

The School Heads' Leadership Practices Among Public High Schools in the Schools Division of Kalinga

Valerie Tangdol Liyaban
College of Advanced Studies, Kalinga State University
valerie.tangdol@deped.gov.ph

Date Submitted:
March 22, 2026

Date Accepted:
April 14, 2026

Date Published:
May 26, 2026

DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.20388946

ABSTRACT

This study examined the leadership practices of school heads among public high schools in the Schools Division of Kalinga and their relationship with teachers' instructional practices. It focused on transformational, instructional, and administrative leadership practices, as well as teachers' lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and student learning outcomes. The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. Data were gathered from 312 respondents composed of 224 teachers, 56 master teachers, and 32 school heads across 32 public secondary schools in Kalinga. A structured questionnaire adapted from the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads and the Philippine Professional Standards

for Teachers was used. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis's test, Spearman's rank-order correlation, and stepwise backward regression analysis. Findings showed that school heads' leadership practices were often practiced overall, with administrative leadership obtaining the highest area mean, followed by instructional leadership and transformational leadership. Teachers' instructional practices were always practiced overall, with lesson planning, classroom management, instructional delivery, and student learning outcomes all rated highly. However, the relationship between school heads' leadership practices and teachers' instructional practices was not statistically significant at the district level. Regression analysis likewise showed that leadership practices had very weak explanatory power in predicting instructional practices. The study concludes that while school heads demonstrated consistent leadership practices and teachers showed strong instructional practices, other contextual variables may better explain variations in instructional effectiveness. The findings imply the need for targeted leadership development, strengthened instructional supervision, improved assessment literacy, and collaborative school-based professional learning programs.

Keywords: *school heads' leadership practices; instructional practices; public high schools; Kalinga; instructional leadership; transformational leadership*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a major foundation of social development, economic progress, and national transformation. Within schools, leadership is a central mechanism through which policies, resources, and instructional reforms are translated into classroom practice. School heads are expected not only to manage operations but also to influence teacher motivation, instructional quality, learner-centered practice, and school improvement. This expectation has become more urgent in the Philippine basic education system because the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads and the MATATAG Curriculum both

emphasize instructional leadership, professional growth, and accountability for learning outcomes (Department of Education, 2020, 2024).

School leadership has shifted from purely administrative work to broader transformational, instructional, and organizational functions. Transformational leadership supports vision-building, motivation, collaboration, and professional commitment (Bass, 1990; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Instructional leadership focuses on curriculum implementation, classroom observation, mentoring, supervision, and the protection of instructional time (Hallinger, 2011). Administrative leadership ensures that school systems, resources, documentation, and compliance procedures support teaching and learning. In geographically isolated and culturally diverse divisions such as Kalinga, these leadership domains are especially relevant because teachers often need guidance, technical assistance, and contextualized support.

The Schools Division of Kalinga faces specific contextual realities such as dispersed school locations, varied district conditions, culturally diverse learners, resource limitations, and different levels of teacher experience. These conditions can affect how leadership practices are perceived and how instructional practices are implemented. The implementation of national standards, Learning Action Cells, school improvement planning, and curriculum reforms requires school heads to lead with clarity, responsiveness, and cultural sensitivity (Department of Education, 2016, 2017; Flores & Caballero, 2019).

Despite the growing literature on school leadership, there remains a need for evidence showing how transformational, instructional, and administrative leadership practices operate in the local context of Kalinga and how these relate to teachers' instructional practices. This study therefore examined the extent of school heads' leadership practices, assessed teachers' instructional practices, determined the relationship between these variables, and used the findings as basis for a program to enhance school leadership and instructional effectiveness.

Literature Review

School heads' leadership practices

Transformational leadership explains how school leaders inspire teachers to commit to shared goals, improve professional practice, and support organizational change. Bass (1990) emphasized that transformational leaders create a vision and motivate members to go beyond compliance. In schools, this leadership domain involves developing a shared vision, promoting collaboration, recognizing teacher contributions, and encouraging innovation. These practices are important in public schools where teachers must respond to curriculum reforms and varied learner needs.

Instructional leadership focuses more directly on teaching and learning. Hallinger (2011) described leadership for learning as a sustained effort to define academic goals, manage instructional programs, monitor teaching, and support professional development. In the Philippine setting, instructional supervision, classroom observation, coaching, mentoring, and Learning Action Cells serve as mechanisms for strengthening teachers' instructional capacity (Department of Education, 2016; Dela Cruz & Mendoza, 2019; Flores & Caballero, 2019).

Administrative leadership supports the conditions necessary for instruction. School heads manage school resources, ensure compliance with DepEd policies, organize school programs, communicate with stakeholders, and maintain a safe and orderly learning environment. Administrative leadership is particularly important in geographically isolated schools because resource distribution, documentation, safety, and coordination can influence teachers' ability to deliver instruction effectively (Torres, 2021).

Teachers' instructional practices

Instructional practices include lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and support for student learning outcomes. The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers emphasize alignment with curriculum standards, learner-centered approaches, assessment, classroom management,

and professional reflection (Department of Education, 2017). Lesson planning provides structure and alignment between objectives, activities, and assessment. Instructional delivery involves explaining concepts clearly, using appropriate teaching strategies, integrating technology and materials, and encouraging learner participation. Classroom management enables teachers to create a safe and productive learning environment, while student learning outcomes reflect assessment, feedback, and learners' mastery of competencies.

Guskey's (2002) model of teacher change suggests that changes in instructional practice become meaningful when teachers observe positive effects on learners. Thus, teacher development depends not only on training but also on evidence of improved learning. In this regard, leadership practices may contribute to teacher improvement by providing supervision, feedback, resources, and opportunities for collaboration. However, the extent of this influence may vary by school context, teacher experience, and other factors beyond leadership alone.

Leadership and instructional effectiveness

Previous Philippine studies have shown that school leadership may improve lesson planning, classroom delivery, learner engagement, and professional collaboration when school heads provide mentoring, technical assistance, and instructional monitoring (Garcia & Reyes, 2020; Mendoza, 2024; Navarro, 2023; Santos, 2021). However, leadership effects may not always appear as direct statistical relationships, especially when instructional practices are already uniformly high across schools or when contextual factors such as district conditions, teacher experience, school resources, and local culture influence classroom practice.

In Kalinga, earlier work on teaching performance highlighted the importance of adaptability and contextualized instruction (Gavino, 2013). The current study builds on this local concern by examining how school heads' leadership practices and teachers' instructional practices are manifested across public high schools in the division and whether the leadership domains significantly relate to or predict instructional practices.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component was used to determine the extent of leadership practices of school heads and the instructional practices of teachers. The correlational component was used to examine the relationship between leadership practices and instructional practices and to identify whether specific leadership practices significantly predicted instructional practices.

Research Locale

The study was conducted among public high schools in the Schools Division of Kalinga. This locale was selected because of its geographically isolated, culturally diverse, and resource-varied context, which provides a meaningful setting for examining school leadership and instructional practice.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The respondents were 312 school personnel from 32 public secondary schools in the Schools Division of Kalinga. The respondents consisted of 224 teachers, 56 master teachers, and 32 school heads. Proportional random sampling was used for teacher-respondents to ensure representation from each school, while total enumeration was applied to master teachers and school heads because of their smaller population and relevant instructional leadership roles.

Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used as the primary instrument. The tool contained respondent profile items, indicators on school heads' leadership practices in terms of transformational, instructional, and administrative leadership, and indicators on teachers' instructional practices in terms of lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and student learning outcomes. The leadership indicators were adapted from the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads, while the instructional indicators were adapted from the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers.

Data Gathering Procedure

The study was conducted after the proposal was approved and permission to gather data was secured from the necessary authorities. The questionnaire was administered through Google Forms. The link was distributed to the identified respondents, and follow-ups were made to ensure an adequate response rate. Data gathering was completed over a four-week period.

Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage were used to describe the respondents' profile. Weighted mean was used to determine the extent of leadership and instructional practices. Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis test were used to determine significant differences across profile variables. Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to examine the relationship between school heads' leadership practices and teachers' instructional practices, and stepwise backward regression analysis was used to determine whether specific leadership practices significantly predicted instructional practices. Statistical processing was done using JAMOVI.

Ethical Consideration

Participation in the study was voluntary. Respondents were informed of the purpose and significance of the study, and confidentiality of responses was maintained. Data were used only for academic purposes and were reported in aggregate form to protect the identity of the respondents and their schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Respondents

The study included 312 respondents from 32 public secondary schools. Female respondents constituted the majority, with 248 respondents or 79.49%, while male respondents accounted for 64 or 20.51%. In terms of district affiliation, Southern Pinukpuk District had the highest representation at 62 respondents or 19.87%, followed by Rizal District at 47 or 15.06%, and Northern Pinukpuk District at 41 or 13.14%. Most respondents had a master's degree (153 or 49.04%), followed by those with a bachelor's degree (130 or 41.67%) and a doctorate degree (29 or 9.29%). Most respondents were teachers (224 or 71.79%), followed by master teachers (56 or 17.95%) and school heads (32 or 10.26%).

Table 1. *Profile of respondents in the Schools Division of Kalinga (n = 312)*

Profile variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Female	248	79.49
Sex	Male	64	20.51

Educational attainment	Bachelor's degree	130	41.67
Educational attainment	Master's degree	153	49.04
Educational attainment	Doctorate degree	29	9.29
Position	Teacher	224	71.79
Position	Master Teacher	56	17.95
Position	School Head	32	10.26
Years in service	0-3 years	213	68.27
Years in service	4-10 years	57	18.27
Years in service	10 years and above	42	13.46

Extent of School Heads' Leadership Practices

Table 2 shows that the leadership practices of school heads obtained a total average weighted mean of 4.01, interpreted as Often Practiced. Among the domains, administrative leadership obtained the highest area mean ($M = 4.05$), followed by instructional leadership ($M = 3.99$) and transformational leadership ($M = 3.98$). This pattern indicates that school heads were particularly strong in managing school operations, coordinating programs, maintaining documentation, and ensuring compliance with policies. However, transformational leadership obtained the lowest area mean, suggesting that practices related to recognizing teacher contributions, fostering innovation, and inspiring teachers may still be strengthened.

Table 2. *Summary of school heads' leadership practices*

Leadership domain	Mean	Interpretation
Transformational leadership practices	3.98	Often Practiced
Instructional leadership practices	3.99	Often Practiced
Administrative leadership practices	4.05	Often Practiced
Total average weighted mean	4.01	Often Practiced

The finding supports the role of school heads as instructional and administrative leaders under the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (Department of Education, 2020). The prominence of administrative leadership may reflect the day-to-day realities of school heads in Kalinga, where operational management, compliance, communication, and coordination are essential to sustaining school functions. At the same time, the relatively lower transformational leadership mean suggests the need to reinforce vision-building, teacher recognition, innovation, and collaboration as part of leadership development.

Extent of Teachers' Instructional Practices

Table 3 presents teachers' instructional practices. The total average weighted mean was 4.48, interpreted as Always Practiced. Lesson planning obtained the highest sub-area mean ($M = 4.51$), followed by classroom management ($M = 4.50$), instructional delivery ($M = 4.49$), and student learning outcomes ($M = 4.42$). The results indicate that teachers consistently prepared lesson plans, aligned learning objectives

with curriculum standards, managed classroom routines, delivered instruction using varied strategies, and monitored learning progress.

Table 3. *Summary of teachers' instructional practices*

Instructional domain	Mean	Interpretation
Lesson planning	4.51	Always Practiced
Instructional delivery	4.49	Always Practiced
Classroom management	4.50	Always Practiced
Student learning outcomes	4.42	Always Practiced
Total average weighted mean	4.48	Always Practiced

The high instructional practice ratings suggest that teachers in the division demonstrate strong adherence to professional teaching standards. The comparatively lower score for student learning outcomes, although still rated Always Practiced, points to the continuing need to strengthen assessment practices, timely feedback, and evidence-based monitoring of learner mastery. This aligns with the emphasis of the MATATAG Curriculum on foundational skills, learner progress, and responsive instruction (Department of Education, 2024).

Differences in Leadership and Instructional Practices by Profile Variables

Tests of differences indicated that perceptions of leadership practices did not significantly differ by sex, district affiliation, or years in service. However, a significant difference was found when grouped according to highest educational attainment ($p = 0.002$), suggesting that academic preparation may influence how leadership practices are perceived. For instructional practices, the study reported no significant differences by district affiliation, position, or years in service, indicating a generally consistent implementation of instructional practices across respondent groups.

Table 4. *Summary of selected tests of difference*

Comparison	Statistical test	Statistic	p-value	Decision
Leadership practices by sex	Mann-Whitney U	$U = 49.5; Z = -1.299$	0.194	Not significant
Leadership practices by district affiliation	Kruskal-Wallis	$\chi^2 = 67.238; df = 9$	0.071	Not significant
Leadership practices by highest educational attainment	Kruskal-Wallis	$\chi^2 = 55.254; df = 2$	0.002	Significant
Leadership practices by years in service	Kruskal-Wallis	$\chi^2 = 13.617; df = 2$	0.246	Not significant
Instructional practices by district affiliation	Kruskal-Wallis	$\chi^2 = 6.19; df = 9$	0.721	Not significant
Instructional practices by position	Kruskal-Wallis	$\chi^2 = 3.24; df = 1$	0.072	Not significant
Instructional practices by years in service	Kruskal-Wallis	$\chi^2 = 0.0192; df = 1$	0.890	Not significant

The significant difference in leadership perceptions by educational attainment implies that respondents with different academic qualifications may evaluate leadership practices using different professional lenses. Those with graduate-level preparation may have greater familiarity with policy, instructional supervision, and professional standards, which can influence their evaluation of school heads' leadership practices. Meanwhile, the lack of significant differences in most instructional practice comparisons suggests that division-wide standards, monitoring systems, and professional learning opportunities may have helped establish common instructional expectations across schools.

Relationship Between Leadership Practices and Instructional Practices

The Spearman correlation analysis revealed a very weak negative relationship between school heads' leadership practices and teachers' instructional practices at the district level ($\rho = -0.164$), with a p-value of 0.651. Because the p-value was greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the relationship was not statistically significant. This means that districts with higher leadership practice ratings did not necessarily show higher instructional practice ratings in the dataset. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between school heads' leadership practices and teachers' instructional practices was accepted.

Table 5. Relationship between leadership practices and instructional practices

Variables	Spearman's rho	p-value	Interpretation
Leadership practices vs. instructional practices by district	-0.164	0.651	Not significant

This finding should not be interpreted to mean that leadership is unimportant. Rather, it suggests that within this particular district-level analysis, leadership practices did not emerge as a statistically significant correlate of teachers' instructional practices. One possible explanation is that instructional practices were already consistently high across districts, leaving limited variability for leadership ratings to explain. Another possibility is that other variables such as teacher training, curriculum support, resource access, subject area, class size, and cultural context may have stronger direct influence on instructional practice.

Leadership Practices as Predictors of Instructional Practices

Stepwise backward regression analysis was conducted to determine whether leadership practices significantly predicted teachers' instructional practices. The final model explained only 1.88% of the variance in instructional practices ($R^2 = 0.0188$), indicating very weak explanatory power. Instructional leadership remained in the final model but was not a significant predictor (estimate = -0.0646, $p = 0.613$). Transformational and administrative leadership were excluded by the stepwise procedure, indicating that they did not meet the criterion for inclusion in the final model.

Table 6. Summary of stepwise backward regression analysis

Component	Result	Interpretation
Model fit	$R = 0.137$; $R^2 = 0.0188$	Very weak explanatory power

Instructional leadership predictor Estimate = -0.0646; SE = 0.125; t = -0.518; p = 0.613 Not significant

The regression findings reinforce the correlational result. Although school heads' leadership practices were consistently observed and teachers' instructional practices were strong, leadership variables alone did not significantly predict instructional practices in this analysis. The result suggests the need for future studies to examine additional predictors such as teacher self-efficacy, professional development participation, school resources, workload, Indigenous Peoples Education implementation, assessment literacy, and learner characteristics.

Proposed Program for Enhancing Leadership and Instructional Effectiveness

Based on the findings, a targeted program is proposed to strengthen leadership practices and sustain instructional effectiveness. The program focuses on improving transformational leadership, deepening instructional supervision, strengthening assessment practices, and promoting collaborative professional learning.

Table 7. *Proposed program to enhance leadership practices and instructional effectiveness*

Program area	Objective	Key activities	Persons involved	Time frame
Leadership development	Strengthen transformational and instructional leadership competencies of school heads	Training on vision-building, teacher recognition, mentoring, feedback, and innovation leadership	DepEd division office, district supervisors, school heads	6-12 months
Instructional supervision	Improve classroom observation, coaching, and protection of instructional time	Structured observation tools, post-conference mentoring, technical assistance, and monitoring of instructional time	School heads, master teachers, department heads	Quarterly
Assessment literacy	Enhance teachers' capacity to monitor student learning outcomes	Workshops on formative assessment, feedback use, culturally responsive assessment, and data-based instructional decisions	Master teachers, LAC facilitators, teachers	Quarterly
Collaborative professional learning	Institutionalize reflective collaboration among teachers and school heads	Strengthened LAC sessions, peer mentoring, lesson study, and sharing of contextualized practices	Teachers, master teachers, school heads	Monthly
Monitoring and evaluation	Track implementation and evidence of improved practice	Documentation, progress reports, teacher feedback, classroom evidence, and learner outcome review	School M&E team, district supervisors	Annual review

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that school heads in the Schools Division of Kalinga demonstrated leadership practices that were often practiced, with administrative leadership emerging as the strongest domain. This indicates that school heads were particularly effective in managing school operations, coordinating programs, ensuring compliance, and sustaining orderly school systems. However, transformational leadership obtained the lowest domain mean, suggesting the need to further strengthen practices related to teacher recognition, innovation, shared vision, and professional motivation.

Teachers' instructional practices were always practiced overall. Lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and student learning outcomes were all rated highly, showing that teachers consistently demonstrated strong instructional performance. Nevertheless, student learning outcomes had the lowest sub-area mean among the instructional domains, implying the need to strengthen assessment, feedback, and monitoring of learner mastery.

The study further concludes that there was no statistically significant relationship between school heads' leadership practices and teachers' instructional practices at the district level. Leadership practices also did not significantly predict instructional practices in the regression model. These findings suggest that while leadership remains an important support mechanism, variations in teachers' instructional practices in this study may be better explained by other contextual, professional, and school-level factors not included in the model.

Recommendations

DepEd administrators may design targeted leadership development programs that strengthen transformational and instructional leadership competencies of school heads, particularly in teacher recognition, innovation, mentoring, and instructional support.

School heads may intensify instructional supervision through regular classroom observation, structured feedback, post-observation mentoring, and deliberate protection of instructional time, especially in schools where administrative demands may compete with teaching and learning priorities.

Teachers and master teachers may strengthen assessment literacy through sustained Learning Action Cell sessions focused on formative assessment, culturally responsive assessment, feedback utilization, and monitoring of student learning outcomes.

Schools may institutionalize collaborative professional learning structures where teachers, master teachers, and school heads jointly review lesson plans, instructional strategies, assessment tools, and learner performance data.

Future researchers may examine additional variables such as teacher self-efficacy, workload, school resources, learner characteristics, subject specialization, professional development exposure, and Indigenous Peoples Education implementation to better explain variations in instructional practices in Kalinga and similar contexts.

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