



Participative Leadership Practices and Professional Development of Language Teachers in Public Secondary Schools

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study determined and described the participative leadership practices and professional development of language teachers in public secondary schools in Calinan District Cluster 7, Division of Davao City. This study used the non-experimental quantitative research design utilizing the correlational method. The respondents of this study were composed of 131 teachers in public secondary schools using universal sampling. The data analysis utilized the mean, Pearson r and regression analysis. The findings disclosed that the participative leadership practices were high. Thus, participative leadership practices were oftentimes demonstrated by the teachers. Moreover, professional development is high. Thus, the professional development was oftentimes manifested by the teachers. It was found that there was a significant relationship between participative leadership practices and the professional development of teachers. Based on the findings, the

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public-school teachers may attend conferences and training from the DepEd for a proficient growth program in participative leadership practices and professional development of teachers. This may provide skillful improvement for teachers with the goal of building capability through supported education opportunities for learners and simultaneously learning the content of better academic rehearses.

Keywords: Participative leadership practices; professional development; teachers; public secondary schools; Philippines.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a crucial role as the key guardians of education. Their voices must be the driving force behind educational improvement and development, especially amid the numerous challenges and conflicting pressures within modern education systems (Tabassum & Alam, 2024). Professional development remains a cornerstone of education policy, enabling teachers to innovate and support the learning of children and young people in an ever-changing society. Such innovation stems from professional development rooted in critical self-reflection, professional autonomy, and respect for the teaching profession (Temitayo, et al., 2024). However, the question of how to effectively build professional development continues to be a significant challenge, contributing to the mixed feelings many teachers have about their profession.

Participative leadership has emerged as a promising framework to address these challenges, fostering collaboration and shared decision-making in educational institutions. Recent studies underscore the evolving role of leadership styles in promoting teacher growth and professional development. For instance, Karakose, et al. (2023) explored the scientific evolution of social justice leadership in education, emphasizing its role in addressing systemic inequalities and empowering educators. Similarly, Karakose, et al. (2023) highlighted the intellectual structure of transformational school leadership, which has proven to be a key driver of innovation and teacher motivation. These findings are crucial for understanding how participative leadership practices can be optimized to enhance teacher engagement and effectiveness.

Moreover, distributed leadership has gained recognition as a model that fosters professional collaboration and collective accountability in schools. Karakose, et al. (2022) analyzed the evolution of distributed leadership, revealing its

significant impact on school improvement and teacher development. The role of mentoring, as examined by Yirci, et al. (2023), further illustrates how leadership strategies can facilitate the professional growth of educators by providing structured guidance and support. Additionally, digital leadership, as explored by Karakose, et al. (2022), reflects the need for leaders to adapt to technological advancements and their implications for professional learning and development in the digital age.

Professional teachers maintain discipline and fairness in their classrooms, ensuring their personal desire to be liked by students does not interfere with enforcing rules or fostering an equitable learning environment. They uphold the belief that every student has the potential to succeed and design lesson plans enriched with strategies and materials to facilitate learning (Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Wilkins, 2023). Collaboration is another hallmark of professionalism. Teachers regularly work with colleagues to share strategies, analyze data, address curriculum issues, and improve student performance. They prioritize the school community's success over individual concerns, fostering a positive, learning-focused environment (Visone, 2024). Professional teachers avoid unproductive behaviors such as gossip or arguments with colleagues, instead emphasizing constructive collaboration (Tamunodiepiriye, et al., 2022).

In many regions, including the Philippines, professional development is a requirement for maintaining certification. Teachers who are truly committed to their profession actively participate in development programs, staying up-to-date with best practices and educational strategies. They read extensively, conduct research to refine their teaching methods, and attend conferences, often as presenters. Membership in professional organizations further helps them build networks and engage with peers (Tulo & Lee, 2022).

In the Philippines, teachers are expected to serve as role models for their students. Professionalism in all aspects of their career helps maintain respect among students and colleagues while ensuring quality education. Teacher professional development, whether formal or informal, enhances skills and ultimately boosts student outcomes (Kilag, et al., 2023). In the Davao Region, teacher appearance and demeanor reflect their professional development. While male teachers are expected to wear dress pants and polo or button-down shirts, female teachers are encouraged to dress conservatively. Schools often discourage visible tattoos, facial piercings, and brightly colored hair, as well as smoking or drinking in public. Professionalism in student interaction demands striking a balance between being a caring adult and maintaining professional boundaries (Almagro & Flores, 2023).

Recognizing these scenarios, this study aims to assess the current levels of professional development, identify its strongest predictors, and establish best practices for fostering professional growth. By integrating recent insights into participative leadership and teacher development from diverse educational settings, the study seeks to provide comprehensive recommendations to enhance DepEd policies and regulations. Ultimately, the findings will inform programs and activities that stimulate professional development, address existing challenges, and improve teacher performance within a globalized educational context.

The independent variable, participative leadership practices, encompasses key dimensions: human relations, decision-making, instructional leadership, control domain, and conflict resolution. Human relations involves the development of interpersonal trust and effective communication between teachers and leaders. Decision-making reflects the involvement of

teachers in school-level decisions such as policy formation and curriculum design. Instructional leadership emphasizes the support and guidance provided by leaders to enhance teaching practices. Control domain refers to the degree of autonomy teachers have in managing their classrooms and making professional decisions. Conflict resolution addresses how school leaders handle conflicts within the staff, promoting a harmonious and collaborative work environment.

The dependent variable, professional development, includes essential components such as commitment to excellence, honesty and integrity, compassion, and professional responsibility. Commitment to excellence reflects teachers' dedication to continuously improving their teaching quality. Honesty and integrity refer to the ethical behavior and transparency teachers demonstrate in their professional practices. Compassion involves empathy and support for students and colleagues, creating a nurturing educational environment. Professional responsibility speaks to teachers' accountability for their roles, fulfilling school objectives, and maintaining high professional standards.

The conceptual framework suggests that participative leadership practices significantly influence teachers' professional development by fostering an environment where teachers are involved in decision-making and have access to support and resources. This involvement in leadership practices, such as collaborative decision-making and conflict resolution, helps develop their commitment to professional growth, enhances their ethical standards, and strengthens their professional relationships with students and colleagues. By linking leadership behaviors to these aspects of professional development, the study emphasizes the importance of participative leadership in promoting teacher effectiveness and overall school improvement.

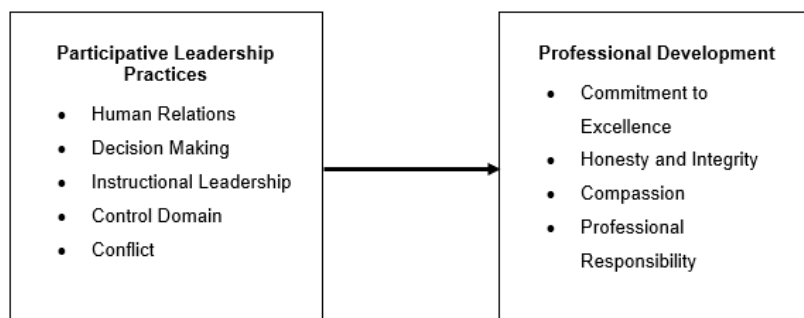


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a non-experimental quantitative research design utilizing the correlational method. A quantitative research design refers to a systematic approach that collects and analyzes numerical data to understand patterns, relationships, or trends. The primary objective of a quantitative research design is to quantify how many people think, act, or feel in a specific way. It involves large sample sizes, focusing on the number of responses rather than the in-depth emotional insights typically explored in qualitative research. The standardized nature of quantitative research ensures that each respondent answers the same set of questions, enabling a fair and consistent analysis of the entire data sample. The collected data is numerical and can be subjected to statistical analysis (Pregoner, 2024). Additionally, surveys can be customized to include follow-up questions based on initial responses, such as tailoring subsequent questions for respondents who are satisfied or dissatisfied with a particular service (Fink, 2024).

This method was chosen for the present study as it measures the relationship between participative leadership practices and the professional development of language teachers in public secondary schools. The correlational method specifically helps in describing and analyzing the statistical association between two or more variables (Pregoner & Baguio, 2024). By employing this approach, the study aims to uncover meaningful relationships and patterns that inform the understanding of how leadership practices impact professional development.

2.2 Research Respondents

The respondents of this study were 131 teachers from public elementary schools. Universal sampling was employed to examine the relationship between participative leadership practices and the professional development of language teachers in public secondary schools. While universal sampling ensured comprehensive representation, it is acknowledged that this method could introduce potential biases. For instance, participants may have felt a sense of implicit pressure to respond positively due to the institutional involvement in the data collection process.

To mitigate such biases, several measures were implemented. The research emphasized voluntary participation, ensuring that teachers could decline or withdraw from the study without consequences. Additionally, anonymity and confidentiality were rigorously maintained to help respondents feel comfortable providing honest and unbiased feedback.

The selection criteria required respondents to have at least three years of teaching experience, ensuring that participants could provide comprehensive and informed insights relevant to the study. Data collection was conducted during the school year 2021–2022, with all ethical protocols observed to maintain the integrity of the research process.

2.3 Research Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a survey questionnaire designed to measure participative leadership practices and the professional development of language teachers in public secondary schools. It was a researcher-developed tool, grounded in relevant studies and literature reviewed during the research process.

Before its administration, the draft of the instrument underwent evaluation for content validity and reliability by a panel of experts specializing in Doctor of Educational Management. Based on their feedback and recommendations, revisions were made to enhance its clarity and effectiveness.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted with 30 elementary school teachers from a separate school within the same district. The results of the pilot test indicated that the instrument was reliable, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.80.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The data for this study were collected through a systematic procedure. First, the researcher sought permission and endorsement from the Dean of the Graduate School of Rizal Memorial Colleges to secure approval from the Schools Division Superintendent. Upon receiving the Superintendent's approval, a request letter was submitted to the respective School Heads for their endorsement.

Following the approval process, a schedule was arranged for the distribution of the survey questionnaires. The researcher included an explanation of the study's purpose and detailed instructions for completing the questionnaires to ensure clarity for the respondents.

Once all the questionnaires were retrieved, the data were meticulously tallied, tabulated, and analyzed. The findings were then interpreted in alignment with the objectives of the study.

2.5 Data Analysis

The gathered data were systematically classified, analyzed, and interpreted using appropriate statistical tools. The mean was utilized to measure the level of participative leadership practices and professional development among the respondents. Additionally, the Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson *r*) was employed to determine the significant relationship between participative leadership practices and professional development.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Level of Participative Leadership Practices of Teachers

Table 1 presents the level of participative leadership practices among teachers across five domains. The highest mean was observed in Decision-Making (4.35), rated as very high, followed by Conflict (4.16), rated as high. Human Relations received a mean score of 4.11, also rated as high. Both Instructional Leadership and Control Domain received a mean score of 4.01, which also falls under the high category. The overall mean of 4.13 indicates a high level of participative leadership practices, which means that teachers demonstrate a strong presence of collaborative leadership, with notable involvement in decision-making, effective conflict management, and maintaining positive human relations. This reflects a leadership environment that fosters teamwork and shared responsibility among educators.

This finding is consistent with the study of Or & Berkovich (2023), which emphasized the importance of participative leadership practices in fostering a collaborative work environment among teachers. Their research highlighted that when teachers actively participate in decision-making and effectively manage conflicts, it contributes to a positive and cohesive school culture. This finding suggests that participative

leadership practices not only enhance teacher collaboration but also promote a sense of shared responsibility, which can improve overall school effectiveness and teacher satisfaction.

Table 1. Level of Participative Leadership Practices of Teachers

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Level
Human Relations	4.11	High
Decision-Making	4.35	Very High
Instructional Leadership	4.01	High
Control Domain	4.01	High
Conflict	4.16	High
OVERALL	4.13	High

Furthermore, the finding aligns with the study of Egitim, (2021), which found that strong participative leadership is key to building positive human relations among educators. Their study emphasized that fostering a collaborative leadership style helps create an environment where teachers work together toward common goals, thus improving both their professional development and the school's success.

In addition, Wang, et al. (2021) found that participative leadership practices significantly contribute to a supportive teaching environment by promoting mutual respect and enhancing collaboration. Their research suggests that when teachers are empowered through participative leadership, it strengthens the overall educational experience, fostering not only professional growth but also a more harmonious school environment.

3.2 Level of Professional Development of Teachers

Table 2 presents the level of professional development among teachers across four domains. The highest mean was observed in Honesty and Integrity and Compassion both with a mean score of 4.27, rated as very high, followed closely by Commitment to Excellence (4.22), also rated as very high. Professional Responsibility received a mean score of 4.13, which falls under the high category. The overall mean of 4.20 indicates a very high level of professional development, which means that teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to ethical standards, excellence, and compassion, while also maintaining a high sense of professional responsibility. This reflects a well-rounded development in key professional

attributes that contribute to effective teaching and positive student outcomes.

Table 2. Level of Professional Development of Teachers

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Level
Commitment to Excellence	4.22	Very High
Honesty and Integrity	4.27	Very High
Compassion	4.27	Very High
Professional Responsibility	4.13	High
OVERALL	4.20	Very High

This finding is consistent with the study of Puyo, (2021), which emphasized that teachers who demonstrate a strong commitment to ethical standards, excellence, and compassion are more likely to impact their students' academic and behavioral outcomes positively. Their research highlighted that a teacher's dedication to these professional qualities fosters an environment of trust and respect, which is essential for effective teaching.

Moreover, the finding aligns with the study of Matos, et al. (2022), which found that teachers who uphold high standards of professional responsibility and compassion create a supportive and nurturing learning environment. Their study suggested that these qualities not only improve student outcomes but also enhance the overall school culture by promoting collaboration and respect among both students and staff.

Additionally, the study by Sprott, (2019) supports the finding by noting that professional development programs that focus on ethics, responsibility, and compassion contribute significantly to teacher effectiveness. They argued that when teachers are empowered with these attributes, they are better equipped to meet

the diverse needs of their students and create an environment conducive to learning and growth.

3.3 Significant Relationship between the Participative Leadership Practices and Professional Development

Table 3 presents the significant relationship between participative leadership practices and professional development. The r-value of 0.437 indicates a high correlation between the two variables. The p-value of 0.01 is less than the significance level of 0.05, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (Ho). This suggests that there is a statistically significant relationship between participative leadership practices and professional development, meaning that higher levels of participative leadership practices are associated with greater professional development among teachers. While this result is promising, further exploration of the underlying mechanisms driving this relationship is needed. One potential mechanism could be the role of teacher autonomy and empowerment in fostering professional growth. Teachers who feel involved in decision-making processes and leadership activities may experience a greater sense of ownership over their professional development, which leads to increased motivation, engagement, and participation in development programs. Additionally, providing teachers with opportunities to collaborate in decision-making and school improvement processes may help build a more supportive and innovative school culture, further promoting professional growth. Encouraging regular professional development opportunities, fostering teacher communities, and promoting peer mentoring can also serve as effective strategies for enhancing professional growth. Furthermore, school leaders should ensure that participative practices are consistently applied and supported by the school's overall culture to maximize their impact on teacher development.

Table 3. Significant Relationship between the Participative Leadership Practices and Professional Development

Variables	X	Y	r-value	Degree of Correlation	p-value	Decision (Ho)
Participative Leadership Practices	4.46		0.437	High Correlation	0.01	Rejected
Professional development		4.04				

This finding affirms the view of Transformational Leadership Theory by Leithwood and Jantzi (2005), which emphasizes that participative leadership practices significantly enhance teacher development by fostering a collaborative and supportive environment. The theory argues that transformational leadership, characterized by shared decision-making, vision-building, and teacher involvement in school leadership, has a profound impact on professional development. In the context of the study, the positive correlation between participative leadership practices and professional development suggests that when teachers are actively engaged in leadership processes and are given the opportunity to contribute to decision-making, their professional skills and motivation improve. This leads to a more positive work environment, greater teacher satisfaction, and, ultimately, better student outcomes. Their work highlights the importance of collective responsibility and collaboration in driving systemic improvements in schools.

Moreover, the finding reinforces Bass's Full Range Leadership Theory (1996), which posits that leadership practices that empower teachers and encourage their active participation in school decisions are linked to higher levels of professional development. Bass's Full Range Leadership Theory includes transformational leadership, which focuses on inspiring and motivating teachers to take ownership of their professional growth. According to this theory, leadership practices that foster participation, autonomy, and empowerment can lead to increased teacher motivation, engagement, and overall effectiveness. Teachers who feel supported and involved in the decision-making process are more likely to seek professional development opportunities, try innovative teaching strategies, and collaborate with colleagues. Bass's theory suggests that such practices not only improve individual teacher performance but also contribute to the overall success of the school.

Furthermore, the finding validates Sergiovanni's Theory of Leadership and Community (1994), which stresses the importance of shared leadership and the creation of a professional learning community within schools. Sergiovanni argues that effective leadership is not just about authority or top-down control, but about fostering collaboration, trust, and shared responsibility among educators. In this framework, participative leadership is a key component, as it encourages teachers to take an active role in shaping school policies, curricula, and instructional practices.

The theory highlights that when teachers work together in a supportive community, they are more likely to engage in continuous professional development, exchange ideas, and develop new teaching practices. This approach builds a strong professional culture in schools, where teachers are not only committed to their own growth but also to the collective success of the entire school community. In line with the study's findings, the theory suggests that participative leadership practices foster a sense of belonging and professional responsibility, which ultimately enhances the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions can be drawn. The level of participative leadership practices among teachers is high, indicating that these practices are clearly evident and actively manifested in their teaching. Similarly, the level of professional development is also high, reflecting that teachers are committed to their growth and development. Furthermore, the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant relationship between participative leadership practices and professional development, is rejected. This decision is based on the finding that participative leadership practices are positively correlated with professional development, suggesting that as participative leadership practices increase, so does the professional development of teachers.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, several actionable recommendations are proposed for improving the professional development of teachers and fostering effective participative leadership practices. First, policymakers and human resource managers may prioritize participative leadership practices in the development of teacher training policies. Since the study revealed a significant correlation between participative leadership and professional development, it is essential to integrate these practices into the design of professional development programs. Policymakers may consider embedding these principles into teacher development frameworks to support both teacher empowerment and improved educational outcomes.

Second, school administrators may implement regular training initiatives that promote participative leadership and foster collaboration among teachers. Administrators may organize

workshops that focus on leadership skills, shared decision-making, and peer mentoring. Additionally, administrators may create structured opportunities for teacher feedback and involvement in school policies, ensuring that teachers feel valued and integral to the school's success. Third, teachers may be actively encouraged to participate in school programs and activities that promote both their professional and social learning. This includes engaging in professional learning communities (PLCs), cross-departmental committees, or collaborative lesson planning. By participating in these programs, teachers can develop their skills, exchange best practices with colleagues, and contribute to the overall development of their school.

Finally, future research may explore additional indicators of participative leadership and professional development, as well as investigate other potential variables that may influence teacher effectiveness. Research that considers cultural, regional, and institutional differences in leadership practices will provide deeper insights into the mechanisms driving professional development and the conditions that support teacher growth.

CONSENT

This quantitative study adhered to rigorous ethical standards to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all participants. Before data collection, written informed consent was obtained from all respondents, who were fully briefed on the study's goals and the measures taken to safeguard their privacy. To ensure anonymity, no personally identifiable information was collected, and each participant was assigned a unique identification code for data analysis. All data were securely stored on encrypted servers, with access limited to the research team. The results were reported in aggregate form to prevent the identification of individual responses. Furthermore, statistical analyses were conducted in a manner that further protected the anonymity of the respondents, maintaining their privacy throughout the study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The researcher sought permission and endorsement from the Dean of the Graduate School of Rizal Memorial Colleges to secure approval from the Schools Division Superintendent. Upon receiving the Superintendent's approval, a request letter was submitted to the respective School Heads for their endorsement.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

The author(s) hereby declare that generative AI technologies have been used during the writing and editing of this manuscript.

The details of the AI usage are as follows:

1. Grammarly: Used for grammar and spell-checking, as well as suggestions for improving sentence structure and overall clarity.
2. Quillbot: Employed for paraphrasing and refining sentence flow to enhance readability and coherence.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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