# International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

# Distributed Leadership Functions of School Heads as Determinant of School Readiness of Public Elementary Schools in Davao Del Norte Division

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.5.0624.1464

**A B S T R A C T**

This study explored the extent of distributed leadership functions of school heads and school readiness if public elementary schools in Davao del Norte Division. Also, it investigated the association of the involved variables and the domains of distributed leadership functions of school heads that significantly influence school readiness. With the use of probability sampling, 150 elementary teachers in the public schools were selected as the respondents. Utilizing the descriptive-correlational survey method, the data collated were analyzed through the use of Mean and Product-Moment correlation. Results revealed that there was an extensive distributive leadership functions of school heads and an extensive school readiness. Furthermore, there was a significant relationship between the two variables. Highlighting the findings, it was further suggested that higher officials in the Department of Education and school heads may identify means on how to strengthen their distributive leadership functions in order ensure school readiness. More so, future researchers may further explore the involved variables considering other factors and research methods.

Keywords:  Distributed leadership functions, school readiness, descriptive correlation, Davao del Norte Division, Philippines

## Introduction

School readiness towards change involves cultivating a flexible and adaptive educational environment that empowers students and educators to embrace innovation and evolving pedagogical approaches. It requires fostering a mindset of continual improvement, enabling both the curriculum and teaching methods to align with the dynamic needs of students and the rapidly changing landscape of education. According to Berkovich (2011), education policy reform is implemented as a way to improve the operation of the school systems, processes and learning outcomes of students. However, most of the educational changes failed to be implemented effectively in the organizations including in schools because of factors such as negative emotions of teachers in particular uncertainty, fear and doubtfulness that made it difficult for teachers to accept the changes (Yılmaz &  Kılıçoğlu, 2013).

In Indonesia, its education system has been a high-volume, low quality enterprise that has fallen well short of the country's ambitions for an "internationally competitive" system. Most of the teachers are not bold towards change due to unpreparedness to challenges. Many Indonesian teachers and lecturers lack the required subject knowledge and pedagogical skills to be effective educators; learning outcomes for students are poor; and there is a disparity between the skills of graduates and the needs of employers. More so, schools have inadequate funding, human resource deficits, perverse incentive structures, and poor management (Rosser, 2018).

In the Philippine setting, Schools are expected to be the training ground for students to prepare them for the real world. As the curriculum is used as the blueprint on what students should learn, the teaching force plays the biggest role in delivering this essential information to the students (Redondo, Jr. & Bueno, 2019). In fact, the sudden implementation of the K–12 in the Philippines left teachers in confusion with their roles in the new educational system, specifically the development of their roles throughout the process, the appropriateness of the new curriculum and the real classroom situation, and the difference in the internal communication of different education stakeholders. The teachers were discovered to struggle in delivering the content of class materials and possess poor teaching strategies/skills. Due to the lack of professional development opportunities, teachers were unprepared to teach the content based on the assigned schedule and have a more diversified teaching methodology. Moreover, the absence of proper support and materials led to lesser time for teachers to efficiently instruct the content. Dizon et al. (2019) further supported this claim stating that there is a lack of preparation for teaching development.

In the Division of Davao del Norte, it was observed that teachers are not ready to change due to unpreparedness and improper guidance.  In fact, teachers were resistant to change because they are not provided with clear and well-defined reasons for the proposed change or how it would benefit them and their students, they might resist it due to uncertainty and fear of the unknown. Also, teachers felt unprepared to implement a change because they do not receive adequate training or professional development.

Within the abovementioned circumstance, the researcher was motivated to delve into the extent of distributed leadership functions of school heads and school readiness towards change among public elementary teachers in Davao del Norte Division. The study uncovered the correlations between distributed leadership functions of school heads and school readiness towards change. Additionally, this endeavor aspired to offer valuable insights to policymakers, enabling them to formulate policies, programs, interventions, projects, and activities that foster a reinforced leadership among school leaders. This, in turn, would create opportunities for teachers to demonstrate readiness towards change in the workplace.

This study was primarily grounded on Distributed leadership theory. It is a framework of research by which understanding of leadership practices develops in an organization, including the activities in form of conventional, unconventional, organized and arising activities (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2019; Torres, 2019). Distributed practice defines it as coordination between people and the main situation or problem to which they are facing. Distributed leadership is the center of interaction among staff members. (Huggins, Klar, Hammonds, & Buskey, 2016; Hussain et al., 2018) defined distributed leadership as social interaction, which acts as key management operations. Linking it with social interaction, distributed leadership is known as team leadership, shared leadership, and democratic leadership. In education context, some use distributed leadership to designate that school leadership by having multiple leaders. Some argues that distributed leadership is attributed to organizational efficiency not to individuals.

Moreover, distributed leadership is not just sharing of tasks but in fact it is an approach that is shared with all staff members who are efficiently engaged and affect the culture, philosophy and direction (Price Waterhouse Cooper: 2017). Leaders prepare their employees with their full interest for any advancement of change. Commitment to change is explained as such a state in which employees are given awareness about change, possessed expertise those are compulsory for execution of that change, and are motivated for that change by giving suitable rewards.

Haffar (2015) explained change readiness as a point when an employee is ready physically, with full intentions and willing for accepting the change. Employees with high readiness for change will contribute and motivate the organizational promotional activities. Employees know about norms and importance of change and they realize that adapting change is compulsory. Bush, De, and van den Bass (2016) conceptualized readiness for change in three aspects: intentional readiness for change, cognitive readiness for change, and emotional readiness for change.

According to Piderit (2018) in intentional readiness for change, intention is a desire to act in certain way toward an object or event. According to distributed leadership theory, intentional readiness for change is that people are agreeing for trying their best into any difficult task and relevant to Normative commitment to alter this manner that it is based on the concept of Aristotle ideas of good naming will have a good faith. According to past researches, employees have belief about commitment of that change that by doing so it will also a part of company's contract. Distributed leadership and cognitive readiness for change are interlinked through a strong bond. Distributed leaders have key intentions on employee's involvement in their work. Some are effective leaders who have abilities of delivering their knowledge to their employees efficiently. Some are passive leaders who cannot deliver the accurate knowledge to their subordinates and so that they cannot prepare them for future. The past research said that distributed leader urges employees on more indulgent in their work with more passion and immersing simulations towards their work.

## Methodology

### Research Design

In this study, a quantitative research approach was employed, specifically utilizing a descriptive correlational technique. Quantitative research methods involve the collection of numerical data and its subsequent mathematical analysis, often incorporating statistical tools. This approach is employed to elucidate and provide explanations for specific problems or phenomena, as highlighted by Apuke (2017). In the context of descriptive correlational investigations, the focus lies in describing variables and the naturally occurring relationships that manifest among them, as discussed by Davis (2021). This study was categorized as quantitative since it relied on numerical data for data analysis and interpretation. It was descriptive since its goal was to evaluate the distributed leadership functions of school heads and school readiness towards change. This academic endeavor was also correlational because it evaluated the relationship between distributed leadership functions of school heads and school readiness towards change of public elementary schools of Davao del Norte Division.

### Research Respondents

There were 150 public elementary teachers who were invited to answer and be part of this study. It was claimed that for simple regression analysis, it needs at least 50 samples and generally 100 samples for most research situations (Hair et al., 2018). Hence, the 150 respondents were more than enough to address the purpose of this study. In the inclusion and exclusion criteria, elementary teachers with 2 years teaching experience were chosen in this endeavor since their 2 years stay in the public school would help them to assess the distributed leadership functions of their school heads and how it affected the school readiness towards change. Respondents who felt awkward and uncomfortable in answering the survey questionnaire were free to withdraw from their participation. They were not forced to be part of the study. Their decision to withdraw was respected. Apparently, the respondents' welfare was given utmost importance in the conduct of the study.

### Research Instruments

As to the form of gathering data, this study utilized an adapted survey questionnaire. The questionnaire that was employed in this undertaking was divided into two sets. The first set was focusing on distributed leadership functions of school heads while the second set was about school readiness.

The distributed leadership functions of school heads questionnaire was adapted from Hulpia and Devos (2009). The instrument consisted of 21 items. It had the following indicators, namely: support (1-10), supervision (1-3), and coherent leadership (1-8). The questionnaire was subjected to a pilot testing having a result of .77 suggesting that the items have relatively *high* internal consistency.

The school readiness questionnaire was adapted from Helvaci (2015). The instrument consisted of 18 items. It had the following indicators, namely: teachers' readiness (1-5), administrators' readiness (1-5), readiness of school infrastructure (1-5), and parents' readiness (1-3). The questionnaire was subjected to a pilot testing having a result of .75 suggesting that the items have relatively *high* internal consistency.

## Table

### Table 1

**Summary on the Extent of Distributed Leadership Functions of School Heads**

| No | Indicators | Mean | Descriptive Equivalent |
|----|-----------|------|------------------------|
| 1 | Support | 4.13 | Extensive |
| 2 | Supervision | 4.18 | Extensive |
| 3 | Coherent Team Leadership | 4.16 | Extensive |
| **Overall** | | **4.16** | **Extensive** |

Table 1 provides the summary on the extent of distributed leadership functions of school heads. It is exhibited that the overall mean of distributed leadership functions of school heads is 4.16, which is in an extensive level. This means that distributed leadership functions of school heads are oftentimes evident.

Data show that all three (3) indicators reveal an extensive result. As arranged chronologically, supervision has the highest mean score (4.18). This is followed by coherent team leadership (4.16) and support (4.13). The results serve as a proof that the distributed leadership functions of school heads are oftentimes evident.

The data indicates a robust and multifaceted performance across three key indicators. Notably, when arranged chronologically, the highest mean score is attributed to supervision. This suggests a noteworthy and effective engagement of school heads in overseeing various aspects of educational activities. Following closely is coherent team leadership indicating a consistent effort towards fostering unity and effective collaboration within the leadership team. Finally, the support indicator signifies a considerable level of backing provided by school heads. The sequential arrangement of these indicators implies a balanced emphasis on supervision, team leadership, and support, collectively portraying a comprehensive approach to leadership that contributes to the overall success and cohesion within the educational institution.

With the extensive implementation of distributed leadership, this reiterates the widely accepted assertion of O'Shea (2021) that distributed leadership enhances capacity building, fostering sustained improvement efforts and effective change management. This is because the practice of distributed leadership creates opportunities for individuals in both formal and informal leadership roles to collaborate and support each other. When professionals collaborate on emerging issues, problems, or challenges that are significant to them, the potential for mutual learning can be remarkably impactful.

Similarly, Ware (2019) conceptualized that distributed leadership fosters improved decision-making when a diverse group of individuals with different backgrounds, experiences, skills, and expertise are involved in the process. Two discernible patterns, the consultative contribution pattern and the decisional distribution pattern, may lead to enhanced decisions. The consultative contribution pattern entails substantial involvement from key staff members who provide input and advice on school-wide decisions. However, final decisions are still made by individuals in formal leadership positions. Conversely, Wang et al. (2022) affirmed that the decisional distribution pattern entrusts full responsibility and autonomy to those working on the ground, such as teachers and teacher leaders, empowering them to make decisions within their designated areas of responsibility.

### Table 2

**Summary on the Extent of School Readiness**

| No | Indicators | Mean | Descriptive Equivalent |
|----|-----------|------|------------------------|
| 1 | Teachers' Readiness | 4.16 | Extensive |
| 2 | Administrators' Readiness | 4.21 | Very Extensive |
| 3 | Readiness of School Infrastructure | 3.31 | Moderately Extensive |
| 4 | Parents' Readiness | 3.37 | Moderately Extensive |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Overall** | **3.76** | **Extensive** |

Table 2 provides the summary on the extent of school readiness. It is exhibited that the overall mean of school readiness is 3.76, which is in an extensive level. This means that school readiness is oftentimes evident.

Data show that all four (4) indicators reveal a varying result ranging from moderately extensive to very extensive level. As arranged chronologically, administrators' readiness has the highest mean score (4.21). This is followed by teachers' readiness (4.33), parents' readiness (4.37), and readiness of school infrastructure (3.31).

The data underscores that school readiness is frequently evident across various dimensions. The data from all four indicators present a spectrum of results, ranging from moderately extensive to very extensive levels of preparedness. When organized chronologically, administrators' readiness stands out suggesting a commendable level of preparedness among school leadership. Following closely is teachers' readiness indicating a notably high level of preparedness among educators. Parents' readiness also exhibits a robust score signifying a very extensive level of support and engagement from the parent community. On the infrastructure front, the readiness level, while still relatively positive ranks the last among the four indicators. This comprehensive analysis underscores the collective commitment of administrators, teachers, and parents towards creating an environment conducive to change and innovation, with potential areas for further attention in enhancing the readiness of school infrastructure.

The favorable findings of this study are aligned to the description of Raza (2019) stating that initiating change process neither indicates implementing it successfully nor ensures its sustainability. In the process of change proposed by Robbins and Coulter (2016) stated that the way to achieve this is to increase the driving forces that direct the behaviors away from the current situation. Thereafter, it is necessary to move to the new state, by reducing the limiting forces that stemming from the current situation and prevent advancement. Finally, it is needed to make change sustainable. For this reason, Rismansya et al. (2021) stressed that balancing the driving, and limiting forces is necessary approach towards change. Thus, effective change is achieved in the organization.

Relevant to the findings of the study, Stanhope et al. (2020) mentioned that readiness for change is an important consideration in any effort to increase the effective use of evidence-based programs and other innovations in education. Readiness can be developed and sustained with thoughtful activities that are sensitive to individuals' needs for relevant information and involvement in decision making. Creating readiness for change applies at all levels, from the management to teachers and staff and all those in between, and includes major stakeholders in the process as well.

Ward et al. (2020) stated that as teachers, staff, administrators, policy makers, and leaders come and go, creating readiness for change is an on-going activity if science-based interventions and other innovations are to be scaled up and sustained to benefit students statewide for decades to come (Ward, Ihlo, & Farmer, 2022). OECD (2016) stressed that the capacity to create readiness for change, manage the change process, implement innovations effectively, and establish reliable and enduring indicators of progress is largely missing in nearly all education systems. Creating this infrastructure is an essential part of effectively using evidence-based programs and other innovations to benefit students in classrooms.

**Table 3**

**Significance of the Relationship Between Distributed Leadership of School Heads and School Readiness**

| Distributed Leadership Functions of School Heads | Dependent Variable | r-value | p- value | Decision on Ho |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Support | | 0.479 | 0.000 | Rejected |
| Supervision | **School Readiness** | 0.488 | 0.000 | Rejected |
| Coherent Team Leadership | | 0.485 | 0.000 | Rejected |
| **Overall** | | **0.484*** | **0.000** | **Rejected** |

*Significant at 0.05 significance level.

Presented in Table 3 are the data on the significance of the relationship between distributed leadership functions of school heads and school readiness. Reflected in the hypothesis, the relationship was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The overall r-value of .484 with a p-value of <0.05 signified the rejection of the null hypothesis. It means that there is a significant relationship between distributed leadership functions of school heads and school readiness. This shows that distributed leadership functions of school heads is correlated with school readiness.

Doing a pairwise correlation among the measures of both variables, it can be gleaned that support, supervision, and coherent team leadership revealed computed r-values of 0.479, 0.488, and 0.485 respectively with p-values which are less than 0.05 in the level of significance. This implies that as support, supervision, and coherent team leadership increase, the school readiness also increases.

The comprehensive analysis of these results reveals a significant correlation between the distributed leadership functions of school heads and school readiness. This statistical relationship implies a positive and meaningful connection between the extent of support, supervision, and coherent team leadership provided by school heads and the level of school readiness. The results suggest that as the levels of support, supervision, and coherent team leadership increase, there is a corresponding increase in school readiness. This correlation underscores the pivotal role of distributed leadership functions in shaping a school's preparedness for change and innovation, emphasizing the importance of leadership practices in influencing the overall readiness of an educational institution.

The findings are in line with the study conducted by Chaudry et al. (2020), underscoring that distributed leadership represents an analytical approach to comprehending how leadership functions within a complex organization involving diverse individuals. Distributed leadership goes beyond task sharing; it is an approach shared by all staff members who actively engage and impact the organization's culture, philosophy, and direction. Leaders involve their employees with genuine interest in any change or improvement initiatives. McKeering and Hwang (2019) emphasized that commitment to change is defined as a state in which employees are informed about the change, possess the necessary skills for its implementation, and are motivated for the change through appropriate incentives.

Corroborating this, Zakaria and Mohktar (2022) discovered that distributive leadership elements and the preparedness of school personnel to embrace change play a crucial role in the successful implementation of a professional learning community. The backing of principals and school administrators enhances teachers' collaboration, commitment, and sense of responsibility towards student achievement. Thus, there is a need to reinforce the implementation of professional learning communities, utilizing them as a platform for teachers to elevate their professional development.

## Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were offered:

The extent of distributed leadership functions of school heads implies that it is oftentimes evident in the school. In fact, all dimensions are oftentimes evident from the school heads, namely, support, supervision, and coherent team leadership. Meanwhile, the extent of school readiness is extensive. It is found out that administrators' readiness is always evident while teachers' readiness is oftentimes evident. On the other hand, readiness of the school infrastructure and parents' readiness are occasionally evident. More so, distributed leadership functions of school heads and school readiness are related. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

## Recommendations

The following suggestions were offered based on the conclusions of the study:

Considering the results, DepEd officials are recommended to acknowledge and build upon the frequently observed distributed leadership functions among school heads, specifically in the dimensions of support, supervision, and coherent team leadership. This recognition should be coupled with targeted interventions to enhance teachers' readiness, as it is often evident but could benefit from additional support. Additionally, efforts should be directed towards occasionally evident aspects of school readiness related to infrastructure and parents, fostering a comprehensive and cohesive approach to overall school development. The findings suggest a strategic alignment between distributed leadership functions and school readiness, emphasizing the importance of a synchronized and collaborative effort for effective educational outcomes.

Moreover, School Heads are recommended to capitalize on the oftentimes evident distributed leadership functions, focusing on enhancing areas such as support, supervision, and coherent team leadership, which contribute significantly to overall school effectiveness. The extensive school readiness, particularly the consistent readiness of administrators, should be leveraged as a foundation for continuous improvement. Specific attention should be given to occasional aspects of readiness in school infrastructure and parents, with targeted strategies to strengthen these elements for a more comprehensive and sustained readiness. The identified relationship between distributed leadership functions and school readiness emphasizes the need for intentional alignment and collaboration across these domains to ensure a holistic and synergistic approach to school development.

Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to actively engage with the oftentimes evident distributed leadership functions displayed by school heads, particularly in areas of support, supervision, and coherent team leadership, fostering a collaborative and empowering educational environment. As contributors to school readiness, teachers may capitalize on their oftentimes evident readiness while collaborating with administrators to enhance the occasional readiness of school infrastructure and parents. This collaborative effort will contribute to a more comprehensive and effective school readiness, positively impacting the overall teaching and learning experience. Recognizing the interrelation between distributed leadership functions and school readiness, teachers should actively participate in initiatives that bridge these domains, ensuring a cohesive and well-prepared educational ecosystem.

Lastly, future researchers may make valuable contributions to the attainment of distributed leadership functions of school heads and school readiness by conducting in-depth studies that explore the nuances of this leadership approach in the educational context.

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