

Distributed Leadership Practices, Organizational Autonomy, And School Performance in Public Junior High School in the Division of Taguig- Pateros: Basis for a Proposed Localized Continuous Capacity Development Program

Esperanza C. Abaquita
Eulogio "Amang" Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology
espie.cadavid@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between distributed leadership practices, organizational autonomy, and school performance in public junior high schools in the Division of Taguig–Pateros. Specifically, it determined the extent of distributed leadership practices, organizational autonomy, and school performance and examined the relationships among these variables. A descriptive-evaluative and correlational research design was employed involving 519 respondents composed of Schools Division Supervisors, School Heads, Teachers, and Non-Teaching Personnel. Data on distributed leadership practices and organizational autonomy were gathered using a validated researcher-made questionnaire, while school performance was measured using the Office Performance Commitment and

Review Form (OPCRF) ratings for School Years 2023–2024 and 2024–2025. Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that distributed leadership practices were highly practiced, with Professional Development and Capacity-Building obtaining the highest assessment. Organizational autonomy was likewise highly evident, indicating that schools effectively exercised professional judgment and implemented context-responsive initiatives. Public junior high schools consistently demonstrated a Very Satisfactory level of school performance, with a general OPCRf average of 4.47 across the two school years. The study further revealed a very strong and significant relationship between distributed leadership practices and organizational autonomy. When analyzed separately, both variables showed significant relationships with school performance, with Innovation Capacity and Distributed Responsibility for School Improvement emerging as significant predictors. These findings suggest that collaborative leadership and organizational autonomy function as complementary governance mechanisms that strengthen organizational effectiveness and support sustained school performance in public junior high schools.

Keywords: *distributed leadership, organizational autonomy, school performance, public junior high schools, educational leadership, collaborative governance*

INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership has evolved considerably over the past two decades as schools respond to increasing expectations for quality, accountability, equity, and innovation. Across many education systems, effective leadership is no longer viewed as the sole responsibility of the school head. Instead, it is increasingly understood as a shared endeavor in which teachers, staff, and other stakeholders contribute their expertise to improving teaching, learning, and organizational performance. This shift reflects the growing recognition that sustainable school improvement depends not only on strong individual leaders but also on collaborative structures that encourage collective responsibility and informed decision-making.

In the Philippine basic education system, this perspective is reflected in reforms that promote decentralized governance and school-based management. Republic Act No. 9155, or the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, strengthened the authority of schools to make decisions responsive to their unique contexts while remaining accountable for educational outcomes. Subsequent policies, including the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 and the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads, further emphasized collaborative leadership, stakeholder participation, and continuous school improvement. Together, these reforms encourage school leaders to cultivate professional communities where leadership is shared, innovation is supported, and decisions are guided by the needs of learners and the realities of local communities.

Within this policy environment, distributed leadership has gained considerable attention as an approach that broadens leadership beyond formal administrative positions. Rather than concentrating authority in a single individual, distributed leadership recognizes that teachers and other school personnel possess valuable knowledge and leadership capacities that can contribute to organizational effectiveness. When leadership responsibilities are shared, schools are better positioned to strengthen professional collaboration, develop collective accountability, and respond more effectively to emerging educational challenges. Such environments also create opportunities for teachers to participate meaningfully in decision-making, fostering a culture where leadership is viewed as a collective practice rather than an individual role.

Complementing distributed leadership is organizational autonomy, which enables schools to exercise professional judgment in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs while remaining aligned with national policies and accountability standards. Organizational autonomy allows school leaders and educators to make context-sensitive decisions regarding instructional practices, resource allocation, and school improvement initiatives. Rather than diminishing accountability, autonomy empowers schools to become more responsive to the needs of their learners and communities, encouraging innovation while maintaining responsibility for educational outcomes. When exercised effectively, autonomy provides schools with the flexibility needed to address diverse local conditions without losing sight of national educational goals.

Although distributed leadership and organizational autonomy are often examined as independent constructs, they are inherently interconnected. Schools that encourage shared leadership are more likely to foster professional trust, collaborative decision-making, and collective ownership of school improvement initiatives. Likewise, organizational autonomy creates conditions that allow these collaborative practices to flourish by providing educators with the authority to adapt programs and implement innovations suited to their particular contexts. Together, these complementary leadership approaches have the potential to strengthen organizational capacity, improve institutional effectiveness, and enhance overall school performance.

School performance remains one of the most important indicators of educational effectiveness because it reflects how successfully schools translate leadership, governance, and instructional practices into measurable organizational outcomes. In the Philippine public school system, organizational performance is formally assessed through the Office Performance Commitment and Review Form (OPCRF), which evaluates schools based on established performance targets and accountability standards. While performance indicators capture organizational accomplishments, they also provide valuable evidence of how leadership and governance practices influence the capacity of schools to achieve their educational objectives.

The Division of Taguig-Pateros offers a particularly meaningful setting for examining these relationships. Although public junior high schools within the division operate under the same national policies and

administrative framework, they differ in organizational culture, stakeholder engagement, leadership practices, and the ways they exercise autonomy in addressing local educational needs. These variations provide an opportunity to explore how differences in distributed leadership and organizational autonomy relate to school performance within a common policy environment. Understanding these relationships is especially relevant as schools continue to navigate increasingly complex educational demands while pursuing continuous improvement.

Existing research has consistently highlighted the value of collaborative leadership, teacher empowerment, and organizational capacity in improving school effectiveness. However, much of the available literature has examined distributed leadership and organizational autonomy separately or within educational systems that differ from the Philippine context. Empirical studies investigating the combined influence of these two organizational constructs on the performance of Philippine public junior high schools remain limited, particularly within the Division of Taguig–Pateros. This gap in the literature underscores the need for evidence that explains how leadership distribution and organizational autonomy interact to influence school performance in public secondary education.

Guided by Spillane's Distributed Leadership Theory, Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory, and the Core Performance Model of Marshall and colleagues, this study examined the extent of distributed leadership practices and organizational autonomy in public junior high schools and determined their relationship with school performance. It also identified the implementation challenges experienced by schools and used the findings to develop PROJECT SHARE (Strengthening Shared Leadership, Autonomy, and Responsive Excellence), a localized continuous capacity development program designed to strengthen collaborative leadership, enhance organizational autonomy, and support sustained school improvement.

By examining leadership and autonomy as complementary organizational processes rather than isolated concepts, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how collaborative governance can strengthen school performance in Philippine public education. The findings provide empirical evidence that may inform leadership development initiatives, strengthen school governance practices, and support policymakers and educational leaders in designing context-responsive strategies that promote organizational excellence and continuous improvement.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-evaluative and correlational research design to examine the relationship among distributed leadership practices, organizational autonomy, and school performance in public junior high schools in the Division of Taguig–Pateros. The descriptive-evaluative component was used to determine the extent to which distributed leadership practices and organizational autonomy were manifested across participating schools, assess school performance, and identify the implementation challenges encountered by school personnel. Meanwhile, the correlational component examined whether distributed leadership practices and organizational autonomy were significantly associated with school performance and determined which dimensions served as significant predictors of organizational performance.

The integration of these two research designs provided a comprehensive understanding of the study variables. While the descriptive-evaluative approach described existing leadership and governance practices, the correlational analysis generated empirical evidence regarding the relationships among the variables and served as the basis for the proposed intervention program. This design was appropriate because the study sought not only to describe organizational conditions but also to explain how leadership and autonomy relate to school performance.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in the Schools Division of Taguig–Pateros, National Capital Region, Philippines. The division comprises public junior high schools operating within diverse urban communities that differ in learner population, organizational capacity, and community characteristics. Despite functioning under a common policy framework established by the Department of Education, schools within the division vary in leadership practices, stakeholder participation, and the degree to which they exercise organizational autonomy.

These contextual differences made the Division of Taguig–Pateros an appropriate setting for examining how distributed leadership and organizational autonomy relate to school performance within a shared governance structure. Twenty-four public junior high schools participated in the study, providing broad representation of educational settings across the division.

Sampling Technique

The study involved educational personnel from the public junior high schools in the Schools Division of Taguig–Pateros. The target population consisted of 2,895 personnel, comprising 19 Schools Division Supervisors, 25 School Heads, 2,725 Teachers, and 126 Non-Teaching Personnel. A total of 519 respondents participated in the study. Complete enumeration was employed for the Schools Division Supervisors, School Heads, and Non-Teaching Personnel, resulting in the inclusion of all qualified members of these groups. For the teacher respondents, the sample size was determined using Slovin's Formula with a 5% margin of error, after which proportionate stratified random sampling was employed to ensure that teachers from each participating public junior high school were represented according to their proportion in the total teacher population. This sampling approach provided a representative sample while minimizing sampling bias and ensuring that schools of varying sizes were adequately represented in the study.

Table 1. *Distribution of the Population and Sample*

Respondent Group	Population	Sample
Schools Division Supervisors	19	19
School Heads	25	25
Teachers	2,725	349
Non-Teaching Personnel	126	126
Total	2,895	519

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Distributed Leadership Practices

The study found that distributed leadership practices were highly practiced in public junior high schools in the Division of Taguig–Pateros, as reflected by an overall weighted mean of 4.39. Across all respondent groups, school heads registered the highest assessment, followed by non-teaching personnel, teachers, and supervisors, indicating a common perception that leadership responsibilities are broadly shared throughout the school organization. Among the dimensions examined, Professional Development and Capacity-Building received the highest rating, demonstrating that schools strongly support continuous learning, mentoring, and leadership development. Encouraging Innovation and Creativity, Fostering Leadership at All Levels, and Supportive School Culture and Climate were likewise highly practiced, suggesting that schools cultivate an environment where collaboration, innovation, and shared leadership are encouraged. Although Shared Accountability for Outcomes obtained the lowest rating among the dimensions, it remained within the Highly Practiced category, indicating that accountability mechanisms are evident but may still benefit from further strengthening. Overall, the findings demonstrate that distributed leadership has become an established practice that promotes collaborative governance, shared decision-making, and collective responsibility among school stakeholders.

The findings suggest that leadership is no longer concentrated solely in formal administrative positions but is distributed across teachers and other school personnel, creating opportunities for broader participation in school improvement initiatives. Schools that emphasize professional development, innovation, and supportive organizational relationships are better positioned to strengthen leadership capacity and sustain continuous improvement. These findings are consistent with the discussion in the manuscript, which emphasizes that collaborative leadership enhances organizational commitment and supports school improvement. Likewise, Oracion (2014) observed that teachers develop leadership capacity through collaboration with colleagues and support from school leaders, underscoring the importance of providing opportunities for shared leadership and professional growth.

Organizational Autonomy

The findings revealed that organizational autonomy was highly evident in public junior high schools in the Division of Taguig–Pateros, with an overall composite weighted mean of 4.35. School heads registered the highest assessment, followed by non-teaching personnel and teachers, while supervisors rated the dimension as evident. Overall, the findings indicate that schools have progressively institutionalized organizational autonomy, enabling school personnel to exercise flexibility in decision-making, professional practice, and program implementation while remaining aligned with established educational policies and standards. Among the dimensions, Innovation Capacity obtained the highest rating, suggesting that schools encourage innovative practices and adaptive approaches to address contextual needs. This was followed by Co-curricular and Instructional Autonomy and Learner Agency and Student Voice, reflecting strong support for context-responsive instruction and meaningful stakeholder participation. Although Decentralized Decision-Making received the lowest rating, it remained within the highly evident category, indicating that participatory governance is generally practiced but may still be strengthened to further enhance shared decision-making and organizational responsiveness.

The findings suggest that participating schools have developed the capacity to exercise organizational autonomy while maintaining accountability to educational standards and institutional goals. The high ratings across the different dimensions demonstrate that school personnel are empowered to make professional decisions, implement localized initiatives, and respond effectively to the needs of learners and the school community. These findings are consistent with the discussion in the manuscript, which emphasizes that organizational autonomy strengthens school effectiveness when supported by appropriate organizational structures and professional empowerment. Similarly, Bogale and Hussien (2024) emphasized that the effectiveness of organizational autonomy depends on organizational and environmental conditions that enable schools to exercise autonomy meaningfully, while Blanco et al. (2022) highlighted that teacher empowerment, organizational commitment, and supportive work environments enhance the benefits of organizational autonomy and organizational effectiveness.

School Performance

The analysis of the Office Performance Commitment and Review Form (OPCRF) ratings for School Years 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 revealed that public junior high schools in the Division of Taguig–Pateros consistently demonstrated a Very Satisfactory level of performance. The overall division average increased from 4.46 (Very Satisfactory) in SY 2023–2024 to 4.49 (Very Satisfactory) in SY 2024–2025, resulting in a general average of 4.47 (Very Satisfactory). While most schools obtained Very Satisfactory ratings, several achieved Outstanding performance, indicating consistently high levels of organizational effectiveness across the participating schools. The slight increase in the overall division average further reflects sustained improvement in school performance over the two school years.

The findings indicate that public junior high schools in the Division of Taguig–Pateros have maintained a consistently high level of organizational performance across the two school years examined. The presence of schools with Outstanding ratings suggests that effective management and instructional practices are already evident within the division, while the variation in performance across schools indicates opportunities to further

strengthen leadership capacity, resource utilization, and instructional implementation. Overall, the results reflect a stable and effective school system that continues to sustain quality performance while striving for continuous improvement.

CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate that public junior high schools in the Division of Taguig–Pateros have adopted a collaborative model of governance in which leadership responsibilities are shared among school administrators, teachers, and non-teaching personnel. Likewise, schools have developed the capacity to exercise organizational autonomy while remaining aligned with established educational policies and standards. These governance practices have enabled schools to sustain a Very Satisfactory level of performance across the two school years examined, reflecting effective school management, instructional delivery, and organizational effectiveness.

Furthermore, the study concludes that distributed leadership and organizational autonomy function as complementary governance mechanisms that strengthen institutional capacity and support continuous school improvement. When implemented through collaborative leadership, shared responsibility, effective governance, and supportive organizational conditions, these practices contribute to improved organizational effectiveness and sustained school performance.

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