS 10).

The PSDSs are unsure of their functions because they have lost their administrative functions but still, they are doing the things that they have been doing before. As what the PSDSs dispensed,

They say we have no administrative functions but when they need to gather data in the field, they ask us for it (PSDS 2).

Right now, we have no administrative function, but we are the ones assessing the documents [that are] promotable to T2 and T3 (PSDS 8).

We lost the administrative function, but in some cases whenever the SDS would want us to perform certain duties like in the ranking that will just be the time for us to perform it (PSDS 9).

In my monitoring I often find absentee principals because it was announced that we no longer have administrative function or authority over them, so they do whatever they like, they report and leave the school whenever it pleases them. Then the D.O. will ask us the whereabouts of the principal if they saw him/her somewhere. Their orders are quite contradicting. They make us accountable [for] remised SHs but [announce] to the field that we have no administrative authority over the principals (PSDS 5).

We are still at a loss, because the situation would always require us to perform the duties and functions [that] we have been used to perform (PSDS 5).

Some experienced having to be extension arms of the SDS as representatives to certain stakeholders. These are the experiences of the PSDS respondents:

In terms of management, we are an extension arm of the Division office, it became broader (PSDS 10).

We are also representing the Division to our respective LGUs (PSDS 10).

The name for the office also gave confusion to the PSDSs as there were times they were referred to as “Instructional Supervisors”, which will just cover instructional supervision functions, instead of PSDS.

When I was newly installed in my district it was written in the stage “Instructional Supervisor” not PSDS during my official installation (PSDS 7).

Some principals [insist] that I am an Instructional Supervisor and I have no administrative function (PSDS 7).

Lastly in terms of mandates, these PSDSs were unsure if they should prioritize tasks related to the Curriculum Implementation Division, the School Governance and Operations Division, or the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent. As the PSDSs deplored,

We are part of the CID and yet, we are performing a lot of functions for SGOD and OSDS (PSDS 9).

Confusion on the roles to perform, be it in CID, SGOD or OSDS (PSDS 9).

Considering that there are officials higher than PSDSs, and they have subordinates, they can be considered middle level managers. According to Anicich and Hirsh (2017), middle managers have a complicated relationship with power because it is activated in the context of interpersonal relationships. In addition, they added that middle managers play different roles depending on who they are interacting with. This in itself can be confusing. To add to the exposition certain changes in the functions as reflected in DO 24 s.2005, it gets a whole lot more confusing in terms of mandates.

To extend this point, aside from the confusion as to what the PSDSs can or cannot do, they have experienced being confused about their functions because these seem to overlap with the functions of other managers in the system, specifically certain education program supervisors (EPSs). These are the testimonials of the PSDS-respondents:

Overlapping of duties and functions of EPSs and PSDSs and the work of CID and SGOD were overlapping (PSDS 3).

With the RAT Program comes restructuring of DepEd there was an overlapping of functions of the EPSs and PSDSs and there was a confusion during the interfacing of the SGOD and CID (PSDS 2).

Overlapping functions between PSDSs and EPSs. The EPSs should inform the PSDs of what and where they monitor so that we will not go to the schools they have been through. Besides, EPSs should focus [on] the learning area they are in-charge of (PSDS 5).

Confusion in performing our duties as PSDS or how about the EPSs what will their roles be (PSDS 9)?

Some experiences of the PSDSs are challenging if not confusing. Some reasons for these experiences being challenging include being tested by members and the lack of training.

PSDS 1 laments this experience:

Some principals seemed to be testing my capacity and capability as a PSDS.

Similarly, PSDS 7 had this to say about their function related experiences being challenging:

I need to prepare myself before going to the high school and private schools for possible questions because they seem to be measuring my abilities.

Aside from this, the lack of training does not help at all. The PSDSs were put in the field, to do their functions without proper training. As PSDS 3 discussed,

My experience during the first two-year implementation of the Rationalization Program was challenging because there was no training/seminar then, they just implemented it. The mandates were not clear.

The functions of the EPSs and the PSDSs were quite autonomous before the implementation of the Rationalization Program as reflected in DO 117 s. 2010 and DO 2. s.2008 respectively. However, after the implementation of the Rationalization Program, specifically DO. 25 s. 2020, there are certain key results areas that seem to overlap with each other and understandably, the people who just want to do their jobs are left confused.

To cite an example, the management of curriculum implementation key result area for EPSs seem to be one and the same as the instructional supervision key result area for PSDSs. To go deeper into this account, the EPSs are expected to conduct periodic monitoring and evaluation and submit recommendations towards enhancing the

management and delivery of the basic education curriculum. The PSDSs, on the other hand, are expected to provide guidance and instructional supervision to school heads by observing and gathering data on their strengths and development needs and then coaching them towards improved instructional leadership practices.

While the abovementioned practices can be viewed as different as to the composition and maybe the focus, it is inevitable that these overlap in practice as the enhancement of delivery will have to go through the principal as part of meaningful instructional supervision. Other key result areas are also concerns and the same as curriculum development, enrichment, and localization and while the duties and responsibilities seem to be different, EPSs are expected to submit reports and findings on curriculum innovations but the PSDSs are the ones expected to conduct monitoring and evaluation. Although in this case the EPSs duty is the extension of the PSDSs, it is quite difficult for them to undergo the activities on their own and therefore, overlapping of their activities and ultimately, functions take place.

In what seems to be a contradiction to the lamentation of the PSDSs about their functions overlapping with the EPSs is an understandable limitation to the tasks that they can do as they are the ones to give way whenever functions overlap. As what the PSDS 4 shared,

I felt I have controlled or limited actions in performing my duties and functions (PSDS 4).

The PSDSs were well aware that their instructional supervision functions include the high schools. However, this is not the case in the field. As what the PSDSs exposed,

Confusion among the high school because monitoring before was lodged among PSDSs then it was transferred to the EPSs without consultation. The effort exerted to have rapport with them became useless (PSDS 3).

[There is] a confusion in monitoring the high school. It was assigned to us by the former SDS saying that it should be K to 12 not K to 6 but [when] the new SDS comes, it was taken away from us. It was assigned to the EPSs (PSDS 4).

In their instructional supervision functions, they are the ones that should give technical assistance to the school heads. However, it is confusing as to whether they can directly address the teachers in giving technical assistance or just the school heads. These are what the PSDSs had to say:

In terms of providing technical assistance, though it is quite limited since our TA provision is indirect only, since it is the school heads that we are giving technical assistance in terms of instructional supervision (PSDS 9).

Confusion in terms of giving TA (technical assistance) during class observations whether we are just observing the principal or if we are allowed to give TA as well to teachers (PSDS 9).

As if these gaps are not yet confusing for the PSDSs, there are other experiences that add to their confusion in terms of their functions. The communication that they receive is quite confusing since some are just verbal communication. It is important to note that formal communication should be done especially in situations that call for classroom observation and providing TA. The school will understandably ask for proof that classroom observation is allowed by the division office since the schools first initiative is in effect.

According to Garvey (2019), official information disseminated through properly pre-defined media and channels, is included in formal communication. In the academe, the main stay when it comes to formal communication is the issuance of a memo that people use as proof that the task is formally assigned to them even if it is well within the scope of their functions.

However, the PSDSs experienced receiving just verbal orders and this confuses them as to whether they should go along with the task or wait for a formal communication to be done. There is a dilemma as to finish the task right away without formal communication or wait for the memo and lose precious time. Here are the testimonials of the PSDSs:

Despite the verbal order of the SDS not to observe classes, there were principals who invited me to observe classes with them and they asked for advice after class observations (PSDS 1).

A bit confused on the diverse verbal order of the former and the latter SDS. The former SDS instructed us to observe the principals, on how they provide TA to the teachers and that we should provide TA to the principals only. Then his replacement ordered us not to accompany the principals during class observations and that we should not get inside the classrooms (PSDS 2).

Aside from the absence of memo to support the PSDSs in their accomplishment of tasks, some communications done were just contradicting between and among the PSDSs and the principals. The PSDSs receive different instructions from the principals. As what PSDS 8 lamented,

Confusion in the field when they meet us, they give instruction and order which we follow then when they meet the principals, they give different instruction and order (PSDS 8).

All these reasons for confusion can be attributed to interpretation of the Rationalization Program. Different SDSs seem to have different interpretations of the Rationalization Program. This causes confusion among the members of the division office to which the PSDSs are now included. One SDS has this interpretation and then the next SDS comes and there will be changes. Furthermore, when these PSDSs communicate with their colleagues from other divisions, the practices are different. The PSDSs had this to say when it comes to interpretation differences by the SDSs and ASDSs on the Rationalization Program.

Superintendents have different interpretations on the rationalization (PSDS 10).

Conflict on the ASDS and SDS interpretation, because after the first years we were allowed to go back to our offices when we are in the field, the district offices are Division annex (PSDS 10).

There was confusion on the implementation of the RAT Program. Even the SDSs in the different SDOs in the region implement it differently; hence, there was comparison within the region (PSDS 3).

Disappointed in the first few years of RAT Program implementation because of the different ways on the implementation of SDSs in other SDOs (PSDS 7).

I was lost with my function and uncertain of what to implement in the field because of lack of clear guidance from the SDS. They have different interpretation of RAT Program and K-12 Curriculum, previous SDS did not instruct us to handle the secondary schools, comes the next SDS she instructed us to handle the secondary schools then comes the next SDS he again removed from us the secondary schools and assigned them to the EPSs (PSDS3).

This interpretation difference can be attributed to the vagueness that the Rationalization Program was put together. There were lots of inclusions that left so much for interpretation; thus, different managers have different implementations.

According to Petek et al. (2021), literature review shows that policy theory has a hard time with policy goals. This basically means that in policy making, policy goals are only taken as self-evident and use terms involving limited to basic principles instead of being laid out in precise concepts and operationalized terms.

The basicity of the terminologies used and the absence of operationalizing these in terms of the functions that PSDSs need to undertake leave so much for interpretation and hence, results in different implementations of the Rationalization Program.

On a positive note, if managers let feedback from employees reach them, this shows that the manager is committed to the success of the organization and is willing to make changes in order to see that success (Lavoie, 2014). This will also be a very good way to establish a trusting relation between the manager and his subordinates.

However, based on how these responses were composed and the corresponding deliveries, this is not the case based on the PSDSs experiences. It can actually be the other way around. This is a sign of mistrust on part of the principals and the teachers even as they are measuring or testing the capacities of the PSDSs to lead. This makes the experiences of the PSDSs in accomplishing their tasks more challenging than it already is because they have more things to worry about – what these people from school will say about them.

As it is very obvious especially for the members of the academe, trainings are extremely important. Not only this is crucial for capacity building, but this is also very vital in securing quality work from members of the organization. Needless to say, one cannot expect high quality work from someone not trained to do certain things. As Frost (2019) discussed, trainings present opportunities to expand the knowledge base of different members of the organization. Specifically, structured training and development in the workplace is very important. These trainings are contextualized to what the members will do, whatever their functions are and will ensure that they deliver based on certain quality standards set.

Theme 2: Experiences Lapses in Management of Resources

The next set of experiences that the PSDSs shared had something to do with their experiences in communications management. Communications management is the

control of communication; how, and what is being communicated by the sender to the recipient of the message (Calderon, 2015). There are four important elements in communications management: the sender, the message, the channel, and the receiver. If there are lapses in any of the four elements, the communication is bound to fail, leading to miscommunication.

One point of consideration in communications management is the channel. There may be one or several channels that messages may pass through before reaching the intended receiver. The more channels there are, the more likely that the message is altered until such a point that it is not anymore similar to the original message. This is exactly what happened to the PSDSs communications with the ASDS and the SDS even with the institution of the CID and SGOD chiefs after the Rationalization Program. Here are the experiences of the PSDSs.

Queries to the Chief of CID not promptly addressed unlike if there is no chief, we can go directly to the ASDS, or the SDS (PSDS 1).

Need to ask permission from the chief, ASDS, SDS if cannot report in the DO but will address issues and concerns in the district (PSDS 1).

It was also hard when we needed to consult the ASDS or SDS we needed to pass through the chief first (PSDS 4).

The Chief SGOD is the one signing the travel documents of the principals when in fact she doesn't really know if what she is signing is true or not because we are in the field, we are the ones who knew the whereabouts of the principals because we are in the field, and she is not (PSDS 8).

This clearly poses challenges on the part of the PSDSs on the conduct of their functions. An extra layer of communication will not help especially if important and urgently needed documents like travel documents are of concern.

Aside from extra communication channels, PSDSs also experience failed communication channels. If not extra bosses to communicate to, sometimes, the channels that they use for communication, especially in real time are the ones that give them hard times in their tasks and activities. As what PSDS 8 deplored,

There are times I can't receive communication because the school I have to monitor is located in a dead spot location; hence, in case there is an emergency meeting I can't report right away in the DO.

While this may seem to be a technical issue, there are other experiences that prove otherwise. The field functions of the PSDSs are really quite hard to conduct especially if they will be called for meetings in the division office. This is also true for the other way around. If it were not for failed communication channels, they could have done field work some other time so they will be available for these meetings or vice versa. The PSDSs have these to share:

Conflicting schedule when we need to report at the DO then there is an urgent concern in the field and then LGU also has concerns. Though we can still use cell phones, it's difficult to address issues if not face to face (PSDS 5).

I experienced a delay in providing technical assistance because we need to report to the DO (PSDS 6).

We've experienced the feeling of having only a short notice to attend meeting at the SDO while being at a far-flung area where our district is situated, where in fact we have plans already approved by the CID chief and SDS, then all of a sudden, we will be called for a meeting, and we are given short notice (PSDS 9).

Other sources of channel issues in communication are the ways and means these are done. Some are just verbal communication which is quite hard to pass on to the schools and some are just indirectly given orders.

Giving verbal orders which were quite difficult to disseminate in the field (PSDS 8).

I have often received instructions from SDS verbally only, especially when I need to perform admin functions, I usually ask for a memo so that when there will be problems, I will not be the one to be blamed (PSDS 9).

Most of our work is indirectly given to us by the SDS or the chiefs (PSDS 8).

Lastly, other stakeholders seem to not know that the Rationalization Program is already in effect and that the PSDSs report to the division office. Specifically, the LGUs do not know where to find these PSDSs and understandably, they will look for them in the district office only to find out that they are no longer there. This will result in time wastage. If the Rationalization Program was divulged to the stakeholders, this could have been avoided.

Even LGUS, DSWD, COMELEC and other Gov't units look for the PSDSs in the district office so when we report at the Division Office, they have a hard time communicating with us (PSDS 10).

Especially during this pandemic, our linkages to the LGUs is of much importance since we are bridging the communications from the field to the LGU in

reporting the needs of each school and on what help may the LGU extend to schools, especially the RISO machines granted to us (PSDS 10).

The PSDS-participants also have interesting experiences when it comes to how clear the orders are from the top management. Sometimes, what has been said is not being seen in schools. These are what the PSDSs have to say:

When the SDS ordered the principals to take charge of the learning area coordinatorship, it was not implemented in the district, it was on paper only, still the teachers were the ones who performed their duties and functions (PSDS 2).

When the SDS ordered the replacement of teacher-coordinator with principals, it was not practical and successful because it's still the teacher who has done the job. The principals did not know how to perform the work of the coordinators (PSDS 4).

Sometimes, functions taken away from these PSDSs after the Rationalization Program has been implemented are still being assigned to them.

Whether we like it or not we are forced to perform administrative functions if not should all administrative functions be thrown at the DO? Can the ASDS or SDS cater to all 500+ school heads? How about the queries of the thousands of teachers? The DO must have clear written order on that matter (PSDS 4).

Based on how the expositions went, these PSDSs are amenable to the fact that their stripped-off administrative functions will still be their tasks but not officially anymore. However, as what PSDS 4 demanded, they should be protected by some sort of a black and white. This is because sometimes, there are mismatching responses from different offices when they refer to concerns. As what PSDS shared,

There are times when I refer concerns to the SGOD and CID chiefs and ASDS their responses do not match (PSDS 5).

Lastly, in terms of communications management, since these PSDSs seem to have power stripped off them after the implementation of the Rationalization Program, they are being by-passed. However, when problems arise, they are the ones to troubleshoot. Not quite a pleasant experience. As what the PSDSs lamented,

EPSs issue memos and instructions directly to the coordinators but when there are problems or delay of reports, they seek the help of the PSDSs (PSDS 2).

They give directly to the field the directive to submit reports but when they can't gather the data on time, we are the ones being tasked to consolidate and submit the report (PSDS 8).

Before the Rationalization Program, the PSDSs had their own "D.O" which stands for District Office. They are the leaders there and they accomplish their tasks there.

However, after the Rationalization Program, they were required to report to the Division Office. They see this as quite a waste of time. PSDS 1 has this to say.

Time spent in the Division Office should be used in doing work in the district office.

Aside from this, the PSDSs see traveling as non-essential. It is not beneficial for their health and at the same time, a hassle. As what PSDS and shared,

Reporting in the DO is not beneficial to our health due to the time spent in traveling wherein the DO is quite far from the district office (PSDS 2).

[I have trouble] traveling to the DO which is quite far from my residence and the fare is very costly. It takes one hour to reach the DO whereas in the district office only 20-30 minutes (PSDS 5).

Lastly, their experiences when it comes to where they should be are not those good experiences. Their attention is always divided, and they find reporting to the division office useless.

Attention and focus were divided because we need to report at the DO; hence, we can't address concerns and issues in the field right away (PSDS 6).

While monitoring in the field then there is an emergency meeting in the DO it's quite difficult for us to attend it especially if the school is not accessible to transportation (PSDS 8).

It's useless to report to the SDO while the field really needs us, and we can be of much help and can perform our duties well if we are at the District Office (PSDS 10).

I feel I am more productive in the district than in the DO (PSDS 1).

Vast majority of unfulfilling experiences that the PSDSs encounter had something to do with the feeling of not being productive anymore. Based on the qualitative data gathered, almost all experiences have a connection to these PSDSs, being stripped off their District Offices. As PSDS 2 lamented,

I felt I was not productive in the DO. Most of the time if we were not able to bring paper works, the whole day all we did there was to daydream or talk to each other. Whereas, if we are in the field we can perform much of our mandates.

Similar experiences have been shared by the other PSDSs. Here are their experiences:

I feel useless whenever we report at the DO because I feel that we are wasting our time there. I thought before that they will give us instructions on what to do in the DO but until now there is no instruction so whenever I report at the DO I feel imbecile because we are doing nothing (PSDS 3).

I felt I was not productive in the DO because the work of the PSDS is in the field. That's why our position title is District Supervisor so we must be in the field where our work is not in the DO (PSDS 4).

Aside from the feeling of being unproductive in the division office, these PSDSs miss the feeling of having a place they can call their own. They were used to having their own offices where they can work and be a manager. The PSDSs had these to share:

When the District Officers were dismantled, I felt so demoralized. I did not know where I should stay. I even experienced eating in a carindaria because I have nowhere to go (PSDS 3).

Demoralized for not having a district office. I stay and have lunch wherever. Whenever the LGU has a letter for me I go to the central school and pick it up from the principal (PSDS 5).

Felt demoralized with self-pity because we had no district office to go to after monitoring so I brought home my paper works, files, etc. (PSDS 8).

According to Payne (2022), collaboration is the primary reason for having office spaces. This is the place where employees work together for the attainment of set goals and objectives of the organization. While office spaces are important for collaboration, this is important for managers in the context of having a place to call their own. A place where they can lead and be able to nurture the values that they think fits the organization. These PSDSs were leaders of their own offices. However, these district offices were taken away from them and it is unfulfilling on their part.

To add to the exposition, there are certain inclusion in their functions that call for privacy. With the absence of a district office, they were reduced to being office borrowers. As what PSDS 5 complained,

Whenever a principal or teacher wants to consult with me, I ask them to see me in the school where I was currently monitoring. There was no privacy. I just borrow the principal's office while talking with him/her.

Before the implementation of the Rationalization Program, these PSDSs were authority figures as well. They were in line with the supervisors in terms of authority and influence. However, after the Rationalization Program was implemented, they were not authority figures anymore and how they used to carry themselves, as well as their functions have changed. Following these changes, the principals, as well as other leader figures in school, even the teachers, have changed their ways of communicating and respecting these PSDSs. A PSDS's experience with a principal is representative of this.

One principal insisted that PSDSs are no longer indispensable in the schools, even without them the school can still operate but majority of the principals still seek the help and assistance of the PSDSs, even teachers are clamoring for the presence of the PSDSs especially if their principal is remised of her work (PSDS 2).

That principal indeed is a troublemaker for she reported to the ASDS every action of the PSDS (PSDS 2).

These principals have had this idea that the PSDSs are now just mere members of the division office as well and not the leaders they used to be. This resulted in unfulfilling experiences on the part of the PSDSs. As what PSDS 3 shared,

We were greatly affected in the implementation of the RAT Program. We were misplaced. Principals looked down on us because our previous functions which were administrative in nature were no longer included in our mandate as announced in the field verbally.

Other PSDSs seconded this lamentation. Here are their testimonials:

I felt the resistance of some principals to my presence in their schools (PSDS 4).

There were many hardheaded principals in private schools who didn't accept us in their school. They just acknowledge us only when they need our signature (PSDS 4).

Encountering hardheaded principals who don't want to submit reports on time. They give me a hard time and will tell me in my face that I have no administrative authority over them (PSDS 5).

Principals decide on their own in doing everything but when there are problems, I was the one being called to look into the problems (PSDS 7).

Part of unfulfilling experiences by the PSDSs are related to their being troubleshooters of problems they have no knowledge about. As what some PSDSs shared,

All of the problems committed by the teachers and principals we were unaware of, but we are the ones asked to address them (PSDS 8).

I did not feel that I am the extension arm of the SDS as she used to tell us. There were a lot of issues and concerns in the field, mainly administrative in nature, which were not addressed because we were prohibited from performing administrative functions (PSDS 3).

Not only the principals from public schools cause unfulfilling experiences. As PSDS also lamented not feeling welcome in private schools. Here is what PSDS shared:

I felt not welcome by the private schools because the former SDS told them that I must limit my visit to private schools (PSDS 7).

Apart from professional relationships and the power struggle, unfulfilling experiences also include PSDSs hesitation to do their functions. They are being limited as to what they can do. This may be viewed as the results of the previously discussed reasons of other unfulfilling experiences. Here are what the PSDSs said:

I felt there was a limitation of my functions that I want to implement in the district (PSDS 3).

I felt doubtful of my actions. I always thought that I might commit mistakes since I was not aware of my mandates (PSDS 3).

[I] felt the job was lessened because we used to perform a lot of functions which were not our mandate (PSDS 8).

Speaking of mandates, as much as these are confusing to the PSDSs, these also give them unfulfilling experiences. These PSDSs were used to perform administrative functions before the Rationalization Program was implemented. These times are very different.

We were not anymore allowed to perform administrative functions (PSDS 5).

Due to School-Based Management, PSDS's administrative function was removed (PSDS 8).

It is very difficult for these PSDSs to adjust to now performing administrative functions as these comprise their everyday activities before the Rationalization Program was implemented.

[I] felt difficulty not doing administrative functions which I was used to [doing] (PSDS 5).

There is, however, a gap between the loss of their administrative functions and what is happening in the workplace.

We just perform administrative duties when delegated or all these changes would trim down as our mandates (PSDS 5).

They lost their administrative functions when the Rationalization Program was implemented but when assigned to them, they can perform these functions. This is unfulfilling on the part of the PSDSs as their functions are not consistent with what they are really supposed to do. In terms of what they are supposed to do, they are being left with too little to do in schools.

In terms of management, it is more on giving technical assistance, professional advice, or guidance to the school heads but still if they insist on their decisions, they will still follow it (PSDS 5).

In terms of supervision, nothing more has changed but is still limited to giving technical assistance to enhance the competence of our school heads in providing technical assistance to their teachers, but we cannot directly give technical assistance to teachers (PSDS 5).

After the Rationalization Program was implemented, there were unfulfilling experiences that the PSDSs had. They felt more productive in the district office and since there is no more district office, they feel unproductive in the division office. There seems to be a power struggle as they are no longer viewed as authority figures. They are hesitant to perform their functions even if these tasks are assigned to them.

There are gaps in the written and verbal orders from top management. As much as possible, it is better if formal means of communication is to be done when assigning tasks. There were big changes in their duties and functions, and it is quite confusing for these PSDSs. As big as the changes were, there was not enough change management. The purpose of change management is to implement strategies for effecting change, controlling change, and helping people to adapt to change. First, change management is a systematic approach. There should be an identification of the most meaningful means for generating optimum results. Also, the focus is on the transition and transformation of certain things in the organization. Lastly, people should be helped in adapting to the said changes. These were all non-existent in practice when the Rationalization Program was implemented.

Another reason for the confusing experiences by the PSDSs is the overlapping duties between them and the Education Program Supervisors. This is the case for the EPSs and the PSDSs as they quite share the same qualification standards. The tasks have very little to no demarcation as to how to be conducted in the field. Espinheira added that people waste time doing the work that they should not be doing if responsibilities overlap. It will also be particularly difficult to develop skills if responsibilities always overlap.

Conclusions

The main purpose of the study is to explore the lived experiences of selected public schools district supervisors in the implementation of the Rationalization.

The participants had hard time in managing their times to do both functions in division office and in the district that they were handling. Furthermore, the changes made them feel that some of their functions were not clearly recognized due to inability to have their time to state their needs and feedbacks and having poor communication line or process.

The primary work and functions of the PSDSs become unclear to them during the onset implementation of the Rationalization Program. The overlapping of functions between and among the supervisors confuses the PSDSs. In addition, the tasks that they should prioritize give them confusing experiences.

An Office is needed for PSDSs to have a place for proper communication and smooth performance of their tasks especially in relation to extending professional help and exchanges with teachers, school heads and local government units. Moreover, the enhanced Rationalization Program helps the PSDSs in performing their functions more efficiently.

Considering the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby suggested. The rich experiences of the PSDSs may be shared with one another especially the newly hired ones through forming an association of the PSDSs. A time for the transition on the functions of the PSDSs may be implemented in a year so every PSDS will have a chance to adjust to them. In addition, they still need to have a place in schools so they will have an area where they can address queries from the teachers,

school heads and the local government units. Lastly, further studies on the Rationalization Program may be conducted to have richer understanding of the situation of the PSDSs focusing on effectiveness of Rationalization.

The present study is also bounded by some limitations. PSDSs were able to experience both fulfilment and hurdles in the implementation of the Rationalization Program of DepEd. Newly assigned PSDSs may not have the same experiences because they do not yet have expectations on work unlike the seasoned PSDSs.

Also, some of the challenges of the PSDSs may not be applicable for others who are assigned in nearby district offices like the time to travel to the schools. In addition, culture of people are not always the same so experiences may differ from one station to another.

References

- Anicich, E. and Hirsh, J. (2017). Why Being a Middle Manager is so Exhausting. *HarvardBusiness Review*. Retrieved from: <https://hbr.org/2017/03/why-being-a-middle-manager-is-so-exhausting>
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The Psychologist*, 26(2), 120-123.
- DO 117, s. 2010. Qualification standards for the position of education program supervisor. Retrieved from: <https://www.DepEd.gov.ph/2010/12/13/do-117-s-2010-qualification-standards-for-the-position-of-education-program-supervisor/>
- DO 2, s. 2008. Responsibilities of public schools district supervisors relative to csca programs and projects at the elementary level. Retrieved from: <https://www.DepEd.gov.ph/2008/01/14/do-2-s-2008-responsibilities-of-public-schools-district-supervisors-relative-to-csca-programs-and-projects-at-the-elementary-level/>
- DO 25, s. 2020. National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional

- Standards for Supervisors. Retrieved from:
<https://www.DepEd.gov.ph/2020/09/07/september-7-2020-do-025-s-2020-national-adoption-and-implementation-of-the-philippine-professional-standards-for-supervisors/>
- Frey, B. (2018). *Judgment Sampling*. The SAGE Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Measurement, and Evaluation
- Frost, S. (2019). The importance of training and development in the workplace. Retrieved from: <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/importance-training-development-workplace-10321.html>
- Garvey, J. (2019). What is formal communication? *Peoplegoal*. Retrieved from: <https://www.peoplegoal.com/blog/what-is-formal-and-informal-communication>
- Goulding, C. (2002). *Grounded theory: A practical guide for management, business and market researchers*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Kim, B., Hwang, H., Cho, H. and Jang, Y. (2019). The Rationalization of Korean Universities. *Springer*.
- Lavoie, A. (2014). Letting Your Employees Review You Can Lead to Personal and Professional Growth. *Entrepreneur Asia Pacific*. Retrieved from: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/239778>
- Payne, J. (2022). How important is it to have office space? *Open Sourced Workplace*. Retrieved from: <https://opensourcedworkplace.com/news/how-important-is-it-to-have-office-space#:~:text=The%20primary%20reason%20to%20have,attracting%20quality%20workforce%20and%20clients.>
- Petek, A., Baketa, N., Kekez, A., Kovačić, M., Munta, M., Petković, K., Zgurić, B. (2021). Unboxing the vague notion of policy goals: Comparison of Croatian public policies. *European Policy Analysis*. doi:10.1002/epa2.1106

Umanailo, M. (2019). *Overview Phenomenological Research*. University of Iqra Buru, Indonesia

Usman, A. (2011). *A grounded theory on the making of great educational leaders*. In The Summit. City of San Fernando, Pampanga: University of the Assumption Graduate School.

Wertz, F., et al. (2011). *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: Phenomenological psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and intuitive inquiry*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Funding

This paper is self-funded.

Conflict of interest

Not applicable.