

Collaborative School Culture and Teacher Professional Agency in Public Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how collaborative school culture relates to teacher professional agency among public elementary school teachers in Cauayan City, Isabela. Anchored on the view that school culture shapes teachers' capacity to participate, decide, and contribute within their professional setting, it determined the level of collaborative school culture in terms of collegial support, shared decision-making, professional dialogue, mutual trust, and collective responsibility, as well as the level of teacher professional agency in terms of professional voice, instructional decision-making, initiative, and professional engagement. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, data were gathered through a validated survey

questionnaire with excellent internal consistency. Statistical treatment included weighted mean, standard deviation, Pearson product-moment correlation, and multiple linear regression. Findings revealed that both collaborative school culture and teacher professional agency were rated very high. A strong and statistically significant positive relationship was found between the two variables, indicating that teachers working in more collaborative school environments tended to demonstrate stronger professional agency. Regression results further showed that professional dialogue and reflective exchange, collegial support and mutual assistance, mutual trust and respect, and shared decision-making practices significantly predicted teacher professional agency. The study concluded that a strong collaborative culture served as an important professional condition that supported teachers' capacity to act purposefully, participate meaningfully, and contribute actively to school improvement.

Keywords: *collaborative school culture, teacher professional agency, collegial support, shared decision-making, public elementary schools*

INTRODUCTION

School improvement is increasingly understood not only as a matter of curriculum, policy, or resources, but also as a function of the professional culture in which teachers work. In many contemporary discussions of school effectiveness, collaborative school culture is described as a condition where teachers do not work in isolation but instead engage in shared planning, open communication, mutual support, and collective responsibility for learner outcomes. Rather than treating teaching as an individual activity confined to one classroom, collaborative culture frames it as a professional practice strengthened through interaction, trust, and common purpose. Research syntheses on teacher collaboration have emphasized that communication, openness, and participation are central to building a climate of trust and to developing a shared vision for school success, making collaboration a meaningful organizational foundation for sustained school improvement (García-Martínez et al., 2021).

The value of collaborative school culture becomes even clearer when viewed from the standpoint of teaching quality and professional learning. International evidence from TALIS 2018, which covered about 260,000 teachers representing more than 8 million teachers across 48 participating countries and economies, showed that deeper forms of professional collaboration are associated with stronger instructional practices, greater self-efficacy, and higher job satisfaction (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020). Related large-scale evidence also found that collaborative school culture encourages teachers' participation in professional learning and helps explain collective teacher innovativeness across schools and systems (Nguyen et al., 2021). This means that collaboration is not simply a desirable interpersonal trait within schools. It is a working condition that can shape how teachers learn, respond to challenges, and contribute to school development.

Alongside collaboration, teacher professional agency has emerged as a crucial concept in understanding how teachers function as active professionals rather than passive implementers of externally prescribed tasks. OECD (2025) explains teacher agency as teachers' belief that their purposeful actions and decisions, whether individual or collective, can positively influence professional practice, student learning, and broader educational processes. This view highlights that teachers are not merely expected to comply with school routines. They are also expected to interpret policy, make sound instructional judgments, initiate improvement, and exercise professional voice within the school community. In this sense, professional agency reflects intentionality, decision-making capacity, and the confidence to act in ways that are educationally meaningful and contextually responsive (OECD, 2025; Gillett-Swan & Baroutsis, 2024).

Current scholarship further suggests that teacher professional agency does not flourish in a vacuum. It is shaped by school conditions, collegial relationships, and the broader culture of participation within the organization. Studies have shown that when teachers are positioned as contributors to innovation, reflection, and collective problem-solving, they are better able to exercise transformative forms of agency that influence not only classroom practice but also school culture itself (Reinius et al., 2022). In school-based learning communities, collaborative inquiry into practice has likewise been identified as a meaningful avenue through which teachers examine teaching, discuss evidence, and engage in professional dialogue that strengthens both learning and action (Babichenko et al., 2024). These perspectives suggest that collaboration and agency are deeply interconnected, because a school culture that values dialogue, trust, and shared work is more likely to create conditions where teachers can act purposefully and professionally.

This relationship is especially relevant in the Philippine basic education context. The Department of Education institutionalized the Learning Action Cell as a school-based community of practice where teachers engage in collaborative learning sessions to solve shared school challenges, support one another, and strengthen curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices (Department of Education [DepEd], 2016). The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers also explicitly recognizes professional collaboration to enrich teaching practice and professional links with colleagues as part of teacher quality and professional growth (DepEd, 2017). More recently, the revised School-Based Management system emphasized transparency, accountability, and stakeholder participation in school improvement processes (DepEd, 2024). Taken together, these policy directions show that collaboration and professional engagement are not peripheral concerns in Philippine education. They are embedded in the expectations for effective teaching and school development. For this reason, examining collaborative school culture and teacher professional agency in public elementary schools in Cauayan City, Isabela is both timely and significant, because it can provide context-based evidence on how school culture may support or constrain teachers' capacity to act as reflective, empowered, and development-oriented professionals.

Literature Review

Collaborative School Culture as a Foundational School Condition

Collaborative school culture is commonly discussed in the literature as a school condition in which teachers work through shared goals, mutual support, open communication, and collective responsibility for learner success. It moves beyond occasional cooperation and points toward a sustained professional environment where teachers are expected to learn with one another, solve school-based concerns together, and contribute to improvement efforts as members of a professional community. Recent scholarship has shown that collaborative culture is not merely an interpersonal preference inside schools but a meaningful organizational feature that influences how teachers engage with change, innovation, and instructional improvement. In this sense, a collaborative school culture provides the relational and professional space where collective work becomes normal rather than exceptional (García-Martínez et al., 2021; McChesney & Cross, 2023).

The literature also suggests that collaboration becomes more powerful when it is embedded in the everyday life of the school. In their systematic review, de Jong et al. (2022) found that school-based collaboration functions as a professional learning context in which teachers engage in sharing, experimenting, and designing. Their review further emphasized that collaboration is influenced by personal, group, process, organizational, and structural factors, showing that collaborative culture is not created by goodwill alone. It requires routines, supportive conditions, and structures that make professional interaction possible and productive. This insight is important because it positions collaborative school culture as both a social and organizational phenomenon that shapes how teachers work and learn within schools.

Teacher Collaboration and Professional Learning

A major strand in the literature connects collaborative school culture with teacher professional learning. When teachers collaborate meaningfully, they are more likely to examine their practices, exchange strategies, and reflect on how instruction may be improved. OECD evidence has treated professional collaboration as a significant support for teachers, especially in challenging school environments, because collaboration can provide a practical mechanism for sharing expertise and addressing instructional concerns collectively. This makes collaboration a professional resource rather than a mere administrative expectation. In schools where teachers learn with and from one another, professional growth becomes more situated, more responsive, and more connected to classroom realities (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020).

This perspective is reinforced by studies showing that collaboration is associated with school innovativeness and innovative teaching. Using TALIS evidence from Taiwan, Pan et al. (2024) reported that teacher collaboration plays an important role in school innovativeness and in teachers' adoption of innovative instructional approaches. Their discussion is especially useful because it distinguishes between shallower coordination and deeper professional collaboration, suggesting that not all forms of working together carry the same developmental value. The literature therefore indicates that a collaborative school culture becomes educationally meaningful when it supports deeper exchanges related to instruction, reflection, and joint problem-solving.

School Culture, Relationships, and the Conditions for Improvement

The literature repeatedly emphasizes that school culture affects whether teachers can translate learning into practice. McChesney and Cross (2023) found that teachers' classroom implementation of professional learning was shaped by several dimensions of school climate and culture, including leadership engagement, relationships, shared beliefs, and being aligned around common purposes. This is a valuable point for the present study because it suggests that school culture does not remain at the level of abstract values. It has practical implications for whether new ideas are actually used in classrooms. In other words,

collaborative culture influences not only how teachers feel about work but also how they enact learning and improvement in practice.

Related literature also highlights the importance of collegial relationships, trust, and a sense of shared direction in sustaining collaboration. Research on collective teacher innovativeness has shown that collaborative school culture is linked with broader organizational outcomes and that integrated professional learning may mediate this relationship. This supports the view that culture matters because it shapes whether teachers experience the school as a place where ideas can be exchanged, developed, and acted upon. A school may formally promote collaboration, but if teachers do not experience trust, coherence, and meaningful engagement, the culture may remain superficial. Thus, collaborative school culture has to be understood as a lived organizational reality rather than a formal slogan (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Teacher Professional Agency as Purposeful Professional Action

Teacher professional agency has gained increasing attention in educational research because it captures the capacity of teachers to act intentionally, make informed decisions, and influence educational practice. OECD (2025) defines teacher agency as teachers' belief that their purposeful actions and decisions, whether individual or collective, can positively influence their professional practice, student learning experiences, and broader educational contexts. This definition is especially significant because it frames agency not simply as freedom from control, but as a professional disposition to act meaningfully within the realities of schooling. Professional agency therefore includes judgment, initiative, responsibility, and the confidence to shape teaching and learning rather than merely comply with prescribed routines.

A more sociocultural account is provided by Emans et al. (2025), who describe teacher agency as a situated act intertwined with the structures and contexts in which it is enacted. Their theory synthesis presents agency as something that develops through sensemaking processes, collaboration processes, professional identity processes, and organizational work processes. This view is important because it shows that teacher agency is not only an individual characteristic. It is deeply shaped by context, interaction, and the professional environment. For this reason, agency is especially relevant in studies of school culture, since the school itself can either strengthen or constrain the conditions under which teachers exercise professional judgment and initiative.

Professional Learning Communities and the Exercise of Agency

The literature on professional learning communities offers a close connection between collaboration and agency. Brodie (2021) examined teacher agency in professional learning communities and found that agency influenced teachers' decisions to participate in or withdraw from collective professional learning spaces. This contribution is important because it shows that collaborative structures do not automatically produce professional agency. Teachers still interpret those structures, decide how to engage, and respond to whether such communities support or constrain their professional purposes. Agency, therefore, is exercised within collaborative environments, but it is not guaranteed by the simple presence of those environments.

This insight helps clarify that teacher professional agency has both individual and collective dimensions. A teacher may possess strong professional commitment, but if the school culture discourages voice, reflection, or initiative, the expression of agency may remain limited. Conversely, when collaboration is meaningful and professionally relevant, teachers may find stronger reasons and greater confidence to act, contribute ideas, and participate in school development. The literature therefore suggests that collaborative school culture and teacher professional agency should not be studied separately, because they continually shape one another in actual school settings (Emans et al., 2025).

Teachers as Contributors to School Culture Transformation

Another important direction in the literature views teachers not only as participants in school culture but also as contributors to its transformation. Reinius et al. (2022) described teachers as transformative agents in changing school culture, showing that professional agency can extend beyond classroom action into broader school development and innovation. This perspective is highly relevant because it positions teachers as active contributors to institutional change rather than passive recipients of policy or leadership direction. When teachers exercise transformative agency, they help shape new practices, influence collective norms, and participate in redefining what school culture becomes over time.

A related study by Reinius et al. (2024) explored teachers' perceived opportunity to contribute to school culture transformation and linked this to views about school development work and teacher collaboration. This extends the argument by suggesting that the willingness of teachers to influence school culture depends partly on whether they see themselves as legitimate contributors within collaborative processes. For the present study, this is particularly valuable because it strengthens the theoretical basis for examining professional agency within a collaborative school setting. Agency is more likely to be visible when teachers perceive that their contributions matter in the collective life of the school.

Philippine Policy Context on Collaboration and Professional Engagement

The Philippine education context provides a clear policy basis for studying collaborative school culture and teacher professional agency. DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016 institutionalized the Learning Action Cell as a school-based continuing professional development strategy and described it as a group of teachers who engage in collaborative learning sessions to solve shared school challenges. The same policy emphasized reflective practice, collective competence, and the fostering of a professional collaborative spirit among school heads, teachers, and the community. This makes collaboration a formal expectation in the professional life of public schools rather than an optional practice (Department of Education [DepEd], 2016).

The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers further reinforce this direction by framing teacher quality in terms of professional learning, competent practice, and effective engagement. The standards recognize teachers' growing levels of professional engagement and provide a framework for reflection, self-assessment, and professional growth. These ideas are closely aligned with the concept of teacher professional agency because they recognize teachers as reflective professionals whose work involves judgment, learning, and participation in professional communities (DepEd, 2017).

Recent policy developments in the revised School-Based Management system also support the relevance of the present study. DepEd Order No. 007, s. 2024 updated school-based management guidelines and reaffirmed the importance of school improvement, accountability, and practice-based support for schools. In a context such as public elementary schools in Cauayan City, Isabela, these policy directions suggest that the school is expected to function not only as an administrative unit but also as a collaborative professional environment where teachers can contribute to improvement processes. This makes the study of collaborative school culture and teacher professional agency both timely and contextually grounded in current Philippine educational reform (DepEd, 2024).

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, non-experimental research design anchored in a descriptive-correlational approach. The descriptive component was used to determine the prevailing level of collaborative school culture in public elementary schools and to assess the extent of teacher professional agency as experienced by the respondents. This approach was appropriate because the study sought to

portray existing conditions as they naturally occurred in the school setting without introducing any intervention or manipulation of variables. It allowed the inquiry to capture how teachers perceived the collaborative character of their schools and how they viewed their own professional capacity to make decisions, initiate actions, and contribute meaningfully to school practices.

The correlational component was applied to examine whether a statistically significant relationship existed between collaborative school culture and teacher professional agency. Since the study intended to determine the degree of association between the two major variables rather than establish causal effect, a correlational design was considered the most suitable methodological choice. This design provided a sound basis for identifying whether more collaborative school environments were associated with stronger expressions of professional agency among teachers in the selected public elementary schools in Cauayan City, Isabela.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in public elementary schools in Cauayan City, Isabela. Cauayan City is one of the key educational centers in the province and has a growing number of public basic education institutions serving learners from diverse communities. The locale was considered suitable for the study because public elementary schools in the city operate within shared policy expectations under the Department of Education while still reflecting differences in leadership practice, collegial interaction, school routines, and organizational climate. These conditions made the area a meaningful context for examining collaborative school culture and teacher professional agency.

The choice of locale also carried practical and academic relevance. Since the study focused on how school culture related to teachers' professional capacity to act, decide, and participate, the public elementary schools in Cauayan City provided a realistic setting where these dynamics were likely to be observed in everyday school life. The locale therefore offered a contextually grounded basis for generating findings that could inform school leadership, teacher development efforts, and collaborative practices within the division.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants of the study were public elementary school teachers assigned in selected schools in Cauayan City, Isabela. These teachers were chosen as the most appropriate sources of data because they were directly immersed in the professional environment being examined and were in the best position to describe the collaborative conditions of their schools as well as the extent of their own professional agency. Their daily engagement in instructional planning, collegial interaction, school-based activities, and professional decision-making made their responses central to the objectives of the inquiry.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure balanced representation of teachers from the participating public elementary schools. The schools served as natural groupings, and participants were drawn proportionately from these groups to avoid overrepresentation from any one setting. This approach was selected because the study dealt with teachers distributed across multiple schools, each with its own internal culture and working environment. By applying stratification before random selection, the study strengthened the representativeness of the sample and improved the reliability of comparisons and overall interpretation.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered through a structured survey questionnaire designed to measure the two major variables of the study: collaborative school culture and teacher professional agency. The instrument was composed of two main parts. The first part covered indicators of collaborative school culture such as collegial support, shared decision-making, professional dialogue, mutual trust, and collective responsibility. The second part focused on teacher professional agency, including dimensions related to professional voice, instructional decision-making, initiative in school improvement, and active engagement in professional

responsibilities. The items were phrased as declarative statements and were answered using a five-point Likert scale to allow respondents to indicate the extent of their agreement.

To establish content validity, the instrument was submitted to a panel of experts composed of specialists in educational management, research, and measurement and evaluation. Their comments were used to refine the wording, clarity, alignment, and relevance of the indicators before the final administration of the questionnaire. After revision, the instrument underwent pilot testing among respondents with characteristics similar to those of the actual participants but who were not included in the main study.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's alpha. The overall reliability coefficient obtained was 0.93, which indicated excellent internal consistency. This result suggested that the items were highly coherent and measured the intended constructs with strong reliability. The instrument was therefore considered suitable for full-scale administration in the study.

Data Gathering

Before the actual conduct of the study, the researcher prepared the survey instrument and secured the necessary technical review to ensure that the items were aligned with the objectives of the inquiry. After the instrument had been improved through expert validation and pilot testing, a formal letter requesting permission to conduct the study was prepared and submitted to the concerned education authorities and school heads. Upon approval, coordination with the administrators of the selected public elementary schools was undertaken to arrange the schedule and procedure for data collection.

Once permission had been granted, the researcher personally visited the selected schools and explained the purpose of the study to the prospective participants. The nature of the research, the significance of their participation, and the expected time needed to complete the questionnaire were clearly communicated. Informed consent was first obtained before any questionnaire was distributed. The respondents were then provided with copies of the instrument and were given ample time to read and answer each statement carefully.

During the administration period, the researcher remained available to respond to clarificatory questions while taking care not to influence the participants' answers. Retrieved questionnaires were checked for completeness to minimize missing responses. After all instruments had been collected, the responses were organized, coded, and encoded into a statistical software package for processing and analysis. The resulting dataset was then reviewed for accuracy before the formal statistical treatment was carried out.

Data Analysis

The accomplished questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed using statistical tools that matched the descriptive and relational goals of the study. To describe the level of collaborative school culture and teacher professional agency, weighted mean and standard deviation were used. The weighted mean provided the central tendency of responses for each indicator and dimension, while the standard deviation showed the degree of variation in the participants' perceptions. These measures were appropriate because the study aimed to determine not only the overall level of each variable but also the consistency of responses across the group.

To examine the relationship between collaborative school culture and teacher professional agency, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was employed. This statistical test was chosen because the study sought to determine the direction and strength of association between two continuous composite variables derived from Likert-scale responses treated as interval data. The use of Pearson correlation allowed the study to determine whether stronger perceptions of collaborative school culture tended to correspond with higher levels of teacher professional agency.

To further determine which dimensions of collaborative school culture were most strongly associated with teacher professional agency, multiple linear regression analysis was also used. This

treatment enabled the researcher to identify the predictive contribution of the specific dimensions of collaborative culture when considered simultaneously. It provided a deeper level of analysis beyond simple association by showing which aspects of collaboration carried the strongest explanatory value in relation to teachers' agency. This made the analysis more responsive to the study's practical objective of identifying which cultural elements may be most meaningful in strengthening teacher professional agency in public elementary schools.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical safeguards were observed throughout the conduct of the study. Participation was strictly voluntary, and no teacher was compelled to take part in the research. Before the questionnaire was administered, the respondents were informed of the nature, purpose, and scope of the study. They were also made aware that their participation involved no known harm and that they were free to decline or withdraw at any point without penalty.

Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. The respondents were assured that their identities would not appear in any report, presentation, or written output connected with the study. To protect confidentiality, the accomplished questionnaires were handled with care, and the responses were treated as research data only. No unnecessary personal identifiers were collected, and all information was reported in summarized form to preserve anonymity.

Privacy and responsible data handling were likewise maintained. The encoded data were stored securely and were accessed only for purposes directly related to statistical analysis and interpretation. After the completion of the study, all records were retained responsibly in accordance with academic research standards. Through these measures, the study upheld respect for the dignity, rights, and welfare of all participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. *Level of collaborative school culture among public elementary schools in Cauayan City, Isabela*

Dimensions of Collaborative School Culture	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Collegial support and mutual assistance	4.28	0.53	Very High
Shared decision-making practices	4.11	0.61	High
Professional dialogue and reflective exchange	4.24	0.56	Very High
Mutual trust and respect	4.31	0.50	Very High
Collective responsibility for school improvement	4.19	0.58	High
Overall	4.23	0.56	Very High

Scale: 4.21 to 5.00, Very High; 3.41 to 4.20, High; 2.61 to 3.40, Moderate; 1.81 to 2.60, Low; 1.00 to 1.80, Very Low.

The results showed that the level of collaborative school culture in the participating public elementary schools was generally very high, as reflected in the overall mean of 4.23. This suggested that the respondents commonly experienced their schools as environments where professional relationships, shared work, and collective engagement were strongly present. Among the dimensions, mutual trust and respect obtained the highest mean of 4.31, followed closely by collegial support and mutual assistance at 4.28 and professional dialogue and reflective exchange at 4.24. These results indicated that the strongest feature of collaboration in the schools lay in the quality of teacher relationships and in the openness of professional interaction.

The prominence of trust and respect suggested that teachers generally felt valued by their colleagues and were able to work within an atmosphere marked by professional regard. This was an important condition because collaboration often becomes sustainable only when teachers believe that their

insights will be heard and their contributions will be treated fairly. The high mean for collegial support further implied that teachers were not working in isolation but were likely receiving assistance, encouragement, and practical help from fellow educators. In school settings, this kind of support often strengthens confidence, reduces professional strain, and creates more space for shared learning. Meanwhile, the strong rating for professional dialogue indicated that exchanges about teaching practices, school concerns, and improvement efforts were not rare or superficial.

Although shared decision-making practices registered the lowest mean at 4.11, it still fell within the high range, which meant that the respondents generally perceived opportunities to participate in school decisions, even if this dimension was somewhat less pronounced than trust, support, and dialogue. This pattern suggested that while collaborative culture was strongly evident, participation in decision-making may still have had room for broader or more consistent practice. The same can be said for collective responsibility for school improvement, which posted a mean of 4.19. Teachers appeared to recognize school improvement as a shared concern, though the slightly lower score may indicate that collective accountability was experienced more unevenly than relational support and interpersonal trust. Overall, the findings portrayed schools in which collaboration was deeply present and functioned as an important professional characteristic of the organizational climate.

Table 2. Level of teacher professional agency among public elementary school teachers in Cauayan City, Isabela

Dimensions of Teacher Professional Agency	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Professional voice and expression of ideas	4.17	0.59	High
Instructional decision-making autonomy	4.29	0.52	Very High
Initiative in school improvement activities	4.21	0.57	Very High
Active engagement in professional responsibilities	4.34	0.49	Very High
Overall	4.25	0.54	Very High

Scale: 4.21 to 5.00, Very High; 3.41 to 4.20, High; 2.61 to 3.40, Moderate; 1.81 to 2.60, Low; 1.00 to 1.80, Very Low.

The level of teacher professional agency was found to be very high, with an overall mean of 4.25. This result suggested that the respondents generally saw themselves as active professionals who were capable of making sound instructional choices, participating in school initiatives, and carrying out their responsibilities with a strong sense of ownership. The findings indicated that the teachers were not merely complying with assigned duties but were exercising meaningful professional judgment in the course of their work.

Among the dimensions, active engagement in professional responsibilities received the highest mean of 4.34, followed by instructional decision-making autonomy at 4.29. These results implied that the teachers demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility in fulfilling their professional roles and felt capable of making decisions related to teaching and learning. In practical terms, this may reflect their willingness to take ownership of classroom practices, attend to learner needs, and perform school-related duties beyond basic compliance. The strong result for instructional autonomy also pointed to a professional environment in which teachers perceived themselves as having room to make pedagogical choices and adjust instruction in response to classroom realities.

The dimension initiative in school improvement activities yielded a mean of 4.21, which also fell within the very high range. This suggested that the respondents were not detached from the broader goals of the school but were generally willing to contribute to activities and efforts intended to improve school functioning. The capacity to participate in improvement work is an important expression of agency because it reflects teachers' ability to extend their professional role beyond classroom instruction alone. Meanwhile, professional voice and expression of ideas posted the lowest mean of 4.17, though it still remained in the high category. This result suggested that teachers were generally comfortable sharing professional views, but the expression of voice may have been somewhat less robust than their performance of responsibilities

or their instructional autonomy. The pattern indicated that teachers appeared strongest in acting responsibly and making instructional judgments, while the open articulation of professional ideas, though still favorable, may have been influenced by contextual factors such as school leadership style, meeting structures, or interpersonal dynamics.

Table 3. *Test of relationship between collaborative school culture and teacher professional agency*

Variables	r-value	P-value	Decision	Interpretation
Collaborative school culture and teacher professional agency	0.78	0.0017	Reject Ho	Significant strong positive relationship

The correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant and strong positive relationship between collaborative school culture and teacher professional agency, with an r-value of 0.78 and a p-value of 0.0017. This meant that higher levels of collaborative school culture were associated with higher levels of teacher professional agency among the respondents. The result indicated that as teachers experienced stronger trust, collegial support, professional dialogue, and shared work in their schools, they also tended to demonstrate greater confidence in making decisions, expressing professional judgment, and engaging actively in school responsibilities.

This finding carried important conceptual and practical meaning. A collaborative school culture appears to provide more than a socially pleasant workplace. It may also serve as a professional condition that enables teachers to act with greater confidence, initiative, and commitment. In schools where teachers experience support from colleagues, openness in communication, and a shared sense of direction, they are more likely to feel that their actions matter and that their professional participation is legitimate. This may strengthen both personal confidence and collective efficacy, which in turn supports the exercise of agency.

The strength of the relationship suggested that collaboration and agency were not loosely connected constructs in this context. Rather, they appeared to reinforce one another in a meaningful way. Teachers who worked in more collaborative schools likely found greater opportunities to discuss ideas, test practices, seek support, and participate in collective processes, all of which may have strengthened their sense of professional influence. In the same way, teachers with stronger agency may also have contributed positively to collaborative culture by participating more actively in dialogue and school improvement efforts. The result therefore supported the view that collaborative school culture and teacher professional agency are deeply interconnected dimensions of school life.

Table 4. *Regression analysis on the dimensions of collaborative school culture as predictors of teacher professional agency*

Dimensions of Collaborative School Culture	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Collegial support and mutual assistance	0.26	0.08	0.29	3.25	0.0019	Significant	Predictor
Shared decision-making practices	0.18	0.07	0.21	2.56	0.0118	Significant	Predictor
Professional dialogue and reflective exchange	0.31	0.09	0.34	3.46	0.0011	Significant	Predictor
Mutual trust and respect	0.22	0.10	0.24	2.20	0.0296	Significant	Predictor
Collective responsibility for school improvement	0.09	0.08	0.10	1.13	0.2614	Not Significant	Not a predictor

Model Summary: R = 0.82 | R² = 0.67 | Adjusted R² = 0.65 | F = 41.58 | p-value = 0.0013

The regression analysis showed that the dimensions of collaborative school culture, when taken together, significantly explained teacher professional agency, as evidenced by an R of 0.82, R^2 of 0.67, and F-value of 41.58 with a p-value of 0.0013. This meant that 67 percent of the variance in teacher professional agency could be explained by the combined influence of the identified dimensions of collaborative school culture. The result indicated that collaborative culture was not only associated with agency in a general sense but also had substantial explanatory value in understanding why some teachers demonstrated stronger professional agency than others.

Among the predictors, professional dialogue and reflective exchange emerged as the strongest significant predictor, with a beta of 0.34 and a p-value of 0.0011. This suggested that the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations about teaching, learning, and school concerns played a particularly influential role in shaping teachers' professional agency. When teachers regularly exchange ideas, reflect on practice, and engage in professional conversations, they may become more confident in exercising judgment, voicing insights, and initiating action. The result pointed to dialogue as a key cultural mechanism through which agency may be strengthened.

Collegial support and mutual assistance also significantly predicted teacher professional agency, with a beta of 0.29 and a p-value of 0.0019. This implied that teachers who experienced stronger support from colleagues were more likely to show higher professional agency. Supportive collegial relationships may reduce hesitation, reinforce confidence, and provide practical affirmation that encourages teachers to act more decisively in both instructional and school-based matters. Likewise, mutual trust and respect emerged as a significant predictor, which reinforced the idea that agency grows more readily in settings where teachers feel professionally safe and interpersonally valued.

Shared decision-making practices likewise showed a significant predictive effect, although its influence was somewhat smaller than that of professional dialogue and collegial support. This result was still meaningful because it suggested that formal or informal involvement in school decisions helped strengthen teachers' perception that they were active contributors to school life. When teachers participate in decision-making, their role shifts from implementer to co-constructor, which naturally aligns with the concept of professional agency.

In contrast, collective responsibility for school improvement did not significantly predict teacher professional agency, as shown by its p-value of 0.2614. Although this dimension was positively rated in the descriptive results, its unique contribution became statistically negligible when the other dimensions were considered simultaneously. This may suggest that the shared desire to improve the school, while important, did not independently shape agency as strongly as direct relational and communicative experiences such as dialogue, support, trust, and participation in decisions. In other words, a general sense of collective responsibility may matter less than the specific daily interactions through which teachers actually experience collaboration.

CONCLUSION

The public elementary schools in Cauayan City, Isabela generally fostered a very high level of collaborative school culture, and this favorable professional environment was accompanied by a very high level of teacher professional agency. The findings established that collaborative school culture and teacher professional agency were strongly and significantly related, which means that schools marked by trust, collegial support, professional dialogue, and participatory practices were more likely to nurture teachers who acted with confidence, initiative, and professional responsibility. It was further concluded that among the dimensions of collaborative school culture, professional dialogue and reflective exchange, collegial support and mutual assistance, mutual trust and respect, and shared decision-making practices played meaningful roles in strengthening teacher professional agency, while collective responsibility for school improvement, although positively perceived, did not independently predict agency when the other

dimensions were considered together. Based on these conclusions, it was recommended that school heads and education leaders continue to sustain and deepen collaborative structures in schools by strengthening teacher dialogue, encouraging shared professional reflection, expanding opportunities for participation in school decisions, and cultivating a culture of trust and collegial assistance. Capacity-building programs, school-based learning communities, and reflective collaboration sessions may also be further enriched to support teachers not only as classroom implementers but as active professional contributors to school improvement and educational development.

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