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Strategic Pathways to Educational Innovation: From Design to Sustainability

Iddelo Jan T. Pioquid*¹, Benedicta D. Repayo, PhD²

¹ Candelaria National High School, Aklan, Philippines, ^{1, 2} Aklan State University, Banga, Aklan, Philippines

Corresponding Author email: iddelojantonitpioquid@gmail.com

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Abstract

Aim: The study explored the strategies employed by educational innovators during their pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation phases, and to identify the sustainability strategies used to maintain these innovations.

Methodology: A descriptive qualitative research design was employed, focusing on the strategies of the top two winners of the educational innovation showdown in the teaching category from 2022 to 2025.

Results: The educational innovations greatly enhanced teaching and learning activities. The research found several major strategies that helped to make educational innovations successful. In the pre-implementation period, needs assessment, promotion of a culture of innovation, planning, and consultation were important. In the implementation period, pilot testing, support systems, and open communication were important. Post-implementation strategies were proper inventory, documentation, and close monitoring. Sustainability of innovations was ensured by developing connections and embedding innovations within the current school system.

Conclusion: These findings provide insights for educators and policymakers aiming to enhance educational quality through innovative practices. This can also help the educational innovators who are new in the field who aim to foster an innovative teaching-learning process.

Keywords: *innovation, strategies, sustainability, education*

INTRODUCTION

Educational innovation is one of the main drivers of development in teaching and learning methods globally. As education systems seek to respond to the fast-changing needs of society and technological innovations, local innovations are important in shaping reforms to suit cultural and local contexts. In DepEd Region VI, the commemoration and exhibition of these innovations are conducted annually to celebrate the fruit of hard work, competence, and passion of the committed educational innovators.

This study examines innovations in education, including pre-implementation strategies, implementation, post-implementation, and how innovators have sustained their educational innovations. The contributions of these innovations have greatly helped the entire academic community enhance the quality of education. They have not only supported learners and addressed gaps in the system but also encouraged overall educational progress. As this research explores the experiences of teachers who are also educational innovators, Aivazidi and Michalakelis (2022) and Rosales (2012) highlight that teachers with strong command of the factors shaping classroom didactic activities are better positioned to complete innovative projects successfully. Additionally, Valdés Sánchez and Gutiérrez-Esteban (2023) examined the facilitators that make educational innovation successful, including support from school management teams, educational administration, pedagogical leadership, learning processes, teacher education, available tools and resources, programming, school projects, accompaniment, family support, school culture, reference models, school organization, and a sense of belonging.



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There are effective and high-quality educational innovations and strategies in the District of New Washington, Schools Division of Aklan, initiated by local innovators. However, educational innovators face several challenges in implementing their ideas, as they often lack knowledge about strategies that effectively support innovation. In addition, many innovators are not fully aware of the concept of innovation itself and feel uncertain about how to accomplish it, even if they have a general idea of what they want to undertake. Personal challenges such as time management, funding, and community involvement also add to these difficulties.

These are the reasons why this study was conducted—it highlights the journeys of educational innovation awardees in the district. The study offers a glimpse into how they successfully addressed gaps in their own stations and in the wider community. Moreover, these strategies can serve as useful literature for future educational innovators, providing guidance on effective approaches to adopt throughout the innovation journey. This study can also offer ideas on best practices that others can adapt to successfully sustain their own initiatives.

Objectives

The overarching question for this study is: How are these educational innovations successfully implemented and sustained? This is addressed through the following research questions:

1. What are the innovations implemented by the innovators in the district of New Washington for school year 2021-2024?
2. What strategies were employed by educational innovators in the district of New Washington employed in the creation of their educational innovations?
3. What are the sustainability strategies the innovators employed to sustain their educational innovations?

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design, as it encompasses the strategies employed by educational innovators throughout the pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation of their educational innovations. According to Ayton (2023), qualitative descriptive study is a necessary and appropriate research design for research questions focused on developing an understanding about an inadequately known research field, compared to one phenomenon. Phenomena are explained by qualitative descriptive studies in the form of description, not explanation.

Population and Sampling

The participants of the research were the top 2 winners in the educational innovation showdown – teaching category, New Washington District, Schools Division of Aklan, during the district educational showdown implemented from 2022-2024. They were selected subjects of this research because they have already completed all the phases of innovation process and shown output and been winners. There are five innovations in the study, one innovation has three innovators, another innovation has two innovators, and the remaining three innovations have one innovator each, totaling eight innovators.

Instruments

This research used researcher-made semi-structured interview guide with 3 sections. First section is questions regarding the background of the innovator. Second section is questions regarding strategies on how to implement educational innovation successfully. Third section is questions regarding sustainability strategies employed by educational innovators. The instrument underwent face and content validity from 3 experts. The validation instrument used was adopted from Solanon et al. (2020). The validity outcome earned 18 votes of YES marks with the reading of "very satisfactory."

Data Collection

The process of data collection began after obtaining the Schools Division Superintendent and Public Schools District Supervisor's approval. Once the approval was obtained, then the in-depth interview was scheduled to the participants. The in-depth interview per participant took 45 minutes using a cellular phone as a recording device.



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Data collection took place during March to July 2025. Then the data collected were analyzed utilizing the thematic analysis after the interviews.

Data Analysis

The data gathered were then analyzed in a descriptive qualitative manner employing the thematic analysis. Thematic Analysis (TA) by Braun and Clarke (2006) is arguably one of the best qualitative analytic techniques used. It is a technique of identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning ('themes') in qualitative data. Thematic analysis is suitable for this research since it offers a flexible, systematic method for finding and interpreting patterns in participants' perspectives and practices.

Ethical Considerations

For the sake of ensuring quality, credibility, and ethical integrity of the study, the researchers were rigid in following set research guidelines. Before collecting data, approval was sought from the Schools Division Superintendent and the participants. Informed consent letters were issued to all participants, with which they could voluntarily indicate that they were ready to participate for the study.

After getting the approval, the researchers arranged and scheduled the in-depth interviews with the participants selected. Interviews were all conducted digitally to enable verbatim transcription that is complete and accurate. Prior to any recording, clear consent was obtained from the participants as mandated by the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

To protect participant confidentiality, pseudonyms were employed at the time of transcription, analysis, and reporting. The participant's individual responses and identities were only known to the researchers and were kept strictly confidential. All data collected were handled with maximum care and were securely disposed of after serving their purpose in the study.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section presents the themes and interpretation of data obtained from the participants of the study. The presentation is organized based on the order of the statement of the problems.

Innovations Implemented by the Educational Innovators in the District of New Washington SDO Aklan for School Year 2021-2024

Innovations	Description
Project Re (search) (Re) Source Exchange	Exchange of printed research manuscripts from other educators to be used for research classes of senior high school students.
Project Dokyu'handog	ICT training for students, creation of video documentaries as learning materials, and provision of necessities to the beneficiaries.
Project Kabaekasa Pagsuma	Innovative student-centered numeracy strategies fostering peer tutoring, contextualized learning sheets, hands-on materials, and transformed areas into learning spaces.
Project E-Review Mo	An online Filipino reviewer for senior high school students to elevate their academic performance and interest in learning Filipino specifically implemented during the modular learning.
Project STARLIGHT	Strengthened Techniques and Activities in Reading for Literacy Growth and Hybrid Teaching

The innovations initiated in the New Washington district were primarily focused on teaching and learning. Most teachers concentrated their educational innovations on the teaching-learning process because this is the



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essence of education—it is where the most direct interaction between teachers and learners occurs and where learning happens. Innovations in classroom interaction, assessment, and teaching approaches have the most direct and observable impact on students' understanding, motivation, and achievement. Today, classrooms are increasingly heterogeneous in terms of learners' backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities. Teachers innovate to include more learners and to individualize learning, often through differentiated instruction and the application of technology (Amihan, et al., 2023).

Strategies Employed on the Creation of Educational Innovations

Educational innovation creation generally consists of three phases: the pre-implementation phase, the implementation phase, and the post-implementation phase.

Strategies Employed During the Pre-Implementation Phase

Needs Assessment. Participants emphasized the importance of identifying gaps and problems in their own schools. These gaps were the driving force behind what aspects should be prioritized when developing innovations. Identifying needs helped them target real problems affecting teaching and learning.

As stated by one participant: *"As a language teacher, I have observed that our learners are struggling with reading and comprehension, that motivated me to create a strategy to help them."*

Another participant stated: *"We encountered the problem that some of our students cannot follow our actual lessons in numeracy that is why we decided to dig deeper on what to do with these struggling learners."*

Another participant stated: *"I have observed that the result of the assessment shows that the struggling learner in numeracy is high. What we did is we purposively chose these learners and conducted an interview for us to identify what should be done to help them."*

Needs assessment is a systematic approach to gathering and evaluating data to determine learning and development requirements, uncover root causes, and select the most appropriate strategies (Rober, 2024; Sanchez et al., 2023).

Encouragement of a Culture of Innovation. The innovators identified the value of encouragement within the school in developing new concepts. An innovative culture encourages educators to test out fresh approaches, techniques, and methodologies. Such empowerment not only enhances teaching but also enhances professional and job satisfaction growth. A culture of innovation promotes teamwork, sharing of ideas, and collaborative problem-solving.

One participant stated: *"During the pre-implementation phase, the strategy focused on fostering a culture of innovation by promoting open communication and the sharing of ideas, which facilitated the adoption of design thinking."*

Another participant stated: *"One strategy that I first did when I was planning to innovate was presenting to them the idea of my planned innovation."*

Another participant stated: *"Actually, during our LAC session, I presented to my colleagues the problem that I am encountering, and I gave them also a glimpse of what possible solution I can create which is through my innovation."*

According to Lambriex et al. (2020) a culture of innovation plays a key role in promoting and supporting innovative practices among individuals within educational institutions.

Planning and Consultation. After the needs assessment of the innovators, they then came up with a plan on what strategy are aligned to address the gap and issues existing. They planned the resources needed; people involved and consulted their supervisors and stakeholder for inputs necessary for the development of the plan.



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One participant said: "The information and resources needed for planning were gathered and collected through the conduct of meetings with students, parents, teachers, heads, and other stakeholders."

Another participant stated: "There were meetings and consultations made together with our school head, faculty members, parents of the selected participants and also the beneficiaries of the innovation."

Another participant stated: "The parents of the beneficiaries of our innovation were consulted if they are willing to join their child in the innovation."

Innovation agents are those individuals or drivers who facilitate educational innovation (Juarez, 2011). Supported by Adu et al. (2014), they noted the individuals who can be identified with the schools of education, such as students, teachers, the educational guidance service, the management team, or the rest of the center's staff are the internal agents. External agents as classified by Lubienski et al. (2022) refers to outsiders with whom it is associated such as family, counseling professionals, inspection, and educational administration, as well as those individuals or organizations in the center's environment.

Project Proposition and Approval. Innovators believed that a well-crafted proposal could drive change in their institution. Approval from school leaders legitimizes the innovation, aligns it with strategic goals, and secures needed resources and support.

Another participant stated: "We drafted an innovation proposal to create a strong backbone on the initiative that we are going to implement."

Another participant stated: "I created the innovation proposal then submitted it to our school head for his approval to fully implement the innovation."

Another participant stated: "When I got the proposal approved, it felt like the whole school community is with me in this journey."

School leaders must develop effective strategies and build buy-in to facilitate innovation successfully (Alvi, 2022; Esteban et al., 2016; Zuleta, 2020; Carvajal & Sanchez, 2024).

Strategies Employed During the Implementation Phase

Pilot test and wider rollout: The innovators thought that rolling out the innovation to the whole school or district is one of the most important strategies to maximize the goals of the educational innovations. A pilot test helps determine whether the innovation works in a real school setting—not just in theory. It reveals whether resources, time, and logistics are sufficient and manageable.

One participant stated: "Yes we had pilot testing to identify future problem that may arise."

Another participant stated: "Before we roll out the implementation, we had first the pilot testing to identify specific areas to be improved before the implementation."

Another participant stated: "I conducted a pilot testing first so I can see the initial view of how my innovation works during the implementation."

A pilot study is useful where stakeholders want to know the degree to which an initiative aligns with existing infrastructure and programming to guide decisions on whether to continue and possibly expand its application (Chow et al., 2021)

Support systems: Innovators think that a strong support system is essential for them during the implementation stage since it offers the resources, the boost they need, and the working environment to implement and maintain new ideas successfully. The support may be obtained from any organization, which may include school



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leaders, peers, mentors, or external agencies, and it assists innovators in overcoming challenges, gaining confidence, and eventually enhancing the practice of education.

One participant mentioned: *"Since it was approved by our school head, he agreed to provide us with resources, such as bond papers, inks, printer, and even travel allowances. These were important to us as we cannot shoulder everything from our own pockets."*

Another participant stated: *"I was lucky for having a strong support system which includes my school principal and other stakeholders of the school."*

Another participant stated: *"The project has been very successful because of the assistance given by the stakeholders in terms of snacks since it was one of the highlights of this innovation."*

Santos Guerra (2000), Van der Meer & Van der Moolen (2020) believed that management team is an influence that can make all agents to give their best, thus making innovation possible through planning, action, and assessment.

Open communication: Open communication is critical for educational innovators since it promotes collaboration, trust, and an open environment for the creation and implementation of innovative ideas. It allows for the exchange of different viewpoints, enables the early identification of problems, and promotes the creation of innovative solutions.

As noted by one participant: *"Open communication helped in overcoming resistance from participating in the study."*

Another participant stated: *"Communication has been relevant in this study especially that we are a team in this innovation."*

Another participant stated: *"Collaboration and communication to other stakeholders and your colleagues is very essential to make your project successful."*

According to Tomás (2024), a well-defined communication plan helps avoid misunderstandings, reduces duplication of effort, and ensures that all team members are aligned with the project objectives. Encouraging open communication is essential for innovation.

Strategies Employed During the Post-Implementation

Proper inventory. Accurate inventory of materials used is very important for innovators after implementation since they help in continuous improvement, scalability, and replicating successful practices. They also assist educators in measuring the success of the innovation and determining the effects on student learning. Most importantly, sustaining the innovation would be possible if the materials used were properly kept.

As stated by one participant: *"In terms of monitoring, I personally check inventories and logs in the school library on access of these materials. "*

Another participant stated: *"After the innovation journey, we kept all the learning materials that we used so that we can use it again for the sustainability of the project."*

Another participant stated: *"For us to implement the project continuously, we need to properly keep our materials through inventory."*

A second essential role of office inventory management is to ensure that supplies are stored and organized effectively. Well-structured storage systems allow employees to quickly locate the items they need, reducing delays and enhancing overall productivity. Simple administrative practices—such as labeling shelves and keeping a detailed inventory list—can significantly streamline this process (Accelerate Management School, 2025).



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Documentation. Proper documentation after implementing an educational innovation is essential for evaluating its effectiveness, ensuring accountability, and guiding improvements. It provides evidence of impact, supports transparency, and helps justify the use of resources. Documentation also enables others to replicate or adapt the innovation, promotes sustainability by preserving institutional knowledge, and contributes to professional development through reflection and knowledge sharing.

One participant stated: *"Documentation was one of the essential lessons that I have learned throughout this innovation journey."*

Another participant stated: *"After the implementation process, for you to identify the strengths and weaknesses of your project, proper documentation can be a big help."*

Another participant stated: *"Documentation played a very significant part in our innovation."*

According to Atlassian (2025), documentation promotes knowledge sharing, enabling team members to grasp how processes function and what the outcomes of completed projects should resemble.

Close monitoring. The innovators believe that regularly monitoring educational innovations after implementation is crucial for several reasons. It helps ensure the innovation remains effective, relevant, and sustainable—ultimately improving student outcomes and informing future educational policies. Ongoing tracking also allows for timely adjustments, prevents unintended negative consequences, and aids in identifying promising practices that can be expanded or replicated.

As stated by one participant: *"We monitored the success of the innovation through the logbook in our library which show that many students are still using the research papers. Moreover, we assessed its success because we have checked and observed the research paper of those students who borrowed the research papers."*

Another participant stated: *"I closely monitor the implementation of my project with the help of my co-teachers who are handling English also."*

Another participant stated: *"I see to it that my innovation is still on progress even after the implementation to make sure the continuation of positive impact to my learners."*

Ongoing research and monitoring are essential to assess the sustained effectiveness of educational strategies and technologies. Regular evaluation ensures that interventions remain relevant and adaptable to evolving needs (Berkat et al., 2025).

Sustainability Strategy Utilized by the Innovators

Fostering linkages. The innovators argue that establishing linkages is a key factor in sustaining educational innovations. Such connections foster collaboration, mutual learning, and broader application of new concepts. By bringing together diverse stakeholders—teachers, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners—these linkages create an enabling environment where innovation can thrive and become embedded within the educational system.

As stated by one participant: *"By continuing to reach out to other educators in our field to provide our learners with additional offline resources."*

Another participant stated: *"We asked the help of our stakeholder in terms of snacks through the help of our Brigada Coordinator."*

Another participant stated: *"Our co-teachers are also helping us with regard to resources."*

According to Gilad-Hai and Somech (2016), innovation cannot be sustained when individuals work in isolation. Sustaining innovation in schools requires collaboration among educators, including teachers, support staff,



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and school leaders. When teachers collectively engage with the complex challenges of implementing and maintaining innovations, they experience a greater sense of empowerment and purpose.

Integration to Existing System. Participants agreed that integrating educational innovation into the existing school system—such as its goals, curriculum standards, and policies—is essential for long-term success and sustainability. When aligned with the school's broader mission and academic expectations, the innovation becomes a seamless part of daily teaching and learning, rather than an isolated or temporary project.

One participant stated: *"We are now integrating these methods to other classroom teachers especially those who are handling language subject."*

Another participant stated: *"We had the opportunity to present our innovation to other school which gave them the idea also to adapt the same strategy that we implemented."*

Another participant stated: *"I encouraged other teachers to use the website for their subject also so that our learners can review their lessons with little supervision of their teachers."*

Conclusions

The research on educational innovations in the New Washington District, SDO Aklan, presents the immense influence of innovative approaches on enhancing educational performance. The effectiveness of projects like Project Re(search) (Re)Source Exchange, Project Dokyu'handog, Project Kabaeaka sa Pagsuma, Project E-Review Mo, and Project STARLIGHT illustrates the potential of selective innovations to improve teaching and learning processes, especially in the environment of the new normal.

The key strategies used in the pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation stages, including the development of a culture of innovation, needs assessment, planning and consultation, pilot testing, and open communication, were instrumental in the success of these initiatives. The support systems and collaborative efforts of educators, school leaders, and stakeholders were instrumental in addressing resource limitations and other challenges.

Finally, the research highlights the need for ongoing support, teamwork, and planning in the effective implementation and sustainability of educational innovations. The innovations and strategies of the New Washington educational innovators are worth emulating by other educators and policymakers who want to enhance quality education through innovative practice. This research could be a strong foundation to the innovators especially those who are starting their journey in educational innovation. Further research should persist in investigating and documenting the experiences of educational innovators to enrich the body of knowledge in this field.

Recommendations

It is recommended that schools continue to develop a culture of innovation through facilitating open communication, collaboration, and idea exchange among educators, students, and stakeholders. Conducting needs assessments and pilot testing prior to large-scale rollouts is helpful in identifying and resolving potential issues early. Including successful innovations into the mainstream school system and maintaining continued commitment by school leaders and stakeholders are important for sustainability. Continual monitoring, careful documentation, and the sustenance of effective support systems will make it possible for educational innovations to be effective and responsive to evolving needs. More research should be done so that the experiences of educational innovators can be explored and understood in greater depth, strengthening the knowledge base in this area and informing future projects.

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