

# Collaborative School Culture of Public Secondary Schools in the Municipality of Lebak

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## ABSTRACT

The study explored the collaborative school culture in all public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak. The study aimed to determine the extent to which collaborative school culture is present in all public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak and to describe their practices.

The methodology employed quantitative research, utilizing a survey and a focus group discussion. Data were collected from all eight nationalized high schools in the municipality of Lebak, with 242 survey respondents. The focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted in four identified schools with seven participants for each FGD. The selection criteria include senior teachers, who had at least ten years of dedicated service in the field of teaching. For the data analysis, descriptive statistics was employed, and to the data gathered from the FGD, clustering of concepts or ideas were employed.

Results revealed that, generally, the extent of the presence of collaborative school culture in all public secondary schools of the municipality of Lebak in all factors namely collaborative leadership, teachers' collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnership is of moderate extent. This signifies that school leaders and teachers are moderately involved in decision-making, program development and evaluation, supporting the attainment of the mission, fostering dialogue and planning across grades and subjects, and participating in problem-solving processes.

The study identified good practices in terms of unity of purpose and learning partnership. Under the unity of purpose, the following practices were identified: integrating the schools' vision and mission in the teaching-learning process, promoting equity and inclusivity, aligning with the DepEd's mission in fostering holistic student development by employing collaborative learning strategies, incorporating technology in teaching, and integrating values in teaching. Under the learning partnership, practices include serving as role models in school and community, emphasizing parental and community involvement, promoting learning partnerships among parents and other stakeholders, using differentiated instruction in the learning process, ensuring formative assessment, and fostering sound classroom management.

**Keywords:** Collaborative School Culture, Municipality of Lebak, Unity of Purpose, Learning Partnership

## INTRODUCTION

A collaborative school culture is one in which teachers collaborate to accomplish shared goals that improve the academic performance and general well-being of students (Gruenert, 2005). It emphasizes the significance of promoting trust, transparency communication, collaborative decision-making, and shared responsibility among all members of the school community, the teachers, school leaders, staff, and even students and parents. This culture supports everyone in the school community. It improves school teaching strategies and practices,

boosts students' engagement and motivation, and uplifts academic achievements by encouraging and motivating teachers to exchange ideas, resources, and best practices. The approach of collaborative school culture acknowledges that education is a collective effort by all stakeholders requiring combined practice, expertise, dedication, and commitment. Working together collaboratively in schools creates an inclusive and supportive learning environment that nurtures the growth and development of every student.

Creating a collaborative school culture is crucial for establishing a nurturing and effective learning environment. It involves a shared dedication from teachers, administrators, students, and, sometimes, parents to work towards educational objectives. This entails having a vision, lines of communication, cooperation making, informed decisions based on data promoting inclusivity, fostering trust, problem problem-solving skills, continuous improvement efforts, acknowledging achievements, and receiving strong support from leadership – all with the primary focus of prioritizing students' educational experiences. A collaborative culture values cooperation while also encouraging success (Wagner, 2022).

However, several challenges and gaps might obstruct the effective implementation of a collaborative school culture. One of the major hurdles to collaboration is educators' limited time. Teachers' schedules are frequently substantial, making finding time for collaborative activities such as meetings, planning, and professional development difficult.

Resistance to change is a common barrier in any organization, including schools. Some teachers, staff, or administrators may resist collaborative practices because of fear of change or a belief that existing practices are sufficient. Additionally, many teachers may not have received training on collaborative techniques or have access to the necessary resources to facilitate effective collaboration.

Effective communication is essential for collaboration, but schools may suffer from poor communication practices. In some collaborative efforts, participation may be uneven, with certain individuals or groups taking on a more significant role while others contribute less. This imbalance can create tension and hinder effective collaboration.

Trust and respect among all teachers, school leaders, students, and stakeholders are also crucial for successfully building a collaborative school culture. A lack of trust among members in school can undermine collaborative efforts. Collaboration should ultimately benefit students, but in some cases, it can become too focused on administrative or teacher interests, rather than addressing students' needs and improving their learning outcomes.

It is important then to understand and know the practices in a school setting. By thoroughly describing and exploring the essence of collaborative school practices across all public secondary schools in Lebak this study provides valuable insights into collaborative school practices and identifies areas of strength but also pinpoints areas that require improvement. Thus, teachers and administrators can implement targeted strategies to strengthen collaborative school culture.

By gaining a comprehensive understanding of the collaborative practices within school settings, teachers and school leaders can effectively influence these practices to create a more supportive and conducive learning environment. Through the thorough description and exploration of both the highest and least factors, teachers, administrators, and stakeholders have insights to enhance and embrace collaborative school culture practices within public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak. Furthermore, by emphasizing the value of collaborative school culture practices, teachers and administrators are encouraged to adopt to new perspective and recognize the value of collaboration as a driver of student success can motivate stakeholders to actively embrace and prioritize collaborative initiatives within their educational institutions. Through collective effort and commitment to collaborative practices, Lebak's public secondary schools can cultivate a culture of collaboration that maximizes student learning outcomes and fosters a supportive and enriching educational experience for all.

## Statements of the Problem

Generally, the study aimed to describe the collaborative school culture of public secondary schools in the Municipality of Lebak.

Specifically, it did the following:

1. Determine the extent to which collaborative school culture is present in all public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak.
2. Describe the collaborative school culture practices among public secondary schools in the Municipality of Lebak as experienced by the teachers.

## METHODOLOGY

This section focuses on the researcher's research methods used to answer the specific problems posed for investigation in a systematic manner. The research method, population, illustration of the research design, research instruments, data collection procedure, and data used for accurate data analysis and interpretation were all discussed in detail.

### Research Design

In this study, the researcher used a descriptive quantitative research design. Figure 2 illustrates the research design of the study. A descriptive method was used to determine to what extent collaborative school culture is present in all Public Secondary Schools in the Municipality of Lebak. To describe the collaborative school culture practices among public secondary schools in the Municipality of Lebak as experienced by the teachers, the researcher conducted a Focus Group discussion (FGD) with the selected participants in four identified schools that have garnered the two highest mean and two lowest mean ratings in collaborative school factors.

### Sources of Data

There were two sources of data in this study, the respondents and the FGD participants.

### Respondents

The respondents of the study were all public secondary school teachers in the municipality of Lebak. The study included the entire population of teachers in all public secondary schools in the Municipality.

### Participants

The participants of the study came from the four schools that garnered the two highest-mean and two lowest-mean in the different factors of the Collaborative School Culture Survey. There were seven participants of FGD from each school. They were all teachers and three of them had taught for over ten years in the school. In total, there were 28 participants in four FGDs conducted.

### Research Instruments

The survey questionnaires used in this study were adapted from the study of Gruenert and Valentine (1998 in Gruenert, 2005). The researcher requested permission from the author, and a formal letter granting permission to use the instrument was sent via email. The FGD guide questions were based on the results of the survey. The questions were all about the collaborative school culture practices experienced by teachers in school.

**School Culture Survey (SCS).** The School Culture Survey (Gruenert & Valentine, 1998) measured six factors of school culture as perceived by teachers. The School Culture Survey by Gruenert and Valentine (1998)

conducted an extensive review of literature related to school improvement, culture, and leadership to determine many descriptors of collaborative cultures (Gruenert, 2005).

The instrument used in the original study was a survey developed in 1998 to assess collaborative school culture. Based on the literature review, descriptors of collaborative culture were identified and used as survey items. A pilot survey was administered to 634 teachers in Indiana, which was then reduced to 35 items using varimax rotation. Six factors emerged: collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnership. Validity was established by correlating with another established survey. The survey was conducted during the 2002-2003 school year with 2,750 usable responses. These factors were then correlated with student achievement data in math and language arts to assess their impact.

In this study, the instrument was adapted, and the quantitative method was used to measure the school collaborative culture. The school culture survey consists of 35 five-point Likert scale items from 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, and 5= strongly agree. Higher ratings on the factors of the collaborative School Culture Survey (SCS) demonstrate stronger agreement with the survey statement. The quantitative data was analyzed through Microsoft Excel.

The undecided is treated as having no value in the survey. All respondents who shaded more than three in each indicator in undecided have been removed from the survey. The decision to exclude respondents who selected “undecided” for more than three indicators aimed to focus the analysis on individuals with clearer opinions or preferences. By removing those who are undecided, the dataset becomes more efficient, potentially leading to more precise insights from the data. The Likert scale during the processing of data was changed to four levels instead of five.

The reliability coefficients and the corresponding items within the six factors are outlined in Table 2. “The SCS has strong reliability, that is, teachers are likely to interpret the survey items similarly” (Gruenert et. al, 2015).

Table 2 Reliability Coefficient (Cronbach’s alpha) for the six Factors in the School Culture Survey

Factors of School Culture	Items	Reliabilities
<b>Collaborative leadership</b>	2, 7, 11, 14, 18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 32, 34	.91
<b>Teacher collaboration</b>	3, 8, 15, 23, 29, 33	.83
<b>Unity of purpose</b>	5, 12, 19, 27, 31	.82
<b>Professional development</b>	1, 9, 16, 24, 30	.87
<b>Collegial support</b>	4, 10, 17, 25	.80
<b>Learning Partnership</b>	6, 13, 21, 25	.66

Note: Gruenert & Valentine’s (1998) School Culture Survey

**The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide.** The questions in the FGD guide were drawn from the highest and lowest factors; they include “unity of purpose” and “learning partnership”. For the unity of purpose, the question came from the indicators that garnered the highest mean based on the results of the survey. The highest indicators are on the areas “on how teachers support the mission of the school”, and “on how teachers understand the mission of the school”.

On the other hand, results of the survey show that the factor that has been rated the lowest is “learning partnership”. So, the questions were drawn from the two lowest indicators of that specific factor. The indicators with the lowest ratings are on the area “whether students generally accept responsibility for their schooling, for example, students engage mentally in class, complete homework assignments, and teachers”, and “parents have common expectations for student performance”.

The questions were checked and validated by experts in the field of education.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to key ethical principles to ensure participants' well-being and rights. Participants received comprehensive information about the study's purpose, use of results, and access to findings, allowing informed decisions about participation. Participation was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time without affecting services or relationships. The study aimed to avoid physical or psychological harm, allowing participants to skip distressing questions. Confidentiality was strictly maintained, keeping identifying information private and excluded from published results. Only relevant components were evaluated, ensuring the study remained focused and simple.

### **Data Gathering Procedures**

In gathering the data, a survey and a focus group discussion were conducted. In conducting the survey, the researcher obtained permission from the author of the survey questionnaires, followed by seeking approval to utilize the survey. A formal request was then submitted to the school division superintendent, asking permission to conduct the study in all public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak. Upon approval, letters of permission were sent personally by the researcher to the school heads of all public secondary schools detailing the research process and requesting the exact number of teachers in each school. The researcher individually administered the survey to respondents and gave allotted time to complete the survey data collection took place on the same day to ensure efficiency.

Upon collecting data from all schools, statistical analysis was performed. Based on the results of the survey, the researcher identified the highest mean factors and lowest mean factors. Questions were then based on these factors, specifically on the factor indicators for the formulation of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide questions. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide questions underwent validation from experts.

In the conduct of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) interviews, the goal was to describe the collaborative school culture practices among public secondary schools in the Municipality as experienced by the teachers. Following the validation, the researcher revisited the four determined schools with the highest factors and lowest mean factor scores based on the survey. With the approval of the school principal, letters of consent were provided to the participants, outlining the purpose of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and emphasizing voluntary participation. FGDs were scheduled at convenient times approved by the principals and participants. The FGD was conducted in four different schools with seven participants each. There were four FGD sessions in total.

The FGDs took place in a conference room to provide a comfortable and secure environment. The session was recorded using a cellphone for transcription purposes, with permission from the participants, and the confidentiality of the gathered data was explained. Each FGD was approximately more or less 1 hour and 30 minutes. The researcher listened attentively to the participants, who felt comfortable expressing their experiences openly and honestly.

After the FGDs in four schools, data were transcribed, and significant statements were highlighted. Concepts and categories were then clustered to derive practices of the public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Collaborative school culture refers to an educational environment in which teachers, administrators, staff, and, sometimes, even students work together in a spirit of cooperation, mutual support, and shared responsibility to achieve common goals and improve various aspects of teaching and learning. The study focuses on the extent of presence of the different factors of collaborative school culture among the public secondary schools



in the municipality of Lebak namely: collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of Purpose, collegial support, and learning partnership.

### **Collaborative School Culture of Secondary Schools in the Municipality of Lebak**

The summary of collaborative school culture in all public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak with a mean of 3.31 and interpreted to a moderate extent is shown in Table 10.

Table 10 Summary Results of Collaborative School Culture in All Public Secondary Schools in the Municipality of Lebak

<b>School Culture Survey Factors</b>	<b>mean</b>	<b>std. Deviation</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<b>Collaborative Leadership</b>	3.32	0.02	To a moderate extent
<b>Teacher Collaboration</b>	3.27	0.01	To a moderate extent
<b>Professional Development</b>	3.37	0.07	To a moderate extent
<b>Unity of Purpose</b>	3.42	0.02	To a moderate extent
<b>Collegial Support</b>	3.32	0.02	To a moderate extent
<b>Learning Partnership</b>	3.25	0.02	To a moderate extent
<b>Collaborative School Culture</b>	<b>3.31</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>To a moderate extent</b>

Range: 1:00-1.50= to a very limited extent, 1.51-2.50= to a limited extent, 2.51-3.50= to a moderate extent, 3.51=4:00= to a high extent

The data illustrate a moderate extent in all factors. It indicates that the highest factor is unity of purpose, with a mean of 3.42 and a standard deviation of 0.02, interpreted as to a moderate extent.

On the other hand, the lowest factor is learning partnership, with a mean of 3.25 and a standard deviation of 0.02, also interpreted as to a moderate extent. These two factors were used to explore collaborative school culture practices as experienced by the teachers.

All public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak have a moderate extent of collaborative school culture, with a mean of 3.31 and a standard deviation of 0.02. As a result, this suggests that there is still room for improvement to attain to the highest extent. It emphasizes the importance of ongoing efforts to enhance collaborative school culture with public secondary schools to ultimately improve the extent of its presence among teachers.

Thus, the school is encouraged to engage in assessment and reflection for continuous improvement of collaborative school culture. García-Martínez et al. (2021) affirm the greater benefit of collaborative school culture includes improved student academic performance and instructional processes related to instructional processes. Moreover, collaborative school culture is essential for school improvement as it promotes a dynamic relationship between mutual and deep learning through various ways (Jäppinen, Leclerc, & Tubin, 2016).

### **Collaborative School Culture Practices**

Summary of collaborative school culture practices among public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak as experienced by the teachers are described in this section. Based on the results of the survey, the highest mean factor is unity of purpose, and the lowest mean factor is the learning partnership. These two factors were explored in the collaborative school culture practices as experienced by the teachers. The collaborative school culture practices in terms of unity of purpose as with the highest mean was explored and described in this section as experienced by teachers.

Collaborative school culture practices among public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak as experienced by the teachers in terms of unity of purpose and learning partnerships as identified as the highest mean factor and lowest mean factors among six factors based on the results of the school culture survey.

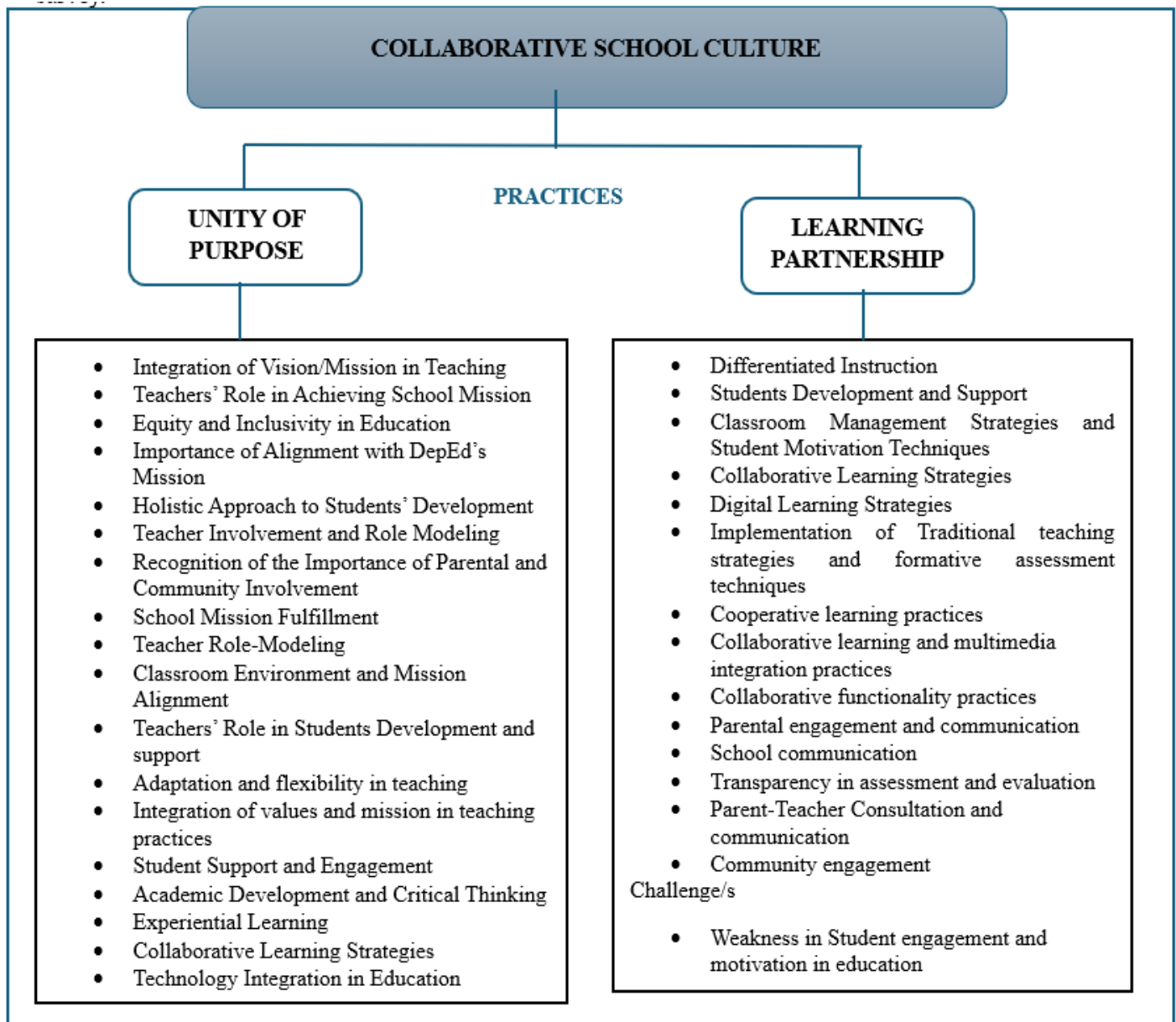


Figure 4. Summary of Collaborative school culture practices among public secondary schools in the Municipality of Lebak as experienced by the teachers in terms of unity of purpose and learning partnership.

Based on Figure 4, in describing the collaborative school culture in all public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak, two main factors were identified and explored: unity of purpose and learning partnership.

Under the unity of purpose, practices such as integrating vision and mission in teaching, emphasizing the teacher's role in achieving school missions, promoting equity and inclusivity in education, and ensuring alignment with DepEd's mission were practiced. Additionally, fostering a holistic approach to student development was a significant factor. Moreover, teacher involvement and role-modeling, recognition of the importance of parental and community involvement, and ensuring school mission fulfillment were highlighted. The role of teachers in aligning classroom environments with the school's mission, supporting students' development and flexibility in teaching methods, integrating values and mission into teaching practices, and promoting student engagement and academic critical thinking were also emphasized.

In the factor of learning partnership, various practices were identified, including differentiated instruction, support for student development, implementation of classroom management strategies, and employment of student motivation techniques. Collaborative learning strategies, digital learning approaches, and formative learning techniques in assessment and evaluation practices were also noted. Additionally, traditional teaching methods, cooperative learning practices, and integrating multimedia into collaborative learning were observed. Moreover, ensuring collaborative functionality, motivating learning activities, and fostering communication through various channels such as letters, home visitation, and online platforms were essential in parental involvement and communication practices. Community engagement is also important in fostering a collaborative school culture where parents, teachers, students, and stakeholders are being recognized and valued. These are the school practices and activities that convene the teachers, parents, and students as a community such as a parent-teacher association, school events and celebrations, and the bayanihan spirit embodied in the school governance council, they are fundamental in building a cohesive and thriving school community. These practices are a part of community engagement wherein teachers and stakeholders convene.

However, challenges were also identified, in the sharing of the teacher-participants in all public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak. One significant challenge identified was the weakness in student engagement and motivation in education. These findings underscore the importance of addressing challenges in collaborative school culture practices, particularly in enhancing student engagement and motivation, to improve the overall quality of education and support the ongoing improvement of collaborative school culture in all public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak.

## Insights

The collaborative school culture practices of teachers in public secondary schools in Lebak municipality expressed good practices in terms of unity of purpose and learning partnership factors. The emphasis on integrating vision and mission in teaching practices highlights the importance of a unified purpose among teachers, enhancing coordination and coherence in delivering teaching and learning to students. The practices of teachers aimed at promoting and maintaining equity and inclusivity emphasize a commitment to providing equal opportunities for all students and fostering a more inclusive, supportive, and enriching educational experience. Advancing and investing in professional development and cultivating leadership skills among teachers and school leaders are vital for sustaining a collaborative school culture, contributing to the overall effectiveness and success of the educational system.

The focus on holistic student development acknowledges the importance of nurturing the overall development of students together with academic skills and preparing them for success in various aspects of life. However, the lack of students' engagement and motivation has been a challenge for teachers. This implies the need for targeted mechanisms to improve learning outcomes and educational quality. Moreover, teachers should embrace digital learning approaches and incorporate multimedia into collaborative learning to reflect a recognition of the changing nature of education, demanding schools to remain agile and adaptable in teaching and learning approaches to cater to all diverse students.

Despite these challenges, the findings emphasize the ongoing efforts needed to improve collaborative school cultures. By leveraging effective practices and addressing challenges, schools can create inclusive, supportive environments conducive to student success.

Fostering communication has been essential in collaborative school culture through various channels where school leaders, teachers, stakeholders, and students are working together for the benefit of the community. It includes parental involvement and community engagement and strengthens the partnership between schools and the broader community, essential for supporting and creating an inclusive educational system.

The comprehensive nature of collaborative school culture practices and the importance of addressing the challenges while building and maintaining upon existing strengths enhances educational outcomes and contributes to the holistic development of students in the municipality of Lebak and across various regions.



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## SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

### Summary of Findings

The extent of the presence of collaborative school culture in all public secondary schools of the municipality of Lebak is generally to a moderate extent. In terms of the different factors, namely, collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnership are all to a moderate extent.

Collaborative leadership factor reveals that teachers are involved in the decision-making process and leaders take time to praise teachers who perform well. The teacher collaboration factor indicates that teachers work together to develop and evaluate programs and projects, and to have opportunities for dialogue and planning across grades and subjects. The professional development factor shows that the faculty values school improvement. The unity of purpose factor reveals that teachers support and understand the mission of the school. The collegial support factor shows that teachers work cooperatively in groups. Additionally, the learning partnership factor points out that teachers are willing to help whenever there is a problem.

In the collaborative school culture practices two factors were explored. These are unity of purpose and learning partnership. The practices that emerged on the themes drawn are the integration of vision/mission in teaching, the teacher's role in achieving school mission, equity and inclusivity in education, the importance of alignment with DepEd's mission, holistic approach to student development, teacher involvement and role modeling, recognition of the importance of parental and community involvement, school mission fulfillment, teacher role modeling, classroom environment and mission alignment, teacher's role in students development and support, adaptation and flexibility in teaching, integration of values and mission in teaching practices, student support and engagement, academic development and critical thinking, experiential learning, collaborative learning strategies, and technology integration in education.

On the other hand, the learning partnership includes the following practices: differentiated instruction, student development and support, classroom management strategies and student motivation techniques, collaborative learning strategies, digital learning strategies, implementing traditional teaching strategies and formative assessment techniques, cooperative learning practices, collaborative learning and multimedia integration practices, collaborative functionality practices, parental engagement and communication, school communication, transparency in assessment and evaluation, parent-teacher consultation and communication, and community engagement. However, one weakness emerged from the theme: student engagement and motivation in education.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is safe to generalize that all public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak have manifested a moderate presence of collaborative school culture. Results revealed that generally, the extent of the presence of collaborative school culture in all public secondary schools of the municipality of Lebak in all factors, namely: collaborative leadership, teachers' collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnership is of moderate extent. This signifies that school leaders and teachers are moderately involved in decision-making, program development and evaluation, supporting the attainment of the mission, fostering dialogue and planning across grades and subjects, and participating in problem-solving processes.

The study identified good practices in terms of unity of purpose and learning partnership. Under the unity of purpose, the following practices were identified: integrating the schools' vision and mission in the teaching-learning process, promoting equity and inclusivity, aligning with the DepEd's mission in fostering holistic student development by employing collaborative learning strategies, incorporating technology in teaching, and integrating values in teaching. Under the learning partnership, practices include serving as role models in school and community, emphasizing parental and community involvement, promoting learning partnerships

among parents and other stakeholders, using differentiated instruction in the learning process, ensuring formative assessment, and fostering sound classroom management.

However, there is room for improvement in learning partnership factors. To address the challenges, the researcher suggests a mechanism for improving motivational approaches in teaching-learning developed by the researcher. This strategy aims to enhance the overall quality of education and support the ongoing improvement of collaborative school culture in all public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak.

## Recommendations

The researcher suggests that the Department of Education strengthen collaborative school culture among the public secondary schools in the municipality of Lebak by addressing challenges, especially in learning partnerships and students' motivation and engagement in education.

The researcher recommends that school heads encourage and implement collaborative school culture practices in their respective institutions by providing training, promoting leadership on collaborative endeavors, and continuously evaluating collaborative activities of teachers in the attainment of the school's vision and mission.

For DepEd officials, it is recommended to consider study findings on collaborative school culture and formulate policies that emphasize the benefits of collaborative practices in student learning and school improvement.

It is recommended that the school governance council and other stakeholders actively foster communication, cooperation, and training for stakeholders' development in managing classroom issues and resource allocation.

They may also provide relevant training and support for teachers to implement collaboration in classroom management, focusing on collaboration skills and building supportive learning environments. In this way, the collaborative school culture may be enhanced and improved to the highest extent possible. Furthermore, effective strategies and practices within collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, and collegial support may be explored.

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