Grading Our Own School: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Principals Leading the SBM Self-Assessment

A basic research proposal · Basic Education Research Fund 2026

[Researcher 1], School Principal II · [Researcher 2], Master Teacher II
[Schools Division Office], Department of Education

A sample with invented details, for teaching: nash.com.ph/blog

Introduction and rationale: the principal at the center

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SBM indicators a school rates as not yet, rarely, frequently or always manifested

DO 007, s. 2024, Annex A

None

means of verification required: the checklist is the record

DO 007, s. 2024, Sec. V.E

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School SBM Coordinator: the school head, a role not to be delegated

DO 007, s. 2024, Sec. V.F.1



The principal now leads a rating of a school that includes the principal's own work, with stakeholders at the table and no validator. Studies measure SBM's effects; none has asked principals what leading the revised self-assessment is like.

Literature review: what is known, and what is not

SBM in the Philippines

Small positive effects on test scores (Khattri et al., 2012); most schools rated themselves at the lowest level in 2014 (World Bank, 2016); SBM described as compliance (EDCOM II, 2024; Laguda et al., 2025).

School self-evaluation abroad

Self-evaluation "hugely dependent on school leadership" (OECD, 2013, p. 469); results can be distorted by pressure (Faddar, 2018); parent voice mostly tokenistic (Brown et al., 2021).

IPA

Each case analyzed in depth before the group: a double hermeneutic (Smith et al., 2009). Used with headteachers abroad (Guihen, 2020; Waite, 2025), not yet with Filipino principals.

So: the effects and the compliance are known; how principals make sense of leading the revised self-assessment is not.

Research questions: one central, four guiding

How do public elementary school principals make sense of leading their school's SBM self-assessment as the School SBM Coordinator?

1. How do they make sense of rating the school, and their own leadership, with teachers and stakeholders taking part?
2. How do they experience holding the coordination that DO 007 says shall not be delegated?
3. How do they experience the end of means of verification and of levels of practice?
4. What do the results come to mean as they carry them into plans and technical assistance?

No hypotheses: an IPA study describes and interprets how particular people make sense of an experience; it tests no relationship stated in advance.

Scope and limitation

Scope

- Principals (School Principal I to III) of public elementary schools in the division
- School SBM Coordinator for both the SY 2024–2025 and SY 2025–2026 self-assessments, in the same school
- One interview each, during the learners' vacation, April to May 2026

Limitations

- Six to eight principals: findings describe them; readers judge the fit
- One interview each, weeks after the self-assessment
- The interviewer is a peer principal in the division
- The analysis is the researchers' interpretation; an audit trail shows how

Research design: interpretative phenomenological analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (chosen)
How particular principals make sense of the experience, each case in depth before the group; the researchers' interpretation made visible.

Descriptive phenomenology

The essential structure an experience shares across many people, close to their words, confirmed by them (Colaizzi's method).

Thematic analysis

Patterns across any qualitative data, often for a practical question such as what principals need; not centered on each person's sense-making.

Case study or survey

A case study describes one bounded case from several sources; a survey counts how many principals report something.

Sampling: purposive and homogeneous

41 principals of the division's public elementary schools

23 meet all three criteria; all are invited directly

6–8 to be chosen from those who agree, for small and large, rural and urban schools

Who is eligible

- School Principal I to III of a public elementary school in the division
- School SBM Coordinator for both self-assessments under DO 007, s. 2024, in the same school
- Not supervised by, and not supervising, either researcher

"There is no right answer to the question of the sample size" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 51); IPA analyzes a small, fairly homogeneous group in depth.

Data collection: one interview with each principal

Interview guide

Eight open questions with probes, in English and Filipino; tried out with two principals of another division.

One interview each

About an hour, at a time and place the principal chooses, with the school's checklist at hand as a prompt; audio-recorded with separate consent.

Transcription and translation

By the lead researcher, word for word, in the language spoken; checked against the recording by the second researcher.

Quality: four principles, and how each is met

Sensitivity to context

Interviews in the principal's language and setting; quotations kept as spoken.

Commitment and rigor

Every line of every case noted; each case analyzed alone before the next.

Transparency and coherence

An audit trail of every decision; an independent audit of two cases.

Impact and importance

A question the division can act on in orientation, technical assistance and the order's review.

Ethical issues: consent, pressure, privacy, review

Consent, three times

Separate consent to take part, to be recorded, and to be quoted under a code; withdraw at any time without penalty.

No pressure from above

Invited directly, not through supervisors; the division office is not told who agreed or declined.

Privacy

Codes and bands; no school named; coded data are still personal data under the Data Privacy Act.

Review, and no AI on the data

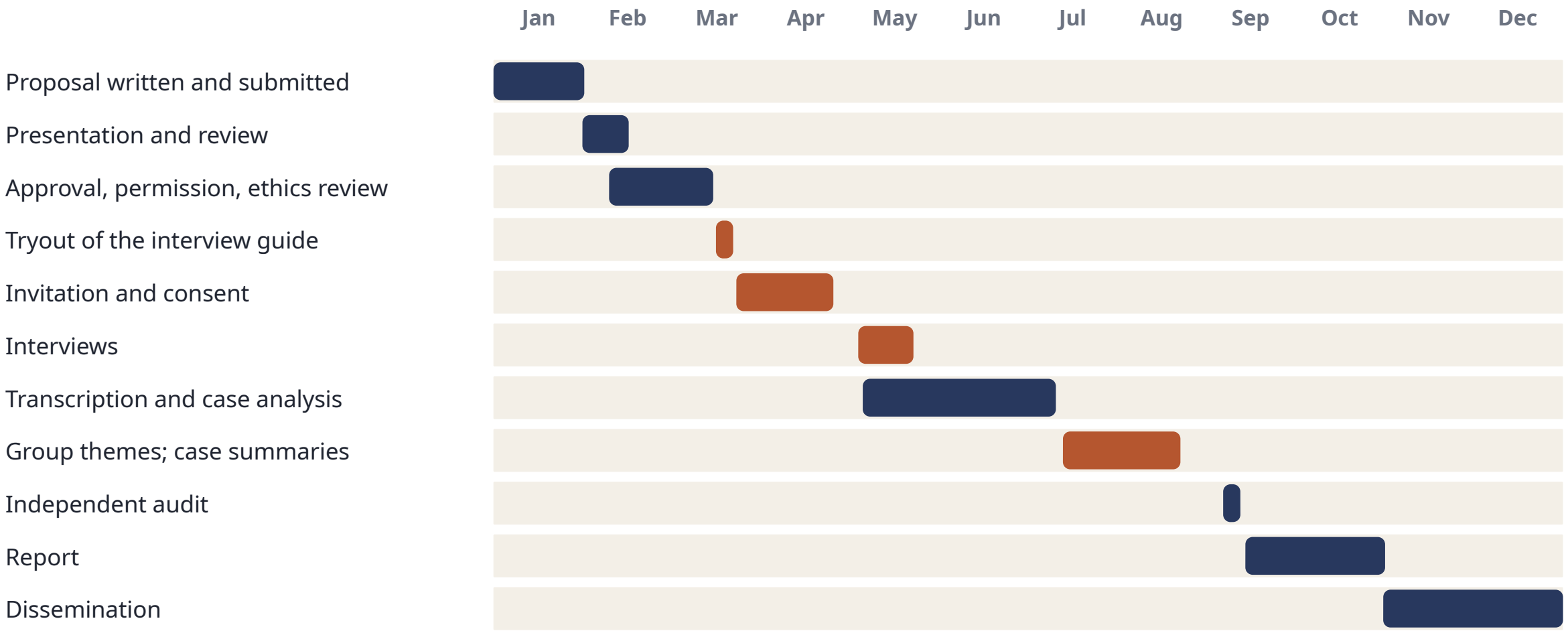
A PHREB-accredited ethics committee reviews the protocol; no recording or transcript goes into an AI tool.

Plan for data analysis: the seven steps of IPA

Step 1	Reading and rereading: each transcript, the first time with the recording
Step 2	Exploratory notes: descriptive, linguistic and conceptual, on every line
Step 3	Experiential statements: what each passage shows of the experience
Step 4	Connections across the statements of one case
Step 5	Personal experiential themes: the clusters named, in a table
Step 6	The next case, on its own terms, before any comparison
Step 7	Group experiential themes: convergence and divergence across cases

Tools: a spreadsheet workbook (Excel or LibreOffice) holds every line, note, statement and theme; the steps follow Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2022).

Timetable: January to December 2026



Rust: work with participants. Interviews fall in the learners' vacation, after SY 2025–2026 ends on March 31.

Cost estimates: PhP 20,000 in eligible items

Item	Particulars	Amount (PhP)
Transportation	Fares to the interviews and the audit	6,000.00
Food	Snacks at interviews and audit meetings	3,000.00
Communication	Mobile data and load, two researchers	4,500.00
Supplies	Encrypted drive, lockable box, folders	2,500.00
Reproduction	Consent forms, guides, case summaries	1,500.00
Dissemination	Research brief for school heads	2,500.00
Total		**20,000.00**

Not charged to the grant

- Transcription service: the researchers transcribe
- Software: a spreadsheet already on hand
- Payment to participants: snacks only
- The auditor's time: given without pay

Dissemination and advocacy: the participants first

The participants

A copy of the report and a meeting

November 2026

SDS, SGOD and the DFTAT

Management committee; a two-page research brief

December 2026

The division's principals

School heads' conference, before the next self-assessment

January to February 2027

Researchers in the region

Regional research congress; the division's journal

March to June 2027

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Thank you

[Researcher 1] · [DepEd email address] · [mobile number]
[Researcher 2] · [DepEd email address]
[Schools Division Office], [address]