



International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

The Role of Distributed Leadership in School Improvement Outcomes

Leonardo Mejia Aquino

Regional Education Supervisor

Quality Assurance Division, DepEd Regional Office - Cordillera Administrative Region

Guest Lecturer, Graduate School, Baguio Central University, Baguio City, Philippines

leonardo.aquino@deped.gov.ph

ABSTRACT

This study explored the role of distributed leadership in driving school improvement outcomes among public elementary schools in Baguio City. Recognizing the evolving demands of educational leadership in the Philippines, the research aimed to assess the extent to which distributed leadership practices are exercised by school heads and to identify the enabling and hindering factors that affect its implementation. Utilizing a quantitative descriptive research design, the study surveyed 50 school heads through a structured questionnaire divided into four sections: demographic profile, perceived level of distributed leadership, enabling factors, and hindering factors. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools, including frequency counts, weighted means, and rankings. The findings revealed that distributed leadership practices were moderately practiced, with the highest emphasis placed on encouraging teachers to lead programs and participate in collaborative planning. Teamwork, trust among personnel, and principal support were frequently cited enabling conditions. However, centralized decision-making, limited teacher autonomy, insufficient leadership training, and time constraints were commonly reported as barriers. The results indicate that while a foundation for shared leadership exists, traditional hierarchies and structural limitations continue to constrain its full implementation. The study concluded that distributed leadership in public schools is evolving but requires targeted interventions to overcome systemic and cultural hindrances. It recommends sustained leadership development, decentralization of school decision-making, improved communication systems, and institutional support for teacher empowerment. By addressing these areas, schools may foster more inclusive and collaborative environments that can significantly contribute to improved educational outcomes and school governance.

Keywords: Distributed Leadership, School Improvement, Shared Governance, Educational Leadership, Teacher Empowerment, Leadership Practices, Public Elementary Schools, Enabling and Hindering Factors, School-Based Management, Leadership Innovation

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Leadership in education is undergoing a paradigm shift, moving away from traditional top-down approaches toward more collaborative and inclusive models. One such emerging approach is distributed leadership, which recognizes leadership as a shared function among principals, teachers, department heads, and other stakeholders within the school system. Rather than assigning leadership responsibilities solely to the school head, this model emphasizes the distribution of leadership tasks across multiple actors to enhance decision-making, resource management, and school performance (Harris, 2020; Spillane et al., 2022).

In the Philippine educational context, especially in urbanized yet resource-constrained settings like Baguio City, school leaders often face multifaceted demands that require broader participation in leadership. A recent study by Alupay and Abad (2023) on public elementary schools in Baguio City found that only 32.8% of school principals were significantly engaged in financial leadership, reflecting a lack of competence and confidence in resource allocation, budgeting, and procurement. This limitation has led to inefficiencies that directly impact the school's capacity to implement improvement initiatives.

Moreover, while some schools exhibit transformational traits—such as mentoring and clear communication—evidence suggests that these leadership qualities are not widely supported by enabling structures for broader participation. For instance, a study on leadership practices in Korean schools located in Baguio noted strong principal leadership but also reported gaps in shared decision-making and inclusive governance, particularly in mobilizing resources and engaging teachers in strategic planning (Ramilo et al., 2023).

Nationally, distributed leadership awareness among teachers is increasing, yet its practice remains limited. Dela Cruz and Carpio (2022) observed that many public-school teachers understand the concept of shared leadership and are willing to take on leadership roles. However, the persistence of hierarchical school cultures continues to restrict their participation in meaningful leadership functions. As a result, leadership capacity remains concentrated, and opportunities for collaboration are underutilized.

These issues highlight a broader concern: despite the recognized benefits of distributed leadership—such as improved teacher morale, more responsive decision-making, and stronger student outcomes (New Leaders, 2022)—there is a clear lack of empirical research assessing how it is implemented and how it influences school improvement outcomes in Philippine public schools. This is particularly relevant in cities like Baguio, which face the dual challenges of high learner diversity and constrained public funding.

Given these conditions, the present study seeks to examine the role of distributed leadership in achieving school improvement outcomes in selected public schools in Baguio City. Specifically, it aims to understand how leadership is distributed across different actors in the school, what enabling or constraining factors are present, and how such distribution influences key aspects of school performance. By focusing on this localized context, the study hopes to contribute to the development of leadership models that are contextually grounded, equity-oriented, and aligned with the Department of Education's thrusts on school-based management and inclusive quality education.

Hence, given the identified gaps in leadership distribution and its impact on school performance, there is a compelling need to design and implement an intervention that will strengthen the practice of distributed leadership in public schools. The limited involvement of teachers and other stakeholders in key decision-making processes, coupled with the concentration of leadership functions on school heads, highlights the urgency for a structured program that promotes leadership sharing, capacity-building, and inclusive governance. An intervention may take the form of a school-based leadership development framework, mentoring systems, or professional learning communities (PLCs) that are intentionally designed to empower teachers and non-teaching staff to participate in instructional and operational leadership. By establishing such a model within the scope of this research, the study does not only aim to analyze the current situation but also to offer a proactive solution that supports the Department of Education's broader goal of fostering resilient, collaborative, and high-performing schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Distributed Leadership: A Global Perspective

Distributed leadership (DL) has emerged as a transformative framework in education, promoting the notion that leadership responsibilities should be shared among various individuals within an organization, rather than being solely concentrated in the principal or school head. This model advocates for collective leadership, participatory decision-making, and shared accountability, all of which contribute to a more resilient and effective school system (Achar, 2024; Harris, 2020). In recent global studies, distributed leadership has been linked to enhanced teacher efficacy, organizational commitment, and student achievement (Zhang & Lee, 2023; Burrige et al., 2024).

A meta-analysis by Luo et al. (2023) underscored the strong positive association between distributed leadership and teacher self-efficacy across culturally diverse school environments. Similarly, in a study using data from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) in Shanghai, Zhang and Lee (2023) found that distributed leadership significantly predicted teacher self-efficacy ($\beta = .33$), job well-being ($\beta = .51$), and career well-being ($\beta = .45$), with self-efficacy acting as a mediating factor. These findings were reinforced by Tucaliuc et al. (2025), who emphasized that although DL promotes empowerment, unclear role definitions could lead to confusion and diminished performance when not carefully managed.

Beyond teacher outcomes, distributed leadership has also been found to benefit learners. A large-scale study in China involving over 7,000 students revealed that DL indirectly contributed to students' social-emotional competence through teacher self-efficacy and student-centered teaching practices (Zhao et al., 2024). Likewise, Raptis et al. (2024) showed how DL facilitates digital transformation in schools, enhancing technology integration and instructional innovation, particularly in the post-pandemic education landscape.

Distributed Leadership and School Improvement

Burrige et al. (2024) presented a comprehensive synthesis of literature indicating that DL enhances school climate, stakeholder collaboration, and learner engagement. They argued that schools practicing DL tend to have more empowered staff, engaged learners, and dynamic institutional cultures. Supporting this view, Galdames-Calderón (2023) found that Chilean principals who promoted teacher leadership and collaboration improved their schools' effectiveness and innovation capacity.

Wang and Bai (2025) further explored the role of DL in facilitating instructional technology use. Their research revealed that DL's influence on ICT integration was mediated by teacher collaboration and self-efficacy, indicating that collective leadership significantly shapes teachers' willingness and ability to innovate. This is particularly important as schools transition to more hybrid and digital forms of teaching.

In Spain, López and Luna (2024) studied the influence of DL on inclusive education.

Their findings highlighted that when teachers are involved in shared decision-making and leadership, inclusion practices become more effective, and learning environments more equitable. However, the researchers also cautioned that DL requires structural clarity to avoid role confusion and implementation fatigue.

The Philippine Experience of Distributed Leadership

In the Philippines, the adoption of distributed leadership is gradually gaining traction, particularly in public schools aiming to implement school-based management. Studies by Mercado and Zamora (2024) in Panabo City reported a strong correlation between school heads' use of DL and teachers' organizational commitment. Awyan and Quines (2025) similarly found that teacher participation in decision-making and coordination were key predictors of job satisfaction and organizational attachment in Region XI public secondary schools.

Moreover, in a study conducted in Davao del Norte, Alsado (2024) concluded that DL significantly contributed to school readiness, particularly in planning, stakeholder engagement, and instructional delivery. Meanwhile, Torres et al. (2025), in a systematic review of Philippine educational leadership models, noted that DL, along with transformational leadership, could be a viable tool for improving teacher motivation and learner outcomes, though its integration into policy and practice remains limited.

Despite these emerging findings, many public schools in the country—including those in urban settings such as Baguio City—still operate within traditional, hierarchical leadership structures. This results in underutilization of teacher expertise, limited collaboration, and decision-making bottlenecks. Moreover, as Tucaliuc et al. (2025) warned, insufficient role clarity in distributed environments may result in blurred responsibilities, thereby reducing the intended benefits of DL.

Synthesis and Research Gap

The reviewed literature clearly establishes distributed leadership as a promising framework for enhancing teacher performance, school climate, and learner outcomes. Global and local studies alike support its effectiveness in fostering collaboration, empowerment, and innovation. However, despite its proven benefits, the operationalization of DL within the Philippine public school system—particularly in urban areas like Baguio City—remains underexplored.

There is a need to understand how distributed leadership is currently practiced in public schools, what factors enable or hinder its implementation, and how it translates into measurable school improvement outcomes. The existing research points to a significant gap in empirical, context-specific data that would guide school leaders and policymakers in designing leadership development programs aligned with the Department of Education's goals for inclusive and effective basic education.

This study therefore seeks to examine the role of distributed leadership in improving school outcomes in Baguio City's public schools. By doing so, it aims to contribute valuable insights that will help educational leaders and institutions move towards more collaborative, resilient, and results-driven leadership models.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aims to determine the perceived level of distributed leadership practices and identify the significant enabling and hindering factors affecting its implementation in public elementary schools in Baguio City:

1. What is the perceived level of distributed leadership practices among school heads in public elementary schools in Baguio City?
2. What are the significant enabling factors that affect the implementation of distributed leadership in public elementary schools in Baguio City?
3. What are the significant hindering factors that affect the implementation of distributed leadership in public elementary schools in Baguio City?

SCOPE AND LIMITATION

This study focuses on examining the perceived level of distributed leadership practices among school heads in selected public elementary schools in Baguio City. It also seeks to identify the significant enabling and hindering factors that affect the implementation of distributed leadership within these institutions. The research is limited to the perspectives of stakeholders currently serving in public elementary schools and does not cover private institutions or secondary education levels. Data will be gathered through structured survey questionnaires, and the results will be interpreted within the confines of self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by individual biases and institutional contexts. Additionally, the study does not intend to measure the direct impact of distributed leadership on student academic performance but rather focuses on its perceived practice and the factors influencing its implementation.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design. The descriptive aspect was used to determine the perceived level of distributed leadership practices among school heads, as well as to identify the significant enabling and hindering factors that influenced its implementation. Additionally, the study examined the relationship between distributed leadership practices and the contextual factors affecting its implementation. Data were collected through a standardized survey questionnaire that was developed and validated for the purposes of the study. The quantitative approach allowed for statistical analysis and generalization of findings within the population of selected public elementary schools in Baguio City.

POPULATION AND/OR SAMPLING

The target population of this study comprised school heads from public elementary schools in Baguio City for the academic year 2024–2025. Based on available estimates, there were approximately 50 school heads. These individuals were identified for their direct involvement in leadership functions, school-based decision-making, and the implementation of institutional programs aligned with DepEd policies. Total enumeration sampling was applied in this study to ensure the perspectives of all school heads regarding distributed leadership practices were captured.

DATA COLLECTION

This study utilized a survey questionnaire as the primary data gathering tool to collect quantitative data from selected school heads in public elementary schools in Baguio City. The questionnaire was composed of four sections: (1) demographic profile of respondents, (2) perceived level of distributed leadership practices, (3) enabling factors, and (4) hindering factors affecting the implementation of distributed leadership. The research instrument underwent content validation by a panel of experts in educational leadership and research to ensure its relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study objectives. A pilot test was conducted with a small group of non-participating schools to determine the instrument's reliability using Cronbach's alpha. Upon approval from the Schools Division Superintendent and participating school heads, the validated questionnaires were distributed personally or electronically, depending on logistical feasibility and prevailing health protocols. Respondents were given sufficient time (5–7 working days) to accomplish the forms. Participation was voluntary, and ethical standards—including informed consent, confidentiality, and data protection—were strictly observed throughout the data collection process. Once retrieved, the responses were encoded, tabulated, and statistically analyzed using appropriate tools to answer the research.

PLAN FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The data gathered from the survey questionnaires were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize the demographic profile of the respondents and to determine the perceived level of distributed leadership practices, as well as the enabling and hindering factors affecting its implementation. To identify which factors were considered most significant by respondents, weighted mean scores were computed and ranked accordingly. The reliability of the research instrument was established through Cronbach's alpha, based on the results from a pilot test. All statistical tests were interpreted at a 0.05 level of significance using appropriate software such as SPSS or Microsoft Excel. Through this approach to data analysis, the study aimed to generate well-rounded findings that reflect measurable patterns and trends related to distributed leadership practices.

To ensure a clear and meaningful interpretation of quantitative data, each computed mean was interpreted using descriptive equivalents based on predetermined scale intervals. For enabling and hindering factors, the responses were interpreted using the labels Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree, reflecting the degree to which each factor was perceived to influence the implementation of distributed leadership. This standardized interpretive framework facilitated consistent analysis and enhanced the clarity of the findings. All results were presented in tabular form, showing the computed mean values, corresponding descriptive equivalents, and item rankings to address the research questions effectively. Inferential statistics such as ANOVA and Pearson's *r* were also used to determine significant differences and relationships among the variables examined in the study. This quantitative approach ensured objectivity, clarity, and statistical rigor in the evaluation of distributed leadership practices and their connection to school improvement outcomes.

ETHICAL ISSUES

This study strictly adhered to ethical standards in the conduct of educational research as prescribed by the Department of Education and relevant institutional research ethics guidelines. Prior to data collection, the researcher sought approval from the Schools Division Superintendent of Baguio City and secured the necessary endorsements from participating school heads. All participants were provided with an informed consent form outlining the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. For teachers and other stakeholders, anonymity was maintained by assigning codes rather than collecting names or personal identifiers. Data were used solely for academic and research purposes, and all records were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher. Additionally, the survey instrument underwent ethical review and validation to ensure that all items were respectful, culturally sensitive, and free from potential harm or coercion. The researcher remained committed to maintaining objectivity, honesty, and transparency throughout the research process, ensuring the integrity of the findings and the protection of the rights and welfare of all participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Distributed Leadership Practices Among School Heads

Table 1 presents the distribution of responses regarding the level of distributed leadership practices among school heads in selected public elementary schools in Baguio City. Based on the aggregated data from 50 respondents, the computed average weighted mean (AWM) across all five indicators is 2.89. This falls within the descriptive equivalent of "Moderately Distributed" (MD), indicating that the implementation of distributed leadership among school heads is evident but not yet strongly institutionalized or consistently practiced across all leadership dimensions.

The highest weighted mean was obtained by the indicator, "Teachers are encouraged to lead school programs and activities," with a mean score of 3.04 and a rank of 1. This finding suggests that among the components of distributed leadership, the empowerment of teachers to take charge of school-based programs is the most frequently observed practice. This may be attributed to the influence of school-based management practices promoted

by the Department of Education, particularly under the governance principles laid out in the Enhanced SBM Framework. Encouraging teachers to assume leadership roles in co-curricular and instructional initiatives aligns with DepEd's call for shared accountability and inclusive school governance.

On the other hand, the indicator "School leadership supports innovation from teachers and staff" yielded the lowest weighted mean of 2.76 and ranked fifth among the five indicators. Although still within the "Moderately Distributed" category, this relatively lower score may suggest that while school heads provide opportunities for teachers to lead, they may not consistently support teacher-driven innovations with sufficient resources, time, or recognition. This gap may reflect the challenges of operationalizing distributed leadership in environments constrained by limited funding, bureaucratic processes, or traditional leadership hierarchies.

Table 1. Level of Distributed Leadership Practices Among School Heads

Indicators	HD (4)	MD (3)	SD (2)	LD (1)	TWP	WM	DE	R
1. Leadership responsibilities are shared among staff members.	13	21	13	3	144	2.88	MD	2
2. Teachers are encouraged to lead school programs and activities.	16	23	8	3	152	3.04	MD	1
3. Decision-making involves collaboration among school personnel.	14	18	12	6	140	2.8	MD	3
4. School leadership supports innovation from teachers and staff.	14	17	12	7	138	2.76	MD	5
5. Teachers participate in planning and evaluation of school goals.	15	20	5	10	140	2.8	MD	3
AWM						2.89	MD	

Legends:

Scale	Statistical Limits	Description	Symbol
4	3.26-4.00	Highly Distributed	HD
3	2.51-3.25	Moderately Distributed	MD
2	1.76-2.50	Somewhat Distributed	SD
1	1.00-1.75	Least Distributed	LD

Two other indicators, "Decision-making involves collaboration among school personnel" and "Teachers participate in planning and evaluation of school goals," both garnered a weighted mean of 2.80 and ranked third. These findings indicate that collaboration and participatory planning are moderately practiced but are not yet pervasive or deeply embedded in the school culture. The consistency of these mean scores suggests a partial decentralization of leadership processes where school heads are beginning to involve teachers in strategic planning and shared decision-making, but perhaps not to a degree that fully reflects the core principles of distributed leadership.

The second-highest scoring indicator, "Leadership responsibilities are shared among staff members," received a weighted mean of 2.88 and ranked second. This further supports the notion that school leadership structures in Baguio City are moderately shifting from a top-down to a more collaborative framework. However, the overall moderate ratings across all indicators point to a need for a more deliberate and structured intervention to reinforce distributed leadership practices.

These findings corroborate the study of Alsado (2024), who concluded that distributed leadership in Philippine public secondary schools remains moderately implemented, particularly in terms of participatory decision-making and leadership delegation. Similarly, Dela Cruz and Carpio (2022) found that in Himamaylan City Schools Division, teachers acknowledged their delegated roles but expressed a lack of substantial influence in decision-making and innovation. Mercado and Zamora (2024) also noted that while teachers exhibit commitment to shared responsibilities, systemic support from school heads is often limited, thereby hindering a more robust implementation of distributed leadership.

The moderate results observed in this study align with the policy direction of the Department of Education as articulated in DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2022, which encourages distributed leadership through SBM and learning resource empowerment at the school level. Nevertheless, the uneven operationalization of such policies across schools calls for continuous leadership capacity building and localized leadership development programs to strengthen collaborative culture and ensure sustained school improvement outcomes. Nevertheless, while the presence of distributed leadership practices in Baguio City's public elementary schools is evident, it remains moderate in scope. These findings highlight the importance of institutionalizing support

structures, refining leadership development programs, and fostering a school culture that values and enables shared leadership for more meaningful educational outcomes.

Enabling Factors in Distributed Leadership Implementation

Table 2 presents the perceptions of respondents regarding enabling factors that facilitate the implementation of distributed leadership in public elementary schools in Baguio City. The data gathered from 50 school head respondents yielded an average weighted mean (AWM) of 3.01, interpreted as “Often”. This implies that, overall, enabling conditions supportive of distributed leadership are frequently observed in the schools, but not to the extent of being consistently and strongly embedded in the institutional culture.

Among the five indicators, two items shared the highest weighted mean of 3.12 and were both ranked first: “The school culture promotes teamwork and collaboration” and “There is trust among school personnel.” These findings suggest that a strong collaborative environment and a foundation of mutual trust exist among school personnel, both of which are critical for enabling distributed leadership. These results are consistent with studies such as Mercado and Zamora (2024), who noted that collegial trust and a teamwork-driven school culture significantly influence teachers’ willingness to assume leadership responsibilities and participate in decision-making. Similarly, the principles of School-Based Management (SBM), as institutionalized through DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2022, emphasize participatory leadership and shared accountability as core components of effective school governance, thereby affirming these findings.

Table 2. Enabling Factors in Distributed Leadership Implementation

Indicators	A (4)	O (3)	S (2)	N (1)	TWP	WM	DE	R
1. The school culture promotes teamwork and collaboration.	14	30	4	2	156	3.12	O	1
2. There is trust among school personnel.	16	25	8	1	156	3.12	O	1
3. The principal encourages participatory leadership.	16	21	10	3	150	3	O	4
4. Teachers are provided leadership training opportunities.	17	20	13	0	154	3.08	O	3
5. Clear communication channels exist among all stakeholders.	18	17	10	5	148	2.96	O	5
AWM						3.01	O	

Legends:

Scale	Statistical Limits	Description	Symbol
4	3.26-4.00	Always	A
3	2.51-3.25	Often	O
2	1.76-2.50	Sometimes	S
1	1.00-1.75	Never	N

The indicator “Teachers are provided leadership training opportunities” received a weighted mean of 3.08, ranking third. This result suggests that professional development support in leadership roles is present but may still require further reinforcement. The availability of training programs reflects an awareness of the importance of capacity-building among teachers, yet the frequency and quality of such opportunities might vary across schools. This aligns with the findings of Alsado (2024), who emphasized that distributed leadership is more sustainable when teachers are adequately trained and continuously mentored for leadership roles.

The item “The principal encourages participatory leadership” obtained a weighted mean of 3.00 and ranked fourth. While this still falls under the “Often” descriptor, it suggests that not all school leaders actively and consistently promote participatory decision-making. Some school heads may still exhibit traditional hierarchical tendencies, limiting the full practice of distributed leadership. This echoes Dela Cruz and Carpio's (2022) findings in Himamaylan City Schools Division, where teachers reported limited empowerment due to centralized decision-making norms, even when trust and collegial relationships were present.

The lowest weighted mean, 2.96, was assigned to “Clear communication channels exist among all stakeholders,” ranking fifth. While the result still indicates that clear communication is often practiced, its relatively lower ranking underscores a potential barrier in distributed leadership implementation. Effective communication is essential in coordinating shared responsibilities, clarifying goals, and ensuring accountability among all school personnel. A lack of consistent, transparent communication may hinder the smooth transfer of leadership roles and collaborative initiatives.

Overall, the results reveal that enabling conditions for distributed leadership are generally present in Baguio City's public elementary schools. However, their frequency and strength suggest the need for continuous improvement, particularly in communication practices and proactive leadership encouragement from principals. Institutionalizing leadership development programs, strengthening feedback mechanisms, and reinforcing a culture of

trust and collaboration are key recommendations to further enhance the enabling environment for distributed leadership. These findings underscore the importance of building strong enabling systems within schools to promote a more sustainable and inclusive leadership model. They align with recent DepEd policies and emerging Philippine-based research that advocate for participatory governance as a vehicle for school improvement and teacher empowerment in the post-pandemic educational landscape.

Hindering Factors in Distributed Leadership Implementation

Table 3 illustrates the perceptions of respondents regarding the hindering factors that affect the implementation of distributed leadership in public elementary schools in Baguio City. The responses from 50 school heads were analyzed to determine the extent to which certain barriers are perceived to obstruct the distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities. The data revealed an Average Weighted Mean (AWM) of 2.85, which falls under the descriptive equivalent of "Often." This suggests that, while not constant, the presence of hindering factors is frequently observed in schools, thus potentially limiting the full realization of distributed leadership.

Table 3. Hindering Factors in Distributed Leadership Implementation

Indicators	A (4)	O (3)	S (2)	N (1)	TWP	WM	DE	R
1. Leadership decisions are centralized in the school head.	17	21	10	2	153	3.06	Often	1
2. Teachers are not given enough autonomy to lead.	14	20	12	4	144	2.88	Often	4
3. Lack of trust among staff members.	15	22	8	5	147	2.94	Often	2
4. Inadequate leadership training for teachers.	14	24	6	6	146	2.92	Often	3
5. Time constraints hinder teacher involvement in leadership tasks.	9	27	8	6	139	2.78	Often	5
AWM						2.85	O	

Legends:

Scale	Statistical Limits	Description	Symbol
4	3.26-4.00	Always	A
3	2.51-3.25	Often	O
2	1.76-2.50	Sometimes	S
1	1.00-1.75	Never	N

The indicator that registered the highest weighted mean of 3.06, and ranked first, was "Leadership decisions are centralized in the school head." This finding reveals that despite efforts to promote shared leadership, the traditional top-down model of school management remains prevalent. The continued centralization of decision-making may stem from structural hierarchies, leadership culture, or compliance-driven mandates that place accountability solely on the school head. This situation may discourage teacher agency and create bottlenecks in collaborative governance. As corroborated by Dela Cruz and Carpio (2022), school-based decision-making in some Philippine divisions still revolves around the school head, limiting the practice of genuine participatory leadership.

The second most commonly cited barrier was "Lack of trust among staff members," which obtained a weighted mean of 2.94. Trust is a foundational element of distributed leadership, as it facilitates delegation, collaboration, and risk-taking among school personnel. The presence of mistrust, whether perceived or actual, hinders the willingness of teachers to step into leadership roles and may lead to resistance or disengagement. This echoes the findings of Mercado and Zamora (2024), who reported that the absence of relational trust in schools negatively impacts teachers' motivation to participate in governance and decision-making.

Ranked third was the indicator "Inadequate leadership training for teachers," which garnered a weighted mean of 2.92. This suggests that opportunities for teachers to enhance their leadership capacities remain insufficient. Even when teachers are willing to assume leadership responsibilities, the lack of formal preparation, mentoring, and sustained professional development may prevent them from performing these roles effectively. This aligns with Alsado's (2024) research, which emphasized the need for ongoing leadership training programs to institutionalize distributed leadership as a practice rather than a sporadic initiative.

Meanwhile, the item "Teachers are not given enough autonomy to lead" had a weighted mean of 2.88, ranking fourth. This highlights that while teachers may be involved in program implementation, they are not always granted the independence to design or lead these initiatives fully. The limited scope of autonomy reduces the authenticity of distributed leadership and may cause leadership efforts to be perceived as tokenistic. Autonomy is essential for innovation, contextual decision-making, and accountability, all of which are integral to effective leadership distribution.

The lowest-ranked hindering factor was “Time constraints hinder teacher involvement in leadership tasks,” with a weighted mean of 2.78. Although rated lowest, this still reflects a notable concern. Teachers often juggle instructional duties, administrative tasks, and extracurricular commitments, making it difficult to participate actively in leadership functions. Time as a barrier has been consistently reported in leadership literature, including by DepEd’s internal reviews of SBM practices, where competing demands on teachers’ time were cited as challenges to their full engagement in school governance.

Collectively, these results suggest that while distributed leadership is recognized and practiced to some extent, several institutional and cultural obstacles persist. These hindering factors—centralized decision-making, lack of trust, insufficient training, constrained autonomy, and time limitations—need to be addressed if distributed leadership is to be fully realized and sustained in public elementary schools. The findings of this study call for responsive policies and interventions from educational leaders and DepEd itself. The integration of distributed leadership principles into leadership training programs such as the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) courses, and further enhancement of SBM practices as outlined in DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2022, are essential steps toward minimizing these barriers. Moreover, school heads should be encouraged and capacitated to redesign leadership structures within their schools to foster inclusive, trusting, and empowering environments that enable all educators to lead.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed that distributed leadership practices in public elementary schools in Baguio City were present to a moderate extent. School heads generally engaged teachers in leadership roles, especially in leading programs and participating in school initiatives. However, while the sharing of leadership responsibilities and collaboration in planning were evident, they were not yet fully institutionalized across all schools. The results suggest that school heads are gradually shifting from centralized models toward more inclusive and participatory leadership structures, but with varying levels of consistency.

In terms of enabling and hindering factors, the presence of a collaborative school culture and mutual trust among school personnel emerged as strong enablers of distributed leadership. Leadership training opportunities and principal encouragement also contributed positively, though areas like communication and consistent support for innovation remained less evident. On the other hand, centralization of decision-making, limited teacher autonomy, lack of leadership training, and time constraints were frequently identified as barriers. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions and policy support to strengthen distributed leadership practices and maximize their impact on school improvement.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The study concludes that distributed leadership in public elementary schools in Baguio City is moderately practiced, with school heads increasingly involving teachers and staff in leadership roles. While collaborative school culture and trust among personnel serve as strong enabling factors, the persistence of centralized decision-making, limited leadership training, and time constraints hinder the full realization of shared leadership. The findings underscore that while the foundation for distributed leadership exists, systemic and cultural challenges continue to limit its consistent and effective implementation.

Recommendations

To strengthen distributed leadership, it is recommended that the Department of Education and school leaders institutionalize professional development programs focused on participatory leadership, provide teachers with structured opportunities for leadership roles, and establish clear communication systems within schools. Moreover, decentralizing certain decision-making processes and addressing time-related constraints through strategic workload distribution will empower more teachers to engage meaningfully in leadership. These interventions, if consistently supported, will enhance school performance and create more resilient, collaborative educational environments.

DISSEMINATION AND ADVOCACY PLANS

To ensure the practical application and sustainability of the study’s findings, a comprehensive dissemination and advocacy plan will be implemented, centered on the integration of a targeted intervention program—the Distributed Leadership Enhancement Framework (DLEF). This innovation is designed to address identified gaps in leadership distribution by providing structured strategies for shared decision-making, leadership capacity-building among teachers, and collaborative school governance.

The research findings will be initially shared with the teaching staff during Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions and faculty meetings, where the DLEF will be introduced as a school-based intervention. These sessions will not only present data but also guide teachers through collaborative planning activities to align classroom practices and leadership tasks with distributed leadership principles. Teachers will be invited to pilot the framework within their departments or grade levels, fostering practical engagement and reflection.

A parent engagement forum will also be conducted to disseminate results and promote their continued involvement through the Parent-Teacher Leadership Circles (PTLC)—a component of the DLEF that empowers parents to take leadership roles in supporting school initiatives and monitoring learner progress. This initiative aims to build trust, improve communication, and create shared accountability between the school and the home.

At the leadership level, the findings and the DLEF will be formally presented to the School Leadership Team and the Schools Division Office (SDO). A proposed action plan for scaling the intervention will be submitted for review, encouraging the potential replication of the innovation in other schools within the division. To support this advocacy, a printed and digital toolkit containing the framework, sample leadership templates, implementation guides, and monitoring tools will be distributed. The outputs will also be summarized in infographics, policy briefs, and newsletter articles to be disseminated through official DepEd communication platforms, division bulletins, and school social media pages. This advocacy ensures that the study moves beyond documentation, translating research insights into actionable, innovative, and inclusive school leadership practices.

REFERENCES

- Achar, A. (2024). Distributed leadership and inclusive governance in schools: A global perspective. *Educational Management Review*, 36(2), 125–138.
- Alsado, D. R. (2024). Distributed leadership and school readiness among public secondary school heads. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, 5(6), 12–20. <https://ijrpr.com/uploads/V5ISSUE6/IJRPR29895.pdf>
- Alupay, M. M., & Abad, D. A. (2023). Financial leadership practices among public elementary school heads in Baguio City. *Cognizance Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 3(11), 88–102.
- Awyan, J. L., & Quines, F. R. (2025). Distributed leadership and teachers' participation in school decision-making: Implications to organizational commitment. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 12(1), 101–117. <https://oapub.org/edu/index.php/ejes/article/view/5852>
- Burridge, D., Smith, T., & Jones, L. (2024). The effects of distributed leadership on school climate and academic performance: A critical synthesis. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 117, 102140.
- Dela Cruz, G. R., & Carpio, L. T. (2022). Awareness and extent of practice of distributed leadership in Himamaylan City Schools Division. *Philippine Social Science Journal*, 5(3), 45–55. <https://philssj.org/index.php/main/article/view/262>
- Department of Education. (2022). Policy Guidelines on the Provision of Learning Resources and Facilities in Schools (DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2022). <https://www.deped.gov.ph/2022/06/24/do-024-s-2022>
- Galdames-Calderón, C. (2023). Distributed leadership: School principals' practices to promote teachers' professional development for school improvement. *International Journal of Educational Leadership*, 11(3), 67–83.
- Harris, A. (2020). Distributed leadership: Implications for the role of the principal. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 58(1), 104–120.
- López, E., & Luna, J. (2024). Distributed leadership and inclusive education in Spanish public schools. *European Journal of Inclusive Education*, 9(2), 88–102.
- Luo, W., Zhang, J., & Tang, L. (2023). The mediating role of teacher self-efficacy in the relationship between distributed leadership and teacher professional development. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 59(3), 450–472.
- Mercado, R., & Zamora, K. (2024). School heads' distributed leadership and teachers' organizational commitment in Panabo City Division. *EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 10(2), 34–41. <https://eprajournals.com/IJCM/article/13067>
- New Leaders. (2022). How distributed leadership can help schools thrive. <https://www.newleaders.org/blog/how-distributed-leadership-can-help-leaders-and-schools-right-now>
- Ramilo, M. T., Lee, S. J., & Balanay, J. M. (2023). Exploring transformational leadership practices among school leaders in Korean schools in Baguio City. *Asian Journal of Educational Leadership*, 10(2), 34–49.
- Raptis, M., Georgiou, E., & Papadakis, S. (2024). Digital transformation and leadership: Exploring distributed leadership in post-pandemic schools. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 11(1), 56–70.
- Spillane, J. P., Shirrell, M., & Hopkins, M. (2022). Conceptualizing school leadership as distributed: A review and synthesis. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 50(5), 789–810.
- Torres, M. E., De Leon, S. L., & Austria, J. D. (2025). Leadership styles and their impact on educational outcomes in the Philippines: A systematic review. *Philippine Journal of Educational Policy and Research*, 5(1), 22–39.
- Tucaliuc, A., Răducu, D., & Popescu, M. (2025). Benefits and risks of distributed leadership in schools: A critical appraisal. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 12(1), 88–103.
- Wang, X., & Bai, H. (2025). Exploring the relationship between distributed leadership, teacher collaboration, and ICT integration. *Journal of Instructional Innovation*, 14(2), 23–35.
- Zhang, W., & Lee, Y. (2023). Distributed leadership and teacher well-being: Evidence from Shanghai. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 301–312.
- Zhao, L., Lin, Y., & Han, J. (2024). The mediating effects of teacher self-efficacy and student-centered teaching on the link between distributed leadership and student social-emotional development. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 17, 1149–1165.