

Navigating the Digital Frontier: A Qualitative Study on the Lived Experiences of Generation X School Head's in Digital Era

Angelita Luz Rosales

Abstract. This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of generation x school heads in the digital era. There were eight (8) school heads in Marilog District, Davao City Division who participated in the study. This study made use of a phenomenological approach to extract the ideas of the participants. The in-depth-interview was employed to gather information with regards to their respective experiences, coping strategies, and insights. Using thematic analysis, the following themes emerged from the lived experiences of Generation X school heads in the digital era in Marilog District, Davao City Division: the challenges faced included the digital divide, scarcity of resources, and a negative outlook toward technology integration. In response to these challenges, the coping mechanisms employed by the school heads involved establishing support systems, engaging in continuous professional learning, and demonstrating flexibility and adaptability. Lastly, the insights drawn from their experiences highlighted the importance of communication and collaboration, training and development, and recognizing the benefits of technology in school administration and instruction. The study emphasized the need for the Department of Education to implement regular, targeted training for Generation X school heads to boost digital skills and confidence, supported by mentorship networks and strong support systems to empower effective digital leadership.

KEY WORDS

1. Generation X
2. Digital era
3. School Heads
4. Phenomenology
5. Davao City Division

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1. Introduction

As technology substantially transforms all aspects of society, education confronts a significant crossroads. The advent of the digital era compelled seasoned instructors from prior generations to adjust to an evolving educational landscape. Generation X school leaders (born around 1965 and 1980) have emerged as significant figures in both the analog and digital periods among these educators. Generation X school administrators, who were raised amid the emergence of personal computation and the in-

ception of internet access, now oversee schools that have become more integrated with technology advancements.

Although technology has significantly enhanced access to information, communication methods, and commercial prospects, it has concurrently presented a myriad of complex challenges and issues. One of these problems is the "digital divide," which denotes the pervasive discrepancy in access to computers and the internet, hence intensifying pre-existing societal dispari-

ties. Consequently, although certain segments of the population enjoy unfettered communication with knowledge and opportunities, others are marginalized due to being eliminated from the digital domain, thereby exacerbating pre-existing societal disparities (Mubarak Soumi, 2022).

Pedagogical challenges arising from the shift towards online education have garnered substantial interest in the research community. Edge et al. (2021) performed a global study examining the lives, professions, experiences, and desires of Generation X administrators and vice-principals in London, NYC City, and Toronto. They assert that Generation X introduces a novel array of generational concepts, anticipations, and objectives to educational leadership roles. They are often considered independent and self-reliant, with a robust dedication to personal and professional relationships, as well as social and peer networks. The commonly shared traits impact GenXers' expressed preference for collaboration, mobility, variety, innovative organizational frameworks, and work-life equilibrium. They asserted that for such teachers to thrive in the digital era, they must adopt creative instructional methods and viewpoints. Gaining insight into the lived experiences of Generation X school heads in the digital age is crucial for understanding how educational leadership evolves amidst technological advancements and changing administrative demands. While literature abounds on the experiences of educators from various generational cohorts, a significant gap remains concerning Generation X leaders—particularly in the context of Davao City. Most existing studies have focused on the perspectives of teachers, leaving the experiences of school heads underexplored. This phenomenological study seeks to fill this void by delving into how Generation X school leaders in the Marilog District of the Davao City Divi-

sion navigate the complex landscape of leading schools in the digital era.

This research aims to highlight how these leaders integrate new administrative and technological innovations while remaining rooted in traditional pedagogical frameworks. By uncovering their personal and professional journeys, the study offers valuable perspectives for the broader Department of Education community, especially for those who are similarly tasked with balancing legacy systems and emerging digital demands. Their narratives will shed light on the unique challenges they face, the coping strategies they employ, and the insights they have gained through lived experience.

Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) to determine the lived experiences of Generation X school heads in the digital era. (2) to determine the coping strategies of Generation X school heads based on their experiences in the digital era. And (3) to determine the insights can be drawn from the experiences of Generation X school heads in the digital era that can be shared with the academe?

This study benefits multiple stakeholders by highlighting the unique challenges and strengths of Generation X school heads in the digital era. For the Department of Education, it provides a basis for developing policies and support systems tailored to generational and technological transitions. School leaders gain practical insights to enhance their leadership and adaptability in a rapidly evolving educational landscape. Teachers benefit from improved alignment with school heads, fostering better integration of digital tools in instruction. Students indirectly gain from more effective leadership and a more engaging, tech-supported learning environment. Future researchers can build on this study to further explore generational dynamics in educational leadership.

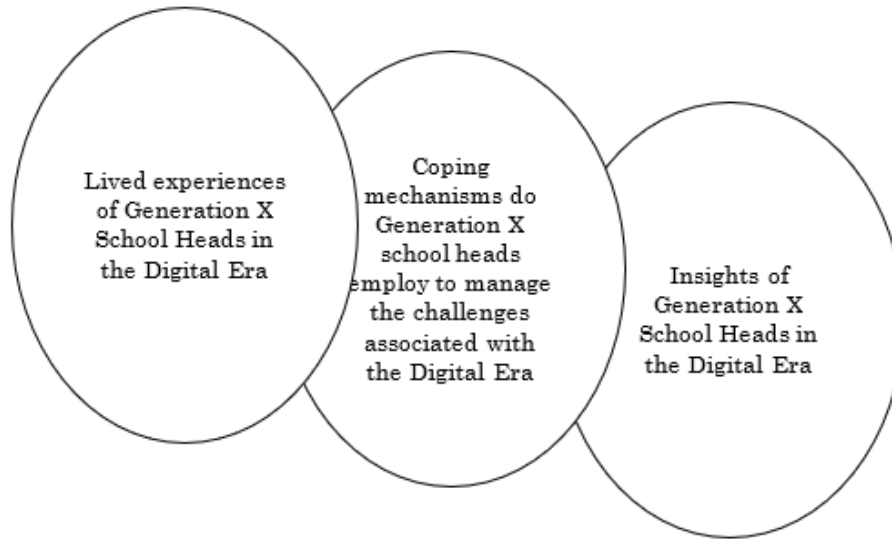


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework

2. Methodology

The following section outlines the procedures used by the researcher to perform this research study. It includes the population and sampling, instrumentation, data source, and data analysis.

2.1. Research Design—The study adopted a qualitative, phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of Generation X school leaders in the digital age, emphasizing the importance of understanding participants’ realities within their natural settings (Creswell Creswell, 2023). This method allowed the researcher to uncover deep, nuanced insights into social and human issues through inductive analysis and an acknowledgment of researcher subjectivity.

2.2. Ethical Considerations—The study adhered strictly to ethical research standards, ensuring informed consent, participant safety, confidentiality, and transparency, in line with RMC’s Research Ethics. Focused on Generation X school leaders in Marilog District, it emphasized the social value of exploring leadership in a digital context, with implications for educational policy and professional development. By safeguarding participant well-being and maintaining data integrity, the researcher

ensured a respectful, inclusive, and rigorous exploration of leadership challenges in modern education.

2.3. Research Participants—The study employed purposive sampling to select eight Generation X school leaders from public schools in Marilog District, Davao City, ensuring they had at least two years of experience to provide in-depth, relevant insights. This approach, as supported by Stewart et al. (2021), enabled the collection of rich, meaningful narratives that deepened understanding of the challenges and experiences faced by educational leaders in a digital context.

2.4. Research Instrument—In this qualitative study, interviews served as the primary instrument for collecting data to understand participants’ lived experiences, perspectives, and emotions (Creswell Creswell, 2023). While other methods such as observations and document analysis supported data triangulation, interviews were the most effective for eliciting

in-depth insights from instructors, allowing for the categorization, coding, and interpretation of responses to generate meaningful themes.

2.5. Data Gathering Procedure—The researcher obtained formal approval from academic and administrative authorities before conducting face-to-face, in-depth interviews with eight qualified school leaders, ensuring informed consent and ethical compliance. The interview guide underwent expert content validation to ensure relevance and clarity. Interviews were conducted in a confidential, supportive setting and recorded with consent. Data analysis employed thematic content analysis and triangulation to ensure accuracy and credibility of the findings.

2.6. Data Analysis—The study employed thematic content analysis (TCA) to systematically interpret qualitative data from interviews and documents, enabling the identification of key patterns and participant perspectives (An-

derson, 2022). To strengthen validity, methodological triangulation was used, combining interviews, assessments, and document analysis, ensuring comprehensive and corroborated findings (Guion, 2002). Semi-structured interviews facilitated flexible yet consistent data collection, supported by secondary desk reviews for deeper contextual understanding. The study employed thematic content analysis (TCA) to systematically interpret qualitative data from interviews and documents, enabling the identification of key patterns and participant perspectives (Anderson, 2022). To strengthen validity, methodological triangulation was used, combining interviews, assessments, and document analysis, ensuring comprehensive and corroborated findings (Guion, 2002). Semi-structured interviews facilitated flexible yet consistent data collection, supported by secondary desk reviews for deeper contextual understanding.

3. Results

This chapter highlighted the results and discussion of the study. Themes were extracted based on participants' responses to each question. Experiences of teachers fulfilling ancillary functions, coping strategies of teachers in overcoming the challenges they have encountered, and learning insights generated by the teachers in relation to their experiences in fulfilling ancillary functions are discussed below.

3.1. Experiences of teachers fulfilling ancillary functions—Figure 2 shows the experiences of teachers fulfilling ancillary functions. Based on the participants' responses, the results revealed two common themes. These themes

are: (1) work overload and (2) limited support and resources. These findings highlight the added pressures teachers face, emphasizing the need for better institutional support and resource allocation.

3.2. Coping Strategies of Teachers in Overcoming the Challenges they have encountered—Figure 3 highlights the coping strategies of teachers in overcoming the challenges they have encountered. In this context, the results have revealed two themes on the coping strate-

gies used by teachers. The themes were (1) proper planning and time management, and (2) seek support. These strategies reflect the proactive and collaborative approaches teachers adopt to maintain balance and resilience in the face of demanding responsibilities.

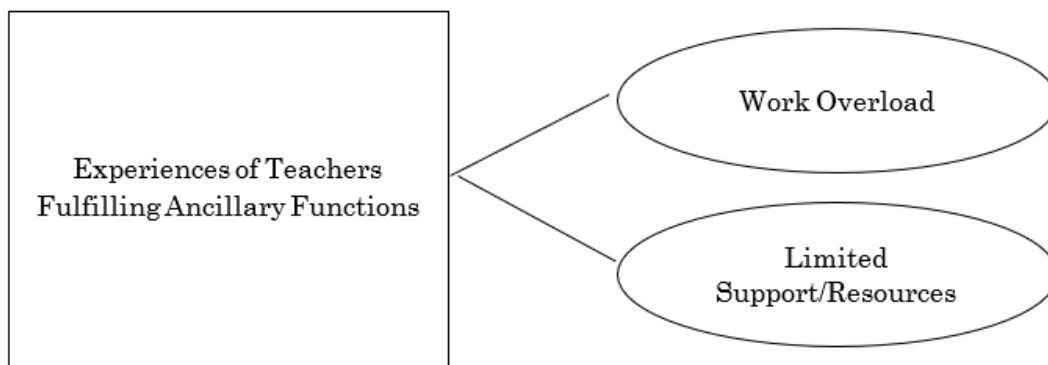


Fig. 2. Experiences of Teachers Fulfilling Ancillary Functions

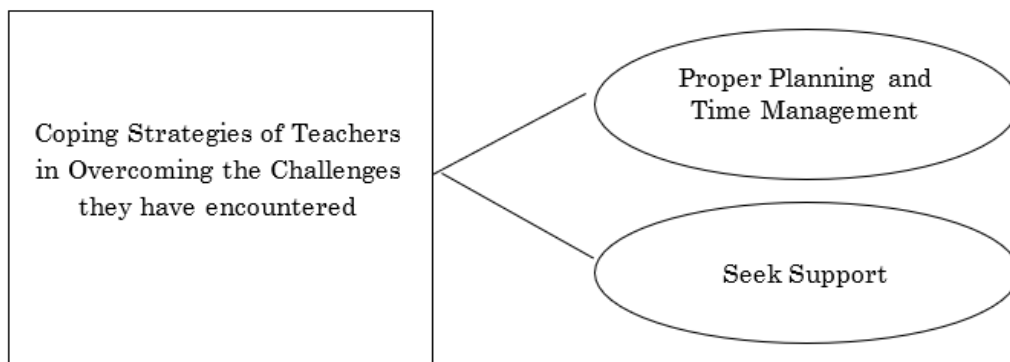


Fig. 3. Coping Strategies of Teachers in Overcoming the Challenges they have encountered

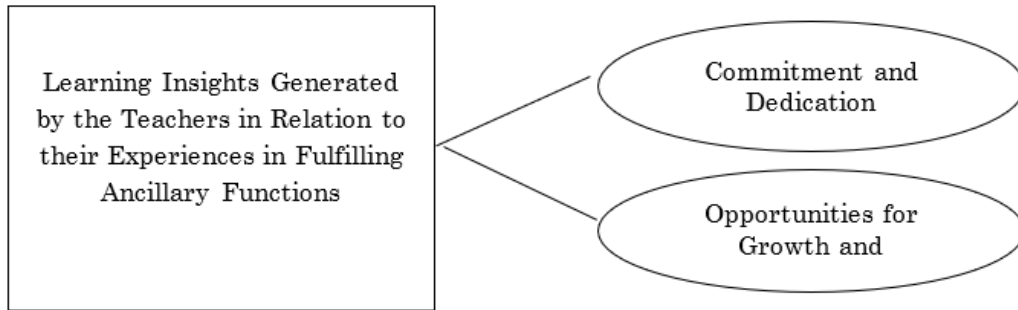


Fig. 4. Learning Insights Generated by the Teachers in Relation to their Experiences in Fulfilling Ancillary Functions

3.3. *Learning Insights Generated by the Teachers in Relation to their Experiences in Fulfilling Ancillary Functions*—Figure 4 revealed the learning insights generated by the teachers in relation to their experiences in fulfilling ancillary functions. The responses of the participants have revealed two common themes namely: (1) commitment and dedication, and (2) opportunities for growth and improvement. These insights underscore the dual nature of ancillary tasks as both challenging responsibilities and avenues for professional development.

4. Discussion

To specifically elicit the replies of participants' experiences, this study used a qualitative research design. In-depth interviews with the participants—seven chosen teachers from Sta. Ana District, Division of Davao City—were also conducted in order to gather data. On the experiences of teachers fulfilling ancillary functions. Based on the participants' responses, the results revealed two common themes. These themes are: (1) work overload and (2) limited support and resources. On the coping strategies of teachers in overcoming the challenges they have encountered. In this context, the results have revealed two themes on the coping strategies used by teachers. The themes were (1) proper planning and time management, and (2) seek support. Lastly, on the learning insights generated by the teachers in relation to their experiences in fulfilling ancillary functions. The responses of the participants have revealed two common themes namely: (1) commitment and dedication, and (2) opportunities for growth and improvement.

On the lived experiences of the Generation X school heads in the digital era in Marilog District, Davao City Division, and the findings highlight the generational challenges encountered by school heads in adapting to a rapidly digitalizing education system. The digital divide reflects their struggle to bridge gaps in technological fluency and access, while scarcity of resources underscores limitations in infrastructure and support necessary for effective implementation. Additionally, a negative outlook stems from the compounded pressures of managing both technological demands and traditional responsibilities, contributing to a sense of inadequacy or reluctance toward innovation. On the coping mechanisms that Generation X school heads employ to address their experiences and challenges, results demonstrate the resilience and resourcefulness of Generation X leaders in navigating the complexities of digital transformation. Support systems, both institutional and personal, provide a crucial backbone

for their efforts, while continuous professional learning equips them with the skills needed to stay current. Flexibility and adaptability reflect their willingness to evolve, shift perspectives, and embrace new approaches to leadership in response to changing educational landscapes.

On the insights shared by the Generation X school heads based on their experiences that they shared to the academe to effectively adopt technology in school administration and instruction, results underscore the value of participatory and inclusive practices in technology integration within schools. Emphasizing communication and collaboration suggests that collective efforts and shared visions are essential for progress, while the need for training and development points to the importance of capacity-building initiatives. Moreover, recognizing the benefits of technology reflects a gradual shift in perception toward its potential to enhance

administrative efficiency and instructional delivery.

To better support teachers, the Department of Education should allocate more funding for support staff to handle ancillary tasks and revise policies to reduce administrative burdens. Encouraging collaboration and mentorship programs can also foster supportive work environments. Teachers can improve efficiency through effective time management, delegation, peer collaboration, and continuous professional development. Students should be empowered to take ownership of their learning through active participation and regular feedback sessions, helping teachers tailor their strategies. Future researchers are encouraged to investigate workload management techniques and conduct longitudinal studies on how ancillary duties impact teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and instructional quality over time.

5. References

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