



Distributive Leadership of School Heads in Relation to School Governance of Public Secondary Schools in Davao Occidental Division

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the extent of distributive leadership and school governance in public secondary schools in the Davao Occidental Division and examined the relationship between these variables. Using probability sampling, 150 secondary teachers from public schools were selected as respondents. The data were analyzed using the descriptive-correlational survey method, employing Mean and Product-Moment correlation. Results indicated that both distributive leadership by school heads and school governance were extensive. Additionally, a significant relationship was found between the two variables. Based on these findings, it was suggested that higher officials in the Department of Education should identify ways to support school heads in enhancing their distributive leadership to promote proactive school governance. Future research should explore these variables further, considering other factors and research methods.

Keywords: Distributive leadership, school governance, descriptive correlation, Davao Occidental Division, Philippines

Introduction

School governance is the autonomy granted to schools in managing their human, financial, and material resources. It entails stakeholders making decisions based on the actual conditions of the school. Therefore, it is imperative for school principals to advocate for good governance within their institutions. Good governance is a systematic approach to managing schools aimed at fostering their development and accountability. It plays a crucial role in legitimizing schools as educational institutions. The purpose of school governance is to improve the quality of school management and performance. It encompasses a range of responsibilities, practices, policies, and procedures implemented by an institution to provide strategic direction, ensure goal attainment, and promote responsible, accountable, and transparent resource utilization. Unfortunately, there is a pressing need to enhance school governance at all levels of education.

In the United States, the public education system has fallen behind and is grappling with several significant challenges. Policymakers are continually striving to enact changes, but not all of these efforts prove beneficial. Some of the factors contributing to the struggles of the American public education system include insufficient government funding for schools, a decline in school safety, issues with the common core curriculum, decreasing teacher salaries, an overemphasis on standardized testing, increasing challenges with student poverty, a lack of parental involvement, and a deficiency in teacher innovation (Barrington, 2023).

In the Philippines, various factors have contributed to the decline in educational standards. Studies and fact-finding commissions have identified several key issues, including the insufficient government budget for education, the low quality of teachers, ineffective school management, inadequate school facilities such as laboratories and libraries, substandard learning environments, outdated curriculum content, insufficient books and scientific equipment, ineffective teaching methods, classroom shortages, and other related challenges. Additionally, Filipino teachers are often overworked and receive inadequate pay, portraying only a portion of their challenging circumstances (Pacay, 2023).

Similarly, a parallel scenario unfolded among teachers within the Davao Occidental Division. Their daily struggles with deteriorating classrooms, excessively crowded classes, and shortages of teaching materials, among other challenges, compounded the already demanding nature of their work. Apart from classroom instruction, teachers often undertook numerous arduous and time-consuming tasks unrelated to their primary teaching roles. However, these observations remained largely anecdotal and were not thoroughly investigated within the local context. No studies focusing on school governance, particularly concerning the distributed leadership of school heads, had been conducted yet.

Given these circumstances, the researcher felt driven to examine the state of distributive leadership among school heads and school governance within specific public secondary schools in the Davao Occidental Division. Additionally, the researcher sought to investigate the correlation between these two variables. Through this academic endeavor, the researcher aimed to contribute positively to the school community.

This study was primarily grounded in the system theory of management, as conceptualized by Parsons (1977) and referenced by Abdullahi (2018). Abdullahi (2018) described a system as a cohesive collection of elements working together to achieve a defined goal or objective. According to this

theory, if one component of the system is altered or removed, it impacts the others, highlighting the interdependent nature of the system. The theory emphasizes the relationships between the various parts of the system and their collaborative function as a whole. A system involves inputs such as raw materials, finances, personnel, and technologies, processes including planning, organizing, directing, motivating, coordinating, and controlling, outputs such as products, profits, satisfaction, and services which are transformed through the managerial functions of service providers, and feedback which indicates the realized quality of life or productivity for clients.

Every educational institution necessitates financial resources and other essential assets, including buildings, furniture like desks and chairs, textbooks, and utilities like water and electricity. These constitute the inputs essential for the daily functioning of schools. Typically, it is the government's responsibility to provide these inputs through an agency or an education-focused provider organization. Educational service providers, including principals, teachers, and staff, undertake the task of processing these inputs, primarily the students, to cultivate future services, which are educated individuals. This transformation of available resources into educated children represents the output of the school (Kadir, 2019).

Furthermore, effective governance entails the proficient administration of resources that is characterized by openness, transparency, accountability, fairness, and responsiveness to societal needs (Kefela, 2011). This concept can also be viewed as a modern approach to public administration (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Aktan, 2017). Within the realm of education, good governance should exhibit qualities such as responsiveness, accountability, transparency, and engagement in the formulation and execution of policies (Risteska et al., 2010).

Therefore, effective school governance demands robust leadership from both the school council and the principal, who must collaborate seamlessly. These influential leaders are tasked with establishing direction, nurturing individuals, driving change, enhancing teaching and learning, resolving issues, upholding values, fostering trust, and maintaining visibility within the school (Gurr, 2015).

Education leaders, such as ministers, are tasked with achieving educational goals and can be held responsible for their attainment. To accomplish this, they initiate bureaucratic processes to allocate necessary resources and implement required programs. Principals and teachers, on the other hand, are responsible for processing these resources and are accountable to various stakeholders, including parents, governing bodies, and the ministry of education (Kadir, 2019).

Principals are expected to fulfill a multitude of roles, including being educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations and communications experts, budget analysts, managers, and program administrators (Kasprzhak & Bysik, 2014). Essentially, effective principal leadership involves the ability to influence and manage others efficiently, effectively, and economically in achieving educational goals.

Another concept underpinning this study is Distributive Leadership (DL), which reconceptualizes the role of leadership teams. Their primary duty is to foster an environment where sharing knowledge and skills is encouraged, thereby enabling staff productivity through collaboration (Harris, 2003). Leadership teams should provide opportunities for staff members to lead initiatives rather than personally overseeing every project, while also offering support and guidance as needed. Principals play a pivotal role in the equation of teacher leadership and are central to the organizational restructuring necessary for the implementation of distributed leadership in schools (Harris et al., 2011). Without their active endorsement, DL cannot thrive in any educational institution.

School governance encompasses the policies and practices that guide an organization towards its goals. DL involves the delegation of roles and responsibilities, granting staff members at all levels greater authority. When effective leaders embrace DL, it fosters staff confidence and commitment, leading to school improvement. This underscores the importance of leadership in enabling middle management to assume leadership roles. Without such support, failure is inevitable, hindering the progress of the school (Al Hassanieh & David, 2021).

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a non-experimental quantitative research approach, employing a descriptive-correlational research design. Quantitative research methods involve collecting numerical data to elucidate a problem or phenomenon, which is then analyzed using mathematical techniques, particularly statistics (Apuke, 2017). The primary goal of quantitative research is to generate knowledge and deepen understanding of the social world (Allen, 2017). A descriptive correlational study focuses on describing relationships between variables without attempting to establish causation (Noah, 2021). This study was categorized as quantitative because it relied on statistical analysis to interpret the data. Its descriptive nature aimed to assess the extent of distributive leadership among school heads and school governance. Furthermore, the study was correlational as its objective was to determine the relationship between distributive leadership among school heads and school governance in public elementary schools within the Davao Occidental Division.

Research Respondents

This study included 150 public elementary teachers from the Division of Davao del Sur. It was noted that for simple regression analysis, a minimum of 50 samples is required, while in most research scenarios, around 100 samples suffice (Hair et al., 2018). Therefore, the inclusion of 150 respondents exceeded the requirements for this study. In determining inclusion and exclusion criteria, secondary teachers with a minimum of 3 years of teaching experience were selected. This criterion was chosen because their tenure of 3 years in public schools would enable them to evaluate the extent of distributed leadership and school governance by their school heads. Respondents who felt uncomfortable or hesitant in completing the survey

questionnaire were given the option to withdraw from participation. Their decision to withdraw was respected, and they were not compelled to be part of the study. Ensuring the welfare of the respondents was a top priority throughout the research process.

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 distributive leadership of school heads while the second set was about school governance.

The distributed leadership questionnaire was adapted from Hulpia et al. (2011). 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 .75 suggesting that the items have relatively *high* internal consistency.

The school governance questionnaire was adapted from the study of Supriadi et al. (2020). The tool had a total of 18 items. It was divided into 6 subscales, namely, transparency (1-3), accountability (1-3), responsibility (1-3), autonomy (1-3), fairness (1-3), and participation (1-3). It was also subjected to pilot testing which revealed a result of .72, suggesting that the items have relatively *high* internal consistency.

The instrument in this study was contextualized to achieve the purpose of this study. The researcher incorporated all the comments and suggestions of the adviser, panel members and expert validators for the refinement of the tools and to achieve construct validity.

Table

Table 1

Summary on the Extent of Distributive Leadership of School Heads

No	Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1	Support	3.47	Extensive
2	Supervision	3.48	Extensive
3	Coherent Leadership	3.45	Extensive
Overall		3.47	Extensive

Table 1 provides the summary on the extent of distributive leadership of school heads. It is exhibited that the overall mean of distributive leadership of school heads is 3.47, which is in an extensive level. This means that distributive leadership of school heads is oftentimes evident.

Data show that all three (3) indicators are in an extensive level. As arranged chronologically, supervision has the highest mean score (3.48). This is followed by support (3.47) and coherent leadership (3.45).

The data analysis reveals that all three indicators exhibit a high and extensive level of influence. These results collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of leadership in education, where supervision, support, and cohesiveness play pivotal roles in achieving educational objectives and fostering a positive learning environment.

The extensive distributive leadership demonstrated by school heads reaffirmed the definition proposed by Thien and Adam (2019), which characterizes distributive leadership as the extent to which leadership functions are shared among various formal and informal roles within the leadership team. These roles encompass the principal, assistant principals, and teacher leaders. In essence, distributed leadership is operationalized by the delegation and distribution of leadership responsibilities across different positions within the team. This approach acknowledges that leadership is not confined to a singular individual but can be shared among multiple team members, fostering collaboration and collective decision-making.

Furthermore, Jamil and Hamzah (2019) elaborated on how the concept of distributive leadership offers a new perspective on school leadership transformation. It acknowledges the significant influence of teachers' collective efficacy and professional learning communities on enhancing teaching quality. This study delves into the impact of the distributive leadership approach adopted by secondary school administrators on teacher collective efficacy and professional learning communities. By investigating these effects, the research aims to elucidate the relationship between distributive leadership and the collaborative and empowering environment within schools.

Additionally, Lahtero et al. (2017) suggested that distributive leadership can be observed across a spectrum. At one end are the official structures of the school, such as management teams and the delegation of specific tasks and responsibilities by formal leaders. At the other end, there is situational interaction occurring within the management group and among unofficial structures. Distributed leadership can also emerge through the official structures, such as the management teams.

Table 2

Summary on the Extent of School Governance

	Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1	Transparency	3.47	Extensive
2	Accountability	3.47	Extensive
3	Responsibility	3.56	Extensive
4	Autonomy	3.65	Extensive
5	Fairness	3.41	Extensive
6	Participation	3.59	Extensive
	Overall	3.53	Extensive

Table 2 provides the summary on the extent of school governance. It is exhibited that the overall mean of school governance is 3.53, which is in an extensive level. This means that the school governance is oftentimes evident.

Data show that all six (6) indicators are in an extensive level. As arranged chronologically, autonomy has the highest mean score (3.65). This is followed by participation (3.59), responsibility (3.56), transparency (3.47), accountability (3.47), and fairness (3.41).

The data analysis reveals that all six indicators exhibit an extensive level of influence, underlining the multifaceted nature of school governance. These results collectively emphasize the comprehensive nature of school governance, with autonomy, participation, responsibility, transparency, accountability, and fairness all playing crucial roles in fostering effective and ethical governance within educational institutions.

The positive outcomes of this study corroborated the findings of Gorgodze (2016), who emphasized that effective school governance supports teachers by providing clear policies and guidelines for successful teaching. It cultivates a conducive work environment conducive to professional development and collaboration. Through the allocation of resources and support systems, school governance addresses teachers' needs, including professional growth opportunities and mentorship. Additionally, it ensures equitable evaluation processes that recognize and reward teachers' contributions.

Similarly, Hartell et al. (2016) emphasized that school governance benefits parents by fostering transparent communication, keeping them informed about their child's education and activities. It provides a platform for parents to voice concerns and suggestions, fostering collaboration with the school. Governance establishes policies that promote parental involvement in decision-making, thereby influencing the school's direction. Effective governance ensures equitable treatment of all students, addressing parental concerns regarding their child's well-being and education.

According to Baker et al. (2016), for independent schools to thrive, expand, and serve future generations, competent individuals and efficient governance structures are indispensable. The presence of capable personnel and effective governance systems is critical for the success and sustainability of independent schools. This initial step is pivotal in enabling independent schools to prosper and meet the evolving needs of future generations. Establishing suitable personnel and governance frameworks is a fundamental prerequisite for the enduring success of independent schools.

Table 3**Significance of the Relationship Between the Extent of Distributive Leadership of School Heads and School Governance**

Distributive Leadership of School Heads Indicators	Dependent Variable	r-value	p-value	Decision on Ho
Support	School Governance	0.616	0.000	Rejected
Supervision		0.625	0.000	Rejected
Coherent Leadership		0.618	0.000	Rejected
Overall		0.620*	0.000	Rejected

*Significant at 0.05 significance level.

Presented in Table 3 are the data on the significance of the relationship between distributive leadership of school heads and school governance. Reflected in the hypothesis, the relationship was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The overall r-value of .620 with a p-value of <0.05 signified the rejection of the null hypothesis. It means that there is a significant relationship

between distributive leadership of school heads and school governance. This shows that distributive leadership of school heads is correlated with school governance.

When assessing the significant relationship, the study employed the Pearson r scale, which is the most commonly used method for measuring linear correlation. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) is a numerical value ranging from -1 to 1, indicating the strength and direction of the association between two variables. Positive correlation is observed when the result falls between 0 and 1, signifying that as one variable changes, the other variable changes in the same direction. A result of 0 indicates no correlation, implying no relationship between the variables when one changes. Conversely, negative correlation is apparent when the result is between 0 and -1, indicating that as one variable changes, the other variable changes in the opposite direction. Doing a pairwise correlation among the measures of both variables, it can be gleaned that support, supervision, coherent leadership revealed computed r-values of 0.616, 0.625, and 0.618 respectively with p-values which are less than 0.05 in the level of significance. This implies that as support, supervision, coherent team leadership increases, the school governance increases.

The findings highlighted the significant influence of school leadership on the overall governance of educational institutions, particularly emphasizing the role of distributive leadership in effective governance. Further examination through pairwise correlations among the individual measures of both variables yields valuable insights, indicating strong and statistically significant relationships between specific components of distributive leadership and school governance. These results suggest that as school leaders provide increased support, effective supervision, and foster cohesive team leadership, the quality and efficacy of school governance are likely to improve. This underscores the pivotal role of distributive leadership practices in shaping educational institution governance and enhancing the overall educational experience for students, staff, and the broader community.

These findings aligned with a study by Norman et al. (2010), which emphasizes that effective school governance relies on proficient principal leadership to establish suitable processes, systems, and management practices ensuring the sustainability and continuity of schools. Research indicates that enhancing teaching and learning quality is closely tied to the quality of leadership, with a leader's positivity and transparency influencing followers' perceived trust. This suggests a strong relationship between leadership practices and the perspectives of various school stakeholders.

Lukas and Jankovic (2014) further support these notions, highlighting that decentralized principles grant principals autonomy in determining school practices and implementing innovative leadership strategies. While some principals delegate decision-making authority to subordinates, others prefer a more centralized approach. Additionally, principals mobilize diverse resources essential for school efficacy and establish partnerships with external agencies to enhance school efficiency. Consequently, principals are seen as responsible for advancing the school's interests.

According to Adolfsson and Alvunger (2020), school governance encompasses the framework and procedures through which school leaders exercise their leadership and decision-making authority. It involves the administration and oversight of educational policies, resources, and activities within a school. School heads are responsible for defining the school's vision and objectives, ensuring compliance with regulations, and fostering a conducive learning environment. Effective school governance promotes accountability, transparency, and collaboration among stakeholders, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of education.

Conclusions

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

The prevalence of distributive leadership among school heads is frequently noticeable within the school environment. Specifically, all dimensions—support, supervision, and coherent leadership—are often apparent in their practices. Additionally, the level of school governance is typically high, with indicators such as transparency, accountability, responsibility, autonomy, fairness, and participation consistently rated highly. The findings indicate a relationship between distributive leadership among school heads and school governance, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis.

Recommendations

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

The higher officials in the Department of Education may play a pivotal role in promoting socio-emotional competence and positive interpersonal relationships among teachers by prioritizing these aspects in the educational system. They may support the development and implementation of professional development programs that focus on socio-emotional skills, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence. DepEd officials may also provide resources and guidelines for conflict resolution training and initiatives.

Moreover, school heads may play a crucial role in cultivating socio-emotional competence and fostering positive interpersonal relationships among their teaching staff. They may proactively support professional development opportunities that focus on socio-emotional skills, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution. School leaders may create a school culture that values open communication, trust, and mutual respect, encouraging teachers to engage in collaborative activities and share their experiences.

Furthermore, teachers may play a pivotal role in promoting socio-emotional competence and fostering positive interpersonal relationships among their peers. To support these endeavors, teachers may engage in ongoing professional development programs that enhance their socio-emotional skills, self-awareness, and empathy. They may actively model these competencies in the workplace, creating a more inclusive and emotionally supportive environment. Furthermore, teachers may engage in open and constructive communication, demonstrating active listening and conflict resolution skills.

Lastly, future researchers may significantly contribute to the development of distributive leadership among school heads and the enhancement of school governance by conducting rigorous studies that evaluate the effectiveness of various leadership models and governance structures. Their research may identify best practices, determine the impact of distributive leadership on school governance, and assess the role of leadership teams in decision-making processes. Moreover, future research may investigate the contextual factors that influence the success of distributive leadership and its relationship with school governance, allowing for tailored recommendations and strategies.

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