



## **DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND COLLABORATIVE CULTURE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THE DIVISION OF BATAAN: BASIS FOR A SCHOOL-BASED EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study investigated distributed leadership practices and collaborative culture in secondary schools within the Division of Bataan, with the aim of establishing a foundation for a school-based empowerment program. Employing a quantitative descriptive correlational design, the research involved 152 teachers and administrators selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using a researcher-made Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed through frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation ( $r$ ). Results showed that distributed leadership and collaborative culture were strongly evident, particularly in the areas of shared leadership roles, teamwork, and collective responsibility. A statistically significant relationship was established between distributed leadership and collaborative culture with  $r = 0.742$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The findings suggest that enhancing shared decision-making, addressing workload constraints, and strengthening professional development can further advance collaboration and teacher empowerment. Based on these results, a school-based empowerment program was formulated to institutionalize participatory collaboration and promote continuous school improvement.

**Keywords:** *distributed leadership, collaborative culture, teacher empowerment, shared decision-making, school leadership*

## INTRODUCTION

Globally, schools are increasingly embracing distributed leadership as an alternative to hierarchical, principal-centered models of governance. This paradigm shift recognizes that educational leadership is not confined to a single individual but is instead a shared process of influence involving teachers, department heads, and administrative teams working collaboratively toward common goals (Harris, 2020; Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership focuses on empowerment, collaboration, and the collective responsibility for teaching and learning improvement (Hallinger & Bryant, 2022). It reflects the growing consensus that effective school leadership arises from networks of interaction rather than from a top-down approach.

In recent years, education systems worldwide have adopted distributed leadership to strengthen school performance, teacher professionalism, and organizational learning. Studies in the United Kingdom, Australia, and Singapore, for instance, have shown that distributed leadership fosters teacher commitment, enhances innovation, and promotes collective accountability (Ng, 2020; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). These practices have led to improved school climates and more responsive systems of decision-making, particularly when schools face complex challenges that require adaptive, participatory leadership.

In developing countries, however, the adoption of distributed leadership remains uneven. Research in Southeast Asia reveals that leadership in schools continues to be largely centralized and bureaucratic, limiting teachers' participation in leadership functions (Hallinger, 2021). While policy reforms often promote empowerment and shared governance, school culture, traditional management styles, and limited professional development opportunities sometimes hinder authentic collaboration. As a result, the potential of distributed leadership to transform teaching and learning remains underutilized in many contexts (Bush, 2020; UNESCO, 2022).

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education (DepEd) recognizes the importance of participatory and collaborative leadership through key policy instruments such as the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) and the Expanded Career Progression System (ECPS) (DepEd Orders No. 24, s. 2020; No. 17, s. 2023). These frameworks emphasize that effective school heads must create an enabling environment that promotes teamwork, shared decision-making, and empowerment of teachers and staff. The principles of shared governance articulated in Republic Act No. 9155 (Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001) further reinforce that leadership responsibilities should be distributed across various stakeholders in the school community.

In the Division of Bataan, distributed leadership has become increasingly relevant as schools face leadership transitions, the absence of full-fledged principals, and the designation of Teachers-in-Charge (TICs) or Officers-in-Charge (OICs). In many secondary schools, department heads and senior teachers are compelled to assume leadership roles in instructional supervision, resource management, and program

implementation. While these arrangements sustain operations, the extent to which distributed leadership practices foster collaborative school cultures remains insufficiently explored. Understanding how leadership is shared, how collaboration functions in daily school life, and how teachers perceive empowerment in decision-making is essential for strengthening educational leadership practices within the division.

Globally and nationally, previous studies have confirmed that distributed leadership contributes to teacher empowerment, organizational innovation, and school improvement (Leithwood et al., 2020; Torres & Villanueva, 2022). However, there remains a gap in local empirical research exploring how distributed leadership manifests in Philippine public schools, especially in divisions like Bataan, where leadership responsibilities are often delegated to interim or acting leaders. Existing literature tends to focus on principals' leadership competencies rather than on how leadership is enacted collectively within schools (Cruz, 2021). This lack of contextual evidence limits the formulation of localized frameworks that could support the institutionalization of distributed leadership at the division level.

Hence, this study explored the distributed leadership practices and collaborative cultures in secondary schools within the Division of Bataan. It identified how leadership is shared among teachers and administrators, what factors facilitate or hinder collaboration, and how such practices contribute to teacher empowerment and school improvement. Through quantitative inquiry, the study uncovered data representing the relationship between authentic leadership and collaborative cultures in secondary schools.

Ultimately, the findings of this research served as the basis for the development of a School-Based Empowerment Program that may guide the Division of Bataan in strengthening participatory leadership, professional learning communities, and teacher engagement. This program focuses on institutionalizing distributed leadership practices that promote shared accountability, innovation, and continuous school improvement.

## **Research Questions**

The study determined how distributed leadership practices and collaborative cultures manifest in secondary schools in the Division of Bataan to serve as the basis for a school-based Empowerment Program.

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
  - 1.1 designation;
  - 1.2 age;
  - 1.3 sex;
  - 1.4 highest educational attainment;
  - 1.5 number of years in service;
  - 1.6 number of years in the current school; and
  - 1.7 leadership professional development trainings attended.

2. How do distributed leadership practices manifest among the respondents in terms of:
  - 2.1. enactment of leadership roles;
  - 2.2. collaborative practices among teachers and administrators;
  - 2.3. factors facilitating or hindering collaboration; and
  - 2.4. perceptions on empowerment and shared decision-making.
3. How may the collaborative cultures in schools be described in terms of:
  - 3.1. collegiality and professional trust; and
  - 3.2 shared vision and collective responsibility
4. Is there any significant relationship between distributed leadership practices and collaborative culture in schools?
5. Based on the findings, what School-Based Empowerment Program may be proposed for the Division of Bataan?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study employed a quantitative descriptive–correlational research design with a developmental component. The quantitative approach was appropriate as the study intended to measure, quantify, and analyze the extent to which distributed leadership practices and collaborative culture manifest in secondary schools, as well as determine the statistical relationship between these variables. The following descriptive components were used to systematically describe: (1) the demographic and professional profile of the respondents; (2) the extent of manifestation of distributed leadership practices; and (3) the level of collaborative culture in secondary schools. Moreover, this study used convenience sampling as a sampling technique.

Descriptive research is suitable when the objective is to portray the characteristics of a population or phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The correlational component examined the degree and direction of the relationship between distributed leadership practices and collaborative culture. Correlational research is particularly useful when the goal is to determine whether and to what extent variables are statistically associated without manipulating them or establishing causal inference (Bhandari, 2021). This design is appropriate because the study does not attempt to control or manipulate leadership practices or school culture, but rather to examine naturally occurring relationships within the school setting.

The developmental component of the study involved the formulation of a School-Based Empowerment Program grounded on the empirical findings of the descriptive and correlational analyses. The proposed program was data-driven and anchored on identified strengths, gaps, and statistically significant relationships between distributed leadership and collaborative culture dimensions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Part I displays the profile of the respondents in terms of designation, age, sex, highest educational attainment, number of years in service, number of years in the current school, and leadership of professional development trainings attended.

Part II shows distributed leadership practices among respondents in terms of enactment of leadership roles, collaborative practices among teachers and administrators, factors facilitating or hindering collaborations, and perceptions on empowerment and shared decision-making

Part III displays the collaborative cultures in schools in terms of collegiality and professional trust, and shared vision and collective responsibility

Part IV reveals the relationship between distributed leadership practices and collaborative culture in schools

Part VI presents the school-based empowerment program

**Part I displays the profile of the respondents in terms of designation, age, sex, highest educational attainment, number of years in service, number of years in the current school, and leadership of professional development trainings attended.**

**Table 1. The profile of the respondents in terms of designation**

<b>Designation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Teachers	109	71.71
Administrators	43	28.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 presents the respondents' profiles based on their designations. Among the respondents, there were 109 or 71.71% teachers who participated in the study, while the remaining 43 individuals or 28.29% are school administrators. This indicates that of the total sample, teachers comprise more than two-thirds. This higher proportion of teachers suggests that the dataset is largely reflective of classroom-level practitioners, whereas administrators represent a smaller portion yet play an essential segment of leadership personnel.

The findings of the study are heavily influenced by the perspectives of teachers, as they are dominant in this study; this number represents the reality of distribution in schools where teachers outnumber the population of administrators. While the administrators provide important insights into leadership and policy, the teacher represents the realities of implementation between leadership and practitioner viewpoints.

The study of Kaukewahulo and Nkengbeza (2023) revealed that principals and teachers play important roles through supervision, monitoring, discipline, decision-making, and assessment. Most importantly, there is an improvement when principals and teachers work together.

**Table 2. Profile of the respondents in terms of age**

Age	Frequency	Percent
20 to 29 years old	13	8.55
30 to 39 years old	45	29.61
40 to 49 years old	64	42.11
50 to 59 years old	26	17.11
60 years old and above	4	2.63
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 shows the age distribution of respondents across five categories. For 20 to 29-year-olds, there are 13 individuals or 8.55%, indicating a relatively small proportion of early-career professionals. Moreover, a total of 45 individuals, or 29.61%, are between 30 and 39 years old. Most of the respondents are between the ages of 40 and 49 years old having a total of 64 individuals or 42.11%. Meanwhile, there were 26 or 17.11% individuals have ages between 50 and 59 years old. Lastly, those 60 years old and above have only 4 respondents or 2.63%.

The distribution of the age group suggests that the study captures the perspective of professional and experienced mature individuals. The relatively low number of young educators may limit the representation of currently emerging teaching trends, but overall, these respondents are more likely to have developed leadership insights and teaching practices.

Van Driel et al. (2021) found that experience matters. Teachers who have been in the field longer are generally better at managing classes, making sound decisions, and taking on leadership roles compared to beginners. Years of teaching sharpen how they read situations, respond to problems, and guide others. Over time, they build not just teaching expertise but also leadership confidence. That first distributed leadership well, since it relies on tapping people with real expertise. Experienced teachers also tend to mentor younger colleagues and help build a collaborative spirit. So, having many middle-aged, seasoned teachers in our study makes the insights on leadership and teamwork more credible.

**Table 3. Profile of the respondents in terms of sex**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	31	20.39
Female	121	79.61
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 shows the profile of the respondents according to sex. There were 31 or 20.39% male respondents, while female respondents comprised 121 or 79.61%. This represents that the female respondents outnumbered the male respondents by nearly four times, showing that in this study, the individuals who participated in the study are predominantly female.

The findings may reflect perspectives shaped by female educators, particularly in indicators such as collaboration, communication, and leadership dynamics. While this gives a realistic representation, it may also limit the gender-based comparative analysis. This also shows that this profession is dominated by females, as reflected in the table.

Maghanoy et al. (2025) looked at gender in schools and found that female educators often bring stronger collaboration, communication, and flexibility to the table. Women are more likely to lead in ways that invite participation and shared decision-making, which is exactly what distributed leadership calls for. The study also observed that schools with more female teachers usually have a closer relationship and stronger peer support, creating a more united and cooperative environment. That helps explain our finding: with mostly female respondents, it makes sense that perceptions of collaboration and leadership would come across as positive.

**Table 4. Profile of the respondents in terms of the highest educational attainment**

<b>Highest Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Bachelor's Degree	26	17.11
MAED Units	54	35.53
CAR for Master's Degree	15	9.87
Master's Degree	35	23.03
Doctoral Units	14	9.21
CAR for Doctoral Degree	5	3.29
Doctoral Degree	3	1.97
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 presents the highest educational attainment of respondents. Among the attainments, the MAED units got the highest number of individuals, 54 or 35.53%,

followed by the master’s degree with 35 or 23.03% individuals, indicating that the respondents are currently pursuing graduate education. The attainment of a Bachelor’s Degree includes a total of 26 individuals or 17.11%, indicating those with basic qualifications. Meanwhile, Completed Academic Requirements or CAR of Master’s Degree includes 15 or 9.87%, which represents a number who have completed the academic requirements but have not yet finished the degree. For doctoral-level education, doctoral units have 14 respondents of 9.21%, CAR for doctoral degree has 5 respondents or 3.29%, and lastly, having the lowest frequency, 3 individuals of 1.97% have finished their doctoral studies or have a doctoral degree.

The data indicate that most respondents are pursuing graduate studies, although fewer have attended the doctoral level. The considerable number of respondents with MAED units reflects a strong commitment to personal and professional development. Promoting further academic advancement may enhance teachers’ and administrators’ research-based decision-making skills and leadership capacity.

The study by Cayabas (2025) explained that pursuing continuing graduate studies significantly contributes to both personal and professional development by equipping individuals with advanced knowledge, skills, and competencies that enhance workplace performance. It highlighted that graduate education fosters personal growth through increased confidence, improved critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, stronger communication skills, and greater opportunities for career advancement. Professionally, it develops higher-level competencies such as leadership, effective decision-making, policy analysis, resource management, and crisis management, all of which are essential in real-world work settings. The study further emphasized that the knowledge and experiences gained from graduate studies help individuals transition more effectively from academic environments to professional practice, making them more capable, adaptable, and prepared for complex organizational roles.

**Table 5. Profile of the respondents in terms of the number of years in service**

<b>Number of Years in Service</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Less than 5 years	15	9.87
5 to 10 years	42	27.63
11 to 15 years	27	17.76
16 to 20 years	26	17.11
More than 20 years	42	27.63
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5 presents the respondents’ years of service. A total of 15 respondents, or 9.87%, have years in service of less than 5 years. Meanwhile, 5 to 10 years has 42 respondents or 27.63%, indicating a significant group of moderately experienced educators, and “11 to 15 years” includes 27 respondents or 17.76%, while “16 to 20 years” accounts for 26 individuals or 17.11%, both representing mid- to late-career professionals. More than 20 years also has 42 respondents or 27.63%, tying with the 5-10 years category for the

highest frequency. This distribution shows a balance between moderately experienced and highly experienced educators.

The presence of both moderately experienced and veteran teachers and administrators strengthens the reliability of the data, as it captures diverse professional perspectives. Experienced teachers may contribute deeper insights into leadership practices, while those in earlier stages may provide a fresh perspective.

Ominde (2026) showed that the longer teachers stay in the profession, the more competent and engaged they become in school life. Veteran teachers usually have a better grasp of policies, make stronger decisions, and understand leadership roles more clearly. That makes them more effective in distributed leadership settings. A healthy mix of veterans and newer teachers also created balance: the experienced ones provide stability and mentoring, while the newer ones bring fresh energy and ideas. That supports our finding that a range of experience levels gives richer insights into how leadership and collaboration play out.

**Table 6. Profile of the respondents in terms of the number of years in the current school**

<b>Number of Years in the Current School</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Less than 5 years	7	4.61
5 to 10 years	56	36.84
11 to 15 years	48	31.58
16 to 20 years	14	9.21
More than 20 years	27	17.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 6 shows the number of years respondents have served in their current school. Only a small portion of the sample falls under less than 5 years, which has 7 individuals or 4.61%, indicating a small number of newly assigned personnel. The largest group served for 5 to 10 years, comprising 56 respondents or 36.84%. This is closely followed by those with 11 to 15 years of 48 individuals or 31.58%. Respondents with 16 to 20 years and more than 20 years also form a notable part of the sample, wherein 14 individuals or 9.21% fall under the category of 16 to 20 years, and the remaining 27 individuals or 17.76% have more than 20 years of experience in the current school, indicating a considerable number of long-serving staff.

The findings imply the familiarity of the respondents with their school environment, which strengthens their ability to identify the distributed leadership practices and collaborative culture. This long-term tenure allows for understanding and deeper observation of the practices, contributing to more informed and reliable responses.

Luy and Diaz (2022) emphasized that staying in the same school for a long time helps teachers truly understand its culture and how things work. Long-tenured teachers build deeper relationships with coworkers and administrators, which breeds trust, teamwork, and shared responsibility. They're also more likely to get involved in leadership school decisions. Stable staffing keeps programs running smoothly over time.

**Table 7. Profile of the respondents in terms of the leadership or professional development trainings attended**

	<b>12</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
None		13	8.55
1 to 3 trainings		70	46.05
4 to 6 trainings		20	13.16
More than 6 trainings		49	32.24
<b>Total</b>		<b>152</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 7 presents the number of leadership or professional development trainings attended by respondents. Only 13 respondents, or 8.55%, reported having no training exposure, showing that a small portion lacks experience in this area. The largest group, with 70 respondents or 46.05%, attended 1 to 3 trainings, suggesting that most have limited but relevant training experience. Meanwhile, 20 individuals or 13.16% attended 4 to 6 trainings, and 49 respondents or 32.34% attended more than 6 trainings, indicating that a substantial number have extensive training experience.

The results show that most respondents have attended professional development trainings, which likely supports their leadership and collaboration skills. Since training exposure varies, respondents may differ in their knowledge and use of leadership practices. Providing more training opportunities to everyone could improve overall school effectiveness.

Soegiarto et al. (2024) found that leadership and professional development trainings make a real difference in how well people perform and how effective an organization becomes. Training gives teachers practical skills in communication, collaboration, and leadership. The more training they attend, the more confident they feel about taking on leadership roles. Ongoing development also builds a habit of learning and trying new things. Teachers with more training are more likely to join and share decision-making and teamwork.

**Part II shows distributed leadership practices among respondents in terms of enactment of leadership roles, collaborative practices among teachers and administrators, factors facilitating or hindering collaborations, and perceptions on empowerment and shared decision-making**

**Table 8. The distributed leadership practices of respondents in terms of the enactment of leadership roles**

<b>Enactment of Leadership Roles</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. Leadership responsibilities are shared among teachers and administrators.	3.71	0.52	Strongly Agree
2. Teachers are given opportunities to take on leadership roles	3.63	0.54	Strongly Agree
3. Leadership roles are based on expertise rather than position alone	3.52	0.59	Strongly Agree
4. Teachers are encouraged to lead school initiatives and programs	3.54	0.60	Strongly Agree
<b>General Mean and SD</b>	<b>3.60</b>	<b>0.56</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

Table 8 presents the extent to which distributed leadership is practiced in terms of the enactment of leadership roles. The statement “Leadership responsibilities are shared among teachers and administrators” obtained the highest mean of 3.71 and standard deviation of 0.52, interpreted as Strongly Agree, indicating that respondents consistently perceive leadership as a shared function rather than concentrated in a single authority. The statement “Teachers are given opportunities to take on leadership roles” yielded a mean of 3.63 and a standard deviation of 0.54, also Strongly Agree, suggesting that opportunities for leadership participation are widely available. Meanwhile, “Teachers are encouraged to lead school initiatives and programs” garnered a mean of 3.54 and standard deviation of 0.60, reflecting “Leadership roles are based on expertise rather than position alone” recorded the lowest mean of 3.52 and standard deviation of 0.59, yet still within Strongly Agree, implying that while expertise is recognized, positional authority may still influence leadership assignments. The overall mean of 3.60 and standard deviation of 0.56 confirm a high level of agreement and consistency among respondents regarding the enactment of distributed leadership roles.

The results suggest that schools are actively promoting shared leadership practices, where teachers are not merely implementers but also contributors to leadership functions. However, the slightly lower rating on expertise-based leadership indicates that traditional hierarchical structures may still partially exist. Strengthening merit-based leadership assignments could further enhance fairness and effectiveness in distributed leadership.

Osuki (2026) explained that leadership in school doesn’t just come from job titles. It also comes from people’s skills and expertise. Distributed leadership lets teachers take on roles based on what they’re good at, which makes schools more effective because they use everyone’s strengths. Sharing leadership also makes teachers more engaged and

accountable in school projects, and it keeps the school from relying on just one person at the top.

**Table 9. The distributed leadership practices of respondents in terms of collaborative practices among teachers and administrators**

<b>Collaborative Practices among Teachers and Administrators</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. Teachers and administrators regularly collaborate in planning school activities.	3.56	0.65	Strongly Agree
2. There is open communication between school leaders and teachers.	3.61	0.58	Strongly Agree
3. Collaboration is evident in instructional and decision-making processes.	3.57	0.56	Strongly Agree
4. Teamwork is encouraged in addressing school concerns.	3.70	0.52	Strongly Agree
<b>General Mean and SD</b>	<b>3.61</b>	<b>0.58</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

Table 9 highlights the distributed leadership practices of respondents in terms of collaborative practices among teachers and administrators. The general mean of 3.61 and standard deviation of 0.58 demonstrates a consistently high perception of collaborative practices. As shown in the table, “Teamwork is encouraged in addressing school concerns” received the highest mean of 3.70 and standard deviation of 0.52, interpreted as Strongly Agree, indicating that collaborative problem-solving is highly evident. Moreover, the statement “There is open communication between school leaders and teachers” obtained a mean of 3.61 and a standard deviation of 0.58, also Strongly Agree, suggesting effective communication channels within the school. Similarly, “Collaboration is evident in instructional and decision-making processes” posted a mean of 3.57 and a standard deviation of 0.56, reflecting strong integration of collaboration in core school functions. Lastly, the statement “Teacher’s administrators regularly collaborate in planning school activities” recorded the lowest mean of 3.56 and standard deviation of 0.65, though still Strongly Agree, indicating that while collaboration exists, structured planning activities may be slightly less emphasized.

The findings imply that collaboration is deeply embedded in school culture, especially in teamwork and communication. However, the slightly lower score in collaborative planning suggests a need to strengthen structured and systematic collaboration during planning stages, not just during implementation or problem-solving.

Yulianti et al. (2026) showed that when leadership is collaborative, schools improve in both quality and performance. Teamwork and open communication are at the heart of good collaboration. They help schools solve problems and make better decisions

together. The study also found that strong collaboration leads to happier, more engaged teachers. It encourages innovation and keeps schools improving.

**Table 10. The distributed leadership practices of respondents in terms of factors facilitating or hindering collaboration**

<b>Factors Facilitating or Hindering Collaboration</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. Time is adequately provided for collaborative activities.	3.59	0.58	Strongly Agree
2. Administrative support enhances collaboration in the school.	3.62	0.53	Strongly Agree
3. Workload hinders effective collaboration among staff.	3.51	0.55	Strongly Agree
4. School policies support collaborative leadership practices.	3.55	0.54	Strongly Agree
<b>General Mean and SD</b>	<b>3.57</b>	<b>0.55</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

Table 10 presents the factors facilitating or hindering collaboration. The statement “Administrative support enhances collaboration in the school” achieved the highest mean of 3.62 and a standard deviation of 0.53, interpreted as Strongly Agree, highlighting the critical role of leadership support. Meanwhile, “Time is adequately provided for collaborative activities”, followed closely with a mean of 3.59 and a standard deviation of 0.58, indicating that time allocation is generally sufficient. The statement “School policies support collaborative leadership practices” yielded a mean of 3.55 and a standard deviation of 0.54, reflecting institutional backing for collaboration. Notably, “Workload hinders effective collaboration among staff” received the lowest mean of 3.51 and a standard deviation of 0.55, yet still Strongly Agree, suggesting that respondents acknowledge workload as a barrier despite overall supportive conditions. The general mean of 3.57 with a standard deviation of 0.55 indicates that both facilitating and hindering factors are strongly perceived.

While schools appear to provide strong administrative and policy support for collaboration, workload remains a persistent challenge. This implies that even in well-supported environments, structural issues such as task overload can limit the full realization of collaborative practices. Addressing workload concerns could significantly improve collaboration efficiency.

Samsonova et al. (2023) identified what helps and what gets in the way of teacher collaboration. Support from administrators, enough time, and clear policies all make collaboration easier. But heavy workloads and lack of time are still major roadblocks.

Even in supportive schools, teachers can't collaborate if they're overloaded. School structures also matter for keeping collaboration going long term.

**Table 11. The distributed leadership practices of respondents in terms of perceptions on empowerment and shared decision-making**

<b>Perceptions on Empowerment and Shared Decision-Making</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. Teachers feel empowered to participate in school decision-making.	3.55	0.56	Strongly Agree
2. Important decisions are made through collective discussion.	3.63	0.61	Strongly Agree
3. Teachers' ideas and suggestions are valued by school leaders.	3.59	0.63	Strongly Agree
4. Shared leadership improves school effectiveness.	3.75	0.49	Strongly Agree
<b>General Mean and SD</b>	<b>3.63</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

Table 11 presents respondents' perceptions of empowerment and shared decision-making. Among all statements, "Shared leadership improves school effectiveness" obtained the highest mean of 3.75 and standard deviation of 0.49, interpreted as Strongly Agree, including strong consensus on the positive impact of shared leadership. Followed by a mean of 3.63 with a standard deviation of 0.61, "Important decisions are made through collective discussion", suggesting participatory decision-making practices. The statement "Teachers' ideas and suggestions are valued by school leaders" recorded a mean of 3.59 and a standard deviation of 0.63, reflecting recognition of teacher input. Meanwhile, "Teachers feel empowered to participate in school decision-making" had the lowest mean of 3.55 with a standard deviation of 0.56, though still Strongly Agree, indicating that while structures exist, the sense of empowerment may not be equally experienced by all. The general mean of 3.63 and standard deviation of 0.57 signify a strong overall perception of empowerment.

The results suggest that shared decision-making is practiced and valued in schools. However, the slightly lower perception of personal empowerment indicates that some teachers may not fully feel included despite existing systems. Enhancing inclusive participation could strengthen genuine empowerment.

Jager et al. (2025) found that people feel more engaged and satisfied when they get to help make decisions. Being part of the process builds ownership and a sense of empowerment. Group discussions also lead to smarter, better-informed choices. Empowerment improves both individual performance and how well the whole organization runs. Still, not everyone feels equally empowered even when the system allows it.

**Part III displays the collaborative cultures in schools in terms of collegiality and professional trust, and shared vision and collective responsibility**

**Table 12. The Collaborative Cultures in School in terms of Collegiality and Professional Trust**

<b>Perceptions on Empowerment and Shared Decision-Making</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. There is mutual respect among teachers and administrators.	3.69	0.48	Strongly Agree
2. Teachers trust school leaders in making decisions.	3.61	0.55	Strongly Agree
3. Teachers support one another professionally.	3.69	0.50	Strongly Agree
4. A positive working relationship exists among staff members.	3.66	0.49	Strongly Agree
<b>General Mean and SD</b>	<b>3.66</b>	<b>.51</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

Table 12 assesses collegiality and trust. The statements “There is mutual respect among teachers and administrators” and “Teachers support one another professionally” both obtained the highest mean of 3.69 (SD = 0.48 and 0.50, respectively), interpreted as Strongly Agree, indicating a strong interpersonal relationship. The statement “A positive working relationship exists among staff members” was followed by a mean of 3.66 (SD = 0.49), showing overall harmony in the workplace. The statement “teachers trust school leaders in making decisions” recorded the lowest mean of 3.61 (SD = 0.55), though still Strongly Agree, suggesting that trust in leadership, while strong, is slightly lower than peer relationships. The general mean of 3.66 (SD = 0.51) confirms a high level of collegiality and trust.

The findings indicate that peer relationships among teachers are particularly strong, forming a solid foundation for collaboration. However, slightly lower trust in leadership suggests an opportunity for administrators to further build transparency and confidence among staff.

Arambala and Avelino (2024) showed that trust and collaborative leadership have a big impact on how satisfied teachers feel and how much stress they carry. When teachers and administrators trust each other, the workplace becomes more supportive and productive. Good relationships among colleagues also boost teamwork. Trust in leadership helps keep the school stable and effective, and schools with high trust communicate and cooperate better. That supports our finding that collegiality and trust are strong in our sample.

**Table 13. The Collaborative Cultures in School in terms of Shared Vision and Collective Responsibility**

<b>Perceptions on Empowerment and Shared Decision-Making</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. The school has a clearly shared vision understood by all.	3.65	0.51	Strongly Agree
2. Teachers and administrators work together to achieve school goals.	3.69	0.51	Strongly Agree
3. Staff members feel responsible for the success of the school.	3.69	0.51	Strongly Agree
4. Collective responsibility is practiced in improving student outcomes.	3.69	0.53	Strongly Agree
<b>General Mean and SD</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

Table 13 focuses on shared vision and collective responsibility. The statements “Teachers and administrators work together to achieve school goals,” “Staff members feel responsible for the success of the school,” and “Collective responsibility is practiced in improving student outcomes” all share the highest mean of 3.69 (SD = 0.51-0.53), interpreted as Strongly Agree, indicating strong alignment and accountability among staff. The statement “The school has a clearly shared vision understood by all” obtained a slightly lower mean of 3.65 (SD = 0.51), suggesting that while the vision exists, clarity or communication may be slightly less emphasized. The general mean of 3.68 (SD = 0.51) reflects a very strong agreement overall.

The results imply that while teachers and administrators actively work together and share responsibility, there may still be room to improve how the school vision is communicated and internalized. Strengthening clarity of vision could further unify efforts and enhance school performance.

Savariz and Magallanes (2024) argued that a shared vision is what holds a collaborative school culture together. When teachers and administrators are aiming at the same goals, they’re more likely to pull in the same direction for school improvement. A shared vision also builds accountability and commitment. When everyone feels responsible, student outcomes and school performance improve. Schools with a strong shared vision work as one.

**Table 14. The relationship between the distributed leadership practices and collaborative cultures**

		Collaborative Cultures	Decision	Remarks
Distributed Leadership Practices	r	.742**	Significant	Reject Ho
	p-value	<.001		
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level				

Table 14 presents the correlation between distributed leadership and collaborative culture. Results revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between two variables,  $r = 0.742$  with a p-value of  $< 0.00$ . Since the p-value is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that higher levels of distributed leadership practices are associated with higher levels of collaborative culture among secondary schools in the Division of Bataan.

Jan (2026) confirmed that distributed leadership directly strengthens collaborative culture and makes teachers feel more empowered. Schools that spread out leadership see more teamwork, better communication, and more innovation. Distributing leadership also makes the whole organization work better and keeps teachers more engaged. The strong link between leadership and collaboration shows they go hand in hand. Building up distributed leadership is a path to lasting school improvement.

### Part VI presents the school-based empowerment program

**Title:** EMPOWER: Enhancing Management Practices through Organized Work, Engagement, and Responsive Leadership

**Program Rationale:** The development of this program is grounded in the findings that leadership and collaborative culture are strongly evident and significantly correlated in the Schools Division of Bataan. Despite this, several areas require targeted enhancement, including workload management, the systematization of collaborative planning, teacher empowerment, and shared vision. The program addresses these gaps by institutionalizing participatory leadership and collaborative practices within the school system. In doing so, it aligns with the Department of Education’s priorities on shared governance and teacher empowerment. Ultimately, the program aims to improve school effectiveness by strengthening the distribution of leadership and fostering a more cohesive collaborative culture.

Activity	Timeline	Persons Responsible	Expected Outcome
Leadership Structuring and Capacity Building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>designated of teacher leaders</li> </ul>	Quarterly	School Head, Master Teachers, Department Heads	Teachers assigned based on expertise; improved leadership competence

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mentoring</li> <li>• coaching</li> </ul>			
<b>Structured Collaborative Planning (PLCs)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• regular meetings</li> <li>• lesson planning</li> <li>• inter-department collaboration</li> </ul>	Monthly	Department Heads, Teachers	Improved collaboration in planning and decision-making
<b>Workload Management and Empowerment Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• task redistribution</li> <li>• consultation</li> <li>• feedback mechanisms</li> </ul>	Monthly	School Head, Admin Staff, Teachers	Reduced workload barriers; increased teacher participation and empowerment

## Conclusions

This distributed leadership is strongly practiced in secondary schools in the Division of Bataan, reflecting a clear shift toward shared and participatory leadership. Teachers and administrators actively take on leadership roles, engage in joint decision-making, and contribute to school improvement efforts. This demonstrates a deeply rooted culture of teamwork and mutual accountability. A strong collaborative culture was also evident, especially in terms of collegiality, professional trust, shared vision, and collective responsibility. These results indicate that schools have cultivated supportive, cooperative climates that encourage collaboration and organizational development.

The significant connection between distributed leadership and collaborative culture highlights that sharing leadership is a major factor in building collaboration. When schools distribute leadership, communication improves, teamwork strengthens, and overall performance rises. However, workload pressures and inconsistent experiences of empowerment remain. Although a shared leadership system exists, not all teachers feel equally empowered, suggesting a need for more inclusive and equitable approaches. The findings affirm that sustaining a collaborative culture and driving continuous school improvement depends on consistently strengthening distributed leadership.

## Recommendations

Schools may institutionalize collaborative systems through the establishment of regular, structured mechanisms for teamwork and shared decision-making. This may be achieved through the sustained implementation of Professional Learning Communities, collaborative lesson planning, and inter-departmental meetings. Structured collaboration facilitates consistent and meaningful dialogue between teachers and administrators, enabling joint problem-solving and ensuring the alignment of instructional practices with institutional goals.

A continuous professional development program centered on leadership, collaboration, and empowerment may be given the opportunity. It is imperative that the Department of Education design and implement training initiatives that develop teachers' competencies in decision-making, communication, and instructional leadership. To promote inclusivity and equitable professional growth, these programs must be accessible to all members of the teaching and non-teaching staff. The integration of mentoring and coaching systems is also recommended to support the practical application of acquired knowledge and skills in the school contexts.

Future researchers may conduct studies similar to distributed leadership practices and collaborative cultures in a different division. This study will serve as the basis for the relationship between leadership practices and the school culture.

### **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the conduct of the study. Informed consent was secured from all respondents before data collection, and participation remained entirely voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. To protect participants, anonymity and confidentiality were rigorously upheld, and all data were handled in accordance with the data privacy protocols. The study posed no physical, psychological, or professional risk to participants, and their well-being was prioritized at all times. The researcher declares no conflict of interest that may have influenced the research process or outcomes. All sources were properly acknowledged to maintain academic integrity. The findings generated were used exclusively for academic and research purposes.

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