

The Governance–Reflection Connection: Unveiling Leadership Effectiveness Among Public Elementary School Principals

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the governance interaction and reflective sensitivity of public elementary school principals, and their relationship to leadership performance, as measured by the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS). Specifically, the investigation assessed the level of governance interaction among principals, determined their reflective sensitivity along the dimensions of egocentric preferment, preference to leverage, rational discernment, and assertive introspection, and explored the relationships among these variables. The study further sought to determine the extent to which reflective sensitivity predicts governance interaction and contributes to principals' performance outcomes. The descriptive-correlational research design was employed to gather and analyze data from public elementary school principals. A validated survey

questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection. Statistical tools such as the weighted mean, Pearson product-moment correlation, and multiple regression analysis were used to determine variable levels, examine significant relationships, and identify predictors of governance interaction. The findings revealed that the respondents demonstrated a high level of governance interaction and exhibited favorable levels of reflective sensitivity across the four dimensions. Results further indicated significant interrelationships among several dimensions of reflective sensitivity, suggesting that principals who possess strong reflective capacities tend to demonstrate enhanced leadership behaviors and decision-making competencies. Moreover, governance interaction was significantly associated with assertive introspection, highlighting the importance of self-awareness, confidence, and reflective practice in fostering effective organizational engagement. The analysis likewise revealed significant relationships between governance interaction, reflective sensitivity, and RPMS ratings, implying that these factors contribute to leadership effectiveness and professional performance. Regression analysis established that reflective sensitivity significantly predicts governance interaction, with assertive introspection emerging as the strongest predictor among the four dimensions. This finding underscores the value of reflective leadership in strengthening administrative practices, promoting collaborative governance, and enhancing school performance. The study concludes that cultivating reflective sensitivity among school principals can contribute substantially to effective governance interaction and improved leadership outcomes. Consequently, leadership development programs focusing on reflective practice, self-awareness, and organizational engagement are recommended to further enhance the professional competencies of public elementary school principals.

Keywords: *Governance Interaction, Reflective Sensitivity, School Leadership, Public Elementary School Principals, RPMS Performance*

INTRODUCTION

The principal occupies a pivotal position within the educational system, serving as the highest-ranking administrator at the school level and acting as the direct link between educational policies and their implementation. As the instructional and organizational leader of the institution, the principal is entrusted with ensuring that educational goals are achieved while maintaining efficient school operations. In contemporary education, the responsibilities of school leaders have expanded significantly, requiring them to balance administrative duties, instructional supervision, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning in an increasingly complex educational environment. The transition toward outcomes-based education, accountability frameworks, and performance-driven management has transformed the expectations placed upon school administrators. Beyond managing daily operations, principals are now expected to cultivate positive learning environments, spearhead innovation, facilitate organizational development, and establish meaningful partnerships with various stakeholders. These multifaceted functions demand not only technical expertise but also a high level of personal awareness, ethical judgment, and interpersonal competence.

Within the Philippine educational context, public elementary school principals are appointed through a rigorous selection process that evaluates their professional qualifications, leadership capabilities, managerial proficiency, and commitment to educational excellence. Their appointment signifies recognition of their ability to lead institutions effectively while advancing the Department of Education's vision, mission, and goals. Consequently, principals are expected to demonstrate sound decision-making, accountability, and responsiveness to the evolving needs of learners, teachers, and communities. Educational leadership scholars have consistently emphasized that successful school administration extends beyond procedural compliance and operational management. According to the leadership perspective advanced by educational theorists, effective administrators can influence organizational culture, inspire collective action, and foster sustainable school improvement. Such capacities are often rooted in an individual's ability to engage in thoughtful reflection and informed interaction with organizational structures and processes.

One concept that has gained increasing attention in organizational and educational studies is governance interaction. Governance interaction refers to the manner by which leaders engage with institutional systems, stakeholders, policies, and decision-making mechanisms to achieve organizational objectives. It encompasses collaborative practices, transparency, accountability, shared responsibility, and participatory leadership. Through productive governance interactions, school leaders can harmonize institutional priorities with stakeholder expectations while ensuring effective educational service delivery. Parallel to governance interaction is the construct of reflective sensitivity, which pertains to an individual's capacity for self-examination, critical awareness, and thoughtful evaluation of experiences, actions, and decisions. Reflective sensitivity enables leaders to assess their strengths and limitations, recognize the consequences of their actions, and adapt their behavior based on changing circumstances. In educational settings, this attribute supports the development of responsive leadership practices that contribute to organizational effectiveness and continuous improvement.

The dimension of egocentric preferment examines the extent to which personal interests, perceptions, and priorities influence leadership behavior. While self-confidence and personal conviction may strengthen decision-making, excessive self-orientation may limit objectivity and reduce opportunities for collaborative engagement. Understanding this dimension provides valuable insights into how principals balance personal perspectives with institutional needs and collective interests. Another important dimension is preference to leverage, which reflects an individual's tendency to maximize available resources, opportunities, and interpersonal networks to achieve desired outcomes. School leaders who effectively leverage resources often demonstrate strategic thinking, adaptability, and initiative. Such qualities are particularly significant in public schools, where resource constraints often necessitate innovative approaches to problem-solving and program implementation. Rational discernment represents the capacity to evaluate situations logically and systematically before making decisions. Principals possessing strong rational discernment are better equipped to analyze information objectively, weigh alternatives carefully, and formulate solutions grounded in evidence and sound judgment. This dimension contributes to effective governance by enhancing the quality and credibility of administrative decisions.

Meanwhile, assertive introspection focuses on the ability to engage in honest self-assessment while maintaining confidence in one's professional judgment. This dimension combines reflective thinking with purposeful action, enabling school leaders to identify areas for improvement while remaining committed to organizational goals. Through assertive introspection, principals can continuously refine their leadership practices and strengthen their capacity for institutional stewardship. Recent developments in organizational behavior suggest that leadership effectiveness is shaped not only by structural and procedural factors but also by psychological and cognitive attributes. Researchers have increasingly recognized that leaders' reflective capacities influence how they interact with governance systems, respond to challenges, and manage relationships within organizations.

As educational institutions face rapid societal, technological, and policy changes, the ability of school leaders to engage in reflective practice becomes increasingly essential. Moreover, the Department of Education's Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) is a critical mechanism for evaluating school administrators' performance. RPMS ratings provide measurable indicators of leadership effectiveness and organizational contribution. Examining how governance interaction and reflective sensitivity relate to these performance outcomes may offer valuable evidence regarding the personal and professional factors that contribute to successful school leadership. Despite the growing recognition of reflective leadership and participatory governance, few empirical studies have examined the interplay among governance interaction, the dimensions of reflective sensitivity, and performance outcomes among public elementary school principals.

This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive investigation into how these variables relate to one another and influence leadership effectiveness. Hence, the present study sought to determine the governance interaction of public elementary school principals, assess their reflective sensitivity across its four dimensions, examine the interrelationships among these dimensions, explore their associations with governance interaction and RPMS ratings, and identify the predictive value of reflective sensitivity in shaping governance practices. Findings from this inquiry may contribute to leadership development initiatives, policy formulation, and the enhancement of school governance within the public education sector.

METHODS

This study utilized the descriptive research design to investigate the governance interaction and reflective sensitivity of public elementary school principals. The researcher employed survey questionnaires as the primary data-gathering instrument, supported by interviews and direct observations to enrich the information obtained from the respondents. The descriptive design was selected because it allows for a systematic examination of existing conditions, characteristics, and relationships among variables without introducing any form of intervention or experimental treatment. Descriptive research is widely recognized as an appropriate approach for studies that seek to provide a detailed portrayal of current situations and practices. Fox (2022) explained that this research design focuses on presenting an accurate picture of existing phenomena by identifying prevailing conditions, documenting ongoing practices, and interpreting observable realities. It enables researchers to gain a deeper understanding of circumstances as they naturally occur and provides a factual basis for analysis and interpretation.

In a similar vein, Jelinek (2025) characterized descriptive research as an approach aimed at portraying and explaining specific occurrences, events, or conditions within a particular setting. The method seeks to establish factual information regarding the nature and extent of a phenomenon and serves as a valuable tool for examining conditions that exist at the time of the investigation. Through this approach, researchers are able to generate reliable descriptions that contribute to a clearer understanding of the subject under study. Moreover, Gay (2021) viewed descriptive research as a process involving the systematic gathering, organization, and interpretation of information to determine the current status of a population, condition, or phenomenon. Likewise, Travers emphasized that this method is particularly useful in presenting an accurate account of existing situations and identifying factors associated with observed conditions. Given the objectives of the present inquiry, the descriptive

research design was considered the most suitable methodology as it facilitated the assessment of governance interaction, measured the dimensions of reflective sensitivity, examined their interrelationships, and determined their association with the RPMS ratings of public elementary school principals in the DepEd City Division of Meycauayan, Bulacan.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study found that public elementary school principals generally exhibited a high level of governance interaction. Most respondents reported positive perceptions of their engagement with organizational processes, leadership functions, and professional relationships within their respective schools. This indicates that school principals possess the enthusiasm, commitment, and interpersonal competence necessary to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Such findings suggest that governance interaction is a critical component of successful school administration, enabling principals to foster productive relationships and enhance organizational effectiveness. The high level of governance interaction further suggests that school leaders can balance managerial responsibilities with instructional leadership functions. Their favorable perceptions toward governance practices indicate confidence in handling school operations, collaborating with stakeholders, and responding to the dynamic demands of educational management. The result demonstrates that contemporary principals are increasingly embracing participatory and collaborative approaches to leadership, which contribute to organizational harmony and institutional growth. Analysis of the individual indicators of governance interaction showed that principals strongly agreed that their position challenged them to seek innovative ways to improve their competencies and strengthen their relationships with superiors and subordinates. They also clarified their professional roles and acknowledged strong cooperation among teachers. These findings suggest that role awareness and collaborative engagement are essential elements in promoting effective governance within educational institutions. The respondents likewise perceived that information sharing, constructive feedback, mutual trust, and collective participation in decision-making were evident in their respective schools. Such conditions reflect a healthy organizational climate where communication flows effectively and stakeholders are encouraged to contribute to school improvement initiatives. This environment strengthens leadership effectiveness and promotes a culture of shared accountability among school personnel.

The findings on reflective sensitivity revealed varying levels across its four dimensions. In terms of egocentric preferment, most principals were found to be at a moderate level. This suggests that while they possess personal convictions and self-protective tendencies, these characteristics do not dominate their professional decision-making. Instead, they appear capable of balancing self-interest with organizational goals and professional responsibilities. The moderate level of egocentric preferment further indicates that principals maintain confidence in their abilities while remaining receptive to feedback and change. Although some respondents acknowledged concerns regarding authority, recognition, and leadership image, they generally rejected notions suggesting insecurity or excessive self-centeredness. This reflects a healthy level of self-awareness that enables them to function effectively as educational leaders. With regard to preference to leverage, the majority of principals also demonstrated a moderate level of reflective sensitivity. This finding implies that respondents recognize the influence of their position and understand the importance of interpersonal relationships in achieving organizational objectives. However, they do not rely excessively on personal influence or strategic alliances to advance their professional interests. The results suggest that principals are aware of the need to establish productive networks and maintain professional relationships, while exercising caution to avoid potential conflicts and competition. Their responses indicate an understanding of the realities of organizational life without allowing such concerns to negatively affect their leadership functions. This balance contributes to more stable and objective decision-making processes.

The dimension of rational discernment obtained a high level among the respondents. This finding indicates that public elementary school principals possess strong capacities for thoughtful reflection, sound judgment, and reasoned decision-making. They view leadership as a commitment to service and demonstrate an

appreciation for responsibility, ethical conduct, and human dignity in carrying out their professional duties. The high level of rational discernment suggests that principals are capable of carefully evaluating situations before making decisions. Their reflective nature allows them to consider the implications of their actions on teachers, learners, and the broader school community. Consequently, they are better positioned to implement policies and programs that support educational excellence and organizational effectiveness. Similarly, the findings revealed that principals exhibited a high level of assertive introspection. This dimension reflects their confidence, self-awareness, and willingness to exercise leadership when circumstances require decisive action. The respondents recognized assertiveness as an essential leadership competency and viewed positive influence as a necessary component of effective school management.

The high level of assertive introspection indicates that school principals are comfortable introducing innovations, communicating expectations, and making difficult decisions when necessary. Their confidence is not rooted in superiority over others but rather in their belief that effective leadership requires initiative, courage, and accountability. Such characteristics are essential in navigating the challenges of contemporary educational administration.

The examination of the interrelationships among the four dimensions of reflective sensitivity revealed significant associations between several variables. Egocentric preferment was significantly related to a preference for leveraging and rational discernment. These findings indicate that principals with stronger personal convictions tend to perceive greater influence over others and exhibit more thoughtful decision-making. Likewise, preference to leverage was significantly associated with both rational discernment and assertive introspection. This suggests that principals who recognize their influence and professional impact are more likely to engage in reflective thinking and demonstrate confidence in leadership situations. These relationships underscore the interconnected nature of reflective sensitivity dimensions in shaping leadership behavior.

A significant relationship was likewise observed between rational discernment and assertive introspection. Principals who demonstrated stronger capacities for reflective judgment were also more likely to display confidence and assertiveness in their leadership roles. This finding emphasizes the importance of reflective thinking as a foundation for effective leadership action and professional growth.

However, no significant relationship was found between egocentric preferment and assertive introspection. This result suggests that personal defenses against criticism and tendencies toward self-preservation do not necessarily influence a principal's confidence, assertiveness, or openness to innovation. Consequently, assertive leadership appears to be shaped by factors beyond self-focused perceptions alone. The analysis of the relationship between governance interaction and the dimensions of reflective sensitivity revealed that only assertive introspection demonstrated a significant correlation with governance interaction. This finding suggests that principals who exhibit greater confidence, self-awareness, and assertiveness are more likely to demonstrate favorable governance practices. Their ability to communicate effectively, influence others positively, and make decisive choices contributes to stronger organizational interaction.

In contrast, governance interaction showed no significant relationship with egocentric preferment, preference to leverage, and rational discernment. These findings imply that although these dimensions contribute to individual leadership characteristics, they do not directly influence the quality of governance interaction exhibited by principals. The results indicate that effective governance is more closely associated with proactive leadership behavior than with personal perceptions or reflective tendencies alone.

The study further revealed significant relationships between principals' governance interaction, reflective sensitivity dimensions, and their RPMS ratings. The findings indicate that school leaders who demonstrate favorable governance practices and stronger reflective capacities are more likely to achieve higher performance ratings. This result highlights the importance of leadership competencies, interpersonal effectiveness, and reflective thinking in determining professional performance outcomes.

Finally, regression analysis showed that the four dimensions of reflective sensitivity collectively predict governance interaction, with assertive introspection emerging as the strongest predictor. The significant regression model confirms that reflective sensitivity substantially explains variation in governance interaction among principals. Although the model accounted for 21.50 percent of the variance, the findings emphasize the crucial

role of reflective leadership attributes in enhancing governance practices. Overall, the study underscores the importance of cultivating self-awareness, reflective judgment, assertiveness, and interpersonal competence among public elementary school principals to strengthen educational leadership, improve organizational effectiveness, and support the attainment of quality educational outcomes.

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