

Educational Policies Through The Lens of Seasoned Teachers

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Abstract. This study explored the lived experiences of seasoned teachers in the implementation of educational policies, with the goal of understanding the challenges they face and the strategies they adopt to navigate the complex realities of classroom instruction amid evolving policy demands. Specifically, it examined the ways in which experienced teachers interpret, adapt, and respond to educational policies while maintaining effective teaching practices. Using a phenomenological approach, the study engaged participants in in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Data were analyzed through coding and thematic analysis, surfacing key insights relevant to both practice and policy. In response to the first research objective, understanding the experiences of seasoned teachers in policy implementation, themes included Navigating Policy Changes and Shifting Priorities, Limited Involvement in Policy-Making Processes, Coping with Resource Constraints in Policy Implementation, and Balancing Policy Compliance with Professional Autonomy. The second objective revealed three major themes: Collaborative Support Systems and Peer Learning, Professional Adaptability and Resourcefulness, and Reflective Practice and Continuous Learning. Teachers emphasized the importance of teamwork, informal mentoring, and the continuous updating of skills to make policies work effectively within their local context. From the perspective of school leadership, the study yielded significant insights. School heads played a critical role in facilitating policy implementation. The emergent themes included Adapting to Policy Shifts: Challenges and Strategies, The Impact of Policy on Teacher Autonomy and Professional Judgment, and Support Systems for Policy Implementation: The Role of Collaboration and Leadership.

KEY WORDS

1. Educational Policies
2. Seasoned Teachers
3. Policy Implementation
4. Professional Autonomy
5. Teacher Coping Mechanisms
6. Collaborative Leadership

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1. Introduction

The successful implementation of educational policies is central to the progress and effectiveness of school systems. In basic education, school heads are front-line leaders tasked with translating national mandates into practical and meaningful local initiatives. This role is particularly complex for newly appointed school heads, who must immediately navigate institutional expectations, administrative demands, and community dynamics while ensuring that reforms align with the real needs of their school environments. These early experiences offer vital insights into how policies are enacted and highlight the structural and cultural factors that influence implementation outcomes. Although new school leaders often bring fresh energy

and innovative ideas, they face a steep learning curve. They must quickly internalize policy frameworks, meet performance standards set by the Department of Education (DepEd), and address the expectations of teachers, learners, parents, and the wider community. Balancing administrative responsibilities with instructional leadership, all while fostering a favorable school climate, presents significant challenges—especially in resource-limited settings. These experiences reveal the tension between the design of national policies and their actual implementation at the grassroots level, particularly in bureaucratically complex and culturally diverse school systems (Navarro Basilio, 2022). Globally, these challenges are not unique to the Philippines. Research from countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada reveals that newly appointed school heads often lack adequate preparation for the demands of their roles. A well-documented gap exists in induction and mentorship programs designed to support new leaders in transitioning into these roles (Bush Glover, 2019; Moore, 2020). Without targeted training in strategic planning, instructional leadership, and change management, many individuals struggle to translate policy goals into actionable strategies. As a result, even well-conceived reforms risk failure at the point of implementation. Harris and Jones (2021) argue that systems of continuous leadership support are crucial in enabling new principals to navigate change effectively and lead schools toward meaningful improvement. Resistance to change from experienced staff is another persistent issue. Fullan (2021) notes that entrenched school cultures can act as barriers to innovation, particularly when staff view new policies as externally imposed and disconnected from local realities. For novice school heads, managing this resistance requires emotional intelligence, communication skills, and a collaborative leadership approach. This is where seasoned teachers play a pivotal role.

Their deep institutional knowledge and practical insights can either facilitate or hinder policy implementation, depending on whether their voices are acknowledged and integrated into decision-making processes. International studies also show that disparities in resource allocation amplify these leadership challenges. According to the OECD (2019), school leaders in disadvantaged areas frequently operate with insufficient financial, human, and technological resources, making uniform policy implementation nearly impossible. These inequities exacerbate achievement gaps and hinder national reform efforts. Viewed through the lens of veteran educators, it becomes evident that leadership capacity alone is insufficient—systemic support mechanisms and context-specific strategies are also essential for success. In the Philippines, these global challenges are echoed—and often intensified—by local conditions. Newly appointed school heads in rural and geographically isolated areas face severe shortages of learning materials, infrastructure, and qualified personnel. Delos Santos and Javier (2023) report that the unequal distribution of resources continues to hinder DepEd’s reform agenda, especially in marginalized communities. Seasoned teachers, having weathered multiple policy shifts, often highlight the recurring disconnect between policy rhetoric and on-the-ground realities. Their perspectives emphasize the importance of culturally and contextually responsive policy design. Moreover, while DepEd has introduced training programs through the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP), these initiatives are often criticized for being too theoretical and detached from the lived experiences of school leaders (Torres Mendoza, 2021). New principals frequently report being overwhelmed by bureaucratic tasks while feeling ill-equipped to manage pedagogical, relational, and community leadership demands. In such instances, the informal mentorship of seasoned teachers becomes indispensable. Their tacit knowledge

and historical understanding of the school's culture can serve as stabilizing forces during times of change. The situation in Matanao I District illustrates many of these national and international trends. In this context, national policies often do not reflect the socio-economic and cultural realities of the schools they are intended to serve. Programs designed in centralized offices can fail when they lack local relevance or logistical feasibility. School heads encounter resistance from stakeholders who view such initiatives as misaligned with community priorities. Veteran educators in these areas consistently advocate for more participatory and decentralized approaches to policymaking—ones that recognize the distinctive needs and capacities of each school community (Reyes Tamayo, 2024). In summary, examining educational policies through the lens of seasoned teachers offers a critical insight into the realities of implementation. Their accumulated insights shed light on systemic gaps, leadership struggles, and the nuanced dynamics of reform at the school level. By elevating their voices in both research and policy discourse, stakeholders can design more inclusive, context-aware strategies that empower new school heads and advance equitable educational outcomes. Such an approach not only acknowledges the value of professional experience but also fosters a more coherent and sustainable framework for educational change.

1.1. Purpose of the Study—The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences and perspectives of seasoned teachers regarding the implementation of educational policies issued by the Department of Education. It seeks to identify which policies they perceive as most beneficial or detrimental to learners and to understand the motivating and demotivating factors that influence their engagement with these reforms. By examining how experienced teachers interpret and respond to educational policies, the study aims to reveal insights into the real-world impact of policy on teaching practices, school

culture, and learner outcomes, especially in contexts where students face barriers to achieving their educational aspirations.

1.2. Research Questions—What do the seasoned teachers face the experiences in implementing educational policies? 2. How do seasoned teachers cope with the challenges of implementing educational policies? 3. What insights can be drawn from the experiences of the school heads?

Division Supervisors plan projects and prepare activities to support teachers in implementing all DepEd policies. School heads would have a better understanding of the most significant factors that affect teachers in giving the best lessons to learners. Obtaining a college degree not only enhances earning potential; it also alters one's worldview, prompting further intellectual, social, academic, and often spiritual growth. Additionally, this will enable school leaders to plan for ancillary functions strategically. School Heads will have an overview of the respondents' experiences and how they have overcome the challenges. This accomplishment may be even more significant, as its impact may also extend to other family members. Lastly, this study will serve as a source of perspective for future researchers as they conduct a comparable or similar investigation. While national data indicate a significantly larger number of students are pursuing a college education, those from college-educated families typically benefit from advantages.

1.2.1. Education Policies—Refer to the principles and government guidelines that shape the operation, governance, and overall direction of educational systems. These policies encompass a wide range of issues, including curriculum standards, teacher qualifications, student assessment methods, school funding, inclusion practices, and administrative procedures.

1.2.2. School Heads—Responsible for the overall management and administration of the school, including overseeing academic pro-

grams, managing staff, ensuring compliance with education policies, maintaining school facilities, and fostering a positive school culture. School heads play a crucial role in shaping the educational environment, implementing policies, and driving improvements to enhance student learning and outcomes.

1.2.3. Policy Implementation—This involves translating the guidelines, rules, and objectives set out in the policies into practical steps and activities that achieve the desired outcomes. Policy implementation encompasses several stages, including planning, resource allocation, staff training, monitoring, and evaluation.

1.3. Review of Significant Literature—

1.3.1. Educational Reform and Policy Development—Educational reform in the U.S. traces back to early efforts like Boston Latin School (1635) and progressed through Horace Mann’s common school movement, Dewey’s progressive education, the Coleman Report (1966), and *A Nation at Risk*. Subsequent reforms like the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2021) aimed to address educational inequality and improve accountability (U.S. Department of Education, 2021, 2022). Despite reforms, disparities in academic performance persist across student groups (Education Trust, 2019), prompting initiatives such as the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association, 2020) and leadership-based solutions (Thompson et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2023; Leithwood et al., 2024).

1.3.2. Leadership and School Effectiveness—Strong leadership plays a pivotal role in school success. Effective principals align structures, staff, and practices to student needs (Leithwood et al., 2024; Davis et al., 2023; Portin et al., 2022). Leadership standards developed by ISLLC and CCSSO help define expectations (Sanders Kearney, 2020; Canole Young, 2021). Sergiovanni (2019, 2020) emphasized

a shift from managerial to values-based leadership rooted in organizational culture. Principals influence student outcomes more through supportive environments than direct instruction (Seashore-Louis et al., 2020; Branch, Hanushek, Rivkin, 2023).

1.3.3. Principal Training and Development—With increased accountability, principals require high-quality, experience-based training (Davidson et al., 2020; Johnston et al., 2021). Programs like the Rainwater Leadership Alliance and The Wallace Foundation’s Principal Pipeline Initiative emphasized defined competencies, mentoring, data tracking, and tailored support (Cheney et al., 2020; Hitt et al., 2022; Turnbull, Riley, MacFarlane, 2021). Hallinger and Murphy (2023) stressed the importance of balancing instructional and operational leadership through capacity building.

1.3.4. Challenges for Seasoned Teachers and Implementation of Policies—Seasoned educators face challenges implementing evolving policies. Leadership responsibilities such as vision-setting, discipline, and performance expectations correlate with student achievement (Marzano et al., 2020; Glanz, Shulman, Sullivan, 2020). However, principal evaluation systems often lack effectiveness and accountability (Stronge, Xu, Leeper, 2021; Palacios, 2023), limiting meaningful differentiation in leadership effectiveness.

1.3.5. Role of Schools and Districts—Professional development policies aligned with practice improve outcomes (Slabine, 2021). District leaders from high-performing districts advocate for flexible, locally responsive approaches to curriculum and assessment (Large Countywide and Suburban District Consortium, 2021; Shannon Bylsma, 2020). Thriving districts function as learning communities and invest in leader development and data-driven improvement (McLaughlin Talbert, 2023).

1.3.6. Policy Implementation and Leadership—The traditional policy cycle—from prob-

lem identification to evaluation—is often non-linear and politically influenced (Sutton, 2019; Clay Schaffer, 2019). Effective implementation hinges on early planning, leadership, coordination, and stakeholder communication (Hudson et al., 2019; Knill et al., 2021; Howlett et al., 2019). Tools like SWOT, PESTLE, and causality mapping aid in developing viable, ethical policy options (Mintrom, 2020; Martini, 2020; Pomeroy et al., 2020).

1.3.7. Innovation and Evaluation in Policy—Policy labs and stakeholder engagement foster innovation and enhance responsiveness (Hinrichs-Krapels et al., 2020; Locked, 2021). Evaluations, guided by OECD criteria (2021), ensure continuous improvement, relevance, and impact (Johnson, 2020; Everett, 2023).

1.3.8. Case Example: Indonesia’s Zoning Policy—Indonesia’s zoning system for student admissions aimed to promote equity but revealed disparities in implementation (Hijrawardi et al., 2020; Dewi et al., 2019). The program highlights how policy success relies on effective governance, stakeholder support, and careful planning (Langkai et al., 2019; Iqbal et al., 2021).

1.4. Synthesis—Educational policies significantly shape the landscape of teaching and learning, and seasoned teachers offer a unique and critical perspective on how these policies affect classroom realities. With years of experience navigating various reforms and mandates, veteran educators serve as valuable witnesses to the evolving priorities of the education system. Their insights highlight the alignment—or disconnect—between policy intentions and actual implementation on the ground. From the viewpoint of seasoned teachers, many educational policies often appear ideal in theory but face challenges in practice. These teachers emphasize that while policies aim to improve instructional quality, enhance learner outcomes, and professionalize teaching, they sometimes overlook the complexity of classroom contexts.

Issues such as inadequate resources, rigid structures, and top-down implementation hinder the effective execution of well-meaning reforms. Many seasoned teachers express concerns about the rapid succession of policy changes, often occurring without sufficient consultation or preparation. They note that frequent shifts in curriculum, assessment strategies, and administrative requirements can lead to confusion, burnout, and a sense of instability among educators. This highlights the importance of involving experienced teachers in policy development to ensure practical applicability and long-term sustainability. Despite challenges, veteran educators also acknowledge positive aspects of certain policies, especially those that promote inclusivity, learner-centered approaches, and professional development. When adequately supported, these reforms have led to improvements in classroom instruction and student engagement. However, seasoned teachers consistently advocate for clearer communication, longer implementation timelines, and localized adaptation to make policies more effective. In conclusion, viewing educational policies through the lens of seasoned teachers provides policymakers and stakeholders with essential feedback. Their lived experiences reveal both the strengths and shortcomings of existing reforms, emphasizing the need for grounded, consultative, and well-supported policymaking. By listening to the voices of experienced educators, the education system can move toward more meaningful and impactful change.

1.5. Theoretical Lens—This study was grounded in the Theory of Model Policy Implementation, as proposed by VanMeter and Van Horn. A model approach to the implementation of policies formulated by Van Meter and Van Horn was called A Model of Policy Implementation (1975). This implementation process is an abstraction or performance of a policy that is deliberately designed to achieve high-performance implementation of policies, taking into account

the correlations among variables. This model assumes that the implementation of the policy runs linearly from political decisions to the performance of public policy. This model explains that several interrelated variables influence policy performance.

1.5.1. Standards and Targets of Policies/Measures and Policy Objectives—The performance of policy implementation can be measured by the success rate of measures and policy objectives that are realistic in light of the existing socio-cultural level of policy implementers. When the size and policy targets are too ideal (utopian), it will be difficult to realize (Agustino, 2020). Van Meter and Van Horn (in Sulaiman, 2019) proposed to measure the performance of policy implementation must assert specific standards and targets to be achieved by implementing policies, performance appraisal policy is basically atop a top-level achievement standard and goals. An understanding of the general purpose of a standard is an important policy objective. Successful policy implementation could be a failure (frustrated) when the executors (Officials), are not fully aware of the standards and policy objectives. The direction of the disposition of the implementers (implementors) to standards and policy objectives is also a "crucial". Implementors might be failing to carry out the policy because they refused or did not

understand the objectives of the policy. The success of policy implementation depends on the effective utilization of available resources. Humans are the most important resource in determining the success of policy implementation. Each stage requires the implementation of quality human resources appropriate to the work implied by the policies established by the apolitical organization. In addition to human resources, financial resources and time become crucial factors in the successful implementation of the policy. According to Van Meter and Van Horn, the implementing organization has six variables that must be considered, namely: competence and number of staff, range and degree of control, political support, organizational strength, degree of openness and freedom of communication, and the relationship between these factors. The figure illustrates three inter-related concepts regarding the implementation of DepEd policies in the classroom by school heads. First, on the left, it highlights the ****experiences of school heads**** as they implement various policies mandated by the Department of Education (DepEd). These experiences may include both the challenges and successes they encounter while ensuring compliance with national educational standards. It highlights their direct role in translating policy into practice within the unique contexts of their schools.

At the center of the diagram is the overlapping area, which focuses on the ****coping mechanisms employed by school heads**** in implementing these DepEd policies. This intersection signifies that the experiences school heads face are not isolated from how they adapt or respond to the pressures and demands of policy implementation. Coping mechanisms may involve strategic management, emotional resilience, or collaborative efforts with teachers and staff to ensure that policies are effectively implemented, despite potential obstacles.

Lastly, on the right side of the diagram, the concept shifts towards educational management insights drawn from the study. These insights represent the broader understanding gained from examining both the experiences and coping mechanisms of school heads. This section suggests that valuable lessons about leadership, policy implementation, and school management can be derived, offering practical solutions and strategies to enhance the effectiveness of educational administration in the future.

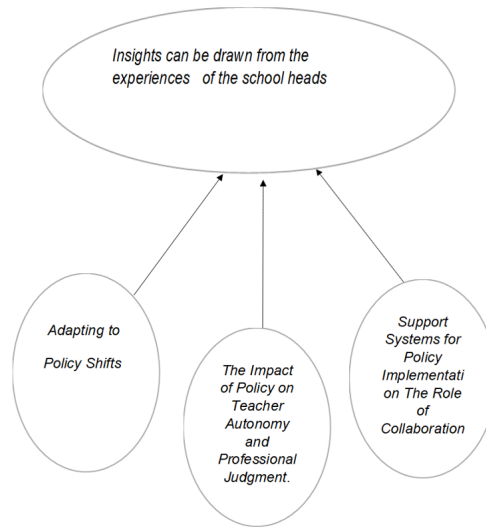


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework of the study

2. Methodology

This chapter introduces the methods used in conducting the study and gathering data. This also included the research design, philosophical assumptions, research participants and sampling, data collection, research instruments, the trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations. The three most common qualitative methods were participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. Each method was particularly suited for obtaining a specific type of data. Participant observation was appropriate for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviors in their usual contexts. In-depth interviews (IDI) were optimal for collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics were explored. Focus groups were effective in eliciting data on the cultural norms of a group and in generating broad overviews of issues of concern to the cultural groups or subgroups represented. Patton (2019) defined phenomenology as an inquiry which asked the question, "What is the structure and essence of the experience of this phenomenon for these people?" The goal of this research aligns well with this definition in its attempt to understand the experiences of teachers as they compare the implementation of this concept then and now. Giorgi (2019) cautioned researchers to be prepared for an investigation that was greater in both depth and breadth than the offered description implied. He suggested information be viewed as only the tip of the iceberg.

2.1. Philosophical Assumptions —A decent study task spans the range of the topic, problem, or area of interest, as well as the paradigm. Stanage (2019) traced the 'paradigm' back to its Greek (paradeigma) and Latin origins (paradigm) meaning pattern, model, or example. A paradigm is the patterning of a person's thinking; it is a principal example among others, an exemplar or model to follow, according to which design actions are taken. Differently stated, a paradigm is an act of submitting to a view (Stanage (2019)). This view is supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2020) who define a research paradigm as a "basic set of beliefs that guide action", dealing with first principles, 'ultimates' or the researcher's worldview or philosophy. In developing research methodologies, three types of philosophical assumptions are used. Epistemological assumptions involve subjective evidence collected through field studies.

Axiological assumptions take into account the biases of the researcher and actively report them. This approach is used to establish whether the environment being studied is a product of the behavior that is encountered or if the behavior is a product of the environment (Pring, 2019).

2.1.1. Ontological—Refer to the nature of the reality of the subject that is being researched. The latter assumption is best suited to my study as a qualitative researcher, I believe that these realities as perceived by different individuals. I also believe that these realities are heavily shaped by their experiences. Using phenomenology as a methodology, this study focused on the teachers' opinions, feelings, experiences, and inner thoughts concerning their knowledge, values, and skills acquired. It adopted a realistic ontology, following the physical world where I, as the researcher, assumed the existence of a world of causes and effects. It was not an ontology of mechanical causes caught in cause-effect relationships; rather, in this study, I assumed that certain realities existed in the world and could influence the way students progressed to the next level. Ontological assumptions refer to the nature of the reality being researched by the subject. The latter assumption is best suited to my study as a qualitative researcher, I believe that these realities as perceived by different individuals. I also believe that these realities are heavily shaped by their experiences. Using phenomenology as a methodology, this proposed study focuses on the teachers' opinions, feelings, experiences, and inner thoughts concerning their knowledge, values, and skills acquired. It adopts a realistic ontology, following the physical world, where I, as the researcher, assumed the existence of a world of causes and effects. It is not the ontology of mechanical causes caught in the cause-effect relationships; rather, in this study, the researcher assumed that some realities exist in the world and may affect the way teachers proceed to the next level. Thus, as qualitative re-

searchers follow a realistic ontology, they view it as a casual reality.

2.1.2. Axiology—Refers to the role of values in research. Creswell (2019) avers that the role of values in a study is significant. Axiology suggests that the researcher openly discusses the values that shape the narrative and includes their own interpretation in conjunction with the participants' interpretations. I uphold the dignity and value of every detail of information obtained from the participants. The researcher understands the personal and value-laden nature of the information gathered from the study. I therefore preserved the merit of the participant's answers and carefully interpreted them in the light of the participant's interpretation.

2.1.3. Rhetoric—This philosophical assumption emphasizes that the researcher may write in a literary, informal style, using the personal voice and employing qualitative terms and concise definitions. In the context of the study, the researcher used the first person to explain the experiences and coping mechanisms of the PE teachers and thoroughly discussed their responses during the interview.

2.2. Qualitative Assumptions —The methodology was a creative and responsive approach to understanding questions and subject matter. In this study, the experiences of the newly hired teachers were gathered through in-depth interviews (IDI), and their coping strategies were extracted from the participants. The researcher's curiosity about the experiences of the new teachers became the basis for conducting qualitative research, which Kalof and Dietz (2019), as cited by Gerodias (2023), considered helpful for uncovering "meanings and motivations that underlie cultural symbols, personal experiences, and phenomena." By using phenomenology, this need was addressed by presenting the stories of newly hired teachers in a manner that, as David (2020) wrote, revealed the themes, symbols, and meanings of their experiences. Phenomenological research

was based on two premises. The first was that experience is a valid, rich, and rewarding source of knowledge. According to Becker (2019), as cited by Morrissey and Higgs (2020), experience is a source of knowledge and shapes one's behavior. From the definition, human experience is viewed as a cornerstone of knowledge about human phenomena, rather than an unreliable source. The second premise of phenomenological research is that the everyday world is a valuable and productive source of knowledge, and that we can gain significant insights into ourselves and the nature of an event by analyzing how it occurs in our daily lives (Morrissey Higgs, 2020). By doing phenomenology, which is concerned with the "what" and the "how" (Moustakas, 1995), the researcher hoped that the subjective experiences and perspectives of the participants who happen to be newly hired would provide highlights as to how the program was implemented before the pandemic and the present execution of the program.

2.3. Design and Procedure—This study employed a narrative design within a qualitative approach, utilizing my experiences to explore the positive impact of a good parent-teacher connection on learners and to address the research questions. According to De Franco (2021), by definition, qualitative research is primarily exploratory, aiming to gain insight into underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. This type of research provides an understanding of the problem and helps in developing ideas or hypotheses for possible quantitative research. Additionally, by employing qualitative research, it would be easier to uncover trends in thoughts and opinions, and gain in-depth knowledge about the problem. Moreover, Creswell (2019) described a qualitative study as an exploration of social or human problems through the inquiry process. It is based on a compound, general picture, created in words, reporting detailed views of participants, and often conducted in a natural setting. Additionally, Denzin and Lincoln (2019)

define this type of research as an attempt to deduce the meaning of a particular phenomenon in terms of how people attribute meaning to it. It involves various research designs such as phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and field research. In this research, the design used was phenomenology. Creswell (2019) defined phenomenology as understanding the essence of experiences related to a phenomenon. It was an approach to qualitative research that explored the lived experiences of participants within a specific group. In 2010, Creswell stated that its fundamental goal was to describe the nature of a certain phenomenon. Moreover, Maxwell (2023), as cited by Chambers (2023), stated that phenomenology sought to extract the purest and most precise data in interpretation, and bracketing was commonly used to document personal experiences with the subject, helping to remove the researcher from the process. As a researcher, I used phenomenology since the data I gathered were based on the experiences of my participants. This served as an instrument/tool in understanding the experiences of human beings regarding a certain phenomenon. This study aimed to set aside biases and preconceived notions about human feelings, responses, and experiences in specific situations. With this, it provided me, as the researcher, with an open space to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives, feelings, and perceptions of those who had lived within the phenomenon or situation of interest. By studying the perspectives of multiple participants, a researcher can begin to make generalizations about what it was like to experience a certain phenomenon from the perspective of those who have lived through it. Certain philosophical assumptions were employed in the development of the research methodology. Epistemological assumptions were based on subjective evidence gathered from field investigations and used to gain knowledge about the accessibility of the place. Axiological assumptions were accounted

for by the researcher and actively reported, as they were used to determine whether the environment being investigated was a result of the observed behavior. Ontological assumptions refer to the nature of reality as perceived by the subject being researched. The latter assumption was best suited to my study because, as a qualitative researcher, I believed that different individuals perceived these realities and were heavily shaped by their experiences. The phenomenological design interprets experiences or facts by listening to the participants' accounts and providing the meaning of those experiences (Creswell, 2019). It described the structures of experiences as they presented themselves to consciousness, without recourse to theory, deduction, or epistemological rhetoric assumptions from other disciplines. The design examined the phenomena through the subjective eyes of the participants and described the meaning of the experiences for several individuals regarding a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2019).

2.4. Ethical Considerations—In this section, I will outline the ethical principles that will guide my research, ensuring the protection and well-being of the ten seasoned teacher participants from Matanao I District, Davao Del Sur Division, as they share their perceptions on the role of data-driven management in academic improvement. These principles include my commitment to social value, informed consent, addressing the vulnerability of research respondents, upholding privacy and confidentiality, carefully considering risks, benefits, and safety, ensuring justice, maintaining transparency, acknowledging my qualifications as the researcher, addressing potential conflicts of interest, ensuring the adequacy of resources, and recognizing community relevance.

2.4.1. Social Value—I recognize the significant social value of this research. By examining the experiences and perspectives of seasoned teachers through the lens of Educational Policies, particularly those related to academic

improvement within the Matanao I District, this study aims to deepen our understanding of how these policies influence teaching practices and student outcomes. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for school administrators, policymakers in the Davao Del Sur Division, and educators themselves. Such insights can guide the development of more effective policy implementation strategies, targeted professional development programs, and ultimately support sustained academic improvement across the district.

2.4.2. Informed Consent—I ensured that each of the ten seasoned teacher participants from Matanao I District provided their informed consent. Prior to their involvement, I clearly explained the study's purpose, the data collection methods I used (such as individual interviews or a focus group discussion), the estimated time commitment required, and their absolute right to withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequences. I provided a detailed consent form outlining these aspects, and I only proceeded with their participation once I was confident they fully comprehended the information and voluntarily agreed to participate.

2.4.3. Vulnerability of Research Respondents—I acknowledged that seasoned teachers, while experienced professionals, might have had established perspectives on Educational Policies that they were hesitant to share openly, especially if they perceived potential implications for their professional practice or evaluations. Recognizing this potential vulnerability, I was committed to creating a research environment characterized by trust, respect, and openness. I explicitly assured participants that their participation was entirely voluntary and that their responses would be kept strictly confidential and anonymized in any reporting of the findings. I aimed to empower them to share their experiences and perspectives honestly, knowing their input would be valued and would not

lead to any negative repercussions within their school or professional lives.

2.4.4. Privacy and Confidentiality—I prioritized the privacy and confidentiality of all participating seasoned teachers from the Matanao I District. I understood the importance of creating a secure space for them to share their perceptions on the role of Educational Polices in academic improvement. To ensure this, I implemented stringent measures to protect their identities and the confidentiality of their responses. Each participant was assigned a unique code, and all collected data was stored securely with access limited solely to me. In any dissemination of my findings, I presented the data in an aggregated form, ensuring that no individual teacher or the specific school could be identified.

2.4.5. Risks, Benefits, and Safety—I carefully considered the potential risks to the participating seasoned teachers, which I anticipated to be minimal, primarily involving the time they dedicated to the study and perhaps some reflection on their experiences with educational policies and practices. However, I believed the benefits of their participation were significant. By sharing their experiences and insights, they contributed to a valuable understanding of how different policies were perceived and utilized by experienced educators. This knowledge could inform the development of more effective and teacher-friendly policies, systems, and professional development, ultimately benefiting both teachers and their colleagues. I ensured that all data collection activities were conducted with respect for their time and professional obligations, prioritizing their comfort and well-being throughout the process.

2.4.6. Justice—I was committed to ensuring justice in this research by selecting ten seasoned teacher participants from Matanao I District who met the criteria of having at least ten years of teaching experience in public schools. I aimed to gather perspectives from experienced

educators who had likely witnessed the evolution of educational policies. Furthermore, I ensured that the study's findings were shared with the participating teachers and, potentially, the school administration, providing them with access to insights that could inform their ongoing efforts to leverage policies for academic improvement. My goal was to ensure that the knowledge gained from their participation was shared and potentially beneficial to their professional practice and the wider educational community within the district.

2.4.7. Transparency—I understood that transparency was crucial for building trust and fostering open communication. Throughout this research process, I maintained clear and open lines of communication with the participating teachers. I ensured they were well-informed about the study's objectives, my methodologies, and the potential impact of their contributions. I was also readily available to address any questions or concerns they had, fostering a collaborative and respectful research environment.

2.4.8. Qualification of the Researcher—As the researcher undertaking this thesis, I brought a strong foundation of relevant qualifications that were essential for conducting ethical and impactful research on educational policies. I possessed a comprehensive understanding of educational leadership, data analysis in educational contexts, and the perspectives of teachers on administrative practices. My skills in qualitative research methodologies, including in-depth interviewing and thematic analysis, equipped me to gather rich and nuanced data on teachers' perceptions. Furthermore, I was deeply committed to ethical research practices, ensuring the confidentiality and respect required when exploring teachers' professional experiences and opinions on administrative practices. My analytical abilities and dedication to accurate interpretation allowed me to draw meaningful conclusions from the teachers' valuable insights.

2.4.9. Conflict of Interest—I was vigilant in identifying and addressing any potential conflicts of interest that might arise from my connections with Matanao I District, the participating teachers, or the Department of Education regarding educational policies and initiatives in schools. Should any such conflicts, perceived or actual, have emerged, I disclosed them transparently and took steps to ensure they did not compromise the integrity and objectivity of my research. My priority was to conduct unbiased and trustworthy research that accurately reflected the teachers' experiences and made a meaningful contribution to understanding different policies.

2.4.10. Adequacy of Resources—I ensured that the participation of the seasoned teachers from Matanao I District was facilitated with adequate resources and minimal disruption to their demanding schedules. I was flexible in arranging data collection activities, such as individual interviews, at times and locations that were convenient for them within their school setting, in coordination with the school administration. I also provided any necessary materials or support to ensure their participation was as smooth and comfortable as possible. I was committed to respecting their time and valuable experience.

2.4.11. Community Involvement —I believed this research held significant relevance for the educational community in Matanao I District and the wider Davao Del Sur Division. By focusing on the perceptions of seasoned teachers regarding the role of policies in academic improvement, the findings could provide valuable feedback to school and district leadership. This could inform the development of more effective data utilization policies, professional development opportunities, and overall strategies for leveraging data to enhance teaching and learning outcomes within the district. it more concise or adjusted!

2.5. Research Participants—In the identification of these research informants, there were

ten (10) seasoned teachers, (1) either male or female, from Matanao I District, Davao Del Sur Division. (2) at least 10 years in the service in public school teaching. Purposive sampling was employed, exemplified by the key informant technique, wherein one or a few individuals were solicited to act as guides to a culture (Tongco, 2020). I used a referral system to access teachers who would help qualify my criteria. This system was also called snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a non-probability-based sampling technique used to gain access to hard-to-reach populations. The participants were purposely chosen to ensure that the necessary information could be expedited for the study. However, the application of snowball sampling was later appropriated to gather the exact data needed to answer the research questions. Moreover, the identity of my participants was strictly valued and respected under the "ethics of research." Hence, the researcher's interaction with them was collegial and morally upright.

2.6. Research Instruments—Qualitative analysis was established the study's credibility, transferability, and dependability. The participants' experiences were audio-recorded during a semi-structured focus group discussion interview. Each participant will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion, which is expected to last approximately three hours. Interview Guide. I prepared five open-ended questions for the semi-structured interview to gather additional information and supporting answers to validate the study's findings. The interview questions were designed to align with the study's research questions and objectives.

2.7. Role of the Researcher—In this study, I undertook multiple roles to ensure the research's success. Initially, I sought permission to conduct the study, starting with the school division superintendent and then obtaining consent from the participants. After securing approval, I conducted and recorded the interviews

essential to this type of research. The primary aim of these interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of school heads, particularly in their efforts to create and sustain innovation within their schools. Additionally, the discussions explored how the Department of Education could enhance its programs to further support school development and innovation, underscoring the crucial role of school heads in driving positive change.

2.8. Data Collection—Data was collected to reproduce real-life communication scenarios in which the participants made oral or written contributions useful for research purposes and their learning process. Establishing rapport with the participants was a crucial step that enabled them to provide high-quality data. To collect information, I developed protocols or written forms for recording data, such as interviews or observations. Additionally, I anticipated potential issues that might hinder or contribute to the loss of information. In this study, I employed the following data-gathering steps. I asked the Schools Division Superintendent for permission to conduct the study in Matanao I District, Davao Del Sur. I secured the superintendent's permission by sending a letter that explained the study's objectives and the participants' identification, along with an attached copy of Chapters 1 and 2 and the research instrument. I only started after I received the Superintendent's approval. I then asked for permission from the school heads. After securing approval from the SDS, I sent letters to the principals or school heads of the identified schools, explaining the study that would be conducted in their schools. I obtained consent from the participants, considering their consent as a priority for the study. The participants were adequately oriented about the whole study process and their roles as participants. I conducted the interviews using the interview questionnaire to perform in-depth interviews. I took participants' profiles, made notes, and recorded conversations using

a sound recorder for easy transcription. Likewise, I carefully listened and actively responded during the interviews. I transcribed the interviewees' responses by recalling their answers from the sound recorder. Since the participants used their vernacular language, translated their responses into English. After transcription, I proceeded with data coding and thematizing. I categorized and coded the data, extracted themes, and contrasted and compared participants' data. I conducted a second round of focus group discussions (FGDs) to confirm data that required further justification and gather participant feedback. The newly acquired material was carefully analyzed and added to the existing body of knowledge. Then, in order to identify patterns and trends, I contrasted and compared data between individuals.

2.9. Data Analysis—All data collected for this study were carefully examined and thoroughly analyzed. I began by reflecting on personal experiences with the phenomenon under investigation as a means of bracketing these experiences to avoid bias and focus on the participants' perspectives. Following this, I identified significant statements from the participants' responses that illustrated their experiences with implementing competency-based education. These statements were categorized as relevant and organized into a list, ensuring that there was no repetition or overlap. The significant statements were then grouped into themes, providing a deeper understanding of the shared experiences among participants. I described "what" the participants experienced in implementing competency-based education, followed by a description of "how" these experiences occurred, including the challenges and opportunities encountered. Finally, I wrote a composite description of the phenomenon, combining both textural (what was experienced) and structural (how it was experienced) descriptions to provide a comprehensive understanding of the teachers' experiences.

2.10. Thematic Content Analysis—The thematic analysis identified the pattern of essential themes in the data and used these themes to address the study. As thematic analysis did not require the detailed theoretical and technological knowledge typically required by other qualitative approaches, it offered a more accessible form of analysis, particularly for those early in their research careers (Braun Clarke, 2020). Regardless of the type of study conducted and its purpose, the most critical aspect of the analysis was that the researcher respected the data and tried to represent the interview results as truthfully as possible (Mortensen, 2020).

2.11. Document Analysis—Document analysis employs a systematic procedure to examine documentary evidence and address specific research questions. Qualitative data analysis involved analyzing material from written documents to draw conclusions based on the study parameters. The effort required to prepare the analysis was much less than that required for field observation, interviews, or the requirements workshop. The analysis of the data could be interrupted and continued at any time.

2.11.1. Triangulation of Data—Triangulation involves using multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to gain a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 2019). Triangulation was also viewed as a qualitative research approach for testing validity by combining data from various sources. Triangulation reduced research bias that came from using a single method. It increased validity by exploring the same topic with various tools and provided a clearer understanding of the research problem, thereby establishing credibility.

2.11.2. Environmental Triangulation—This type of triangulation used different locations, settings, and other critical environmental factors, such as the time, day, or season in which the study was conducted. The key was determining which environmental factors might

impact the information provided. These factors were modified to determine if the results were consistent across settings. Validity was established when the findings remained consistent under various environmental conditions (Guion et al., 2021).

2.12. Analytical Framework—The analytical framework for this study was flexible enough to allow the researcher to either gather all of the data and then analyze it or evaluate it while it was being collected. The data collected was then sifted, charted, and categorized in line with key topics and themes during the analysis stage. This process involves familiarization, coding, developing a thematic framework, indexing, charting, mapping, and interpretation (Ritchie Spencer, 2019).

2.12.1. Familiarization—Was becoming familiar with the data through reading and re-reading interview transcripts. Familiarizing the entire interview with the audio recording and transcript, as well as any contextual or reflective notes the researcher had recorded, was a vital stage in the interpretation process. It could also be helpful to re-listen to all or parts of the audio recording. The researcher becomes immersed in the data by listening to audiotapes, exploring the field, or reading transcripts. The researcher would become aware of critical ideas and recurring themes throughout the procedure and would make a note of them. The researcher may be unable to review all of the material due to the enormous amount of data that might be collected in qualitative research. As a result, a portion of the data set would be utilized. Several elements of the data collection method would influence the selection.

2.12.2. Coding—Is the process of summarizing and representing data to provide a systematic account of the recorded or observed phenomenon. After familiarization, the researcher carefully reads the transcript line by line, applying a paraphrase or label that serves as a 'code' to describe what they have interpreted

in the passage as necessary. Coding was used to classify all the data for systematic comparison with other parts of the dataset. Developing a thematic framework happens after coding a few transcripts. The researcher needs to compare the labels applied and select a set of codes to apply to all subsequent transcripts. Codes could be grouped into categories, which are then clearly defined. This forms a working analytical framework. Several iterations of the analytical framework were likely required before no additional codes emerged. It was always worth having an additional code under each category to avoid ignoring data that did not fit; the analytical framework was never 'final' until the last transcript had been coded.

2.12.3. Indexing —Involves identifying portions or sections of data that relate to a specific theme. This procedure is conducted using all the textual data collected, including transcripts of interviews. Ritchie and Spencer (1994) suggest using a numerical system to in-

dex references and annotating them in the margin beside the text for ease. Qualitative data analysis tools are ideal for this task.

2.12.4. Charting—Involves summarizing the data by category from each transcript. Good charting requires an ability to strike a balance between reducing the data on the one hand and retaining the original meanings and 'feel' of the interviewees' words on the other. The chart should include references to interesting or illustrative quotations. The final stage, mapping, and interpretation, includes an analysis of the important qualities depicted in the charts. This analysis should provide a schematic diagram of the event or phenomenon, helping the researcher interpret the data set. I must be cognizant of the objectives of qualitative analysis and define concepts, map the range and nature of phenomena, create typologies, find associations, provide explanations, and develop strategies (Ritchie Spencer, 2019).

3. Results and Discussion

This study section addresses the research questions and their related answers based on the participants' feedback. The investigation explored teachers' experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights as they navigate the blended learning of scientific concepts.

3.1. Experiences faced by seasoned teachers in Implementing educational policies — The experiences of seasoned teachers in implementing educational policies offer valuable insights into the realities of policy implementation within the school setting. These teachers, equipped with years of classroom practice and institutional knowledge, often serve as key agents in translating abstract policies into meaningful educational practices. However, despite their expertise, they may encounter challenges such as inconsistent policy directives, limited resources, or lack of consultation in decision-making processes. Exploring their experiences not only highlights the gaps between policy

formulation and implementation but also underscores the importance of involving experienced educators in the development and evaluation of educational reforms to ensure relevance, feasibility, and impact. Seasoned teachers play a crucial role in the successful implementation of educational policies, as their extensive experience enables them to effectively interpret and adapt policies to meet the diverse needs of learners. However, these educators often face significant challenges, including frequent policy changes, lack of training, and limited involvement in the policymaking process (Darling-Hammond, 2019). Such issues can lead to inconsistencies in application and re-

sistance to new initiatives, particularly when policies are perceived as top-down mandates that overlook the realities of classroom teaching and learning. Understanding the perspectives of seasoned teachers is essential for creating more effective, sustainable, and teacher-informed educational reforms (Fullan, 2019). The implementation of educational policies is a complex process that often requires seasoned teachers to navigate between administrative expectations and classroom realities. These educators are not only policy implementers but also critical interpreters who must align new mandates with existing practices and student needs (Ball, Maguire, Braun, 2012). However, despite their key position, many seasoned teachers express concerns over the lack of support and clarity provided during policy rollouts. Such disconnects can hinder their ability to implement reforms effectively and may lead to feelings of professional disempowerment (Hargreaves Fullan, 2012). Documenting their experiences offers valuable insights for designing policies that are both practical and teacher-centered. Navigating Policy Changes and Shifting Priorities. Seasoned teachers often encounter challenges in adapting to frequent changes in educational policies. These changes may be driven by shifts in political leadership, evolving educational philosophies, or national curriculum reforms. For experienced teachers who have witnessed multiple waves of policy transitions, such constant adjustments can lead to a sense of instability and frustration. Adapting to new guidelines while maintaining consistent teaching practices requires both flexibility and resilience. One of the key issues is the short timelines allocated for policy implementation. Teachers are frequently expected to understand and apply new directives without sufficient time for in-depth training or reflection. This can result in confusion and uneven application of the policies across schools or classrooms. Seasoned educators, while adaptable, often express concern

over the pressure to comply quickly without thorough preparation. In some cases, the new policies may conflict with existing ones, resulting in inconsistencies in instructional strategies. For example, a previous policy emphasized rote learning, while a new one promoted learner-centered approaches. This inconsistency places seasoned teachers in a difficult position, having to unlearn established practices and adopt new ones without a clear support system. Despite these challenges, many seasoned teachers also demonstrate remarkable adaptability and a profound understanding of how to interpret new directives. Their institutional memory helps them interpret the essence of policies, filtering out impractical elements and focusing on what works best for students. As Ball (2008) notes, policy enactment is not merely about compliance but involves interpretation and negotiation within the local school context. Participant 1 highlights the constant pressure teachers face due to frequent changes in educational policies, which can be overwhelming and exhausting. Teachers have to repeatedly adjust their lesson plans and assessment methods, first adapting to the K-12 curriculum and then abruptly shifting to distance learning due to the pandemic. This cycle of continuous adaptation can feel like starting over repeatedly, causing stress and fatigue, which may affect teachers' ability to deliver quality instruction consistently. Participant 2 points out the inadequacy of orientation sessions related to new policies, which are often rushed and lack sufficient coverage. As a result, teachers are left to navigate these changes primarily on their own, relying heavily on peer support and their motivation to learn and adjust. This scenario underscores the need for more thorough and supportive training programs to better prepare teachers for implementing new educational policies. Participant 3, the teacher, expresses frustration with policies that seem disconnected from the realities of the classroom. For example, rigid assessment formats that do

not align with the varying learning speeds of students make the implementation feel more like a bureaucratic requirement rather than a meaningful tool for student development. This disconnect can lead to a sense of frustration and demotivation among teachers, as they feel compelled to comply without seeing tangible benefits for their students. Participant 4 stated that it is a plea from teachers for more time and appropriate training to effectively implement new policies. It also emphasizes the importance of listening to teachers who have firsthand knowledge of what works in the classroom. By involving teachers in the decision-making process and providing them with adequate support, educational reforms can become more practical, relevant, and effective in improving teaching and learning outcomes. Navigating constant changes in educational policy is a significant challenge for seasoned teachers. As described in the interview, many teachers feel that they adapt to a particular policy or framework only to have a new one introduced. This cycle of continuous adjustment creates stress, confusion, and a sense of instability. The example provided of transitioning from the K-12 curricula to distance learning during the pandemic highlights how abrupt and substantial these shifts can be. Seasoned teachers are often expected to change their planning, assessment strategies, and teaching approaches almost overnight. While support such as orientations is sometimes provided, it is often insufficient. The narratives reflect that these sessions tend to be rushed and lack depth, leaving teachers to navigate the changes independently. Many rely on peer collaboration and self-initiated learning to keep up with the demands of implementation. This lack of consistent institutional support contributes to feelings of burnout, as teachers must take on additional mental and emotional labor without adequate guidance or resources. The expectation to perform under such conditions undermines both their confidence and effectiveness in the

classroom. More concerning is the disconnect between policy requirements and classroom realities. As one teacher mentioned, some policies—particularly those with rigid structures, do not align with students’ actual learning needs and pace. This creates a dilemma for teachers, where compliance may come at the expense of meaningful instruction. They feel constrained by regulations that fail to account for the diversity of learners, resulting in frustration. Compliance becomes a formality rather than a path to better learning outcomes. Teachers find themselves forced to prioritize policy adherence over student-centered strategies, which compromises the quality of education (Jones, 2020). Indeed, this experience is not isolated. According to Flores (2020), teachers often feel like passive recipients of policy rather than active participants in shaping it, which contributes to low morale and resistance. Without meaningful inclusion of teacher perspectives and adequate time for transition, even well-intentioned reforms can be met with skepticism and fatigue. For reforms to be effective, they must include robust training programs, realistic timelines, and strong communication channels between policymakers and frontliners. Recognizing the wisdom and insights of seasoned educators is crucial in ensuring that policies are both practical and sustainable.

3.1.1. Limited Involvement in Policymaking Processes—Another common experience among seasoned teachers is the feeling of exclusion from the policymaking process. Despite their extensive classroom experience and pedagogical insight, many are not consulted during the formulation of policies that directly affect their work. This top-down approach can lead to a disconnect between policymakers and those tasked with implementation. This exclusion often results in policies that are misaligned with the realities of the classroom. Seasoned teachers may struggle to implement directives that are either impractical or irrelevant to their stu-

dents' needs. This contributes to feelings of professional disenfranchisement and devalues their years of service and expertise. When seasoned educators are involved in policy consultations, the outcomes are more grounded and practical. Their firsthand experience offers valuable feedback on what is realistic and sustainable in a typical school setting. Unfortunately, these opportunities are rare, as central offices design most policies with minimal input from the field. Involving teachers in the design and review of policies not only enhances the policies themselves but also fosters a sense of ownership and commitment among those who will implement them. As Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) argue, empowering teachers as agents of change is essential for meaningful educational reform. Participant 5 reflects the common experience of teachers receiving policy directives through memos without being involved in the decision-making or discussion process. This top-down communication style can make teachers feel excluded and disconnected from the rationale behind new policies. When teachers are only informed of changes after decisions are finalized, it limits their sense of ownership and reduces opportunities to provide valuable input that could improve the implementation process. Participant 6 stated that the teacher expresses frustration over being marginalized despite their extensive classroom experience. Their practical knowledge of what works and what does not is often overlooked during the policy development process. This exclusion can lead to disillusionment and decreased motivation among teachers, who feel that their expertise is undervalued and that policies are made without considering fundamental classroom dynamics, potentially resulting in less effective educational reforms. Participant 7 critiques the Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs), recognizing the good intention behind the policy but pointing out its failure to address the diverse learning needs of students. Teachers had to make

numerous adjustments to tailor the competencies to their students' varied abilities, highlighting the gap between policy design and classroom realities. This highlights the importance of flexibility and teacher input in policymaking, ensuring that standards are both practical and adaptable to diverse learning contexts. A recurring concern among seasoned teachers is their minimal involvement in the development of educational policies. As shared in the narratives, many veteran educators feel reduced to mere implementers who are handed memos and directives with little to no consultation. Despite their extensive classroom experience and deep understanding of learners' needs, their voices are often excluded from the policy formulation process. This top-down approach to policymaking can result in a disconnect between the policy's intentions and its practical application in real classroom settings. The sense of exclusion is especially disheartening for those who have dedicated decades to the profession. These teachers possess valuable insights into what works effectively within the learning environment. Unfortunately, their expertise is often overlooked, leading to feelings of frustration and underappreciation. When policies are imposed without teacher input, implementation becomes a mechanical process; teachers comply out of obligation rather than genuine engagement. This not only affects teacher morale but also weakens the impact of the policies themselves, as they may not be entirely suited to the realities of the classroom (Harts, 2020). One example of this disconnect is the implementation of the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs). Although designed to simplify the curriculum during the pandemic, MELCs failed to account for the varied learning levels of students. Teachers had to make significant adjustments to accommodate learners' needs while still meeting the policy requirements. This experience illustrates how excluding teachers from decision-making processes can result in policies that lack

adaptability and create additional burdens on educators who must make them work in practice. Research supports these concerns. According to Ball and Junemann (2019), the lack of teacher participation in educational policy decisions results in weaker policy coherence and undermines the effectiveness of reform. When educators are not consulted, policies risk being misaligned with on-the-ground challenges, resulting in poor execution and diminished outcomes. To address this, there must be a conscious effort to involve teachers, especially those with years of experience, in collaborative decision-making. Their insights are essential for crafting policies that are not only sound in theory but workable in practice.

3.1.2. Coping with Resource Constraints in Policy Implementation—Seasoned teachers often face difficulties in implementing policies due to inadequate resources. Many educational reforms assume the availability of technology, instructional materials, and classroom facilities that are not always present in public schools, particularly in underserved areas. This mismatch between policy expectations and actual school conditions creates daily challenges for implementation. For example, policies promoting digital literacy or technology integration may be rendered ineffective if schools lack stable internet connections, functional devices, or training for teachers. Experienced teachers often find themselves improvising or seeking external support to comply with mandates, which adds to their workload and stress. Despite these challenges, seasoned teachers demonstrate ingenuity in navigating limited resources. They find creative ways to adapt learning materials, maximize available resources, and ensure that learning outcomes are achieved. However, this level of improvisation is not sustainable in the long term and may lead to burnout and frustration. To improve implementation outcomes, policies must be accompanied by adequate support systems, including funding, infrastructure,

and capacity-building programs. As Darling-Hammond (2019) emphasizes, well-supported teachers are key to the success of any educational policy reform. Participant 6 highlights the critical issue of inadequate infrastructure in implementing education policies, specifically the integration of ICT in instruction. Being asked to incorporate digital tools into teaching without having the necessary equipment or stable internet access illustrates the disconnect between policy directives and ground realities. Such situations place undue pressure on educators and underscore the need for policymakers to assess resource availability before setting implementation expectations. The seventh participant's statement reflects the resilience and dedication of teachers who, despite systemic shortcomings, strive to meet policy demands through improvisation. Using personal devices and shouldering the costs of materials demonstrates how teachers often go above and beyond their responsibilities to ensure students receive a quality education. However, this also highlights the inequities and burdens that teachers face when institutional support is lacking, suggesting a need for systemic reforms to reduce their dependence on teacher resourcefulness. Participant 8 acknowledges that while education authorities may be understanding, they, too, are constrained by budget limitations. The insight that remote schools are typically the last to receive support points to systemic inequality in resource distribution. This statement emphasizes that recognizing the needs of underserved schools and prioritizing them in resource allocation is crucial for implementing equitable policies across all educational settings. Participant 9 articulates a core principle in education policy implementation: the success of any initiative is contingent on the availability of support systems. No matter how well-crafted a policy may be, it is bound to fail if the necessary tools and resources are not provided beforehand. This comment calls for a more grounded and practi-

cal approach in rolling out reforms—one that ensures logistical and material support precedes expectations of compliance. Narratives of the participants revealed that one of the most pressing issues seasoned teachers face in implementing educational policies is the chronic lack of resources. As highlighted in the narratives, policies such as the integration of ICT in teaching are often rolled out without providing the necessary infrastructure, especially in remote or underfunded schools. In cases where only two functional computers are available, and internet connectivity is unreliable, the expectations set by policy become unrealistic. Teachers are left to grapple with how to comply without the basic tools required for effective implementation. In response, many teachers take it upon themselves to improvise and innovate using what little they have. The narratives reveal that some individuals use personal laptops and visual aids, incurring out-of-pocket expenses solely to meet policy demands. While this speaks to the resourcefulness and dedication of these educators, it also reveals an underlying systemic issue: Policies often assume a uniform level of access and readiness across all schools. This creates an uneven playing field, where teachers in better-equipped schools are more likely to succeed while others struggle despite their best efforts. Moreover, while school leaders may empathize with the challenges faced by teachers, their hands are often tied by budget constraints and delays in resource allocation. Rural and geographically isolated schools are particularly disadvantaged, often being among the last to receive technological upgrades or educational materials. Teachers in these areas are keenly aware that no matter how well-intentioned a policy may be, it cannot be implemented effectively without the necessary logistical and financial support. This results in frustration and, in some cases, a widening gap between policy expectations and the realities of education on the ground. The research echoes these concerns,

highlighting how a lack of resources hampers the implementation of education reforms. According to Mulkeen (2019), the success of any policy depends heavily on the availability of resources—such as infrastructure, teaching materials, and support systems—that enable its execution. Without these elements, even the most well-designed reforms will falter in implementation. Policymakers need to align their directives with the actual conditions of schools, ensuring that the foundational support is in place before requiring compliance from educators.

3.1.3. Balancing Policy Compliance with Professional Autonomy—One of the more nuanced challenges faced by seasoned teachers is maintaining their professional autonomy while adhering to stringent policy requirements. Educational policies often come with standardized expectations for lesson planning, assessment, and instructional strategies, leaving little room for teacher discretion. Experienced educators value their ability to make professional judgments based on the specific needs of their students. When policies dictate uniform approaches, teachers may feel that their expertise is being undermined. This tension can create internal conflict, as they must balance following directives with doing what they believe is best for their learners. In some instances, seasoned teachers exercise what is known as “principled resistance,” wherein they subtly modify policy implementation to better suit their classroom context without completely disregarding the mandate. This act is not an act of defiance but rather a reflection of professional integrity and a commitment to meaningful learning. Recognizing and respecting teachers’ professional autonomy while providing clear policy guidelines can enhance both morale and effectiveness. As Biesta (2019) argues, policy should support teachers in making sound educational judgments rather than reducing them to mere technicians following scripts. Participant 3 sheds light on the challenge of aligning policy

with student-centered practice. The statement reflects a teacher's nuanced understanding of the need to strike a balance between compliance and responsiveness. While directives must be followed, they are not always aligned with learners' realities. The participant's approach of adhering to the policy's intent while modifying its application for relevance illustrates professional discretion, a key quality for ineffective educators. Participant P4 The experience shared here highlights the rigidity that sometimes accompanies policy implementation, especially in instructional planning. While the imposed lesson plan template was too restrictive, the teacher found a way to comply while still incorporating personalized strategies. This reflects a practical solution many teachers adopt, merging structure with creativity to better serve their learners while still technically adhering to policy guidelines. Participants said that trust between teachers and school leadership is evident in this narrative. The teacher asserts confidence in their modifications, knowing they could justify them with precise results. The absence of conflict, resulting from openness and positive outcomes, highlights the importance of evidence-based flexibility and a supportive leadership style that values teacher autonomy when it leads to student success. FGD2 emphasizes that teaching is inherently adaptive. The participant recognizes the need to implement policies faithfully while also adjusting them to suit their students' needs. The phrase "teaching is not one-size-fits-all" captures the essence of the educator's dilemma: respecting policy without compromising classroom effectiveness. This balance reflects the reflective practice necessary in dynamic educational settings. Participant FGD 3 discusses how they enhanced a standardized format with interactive elements, showing a proactive approach to instruction. This underscores the idea that even within strict guidelines, teachers can infuse lessons with creativity and engagement. Such adaptations often make the

difference between rote compliance and meaningful learning experiences. FGD4 statement suggests a constructive relationship between the teacher and the school head. The teacher's thorough documentation and demonstrated results earned appreciation and support. This example demonstrates how initiative and transparency in adapting policies can foster trust and mutual respect within a school's professional environment, ultimately benefiting both teachers and students. The narratives of the participants showed that Seasoned teachers often find themselves walking a fine line between adhering to educational policies and exercising their professional autonomy. While compliance is expected, experienced educators recognize that rigid implementation may not always serve the best interests of their students. As expressed in the narratives, teachers try to remain faithful to the goals of a policy while making context-based adjustments to ensure relevance and effectiveness. This adaptability demonstrates the nuanced decision-making that veteran teachers engage in on a daily basis. One clear example involves lesson planning templates mandated by higher authorities. Though well-structured, these templates can be too rigid for the diverse needs of classrooms. Instead of abandoning the format, the teacher in the narrative chose to retain the core structure while supplementing it with personalized strategies. These strategies were rooted in years of experience and were designed to make lessons more engaging and responsive to students' learning needs. This balance demonstrates how policy goals can be achieved without compromising instructional quality, provided teachers are allowed to make informed decisions. This balancing act is often made possible by the trust built between teachers and school leaders. The teacher in the narrative emphasized that as long as the outcomes were achieved, their school head respected their professional judgment.

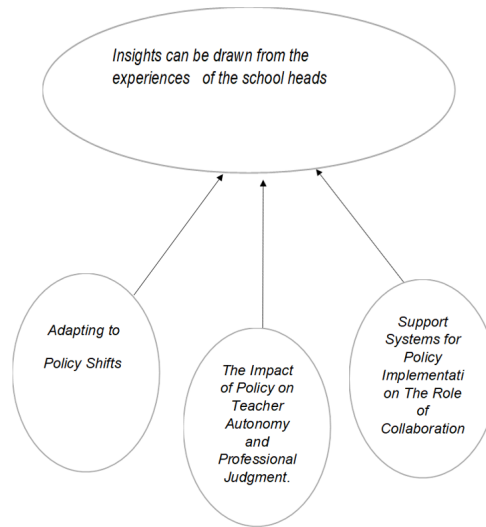


Fig. 2. Experiences faced by seasoned teachers in implementing educational policies

The figure illustrates that Seasoned teachers face multiple challenges in implementing educational policies. They often find themselves navigating frequent and abrupt policy changes that shift instructional priorities, requiring constant adjustments to teaching strategies and lesson planning. Many expressed frustration over their limited involvement in policymaking processes, highlighting how top-down directives often fail to consider the realities of the classroom. Additionally, the lack of sufficient resources, such as teaching materials, technology, or training, makes implementation difficult. Despite these constraints, they strive to balance policy compliance with their professional autonomy, making adjustments based on their experience and the unique needs of their students while remaining faithful to the core objectives of the policies.

3.2. Seasoned Teachers Coping with the Challenges in Implementing the Educational Policies—Seasoned teachers cope with the challenges of implementing educational policies through a combination of adaptability, collaboration, and professional judgment. Drawing on years of classroom experience, they often modify or supplement policy directives to better meet the needs of their students, especially when guidelines are rigid or disconnected from real-world realities. Many rely on peer support,

sharing strategies and resources with colleagues to navigate new or shifting mandates. When resources are scarce, they demonstrate resilience by improvising using personal tools, creating alternative materials, or investing their own time and money to meet policy demands. Despite these pressures, their commitment to student learning and deep understanding of educational contexts enable them to maintain both policy compliance and instructional effectiveness. In facing the complexities of policy implementation, seasoned teachers often turn to reflective practice and continuous learning. They analyze what works and what does not in their classrooms, adjusting strategies accordingly while still meeting mandated guidelines. Many professionals participate in professional development programs or informal learning communities to stay current and enhance their ability to interpret and apply policies more effectively. This proactive mindset enables them to remain flexible and solution-oriented, even in the face of frequent changes in directives. Their ability to reflect critically on their practice and adapt accordingly is a key factor in sustaining effective teaching amid policy shifts. Another critical coping strategy for veteran educators is drawing on their strong networks of peer support. Teachers often create informal support systems

within their schools to exchange practical solutions, share resources, and offer emotional encouragement during times of reform. These collegial interactions foster a sense of community and reduce the isolation that policy changes can bring. As Hargreaves (2000) notes, experienced teachers who collaborate and engage in professional dialogue are more likely to sustain their motivation and effectiveness, especially when faced with the pressures of educational reform.

3.2.1. Collaborative Support Systems and Peer Learning—One of the most effective coping mechanisms seasoned teachers employ is forming and maintaining strong collaborative support systems within their schools. When faced with new or complex policy mandates, they often turn to their colleagues for guidance, sharing ideas and strategies to navigate implementation challenges. These support networks foster an environment of mutual learning where teachers exchange experiences and build collective solutions. Peer learning becomes a practical way to unpack vague or unfamiliar policies. Instead of facing changes alone, experienced teachers use team discussions, peer coaching, and informal mentoring to ensure they understand the policies and adjust their teaching accordingly. These interactions are constructive during times of abrupt shifts, such as curriculum revisions or sudden changes, as seen during the pandemic. Collaboration also enhances teachers' confidence and reduces feelings of isolation. Working together gives teachers a sense of community and emotional reassurance that they are not alone in facing systemic demands. In many cases, these professional relationships grow into long-term partnerships that support innovation, efficiency, and well-being in the teaching profession. Recent research supports this practice. According to Tang and Choi (2019), collaborative learning communities within schools are vital for helping teachers manage reform-related stress and for facilitating the practical imple-

mentation of educational policies. Such communities serve as safe spaces for reflection, inquiry, and adaptation, empowering teachers to remain resilient and effective in the face of constant change. Participant 1 emphasizes the importance of peer collaboration as an immediate response to policy dissemination. The statement highlights how frontline educators often rely on one another as a support system in interpreting vague or unclear policy language. Rather than passively waiting for top-down clarification, they actively seek collective understanding. This highlights the proactive and collegial culture in schools, where teachers rely on one another to make sense of directives and ensure proper implementation. Participant 4's narrative illustrates how structured collaboration through Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions serves as a powerful tool for adapting to curriculum changes, such as the shift to MELCs. Initially confused, the teachers overcame the challenge through shared learning, peer support, and the sharing of resources. The act of circulating lesson templates demonstrates how community effort can reduce individual workload and create a more unified instructional approach, especially in times of policy transition. Participant 7's reflection highlights the emotional and practical value of collaboration among teachers, particularly in resource- and time-constrained conditions. The participant emphasizes that, beyond technical assistance, peer interaction offers vital emotional support. In the face of policy pressures, knowing that others are facing similar struggles creates a sense of solidarity and resilience. This statement highlights the role of collegiality as not only an instructional strategy but also a form of emotional survival. FGD 7 response reinforces the earlier points about collaboration but focuses specifically on how shared efforts lead to a better understanding of policy expectations. The fact that teachers take the initiative to meet and clarify unclear memos indicates a culture of mutual responsibility and trust.

Such collegial practices empower teachers to take control of their professional development and ensure that policy compliance is rooted in a shared understanding rather than confusion or blind compliance. FGD 9 narrative offers a practical example of how collaboration in LAC sessions transforms uncertainty into clarity. The participant shares how this professional development platform helped educators align their lesson logs with MELCs. The sharing of templates exemplifies efficiency and generosity in the teaching community. This story also demonstrates that, while system-level support may be inconsistent, teacher-led collaboration can effectively fill the gap. FHG 10 participant candidly shares how crucial peer support is when faced with limited institutional resources. This statement captures the emotional dimension of educational policy implementation—teachers do not just need information; they need empathy and shared strength. Knowing that others are navigating similar challenges not only fosters professional camaraderie but also sustains motivation and mental well-being in difficult conditions. Seasoned teachers often turn to their colleagues as their first line of support when faced with new or unclear educational policies. The language of policy documents can be technical or vague, leaving teachers to interpret and apply mandates independently. In these instances, co-teachers become valuable thought partners. Through informal discussions and collaborative problem-solving, they help each other unpack memos and translate them into practical classroom actions. This collegial approach fosters a sense of shared responsibility and reduces the burden of navigating policy changes alone. The Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions mandated by the Department of Education serve as a formal structure where collaboration takes place. During the implementation of the Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs), many teachers initially experienced confusion and uncertainty. However, by coming

together during LAC sessions, they were able to align their instructional planning and share valuable resources, such as lesson templates and assessment tools. These cooperative efforts enabled them to adapt more efficiently to the new curriculum expectations, ensuring a degree of consistency across classrooms. Peer collaboration is not limited to technical matters alone—it also plays a crucial role in emotional resilience. The stress of sudden policy changes, limited resources, and increased accountability can be overwhelming. However, having a trusted circle of colleagues helps teachers navigate these challenges with greater confidence and emotional stability. Knowing that others are facing similar issues provides validation and comfort, which is essential for sustaining morale and professional motivation in a constantly evolving educational landscape. As research highlights, professional learning communities, such as Learning Action Communities (LACs), enhance teacher competence and confidence by fostering peer dialogue, critical reflection, and collective action (Dizon, 2021). These communities not only build teachers' capacity to implement reforms effectively but also reinforce a culture of continuous improvement and solidarity among educators. In the face of systemic challenges, collaboration becomes a key coping mechanism that allows seasoned teachers to stay adaptive, informed, and engaged.

3.2.2. Professional Adaptability and Resourcefulness —Seasoned teachers often respond to policy challenges by developing a strong sense of adaptability. Years of classroom experience have equipped them with the ability to read their students' needs and adjust their methods accordingly, even when the policies are rigid or unrealistic. When a new directive arises, these teachers do not always follow it word for word but instead adapt its goals into practices that work in their specific classroom contexts. This flexibility is particularly evident when faced with mismatches between policy ex-

expectations and available resources. For instance, when policies demand the use of technology in instruction, but the school lacks devices or internet connectivity, experienced teachers find creative ways to simulate digital content or use offline materials to meet learning goals. Their focus remains on student outcomes rather than strict compliance, allowing them to prioritize effective learning over procedural formality. Such resourcefulness is not only a matter of survival but also a testament to their professional competence. Seasoned teachers utilize personal tools, self-created materials, and local knowledge to bridge gaps in policy implementation. They can align their teaching approaches with policy objectives, even when external support is lacking, ensuring that students still receive quality instruction. As Huang et al. (2021) observed, teachers with a high degree of professional autonomy and adaptability are better equipped to cope with change and policy-induced stress. Their ability to reconcile policy demands with classroom realities contributes significantly to maintaining teaching effectiveness during reforms and systemic transitions. Participant 4 statement reveals the common disconnect between policy intent and on-the-ground realities in schools, especially in under-resourced settings. While integrating ICT in education is a progressive and necessary goal, the participant highlights the practical limitations—insufficient equipment and unreliable internet. The experience underscores a recurring challenge in educational policy implementation: the lack of consideration for school-level disparities. It demonstrates how well-meaning policies risk becoming symbolic unless they are backed by proper infrastructure and realistic timelines. Participant 5 here demonstrates commendable adaptability and resourcefulness in the face of policy demands. Despite lacking institutional support, the participant takes personal initiative—using a personal laptop, creating multimedia content, and even spending personal funds. This narra-

tive reflects a deep commitment to both compliance and student learning. However, it also highlights the systemic issue of teachers bearing the financial and emotional burden of policy implementation, which should ideally be a shared responsibility supported by the education system. Participant 7's statement highlights the complex reality that teachers face: understanding and receiving support from immediate superiors, such as school heads, while still being pressured by a larger system that measures success through compliance and outcomes. The participant's strategy—doing the best with what is available and making necessary adjustments—demonstrates resilience and pragmatism. This approach, while effective in surviving institutional demands, also underscores the need for systemic reforms that align expectations with actual school capacities and provide sustainable support for teachers. Educational policies often promote innovation and modernization, such as integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into classroom instruction. While the intention is commendable, the reality on the ground often presents significant challenges. For many seasoned teachers, especially those in under-resourced public schools, the push for digital integration can feel impractical or even impossible. The lack of basic infrastructure, such as working computers, projectors, or reliable internet connectivity, makes compliance with such mandates extremely difficult. In response, many teachers rely on their resourcefulness to bridge the gap between policy and practice. As shared in the narrative, the teacher utilized personal resources, including a laptop, to create instructional videos and even spent their own money to print materials. These acts of improvisation highlight the dedication of educators who strive to meet expectations despite lacking institutional support. Rather than rejecting the policy outright, they adjust it to their context, creatively finding ways to deliver learning

experiences that align with policy goals while accommodating local limitations. Support from school leadership can ease the burden, even when resources remain scarce. When school leaders demonstrate understanding and flexibility, teachers feel validated in their efforts and are more motivated to persevere. However, the broader education system often overlooks contextual realities and continues to demand uniform results. This disconnect places immense pressure on teachers, who must meet policy standards while managing constraints beyond their control. Despite this, many seasoned teachers remain committed, focusing on what they can control and continually adapting to serve their learners. According to Corpuz and Lucas (2020), Filipino teachers demonstrate high levels of resilience and adaptability in navigating policy demands within challenging environments. They often develop localized strategies to implement national directives, using personal initiative and community collaboration. While this ingenuity is commendable, it also underscores the need for more context-sensitive policy implementation and better support structures for educators, particularly in remote and underfunded schools.

3.2.3. Reflective Practice and Continuous Learning —Another way seasoned teachers cope with educational policy challenges is through reflective practice and ongoing professional learning. These teachers often revisit their experiences and evaluate what works in their context. This continuous cycle of reflection helps them understand how to apply or adapt policies more effectively while staying grounded in their core teaching values. Experienced teachers are also more likely to seek professional development opportunities that align with current reforms. Whether attending training sessions, webinars, or reading policy briefs, they proactively expand their knowledge to stay informed and competent. This mindset allows them to feel prepared and less overwhelmed

when educational directives change or intensify. Reflection also helps navigate the tension between top-down policy and classroom realities. By critically assessing both policy intent and student needs, seasoned teachers strike a balance that honors the spirit of the law while safeguarding effective pedagogy. This reflective process becomes a survival tool, especially when policies seem to prioritize bureaucratic compliance over meaningful learning. According to Opfer and Pedder (2019), reflective practice and continuous professional development play a crucial role in enabling teachers to remain effective under reform pressures. Teachers who regularly engage in critical reflection are more resilient and better able to align their practice with evolving educational goals, thus strengthening policy implementation at the classroom level. Participant 4's statement emphasizes the importance of *pagninilay*, or reflective practice, in navigating educational reforms. The teacher recognizes that new policies cannot be blindly applied but must be thoughtfully considered in the context of actual classroom dynamics. This habit of critical reflection enables the teacher to assess how changes will impact lesson delivery and student engagement. By assessing past experiences and identifying what strategies worked or failed, the teacher becomes more intentional and adaptive, qualities essential in today's rapidly evolving educational landscape. Participant 5's narrative highlights a strong sense of professional responsibility and a commitment to life-long learning. The teacher not only complies with mandates but actively seeks deeper understanding by attending webinars, reading official documents, and engaging in peer discussions. The willingness to consult more experienced colleagues and independently research complex concepts reflects humility and dedication. The statement affirms that being a seasoned educator does not mean expertise is complete; learning is an ongoing journey, particularly in the context of ever-changing policies and demands in

the education sector. Participant 8 shares how understanding the intent behind policies transforms what seem to be complex tasks into manageable ones. By taking time to internalize and contextualize new guidelines, the teacher is often able to find practical solutions tailored to the classroom reality. This demonstrates that comprehension leads to empowerment—when teachers understand the rationale behind a policy, they can creatively and effectively apply it, thereby reducing frustration and increasing ownership. Ultimately, this reflective approach fosters a more positive and proactive attitude toward change. In the face of continuous changes in educational policies, seasoned teachers often turn to reflection as a key strategy to adapt effectively. Rather than resisting new mandates, these educators take time to think critically about how policies will influence their teaching practices. Reflection enables them to evaluate what has worked in the past and consider which strategies require modification. This thoughtful approach helps bridge the gap between top-down directives and the realities of classroom instruction, making implementation more meaningful and manageable. For many experienced teachers, professional development does not end with years of service; instead, it becomes an ongoing journey of growth. They actively seek out learning opportunities such as webinars, circular updates, and policy briefings to stay informed and competent. When uncertainties arise, they do not hesitate to engage in self-directed learning or seek guidance from more experienced colleagues. This proactive mindset enables them to interpret and apply policy changes with clarity and confidence, reinforcing their role as adaptive professionals in a dynamic educational landscape. By engaging in

reflection and continuous learning, these teachers are better equipped to find practical applications of complex policies. Even when policies initially appear burdensome or misaligned with classroom needs, seasoned educators are often able to reframe their understanding through purposeful analysis. Their commitment to understanding the “why” behind the policy—its goals and intended impact—allows them to implement changes in a way that feels aligned with their teaching values, thus avoiding burnout or frustration. As Calderon (2021) notes, reflective teaching practices enable educators to be more responsive and flexible in the face of curricular reforms and administrative shifts. Reflective practitioners are better positioned to understand both the intent and implications of educational policies, enabling them to make informed decisions that benefit student learning. This reflective lens not only sustains professional growth but also fosters resilience and innovation within the teaching community. Figure 4 illustrates that Seasoned teachers address policy-related challenges by leveraging collaborative support systems and cultivating a robust culture of peer learning. They often consult one another, share resources, and engage in reflective discussions to collectively interpret and apply new directives. Their professional adaptability and resourcefulness also enable them to modify teaching approaches and utilize available tools to make policies effective in their respective contexts. Furthermore, they engage in reflective practice and commit to continuous learning, attending webinars, participating in LAC sessions, and seeking guidance from experienced colleagues to stay updated and confident in implementing new policies effectively.

3.3. *Insights can be Drawn from the Experiences of the School Heads —*

3.3.1. *Adapting to Policy Shifts—Challenges and Strategies.* This theme examines how experienced teachers adapt to changes in edu-

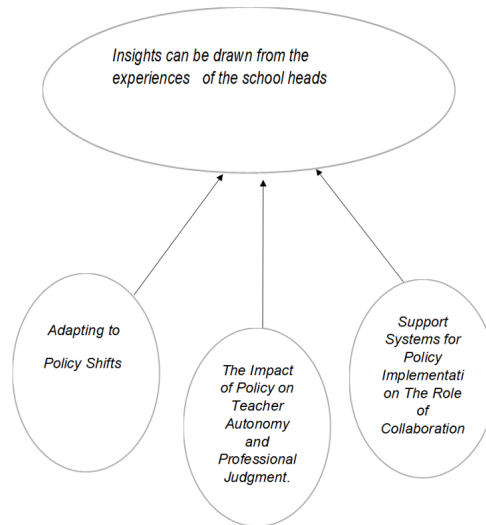


Fig. 3. Seasoned teachers cope with the challenges of implementing educational policies

cational policies, including curriculum reforms and new assessment methods. It focuses on the challenges they face in adjusting their teaching methods, lesson planning, and classroom management to align with these shifts. It also examines the strategies they employ to ensure effective implementation despite limited resources, training, or time. In navigating policy shifts, seasoned teachers often face a range of challenges that can complicate the effective implementation of new directives. These challenges may include the fast-paced nature of policy changes, which can disrupt established teaching routines and instructional methods. For instance, the introduction of new curriculum frameworks or standardized assessment procedures often requires teachers to overhaul lesson plans and adapt to unfamiliar formats. This can be particularly difficult in contexts where resources such as textbooks, teaching materials, or technological support are limited. Furthermore, when professional development opportunities or training sessions on new policies are insufficient or rushed, teachers may struggle to understand how to apply the changes effectively in their classrooms. As a result, there is often a sense of frustration as teachers are tasked with balancing policy demands with the realities of lim-

ited time and resources. To cope with these challenges, seasoned teachers often employ a variety of strategies that emphasize flexibility, collaboration, and resourcefulness. Many rely on their experience and creativity to adapt policies to their specific classroom needs. For example, when faced with the challenge of integrating technology into lessons, teachers may use personal devices, free online resources, or community networks to access necessary tools and materials. They also tend to collaborate with colleagues to share ideas, strategies, and resources, creating informal support systems within their schools. This collaboration fosters a sense of camaraderie as teachers work together to troubleshoot issues and brainstorm solutions. By drawing on their professional networks and accumulating years of teaching experience, seasoned educators can often find effective ways to implement policy changes despite the constraints they face. These strategies not only help mitigate the challenges posed by policy shifts but also ensure that students' learning experiences remain consistent and of high quality under the new frameworks. Participant 1 said that the transition to the K to 12 curriculum was a significant overhaul that left many teachers feeling overwhelmed. This participant's reflection

reveals the depth of adjustments required—from revising lesson plans to reevaluating instructional strategies and assessments. It highlights how educational reform, while designed to improve learning outcomes, can initially feel like a total reset for educators who have been accustomed to a different system. This sense of “starting over” illustrates the emotional and professional demands placed on teachers during systemic shifts, requiring not just compliance but profound pedagogical reorientation. Participant 2 statement underscores the power of collaboration and resourcefulness in navigating curriculum change. The teacher actively engaged in sharing lesson plans and attending LAC (Learning Action Cell) sessions, illustrating a practical approach to problem-solving through peer support. By utilizing free online resources and making the most of limited materials, this educator demonstrated flexibility and initiative. It reflects a collective effort to overcome transitional difficulties, emphasizing that success in implementation often relies less on top-down directives and more on grassroots cooperation among teachers. Participant 3 candidly expresses the confusion and difficulty experienced during the shift to MELCs. The need to revise not only the lesson content but also assessment strategies highlights how policy changes ripple across every part of teaching practice. The comparison to “learning everything again” captures the cognitive and emotional load borne by teachers, especially when implementation comes with limited guidance or preparation time. This sentiment is common among educators who face continuous policy shifts, highlighting the necessity of sustained support and professional development during such transitions. Participant 4 affirms that peer collaboration and adaptive thinking are key survival tools in times of educational reform. Through resource-sharing, co-creation of lesson exemplars, and active participation in LAC sessions, the teacher found a network of support that alleviated the burden of change. Further-

more, the ability to create personalized strategies using available classroom materials speaks to the creativity and resilience of teachers in under-resourced settings. This narrative underscores the importance of empowering teacher communities, particularly when formal support systems are inadequate. Based on the narratives, Seasoned teachers often find themselves at the frontlines of adapting to rapidly changing educational policies, such as curriculum reforms and the introduction of new assessment methods. These changes demand significant adjustments in lesson planning, instructional strategies, and classroom management. For teachers who have spent years mastering a particular system, frequent shifts can be disruptive, requiring them to unlearn previous practices and adapt to unfamiliar formats, often without sufficient preparation or resources. One of the most pressing challenges is the limited access to updated teaching materials and technological tools. In many cases, policies are introduced without the provision of concrete implementation tools, such as revised textbooks, clear instructional guidelines, or training. Professional development opportunities are often rushed or lacking in depth, leaving teachers with more questions than answers. Consequently, educators may feel overwhelmed by the pressure to comply while maintaining instructional quality and meeting the needs of learners. Despite these obstacles, seasoned teachers leverage their experience, creativity, and networks to respond effectively. They adapt lessons using whatever resources are available—often incorporating free online content, personal devices, and local partnerships. Collaboration with peers becomes vital as teachers share lesson plans, teaching strategies, and troubleshooting tips. This peer-driven learning helps bridge gaps in formal training and fosters a resilient, solution-oriented teaching culture. The experiences of these educators reveal that successful adaptation to policy changes requires more than compliance—it demands innovation,

collaboration, and practical support. As Flores (2005) emphasizes, teachers' personal and professional experiences shape how they interpret and respond to policy, highlighting the need for policies that are sensitive to teachers' real-world contexts and capacities.

3.3.2. The Impact of Policy on Teacher Autonomy and Professional Judgment—This theme examines the tension between compliance with educational policies and teachers' professional autonomy. It examines how seasoned educators balance their expertise and pedagogical practices with policy demands, particularly when policies appear rigid or disconnected from classroom realities. It delves into the ways teachers exercise professional judgment while ensuring that policy mandates are met. The tension between complying with educational policies and maintaining professional autonomy is a significant concern for many seasoned educators. While educational policies are designed to standardize and improve teaching practices, they can sometimes impose rigid frameworks that limit teachers' ability to make decisions based on their professional judgment and expertise. For example, when policies dictate specific lesson plans or standardized assessments, teachers may find themselves forced to teach in ways that do not align with their pedagogical beliefs or the unique needs of their students. This disconnect can lead to frustration, as teachers feel constrained in their ability to tailor lessons and instructional strategies to suit their classroom dynamics best. In some cases, policies may overlook the diversity of learners' abilities, learning styles, or cultural backgrounds, thereby creating additional barriers for teachers who attempt to apply a one-size-fits-all approach. Despite these constraints, seasoned teachers often navigate this tension by exercising professional judgment and adapting their teaching practices within the boundaries of policy requirements. They may modify lesson plans, use alternative assessment methods, or incorporate supplemen-

tary resources to address the specific needs of their students while still aligning with policy mandates. In this way, teachers balance the requirement to adhere to educational policies with their responsibility to provide the best possible learning experience for their students. Many teachers draw on their years of experience and expertise to find creative solutions that meet both policy expectations and their students' diverse learning needs. By doing so, they assert their professional autonomy, ensuring that their teaching practices remain responsive, relevant, and practical, even when faced with rigid policy guidelines. Participant 4 statement illustrates the tension between policy compliance and responsiveness to student needs. The participant recounts a time when they were required to use a rigid assessment format despite it conflicting with the student's learning pace. Despite the inflexibility of the mandate, the teacher chose to comply while making strategic adjustments that would benefit their learners. This highlights the practical wisdom many educators develop—navigating top-down policies while safeguarding the quality and appropriateness of instruction. It also reflects a broader challenge in educational governance: ensuring standardization without stifling professional judgment. Participant 5, Similar to the previous response, affirms that rigid policy designs—particularly in assessments—can sometimes disregard the realities of the classroom. In this case, while the teacher still adhered to the mandated structure, they found ways to tailor its application to better align with the student's capabilities. This demonstrates a teacher's adaptability and commitment to learning outcomes rather than merely compliance. It also underlines the importance of allowing some degree of autonomy within implementation frameworks, especially when learners' progress and engagement are at stake. Participant 9 response highlights the importance of transparency and accountability in policy implementation. Unlike others who

may feel conflicted when adapting policies, this teacher emphasized the importance of justifying changes with clear explanations. Because they consistently achieved the desired learning outcomes and communicated their rationale effectively, they gained the trust of their school head. This scenario highlights the importance of open communication between teachers and administrators in fostering a culture of trust and flexibility, which enables the adaptation of policies to local contexts without compromising overall goals. The responses above demonstrate that educational policies are often developed with the intention of standardizing and improving educational outcomes. However, for seasoned teachers, these policies can sometimes restrict their autonomy and override years of pedagogical expertise. When policies enforce rigid instructional formats or assessment types, they may conflict with a teacher's judgment about what works best in a specific classroom context. This tension can be particularly pronounced when one-size-fits-all approaches are implemented. Teachers working with diverse learners—whether in terms of ability, language, or socio-economic background—may find that standardized policies do not account for such variability. As a result, they must constantly reconcile external demands with their professional responsibility to meet students' unique needs. This balancing act often leads to feelings of disempowerment or frustration. Nevertheless, many seasoned teachers assert their autonomy by finding creative ways to meet policy requirements without compromising their students' learning experience. For example, they might align their teaching with mandated outcomes while customizing activities, pacing, or assessments to better suit their students. This ability to exercise discretion and adapt practices is a hallmark of professional judgment, reflecting deep expertise and ethical commitment. These insights emphasize the importance of teacher agency in educational reform. As

Biesta, Priestley, and Robinson (2015) argue, effective policy implementation depends on teachers not merely as implementers but as active agents of change who interpret, adapt, and mediate policy in their practice.

3.3.3. Support Systems for Policy Implementation —The Role of Collaboration and Leadership. This theme highlights the importance of collaboration among teachers, school heads, and other educational stakeholders in overcoming the barriers to effective policy implementation. It investigates how school leadership supports teachers in navigating policy changes and provides insight into the collaborative mechanisms, such as professional learning communities (PLCs) or peer mentoring, that help educators manage new policies and practices. Collaboration among teachers, school heads, and other educational stakeholders plays a crucial role in overcoming the challenges associated with policy implementation. Seasoned teachers often rely on the collective expertise of their colleagues to navigate policy changes effectively. In schools where collaboration is encouraged, teachers can share insights, resources, and best practices to address the challenges posed by new educational directives. For instance, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) allow educators to meet regularly and discuss the implications of new policies, strategizing together on how to integrate these changes into their classrooms. These collaborative spaces foster a sense of shared responsibility, where teachers can voice their concerns, discuss obstacles, and explore potential solutions in a supportive environment. By working together, teachers can reduce the isolation that often accompanies the implementation of new policies and ensure that their approaches align with school-wide goals. School leadership also plays a pivotal role in supporting teachers through these transitions. Effective school heads understand that policy implementation requires more than just top-down communication;

they actively engage teachers in discussions and decision-making processes to ensure that policies are practical and relevant to the school's context. This support might include providing targeted professional development, creating opportunities for peer mentoring, or facilitating discussions about how to adjust teaching practices in line with policy changes. School leaders who prioritize collaboration help build a school culture that values continuous learning, where teachers feel empowered to adapt and refine their practices. By fostering strong relationships between teachers and leadership, schools can better manage the complexities of policy implementation, ensuring that teachers have the tools, support, and professional networks they need to succeed in a rapidly evolving educational landscape. Participant 1 statement emphasizes how critical collaboration and peer support are during times of change. When the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) were introduced, teachers initially struggled with uncertainty and confusion. However, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions and the generosity of fellow educators who shared ready-made lesson templates significantly eased the transition. This underscores how collective effort within the teaching community fosters resilience and efficiency in adapting to educational reforms. Such peer-driven support mechanisms serve as lifelines when institutional directives lack clarity or practical guidance. Participant 3 response highlights the importance of inclusive and empathetic leadership. By involving teachers in conversations about policy implementation and allowing time for adjustment, the school head empowered teachers to process changes thoughtfully and with less stress. This kind of leadership—rooted in consultation and respect for teachers' pacing—helps build trust and morale. It also encourages a more sustainable and grounded approach to educational reform, where policies are not just handed down

but are collaboratively interpreted and applied. Participant 4 underscores how vital sustained support systems are in navigating policy shifts like the MELCs. The teacher recounts initial confusion, a common reaction during significant curriculum changes. But thanks to LAC sessions and the culture of sharing among colleagues, understanding gradually took shape. This iterative learning process helped bridge the gap between policy and classroom practice. The experience shows how professional learning communities, such as LACs, are not just supplemental but essential to successful policy adaptation. Participant 5 reinforces the crucial role of responsive leadership in policy implementation. When school leaders actively seek feedback and allow room for adjustment, they create a supportive environment where teachers feel heard and respected. The participant's account shows how understanding and approachable leadership can reduce anxiety and encourage innovation. More importantly, it affirms that effective school governance isn't only about enforcing rules, but also about cultivating an atmosphere of empathy, open dialogue, and shared responsibility in managing change. Supportive school environments are key to the successful implementation of educational policies. Collaboration among teachers, school leaders, and stakeholders facilitates smoother transitions during policy changes. Seasoned teachers often benefit from professional learning communities (PLCs), peer mentoring, and informal sharing sessions that provide the tools and moral support needed to make sense of new directives. Effective collaboration not only helps clarify policy expectations but also fosters a shared sense of purpose. In schools that promote open dialogue, teachers feel heard and valued. They can express concerns, test ideas, and co-create solutions with their colleagues. These collaborative networks reduce feelings of isolation and increase collective capacity to handle change.

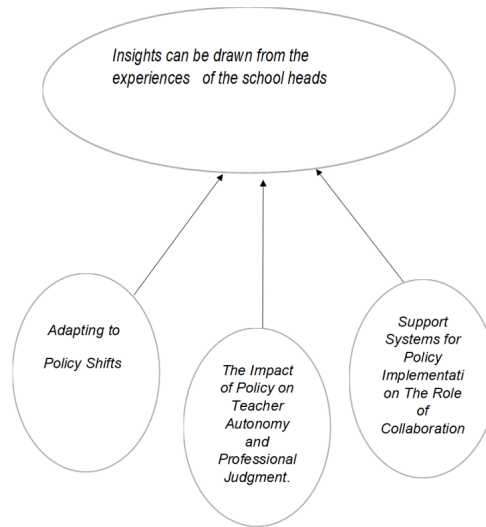


Fig. 4. Insights can be Drawn from the Experiences of the School Heads

Leadership plays a critical role in fostering this collaborative culture. School heads who involve teachers in decision-making processes and provide continuous, context-specific support create an environment where change is less intimidating. When leaders facilitate reflective discussions and prioritize teacher well-being, policy implementation becomes a shared responsibility rather than a top-down mandate. This theme underscores the significance of leadership that is participatory and grounded in trust. As Fullan (2019) notes, sustainable educational change requires school leaders who build professional learning communities and support teachers in navigating complex reforms through collaboration and shared leadership. Figure 5 highlights that meaningful insights can be gathered from the experiences of school heads, particularly in navigating educational policy. These insights fall into three main areas: adapting to policy shifts, the impact of policy on teacher autonomy and professional judgment, and the role of support systems in implementation. School heads, positioned at the intersection of policy and practice, often face the task of translating evolving regulations into actionable strategies within their schools. Their firsthand experiences offer a nuanced understanding of how schools respond to reforms and what kinds of leader-

ship practices are most effective in maintaining stability and progress during such transitions. Adapting to policy shifts requires not only understanding the policy but also guiding teachers through changes in curricula, assessment standards, and administrative processes. Simultaneously, policies can either empower or limit teacher autonomy, affecting morale and professional judgment. School heads play a crucial role in mediating these effects, ensuring that teachers retain a sense of agency. Furthermore, support systems such as training, peer collaboration, and clear communication channels are critical to successful policy implementation. These support systems often determine whether a policy takes root or fails to make a meaningful impact. Therefore, the lived experiences of school heads provide valuable insights into what structures and strategies are necessary for effective, sustainable policy enactment in schools. These concepts, technologies, and associations mirror the participant. Therefore, any strategies or recommendations the researcher offers reflect the participants' real views, beliefs, and values.

3.4. Trustworthiness of the Study—Trustworthiness is all about establishing credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability. In a qualitative study, trustworthiness is crucial because the results and findings of the

research depend on the process by which the researcher conducts it. The trustworthiness of a research study is important in evaluating its worth. Due to the nature of qualitative studies, honesty in all data and details is required. Trustworthiness makes the researcher's study worthy of being read, shared, and taken pride in. The concepts of validity and reliability are relatively foreign to the field of qualitative research. Instead of focusing on reliability and validity, qualitative researchers substitute data trustworthiness. Trustworthiness consists of the following components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Harts, 2019).

3.4.1. Credibility—Contributes to a belief in the trustworthiness of data by observing the attributes of prolonged engagement. To address the issue of credibility, we interviewed as many research participants as possible, until saturation was reached.

3.4.2. Transferability—It is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. In positivist work, the concern often lies in demonstrating that the results of the work at hand can be applied to a wider population since the findings

of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals. It is impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions can be applied to other situations and populations. Therefore, to ensure transferability, I acknowledge that it is my responsibility as a researcher to provide sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork sites, enabling the reader to make such a transfer.

3.4.3. Confirmability—Associates' objectivity in science with the use of instruments that are not dependent on human skill and perception. It is, however, challenging to ensure real objectivity, since even tests and questionnaires are designed by humans, making the intrusion of the researcher's biases inevitable. Here, steps must be taken to ensure, as far as possible, that the work's findings are the result of the participants' experiences and ideas rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher.

3.4.4. Dependability—Involves participants' evaluation of the study's findings, interpretation, and recommendations, all of which are supported by the data collected from the participants. **Confirmability:** The degree to which other researchers could confirm the findings of the research study.

4. Implications and Future Directions

This chapter presents a synthesis of the study's findings on promoting work-life balance and managing teacher wellness in a school setting. It outlines the key implications and offers recommendations for future initiatives. The research explored the lived experiences of teachers, focusing on the challenges they encounter in maintaining well-being while meeting the demands of their professional roles. It highlights how these experiences reveal the need for good educational policies. Moreover, the study underscores the value of empowering seasoned teachers who foster both personal resilience and professional fulfillment.

4.1. Implications—The findings of this study yield several significant implications for educational stakeholders—particularly policymakers, school leaders, and professional development planners. Anchored in Van Meter and Van Horn's Model of the Policy Implementation

Process, which outlines the interaction among policy objectives, resources, communication, implementing agencies, implementers' dispositions, and the external environment, the narratives of seasoned teachers and school heads offer valuable insights into the lived realities

of implementing educational policies. The sub-themes Navigating Policy Changes and Shifting Priorities and Limited Involvement in Policy-making Processes reveal that seasoned teachers often experience abrupt transitions with minimal consultation. These experiences align with Van Meter and Van Horn's assertion that unclear policy goals and poor communication hinder implementation fidelity. The mismatch between top-down policy directives and ground-level realities diminishes teacher agency and results in implementation gaps. Additionally, the school heads' reflections under The Impact of Policy on Teacher Autonomy and Professional Judgment underscore how excessive rigidity in policies can restrict educators' professional discretion. Therefore, it is imperative for policymakers to engage teachers and school leaders in the formulation process through focus group discussions, pilot testing, and regular feedback mechanisms to improve clarity, foster ownership, and promote sustainable implementation. The theme Coping with Resource Constraints in Policy Implementation, coupled with Support Systems for Policy Implementation from the school heads' perspective, highlights a recurrent challenge in policy execution: lack of material and logistical support. Seasoned teachers reported having to improvise lesson delivery due to limited ICT access, inadequate infrastructure, and out-of-pocket expenses for instructional materials. Similarly, school heads expressed that without sufficient funding and logistical backing, even the best policies remain aspirational. These findings reinforce Van Meter and Van Horn's emphasis on resource availability as a critical factor in implementation. For policy goals to be realized effectively, schools must be equipped with basic tools, stable infrastructure, and timely access to teaching and learning materials. Budget allocation frameworks should be reviewed to ensure equity in resource distribution across schools, particularly those in marginalized communities. The subthemes

Professional Adaptability and Resourcefulness, Reflective Practice and Continuous Learning, and Collaborative Support Systems and Peer Learning illustrate how seasoned teachers navigate policy demands through internal agency. Despite limited involvement in policymaking, many teachers exhibited resilience by reflecting on their teaching practices, participating in LAC sessions, attending webinars, and collaborating with peers. These behaviors exemplify the importance of the implementer's disposition, one of the six core variables in Van Meter and Van Horn's model. Teachers' willingness to learn, innovate, and adjust their methods demonstrates that professional development is not merely a formal requirement but a vital coping strategy. Stakeholders must therefore invest in sustained, meaningful professional development that builds teacher capacity and encourages reflective, adaptive teaching practices. From the perspective of school heads, themes such as The Role of Collaboration, Adapting to Policy Shifts, and Support Systems for Policy Implementation underline the importance of strong, responsive leadership. School heads who facilitate open dialogue, empower teachers, and promote shared decision-making contribute significantly to smoother policy transitions. Their ability to contextualize policies while supporting their teams reflects the model's focus on effectively implementing agencies and inter-organizational communication. A collaborative culture, bolstered by supportive leadership, serves as a buffer against the stress of constant policy shifts. Leadership development programs should therefore emphasize relational leadership skills, participatory governance, and instructional support. Overall, the study suggests that successful policy implementation is not solely dependent on the content of the policy but on the coherence among communication, resourcing, professional capacity, and leadership. By valuing the insights of seasoned teachers and school heads—those closest to implementa-

tion—policymakers can create more grounded, equitable, and actionable educational reforms. Fostering collaboration, ensuring resource adequacy, respecting professional autonomy, and cultivating reflective practice are not just support mechanisms—they are essential conditions for meaningful and sustainable change in the education system. Using Van Meter and Van Horn’s framework, it becomes clear that policy implementation is not a linear or top-down process. Instead, it is deeply influenced by the dynamic interplay of institutional capacity, implementer disposition, clarity of goals, and the socio-political environment of the school. To bridge the gap between policy intent and classroom realities, future policy directions must center the voices of seasoned teachers and school leaders who translate theory into practice every day.

4.1.1. Future Directions—Drawing from the insights of seasoned teachers and school heads, and grounded in Van Meter and Van Horn’s Model of the Policy Implementation Process, the following future directions are proposed to enhance the responsiveness and effectiveness of educational policies in the Philippine context:

4.1.2. For Teachers—Strengthen Reflective Practice: Teachers are encouraged to continuously reflect on their experiences in implementing policies to identify which strategies work best for their students. Integrating reflective journaling and collaborative feedback sessions can help refine instructional approaches. Engage in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): Peer collaboration should be institutionalized within schools. Teachers can share best practices and co-develop adaptable tools to interpret and implement policies effectively.

4.1.3. For Students —Promote Learner Voice in Policy Feedback: Mechanisms should be developed that allow students to provide feedback on how policies affect their learning experiences. This can be done through student coun-

cils, classroom dialogues, or surveys, ensuring their perspectives are considered in future reforms. Encourage Active Participation in Learning Adjustments: As policies affect classroom activities and assessments, students should be oriented on the rationale behind changes and empowered to take ownership of their learning paths.

4.1.4. For School Administrators—Create Inclusive Policy Dialogues: School heads should include teachers in the interpretation and localization of policies to build ownership and contextual relevance. This may include school-level consultations, LAC sessions, and feedback mechanisms. Provide Targeted Support and Flexibility: Recognizing the diverse needs of teachers and learners, administrators must offer logistical, emotional, and professional support. Flexibility in policy adaptation, while ensuring accountability, can lead to more realistic and practical implementation.

4.1.5. For the Department of Education (DepEd) —Institutionalize Teacher Involvement in Policy Development: DepEd should establish formal structures where seasoned teachers participate in the drafting, piloting, and reviewing of education policies to ensure ground-level realities are reflected in national directives. Ensure Resource Readiness Before Implementation: Policy rollouts must be paired with appropriate resource allocation—technological tools, printed materials, training modules, and personnel—especially in underserved and geographically challenged areas. Invest in Sustained Professional Development: Rather than one-time orientations, DepEd must implement ongoing capacity-building programs that support long-term teacher adaptation to reforms.

4.1.6. For Future Researchers—Expand the Lens to Include Other Stakeholders: Future research may explore the perspectives of novice teachers, parents, and students to develop a more holistic understanding of policy implementation at the grassroots level.

4.1.7. *Conduct Comparative Case Studies*—Studies comparing policy implementation in urban vs. rural schools, or public vs. private settings, can reveal context-specific strategies and gaps that require tailored policy solutions. Explore Longitudinal Impacts of Policy Shifts: Long-term studies could investigate how sustained exposure to specific policies affects teacher motivation, student performance, and school culture over time.

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