

Distributed Leadership Practices and Teacher Innovation Engagement in Public Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between distributed leadership practices and teacher innovation engagement in public elementary schools in Cauayan City, Isabela. Grounded in the view that shared leadership can create conditions that encourage teacher initiative and instructional improvement, the study described the level of distributed leadership practices and teacher innovation engagement and determined whether leadership practices significantly influenced teachers' innovation engagement. A quantitative cross sectional predictive correlational design was employed. Data were gathered through a validated survey questionnaire administered to public elementary school teachers selected through stratified random

sampling. The instrument demonstrated strong reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.93 for distributed leadership practices and 0.91 for teacher innovation engagement. Descriptive statistics, Pearson product moment correlation, and simple linear regression were used in analyzing the data. Findings revealed that distributed leadership practices and teacher innovation engagement were both at very high levels, with overall means of 4.30 and 4.27, respectively. A strong positive relationship was found between the two variables ($r = 0.718$, $p = 0.001$). Regression analysis further showed that distributed leadership practices significantly predicted teacher innovation engagement and explained 51.6% of its variance ($R^2 = 0.516$, $p = 0.001$). The study concluded that participatory and empowering leadership environments play an important role in strengthening teachers' engagement in innovative professional and instructional practices. It is recommended that school leaders further institutionalize shared leadership structures to sustain teacher innovation and school improvement.

Keywords: *Distributed leadership, teacher innovation engagement, shared decision-making, public elementary schools, school leadership, instructional innovation*

INTRODUCTION

Schools improve more meaningfully when leadership is shared and teachers are empowered not only to implement change, but to help create it. In contemporary school systems, leadership is no longer understood as the work of a single formal authority alone. Schools increasingly operate in complex environments where instructional improvement, teacher development, innovation, and stakeholder coordination require leadership to be shared across roles, relationships, and professional interactions. In this sense, distributed leadership has gained strong scholarly and policy attention because it recognizes that school improvement is more sustainable when teachers and other school actors are given meaningful opportunities to participate in decision-making, problem-solving, and instructional leadership. Rather than weakening the role of the principal, distributed leadership broadens leadership practice so that professional

expertise within the school can be mobilized more effectively for teaching and learning improvement (OECD, 2016; Nadeem, 2024; UNESCO, 2024).

The relevance of distributed leadership becomes even more pronounced in basic education, where schools are expected to respond to diverse learner needs, curriculum demands, technological shifts, and continuing pressures for improved outcomes. International literature suggests that distributed leadership supports school climates where teachers are not merely implementers of policy but active contributors to pedagogical change. O'Shea (2021) found that distributed leadership positively predicts teachers' use of innovative teaching practices, particularly those associated with cognitively engaging and future-oriented instruction. In a broader theoretical discussion, distributed leadership has also been described as a collaborative and adaptive approach that promotes shared vision, clear roles, continuous professional learning, and stronger school improvement processes (Nadeem, 2024). These ideas position distributed leadership as an important framework for schools that aim to move beyond compliance and toward collective professional agency.

At the same time, innovation in education has become a central concern in both research and policy because schools are expected not only to preserve effective teaching traditions but also to develop new ways of addressing changing classroom realities. The OECD has long emphasized that innovation in education involves smarter ways of organizing teaching, learning, and professional practice to better respond to present and future demands (OECD, 2016). More recent work has further stressed that innovation in education must be deliberately understood, measured, and supported because improvement does not occur automatically in school organizations (Vincent-Lancrin, 2023). In the case of teachers, innovation is increasingly viewed as a multidimensional professional process involving the generation, adoption, adaptation, and implementation of new instructional ideas and practices. A recent review of teacher innovation research underscored the growing importance of conceptual clarity in understanding how teacher innovation develops and how it is shaped by the environments in which teachers work (Liu et al., 2024). Taken together, these perspectives suggest that teacher innovation engagement is not a peripheral behavior but an essential dimension of educational responsiveness and quality.

The connection between leadership and teacher innovation has also been increasingly supported by empirical studies. Hsieh et al. (2024) reported that distributed leadership has a significant direct effect on teacher innovativeness, highlighting how leadership arrangements within schools can shape teachers' willingness and confidence to engage in new practices. Similarly, Pan et al. (2024) showed that professional collaboration has a substantial association with school innovativeness and innovative teaching, suggesting that innovation is more likely to flourish in school settings where teachers work together in deeper and more meaningful ways. These findings are important because they point to a common pattern: when leadership is shared, collaboration is strengthened; when collaboration is strengthened, the conditions for innovation become more favorable. Such evidence makes distributed leadership a compelling variable to examine alongside teacher innovation engagement, especially in elementary school contexts where collective work among teachers often directly affects classroom practice and school-wide improvement efforts.

The Department of Education, through the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads, explicitly recognizes school heads as crucial in creating enabling and supportive environments for effective teaching and learning. The standards emphasize high-quality instruction, strong school culture, job-embedded professional development, stakeholder networks, and the improvement of teacher quality, all of which resonate with the logic of distributed leadership rather than purely top-down administration (Department of Education, 2020). In addition, current Philippine education analyses have shown that school head leadership, teacher engagement, and school innovation are closely linked within the basic education ecosystem. The EDCOM II working paper on the role of school leadership noted that positive school leadership can lead to positive teacher performance and learning innovation, while overly rigid compliance cultures may discourage creativity and local initiative (Cuyegkeng, 2025). Even recent DepEd guidance on

in-service training underscores that school-based and division-based professional learning should be participatory and responsive to the needs identified by teachers and school leaders, reinforcing the importance of collaborative leadership structures in school improvement.

This policy and research landscape makes the present study highly relevant in the context of public elementary schools in Cauayan City, Isabela. Public elementary schools operate within real conditions that require school heads and teachers to work together in addressing instructional challenges, learner diversity, resource limitations, and the demand for meaningful innovations in classroom practice. Yet while distributed leadership is often promoted in principle, its actual relationship with teacher innovation engagement in local school settings remains insufficiently documented. There is a need to determine whether leadership practices that are more collaborative, participatory, and empowering are indeed associated with stronger teacher engagement in innovation. Examining this relationship can generate evidence that is useful not only for school heads and teachers in Cauayan City but also for division-level planning, professional development, and school improvement efforts. More importantly, the study may contribute to a clearer understanding of how leadership practice can cultivate a professional culture in which teachers feel encouraged to initiate, embrace, and sustain innovative educational practices in public elementary schools.

Literature Review

Distributed Leadership as a Contemporary Leadership Perspective in Schools

Distributed leadership has emerged as a major perspective in educational leadership because it departs from the traditional image of leadership as the sole responsibility of the principal and instead frames leadership as a practice stretched across people, situations, and organizational routines. In this view, leadership is not confined to formal authority but is enacted through collaboration, reciprocal influence, and the strategic use of expertise within the school. Recent literature describes distributed leadership as especially valuable in school settings that must respond to instructional complexity, organizational change, and growing expectations for shared accountability. Nadeem (2024) explained that distributed leadership strengthens school improvement by encouraging multiple stakeholders to participate in leadership work, while UNESCO (2024) emphasized that leadership for learning is more effective when it draws on the contributions of middle leaders and teachers who shape daily teaching and learning processes. These perspectives make distributed leadership highly relevant for public elementary schools, where instructional concerns are often best addressed through collective professional action rather than isolated decision-making by a single administrator.

Core Features of Distributed Leadership Practices

The literature consistently shows that distributed leadership is not merely the delegation of tasks. Rather, it is characterized by meaningful participation in decision-making, collaborative problem-solving, professional trust, and the recognition of teachers as contributors to school direction. In practice, distributed leadership is reflected when school heads create structures that allow teachers to exercise influence over instructional planning, school improvement initiatives, professional learning, and innovation-related decisions. Nadeem (2024) noted that distributed leadership depends on relational trust, clarity of shared roles, and a school culture that values participation. The 2024/5 Global Education Monitoring Report likewise highlighted that effective leadership is closely tied to feedback, coordination, and instructional support rather than narrow managerial control (UNESCO, 2024). This suggests that distributed leadership practices in schools may be best understood through dimensions such as shared decision-making, collaborative leadership structures, participatory professional culture, and support for teacher-led initiatives.

Teacher Innovation Engagement as a Professional Construct

Teacher innovation engagement refers to the degree to which teachers actively participate in the generation, adoption, adaptation, and implementation of new ideas, methods, tools, and approaches that improve teaching and learning. It is not limited to creativity in an abstract sense, because innovation in the teaching profession involves purposeful action directed toward classroom improvement, learner responsiveness, and instructional relevance. Liu et al. (2024) argued that teacher innovation should be treated as a clearly defined and multidimensional construct, since the field has often used the term broadly without sufficient conceptual precision. OECD publications also frame innovation in education as a necessary response to changing learning demands, emphasizing that innovation may occur in pedagogy, school organization, assessment, and professional practice (OECD, 2016; Vincent-Lancrin, 2023). From this perspective, teacher innovation engagement may involve openness to new instructional strategies, experimentation with teaching methods, integration of appropriate technologies, redesign of classroom activities, and active participation in improvement-oriented professional practices.

Innovation in Schools as a Social and Collaborative Process

The literature also makes it clear that teacher innovation does not develop in isolation. Innovation is shaped by the organizational and relational context of the school, including opportunities for collaboration, professional exchange, trust, and shared learning. Pan et al. (2024) found that teacher collaboration is significantly linked with school innovativeness and innovative teaching, reinforcing the idea that innovation becomes more likely when teachers work within collegial and idea-rich environments. OECD work on educational innovation similarly stresses that innovation is more sustainable when institutions cultivate reflective cultures, evidence-based improvement, and environments where professionals can learn from one another (OECD, 2016; Vincent-Lancrin, 2023). This body of literature is important because it suggests that teacher innovation engagement is not simply a matter of individual personality or talent. It is also a product of the school's leadership structure and professional culture. In this sense, leadership arrangements that encourage collaboration may play a vital role in whether teachers feel empowered to innovate in meaningful and sustained ways.

Linking Distributed Leadership and Teacher Innovation Engagement

A growing body of literature supports the argument that distributed leadership has a meaningful connection with teacher innovation. O'Shea (2021), using large-scale international data, found that distributed leadership significantly predicted teachers' use of innovative teaching practices. This is a particularly important contribution because it moves beyond theory and shows that leadership distribution is associated with actual instructional innovation. More recently, Hsieh et al. (2024) reported that school leadership has a direct and significant effect on teacher innovativeness, further strengthening the argument that leadership practices influence whether teachers engage in new and adaptive ways of teaching. These studies suggest that when leadership is shared and teachers are treated as professionals with agency, teachers may become more willing to test new methods, refine their classroom strategies, and contribute to school improvement efforts. For the present study, this line of literature is central because it offers a strong conceptual and empirical basis for examining whether distributed leadership practices are related to teacher innovation engagement in public elementary schools.

Distributed Leadership and Teacher Agency in Professional Practice

Another important strand in the literature is the idea that distributed leadership supports teacher agency. Teacher agency refers to the capacity of teachers to act purposefully, make professional judgments, and influence educational processes within their school contexts. Although not identical to innovation, agency is often a necessary condition for innovation because teachers are more likely to initiate or adopt new practices when they perceive that their ideas matter and that they have room to act. Nadeem (2024)

emphasized that distributed leadership encourages ownership, initiative, and active participation among school actors. UNESCO (2024) also underscored that education leadership should create conditions for teachers to perform not only as classroom implementers but as professionals who shape learning environments. These insights are highly relevant because teacher innovation engagement is unlikely to flourish in rigid environments where teachers have little voice, little autonomy, or limited involvement in leadership processes. Thus, distributed leadership may be seen as an enabling framework that strengthens the professional confidence and participation necessary for innovation to occur.

Policy and Institutional Basis in the Philippine Education

The relevance of distributed leadership is supported by current professional standards and school improvement expectations. DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2020, which adopted the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads, frames school leadership in ways that go beyond administrative supervision. The standards emphasize instructional leadership, people development, school culture, stakeholder engagement, and organizational management, all of which imply leadership practices that involve coordination, empowerment, and shared professional responsibility. DepEd's professional development policies also point to school-based and job-embedded learning structures, which are more likely to function effectively when leadership is participatory and collaborative. At the international level, UNESCO (2024) similarly highlighted that leadership must focus on learning improvement and should be supported by structures that mobilize the work of teachers and school-level leaders. These policy directions indicate that distributed leadership is not only a theoretical concept but also a practical and policy-relevant leadership orientation for public schools in the Philippines.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative cross sectional predictive correlational design. This design was considered appropriate because the inquiry sought to describe the extent of distributed leadership practices and teacher innovation engagement in public elementary schools and to determine whether variations in leadership practices were associated with differences in teachers' innovation engagement. The descriptive component made it possible to portray the present condition of the two major variables, while the correlational and predictive component allowed the study to examine the strength and direction of their association and to estimate the extent to which distributed leadership practices explained teacher innovation engagement. Since the study did not manipulate any variable and instead examined naturally occurring conditions within schools, a nonexperimental quantitative approach was most suitable.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in public elementary schools in Cauayan City, Isabela. The locale was deemed appropriate because the schools in the area operated within a shared public education system while still reflecting differences in administrative style, school culture, and instructional conditions. These characteristics provided a meaningful setting for examining how distributed leadership was practiced and how such practices were related to teachers' engagement in innovation. The selection of Cauayan City also gave the study local relevance, especially in relation to school improvement efforts, collaborative leadership, and teacher development within the public elementary school.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants of the study were public elementary school teachers assigned in selected schools in Cauayan City, Isabela. They were chosen because they were in the best position to assess the actual

leadership practices experienced in their schools and to describe the degree of their own innovation engagement in professional and instructional work.

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure a balanced representation of teachers across the participating public elementary schools. The schools served as the basis for grouping, after which eligible teacher participants were randomly selected from each group. This sampling approach was appropriate because it increased representativeness and reduced the possibility that the data would reflect only the conditions of a limited number of schools. It also strengthened the comparability of responses across the school setting.

Research Instrument

The study utilized a structured survey questionnaire composed of two major parts. The first part measured distributed leadership practices, while the second part measured teacher innovation engagement. The items were written in a clear and context-sensitive manner so that the participants could respond based on their actual school experiences. The instrument used a five-point Likert scale to capture the degree to which each statement described the participants' perceptions and practices.

The questionnaire underwent content validation by a panel of experts composed of specialists in educational management, research, and basic education practice. Their comments were used to refine the wording, sequencing, clarity, and relevance of the items. After revision, the instrument was pilot tested among teachers outside the actual study area but with characteristics similar to those of the intended participants. The pilot results showed that the instrument had strong internal consistency. The scale for distributed leadership practices obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93, while the scale for teacher innovation engagement yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91. The overall instrument registered a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92, indicating a high level of reliability. These results suggested that the instrument was both valid in content and dependable for use in the study.

Data Gathering

Before the actual conduct of the study, a formal letter requesting permission to administer the questionnaire was prepared and submitted to the concerned education authorities and school heads. Upon approval, the researcher coordinated with school administrators for the schedule and procedure of data collection.

The administration of the instrument was carried out in an orderly and ethical manner. The purpose of the study was first explained to the participants, along with the voluntary nature of their participation. They were informed that the study was intended solely for academic purposes and that their responses would be treated with confidentiality. After securing informed consent, the questionnaires were distributed personally or through an agreed school-based procedure. The accomplished instruments were retrieved, checked for completeness, encoded, and organized for statistical treatment.

Data Analysis

The data were treated using both descriptive and inferential statistics. To describe the level of distributed leadership practices and teacher innovation engagement, the study used the mean and standard deviation. These statistics provided a clear summary of the central tendency and variability of the responses. To determine the relationship between distributed leadership practices and teacher innovation engagement, the study applied Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. This test was selected because it was appropriate for examining the degree of linear relationship between two continuous variables derived from composite scores. To further determine whether distributed leadership practices significantly influenced teacher innovation engagement, the study employed simple linear regression analysis. This treatment was considered appropriate because it went beyond identifying association and estimated the predictive contribution of distributed leadership practices to teacher innovation engagement. This provided a stronger

analytical basis for understanding whether leadership distribution within schools functioned as a meaningful explanatory factor in teachers' innovation-related engagement.

Before the conduct of inferential tests, the encoded data were also screened for completeness, consistency, and normality to ensure that the assumptions for parametric analysis were reasonably met. All tests were interpreted using a 0.05 level of significance.

Ethical Consideration

The study observed fundamental ethical standards throughout its conduct. Permission was obtained from the proper authorities before any data were gathered. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no teacher was forced or pressured to take part in the study. Each participant was given sufficient information about the purpose of the research, the nature of participation, and the intended use of the data before consent was secured.

Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. The names of participants and schools were not written in the presentation of results, and the accomplished questionnaires were handled with care to protect private information. The data were used exclusively for scholarly purposes and were reported in summarized form only. The study also upheld respect, fairness, and academic honesty during the entire research process, from instrument administration to interpretation of findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Level of Distributed Leadership Practices in Public Elementary Schools

Indicators of Distributed Leadership Practices	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Shared decision-making	4.31	0.48	Very High
Collaborative leadership structures	4.24	0.51	Very High
Participatory professional culture	4.38	0.45	Very High
Support for teacher-led initiatives	4.27	0.49	Very High
Overall Mean	4.30	0.48	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 data showed that distributed leadership practices in public elementary schools in Cauayan City, Isabela were perceived to be at a very high level, with an overall mean of 4.30. Among the indicators, participatory professional culture obtained the highest mean of 4.38, followed by shared decision-making at 4.31, support for teacher-led initiatives at 4.27, and collaborative leadership structures at 4.24. The consistently low standard deviations suggested that the responses were relatively clustered, indicating a generally shared perception among teachers regarding the presence of leadership distribution in their schools.

This finding suggested that school leadership in the participating public elementary schools was not viewed as highly centralized. Instead, teachers appeared to experience leadership as a collective process in which they were consulted, involved, and supported. The highest rating for participatory professional culture implied that schools had created an atmosphere where teachers were encouraged to contribute to school improvement efforts, exchange ideas, and take part in professional conversations. Such a result reflects a school environment where leadership is enacted through interaction, cooperation, and mutual trust rather than through positional authority alone.

The high mean for shared decision-making further indicated that teachers were given meaningful opportunities to participate in important school matters. This is significant because when teachers feel that their perspectives are heard and valued, they are more likely to develop stronger ownership of school goals and greater commitment to improvement efforts. The favorable rating for support for teacher-led initiatives

also pointed to the presence of school heads who recognized and encouraged teacher contributions beyond routine classroom responsibilities. The results portrayed schools that had established a strong leadership climate marked by collaboration, empowerment, and professional inclusion.

Table 2. Level of Teacher Innovation Engagement in Public Elementary Schools

Indicators of Teacher Innovation Engagement	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Openness to new instructional strategies	4.36	0.46	Very High
Instructional experimentation and adaptation	4.22	0.50	Very High
Use of educational technologies and resources	4.18	0.55	High
Collaborative idea-sharing for classroom improvement	4.33	0.47	Very High
Overall Mean	4.27	0.50	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 findings revealed that teacher innovation engagement was also very high, as shown by the overall mean of 4.27. The highest mean was recorded for openness to new instructional strategies at 4.36, followed by collaborative idea-sharing for classroom improvement at 4.33, instructional experimentation and adaptation at 4.22, and use of educational technologies and resources at 4.18, which was interpreted as high.

These results indicated that teachers in the participating public elementary schools were highly engaged in innovation-related practices. The strong rating for openness to new instructional strategies suggested that teachers were receptive to fresh approaches in teaching and were willing to improve their classroom methods in response to learner needs. The very high rating for collaborative idea-sharing further implied that innovation was not simply an individual effort but was strengthened through collegial interaction, exchange of practices, and shared professional reflection.

Although all indicators yielded favorable results, the relatively lowest mean was observed in the use of educational technologies and resources. While still interpreted as high, this result may imply that technology-based innovation was present but not as strongly manifested as other forms of innovation engagement. This may be influenced by varying levels of access to digital resources, infrastructure limitations, or differences in technology confidence among teachers. Nevertheless, the overall result showed that teachers demonstrated a strong willingness to improve, adapt, and participate in innovation-oriented professional practices. This suggested that the schools were not only administratively functional but also professionally dynamic, with teachers actively engaging in practices that support continuous instructional renewal.

Table 3. Relationship Between Distributed Leadership Practices and Teacher Innovation Engagement

Variables	r-value	P-value	Decision	Interpretation
Distributed Leadership Practices and Teacher Innovation Engagement	0.718	0.001	Reject Ho	Significant, Strong Positive Relationship

Table 3 showed that the relationship between distributed leadership practices and teacher innovation engagement was significant and positive, with an r-value of 0.718 and a p-value of 0.001, which was lower than the 0.05 level of significance. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The coefficient value indicated a strong positive relationship, meaning that higher levels of distributed leadership practices were associated with higher levels of teacher innovation engagement.

This finding suggested that as schools became more collaborative in their leadership practices, teachers likewise became more engaged in innovation. The result supports the idea that innovation among teachers does not simply emerge from individual creativity alone. Rather, it is shaped by the leadership

environment in which teachers work. When teachers are involved in decision-making, trusted with responsibilities, and encouraged to initiate ideas, they are more likely to demonstrate professional confidence, openness to change, and willingness to improve their teaching practices.

The strength of the correlation is especially important because it indicated that the association between the two variables was not weak or incidental. Instead, distributed leadership appeared to be meaningfully connected with the school conditions that nurture teacher innovation engagement. In practical terms, this means that schools where leadership is more participatory and empowering are also more likely to have teachers who are willing to test new ideas, refine instruction, and collaborate for classroom improvement. The result therefore reinforced the central argument of the study that leadership practice and teacher innovation are closely intertwined in the day-to-day life of public elementary schools.

Table 4. *Simple Linear Regression Analysis on the Influence of Distributed Leadership Practices on Teacher Innovation Engagement*

Predictor	B	SE B	Beta	t-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Constant	1.214	0.289		4.201	0.001	Significant	
Distributed Leadership Practices	0.711	0.082	0.718	8.671	0.001	Significant	Predictor

Model Summary	Value
R	0.718
R ²	0.516
Adjusted R ²	0.508
F-value	75.190
Sig. F	0.001

The regression analysis showed that distributed leadership practices significantly predicted teacher innovation engagement. The computed standardized beta coefficient of 0.718 indicated a strong positive predictive effect, while the p-value of 0.001 confirmed that the predictor was statistically significant. The model summary further showed an R² of 0.516, which means that 51.6% of the variance in teacher innovation engagement was explained by distributed leadership practices. The computed F-value of 75.190, significant at 0.001, confirmed the overall fitness of the regression model.

The regression coefficient of 0.711 meant that for every one unit increase in distributed leadership practices, teacher innovation engagement increased by about 0.711 units. This is a substantial effect in educational research, suggesting that leadership distribution was not merely associated with innovation engagement but served as a meaningful explanatory factor. In other words, the stronger the practice of shared leadership within the school, the greater the tendency of teachers to become involved in innovative professional and instructional behaviors.

The explanatory power of the model is noteworthy. With more than half of the variance in teacher innovation engagement accounted for by distributed leadership practices, the result suggested that school leadership arrangements played a major role in shaping the innovative orientation of teachers. At the same time, the remaining unexplained variance implied that other factors not included in the model, such as school resources, teacher motivation, professional development opportunities, and organizational climate, may also contribute to innovation engagement. Still, the present result clearly established distributed leadership as a strong and statistically significant predictor.

The regression findings strengthened the earlier correlation result. While correlation established that the two variables moved together, regression demonstrated that distributed leadership practices made a substantial contribution to explaining teacher innovation engagement. This means that the way leadership was shared and practiced within public elementary schools mattered greatly in determining whether teachers became active participants in innovation. The finding highlighted the importance of cultivating

leadership environments where teachers are trusted, involved, and encouraged to lead alongside school heads.

CONCLUSION

Distributed leadership practices and teacher innovation engagement were both manifested at very high levels in public elementary schools in Cauayan City, Isabela, indicating that the schools generally fostered a collaborative leadership environment and a strong culture of professional innovation among teachers. It was further concluded that distributed leadership practices had a significant and strong positive relationship with teacher innovation engagement and served as a meaningful predictor of teachers' involvement in innovative instructional and professional practices. This means that when leadership was shared through participatory decision-making, collaborative structures, supportive school culture, and encouragement of teacher-led initiatives, teachers became more open to new strategies, more willing to experiment with instruction, and more engaged in collaborative efforts for classroom improvement. Based on these findings, it was recommended that school heads sustain and strengthen distributed leadership mechanisms by expanding teacher participation in school planning, instructional leadership, and innovation-related decision-making; create more structured opportunities for teacher-led projects, collaborative learning circles, and innovation-sharing sessions; and provide continuing support through mentoring, recognition, and professional development programs that further cultivate teachers' confidence and capacity to innovate. It was also recommended that education leaders at the division and school levels consider distributed leadership as a strategic approach in enhancing teacher innovation engagement and sustaining school improvement in public elementary schools.

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