Empowering School Leaders: Strategic Responses to Leadership Deficits in Basic Education

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ABSTRACT

This study examines strategies to address leadership challenges in Philippine basic education, with particular attention to sustainability-oriented frameworks. Using Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) of official reports and scholarly literature, the paper identifies persistent issues such as weak instructional leadership, excessive managerial burdens, limited professional development, inadequate systemic support, and insufficient digital and crisis leadership capacities. Findings reveal that these deficits stem largely from inadequate training and fragile support structures within schools and educational institutions. To respond, the study highlights empowerment strategies grounded in sustainability principles, including evidence-based decision-making, collaborative and distributed leadership, digital competence, and supportive policy frameworks. International initiatives such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) provide valuable guidance for strengthening leadership capacity, particularly in advancing equity, resilience, and long-term educational reform by 2030.

Keywords: leadership capacity, empowerment strategies, Philippine basic education, sustainable development, school governance

INTRODUCTION

Education leadership is generally acknowledged to be an important building block of school excellence and student success (Rivas, 2025). Around the world, school leaders face various daunting problems and are expected to create a positive and inclusive atmosphere of learning, and to bring about positive improvements within the system (Deliarte-Ramos, 2025). It was observed that within the Philippines, school administrators have become progressively important as a solution to the problems that exist within the basic education system through their dwindling performance and various issues of quality and accessibility of education that must be corrected and improved through good and effective leadership by DepEd and EDCOM-II initiatives and mandates alike (EDCOM-II, 2025).

However, leadership gaps in basic education remain an ever-present issue within the Philippines. Unqualified leaders head many educational organizations with insufficient training, expertise, or strategic support systems (Rivas, 2025). The current leadership programs lack meaningfully tailored strategies, making current leaders ineffective against the special needs of schools they handle (Deliarte-Ramos, 2025). Furthermore, current nationwide initiatives have not provided an effective strategy to harness school administrators effectively to bring positive changes in schools. Thus, there remains an imminent need to explore ways to build leadership capacity in schools through scientifically designed strategies (EDCOM-II, 2025).

The SDGs serve as a valuable tool for filling this gap. Resources such as the SDGs in the Classroom Toolkit and Dimensions of Youth Leadership & Social Responsibility Education focus on the aspects of system thinking, equity, and leadership through participation, which form crucial skills for achieving sustainability (UNESCO,

2021). Such materials act as good resources or guides on the incorporation of sustainability principles within leadership skills and managing a school.

This paper aims to help bridge the gap found in previous studies by analyzing strategic ways to address a gap within the basic education sector, particularly in the Philippines. It also seeks to determine ways through strategic empowerment aspects that would enable more competent leaders to lead more effectively and be more proactive in implementing reforms, not only those that have already been achieved, but also those that have yet to be applied, especially in the education sector. This paper will use a mixed approach to explore what has happened through previous experiences in different places, working through a global strategy about views and policies from UNESCO, especially about educational development policies, aiming to correspond to and address the basic implementation through tools from the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and Environmental and Sustainability Development approaches about objectives from the year 2030.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Philippine Context

Leadership capacity has long been recognized as a critical factor in improving the quality of Philippine basic education. The EDCOM-II Year Two Report (2025) highlights persistent gaps in the preparation and support structures available to school heads, noting that these deficiencies hinder the implementation of foundational learning reforms. Empirical studies reinforce this concern. For example, Masalon et al. (2022) found that shared leadership and micropolitics competence significantly influence school performance in Sarangani Province, underscoring the need for leadership that extends beyond administrative tasks. Similarly, Uy and Alo (2025) observed that while administrators in Davao Occidental demonstrate strong leadership potential, irregularities in project implementation remain prevalent.

From a cultural perspective, Filipino leadership is traditionally grounded in values such as integrity, collective responsibility, and public service (Alfiler & Nicolas, 1997). However, these values are not consistently embedded in leadership training programs, limiting their influence on practice. Structural barriers also persist. For instance, GUIDON (2025) reports that overloaded work responsibilities prevent teachers from actively engaging in instructional leadership roles, thereby weakening collaborative governance within schools.

Taken together, these findings reveal a dual challenge: systemic constraints that limit leadership effectiveness and cultural values that remain underutilized in leadership development. Addressing these issues requires not only technical and managerial training but also culturally grounded approaches that reinforce Filipino values of integrity and collective responsibility.

Regional (ASEAN) Context

Leadership challenges in education are not unique to the Philippines; similar issues are evident across ASEAN. Azman et al. (2024) emphasize the absence of coherent leadership development policies, inadequate training facilities, and the lack of context-sensitive paradigms in many Southeast Asian countries. These gaps reveal the difficulty of applying Western leadership models, which often fail to align with the socio-cultural realities of the region.

Institutional weaknesses further compound these challenges. The Asian Development Bank (2022) notes that governance imbalances undermine educational efficiency and widen systemic gaps. Likewise, Jones (2010) highlights ASEAN's vulnerability to suboptimal implementation due to fragile institutional capacity, which directly affects leadership training and school governance.

Taken together, these findings underscore three interrelated constraints: (1) policy gaps in leadership development, (2) cultural misalignment of imported leadership paradigms, and (3) institutional fragility that limits effective implementation. Addressing these requires regionally grounded leadership frameworks that integrate local cultural values while strengthening institutional capacity for sustainable reform.

Global Context

Globally, leadership capacity in education remains a pressing concern. The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report

(2024/25) underscores the lack of coherent policies for recruiting, developing, and supporting school leaders, despite their pivotal role in improving learning outcomes. Similarly, the Global Leadership Forecast (DDI, 2025) reveals alarming trends: nearly 40% of leaders expressed intentions to leave their roles, citing insufficient preparation for future challenges such as strategic planning, change management, and crisis response.

Comparative evidence highlights stark contrasts between developed and developing contexts. In the United Kingdom, the National Professional Qualification for Headship provides structured mentoring and evidence-informed approaches to leadership development (Murphy, 2018). In Canada, leadership programs emphasize coaching, collaboration, and data-driven decision-making (Wallace Foundation, 2023). By contrast, resource-constrained nations such as Kiribati rely on context-sensitive, community-based approaches that prioritize collaboration and adaptability over formalized training (Owen et al., 2020).

These findings illustrate a global tension: while structured, well-funded leadership programs in developed nations yield measurable improvements, many developing countries must innovate within limited resources. This disparity underscores the need for localized, culturally grounded leadership models that balance global best practices with the realities of diverse educational systems.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) to examine leadership capacity and empowerment strategies in Philippine basic education. QCA is particularly suited for analyzing textual data from policy documents, reports, and scholarly literature, as it enables both inductive theme discovery and deductive application of theoretical frameworks (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Unlike purely descriptive content analysis, QCA emphasizes interpretation within social, cultural, and policy contexts. This makes it appropriate for exploring leadership issues such as instructional competence, systemic support, and sustainability-oriented approaches. The design ensures systematic, replicable analysis while remaining sensitive to contextual nuances.

Document Selection Criteria

Documents were selected based on the following criteria:

- **Source credibility**: Only official government reports (e.g., DepEd, EDCOM-II), international frameworks (e.g., UNESCO SDG/ESD toolkits), and peer-reviewed publications were included.

- **Timeframe**: Materials published between 2020–2025 were prioritized to ensure relevance to current leadership challenges.

- **Scope**: Sources had to address leadership capacity, empowerment strategies, or systemic issues in education.

- **Accessibility**: Only open-access or publicly available documents were considered.

DATA SOURCES

The dataset comprised:

- National reports (e.g., EDCOM-II Year Two Report, DepEd memoranda)

- International frameworks (e.g., UNESCO SDG4 and ESD 2030 toolkits)

- Peer-reviewed journal articles on leadership and governance

- Policy briefs and commentaries from reputable institutions

This digital corpus provided a comprehensive basis for analyzing leadership challenges and strategies across local, regional, and global contexts.

ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE

The analysis followed a three-stage process:

- Open coding – Initial themes were identified from text segments related to leadership capacity, empowerment, and systemic barriers.

- Categorization – Codes were grouped into broader categories (e.g., instructional leadership, managerial capacity, digital leadership).

- Theme development – Categories were synthesized into overarching themes aligned with sustainability frameworks and leadership theories.

Both inductive (emerging from data) and deductive (guided by SDG/ESD principles) approaches were applied to ensure theoretical grounding and contextual relevance.

VALIDATION OF AI-ASSISTED ANALYSIS

AI-supported tools (e.g., NVivo, ATLAS.ti) were used to facilitate coding and theme detection. To ensure validity:

- Automated coding outputs were manually cross-checked for accuracy.

- Triangulation was applied by comparing findings across multiple document types (policy, academic, international frameworks).

- Reliability was enhanced through iterative coding cycles and peer feedback.

This process ensured that AI assistance complemented, rather than replaced, human interpretation.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The paper prides itself on ensuring a rigorous ethical investigation into this topic because it relies solely on web-based resources available for public perusal, thereby bypassing any human participant concerns regarding privacy, informed consent, or confidentiality. Only reputable, publicly verified information found within governmental, institutional, and peer-reviewed publications, as well as reputable news media, is considered, thereby ensuring a high degree of accuracy and trustworthiness within the collected information. Proper citation of the information to avoid any issues of plagiarism and/or copyright infringement on the part of the researcher is, of course, a given. With AI-based content analysis, special consideration is given to ensuring accurate representation and context of information to avoid deceiving any of the original researchers' original conclusions and recommendations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership Capacity Among School Heads in Philippine Basic Education

Online resources readily available to the public often highlight some recurring themes about the leadership capacity of basic education administrators in the Philippine setting. These include and are not limited to, continuous requirements in terms of proficiency in management, instructional leadership, and professional growth and development. Leadership effectiveness is, in fact, affected by systemic constraints such as overload

of administrative functions, lack of supportive environment, and bureaucratic processes, as indicated in papers such as EDCOM-II Reports, DepEd Memos, and global equivalents. The demands on school administrators are further heightened by new and challenging requirements in terms of crisis and inclusive education, as well as leading in the digital age. Leadership capacity is, in these sources, described as complex in terms of needing not only technical and instructional competence but also the skills to interact and interface with communities, manage resources, and deal with complex policy environments.

TABLE 1. Leadership capacity among school heads in Philippine basic education

Major Theme	Description / Pattern Observed in Online Materials	Examples of Indicators Found in Documents
1. Instructional Leadership Competence	Emphasis on improving instructional supervision, curriculum implementation, and learning outcomes. Online materials repeatedly highlight that many school heads still need stronger instructional leadership training.	- Difficulty monitoring teaching quality - Need for upskilling on curriculum reforms (K–12, MATATAG) - Weak use of data to improve learning outcomes
2. Administrative and Managerial Capacity	Reports identify persistent gaps in managerial skills, especially in resource allocation, financial management, and school operations. School leaders often take on heavy administrative workloads that limit their instructional role.	- Financial and procurement challenges - Overlapping tasks and role overload - Need for management training and systems support
3. Professional Development and Continuous Learning	A strong theme across references is the insufficient access to high-quality professional development for principals and head teachers. Online frameworks emphasize the need for continuous training aligned with global standards.	- Limited leadership training opportunities - Unequal access between urban and rural schools - Need for competency-based leadership development programs
4. Policy and Systemic Support from DepEd and LGUs	Many documents highlight structural barriers, including bureaucratic processes and lack of local capacity support. Effective leadership is often constrained by systemic challenges beyond the control of school heads.	- Insufficient support staff in schools - Fragmented governance structures - Policy gaps and unclear role expectations
5. Community and Stakeholder Engagement	Leadership capacity is often evaluated through the ability of school heads to mobilize parents, LGUs, and community organizations. Online sources highlight this as essential for school improvement.	- Variability in parent/community participation - Challenges in building partnerships - Need for stronger communication and school-community collaboration
6. Digital Leadership and Technology Integration	With the shift toward digital learning, school heads are expected to lead technology adoption. Many online materials indicate that digital leadership competencies remain uneven.	- Limited digital literacy or ICT planning skills - Need for support in implementing digital innovation strategies - Challenges in managing tech-based learning systems

| 7. Equity, Inclusion, and Crisis Leadership | International frameworks like SDG 4 and ESD highlight the leader's role in promoting inclusive, resilient, and sustainable learning environments. Philippine documents show gaps in capacity for crisis response and inclusive education. | - Learning recovery needs post-pandemic - Inclusive education training gaps - Weak preparedness for disasters or crises |

Empowerment Strategies for School Leaders Highlighted in Online Reports, Policy Documents, and International Frameworks

These findings in Table 2 indicate that empowerment strategies for school leaders tend to revolve around improving leadership capacity, encouraging collaborative decision-making, embedding information technology skills, and building sustainability into school governance. Global policies such as the "SDGs and ESD for 2030" place great emphasis on inclusive, equity-based, and forward-looking leadership. Other national reports like "EDCOM-II" stress data-based decisions, partnerships, and systemic support. These combined themes discuss and identify how school leaders must tackle contemporary issues in education and ensure effective school governance with sustainable practices of school management.

TABLE 2. Empowerment Strategies for School Leaders

Theme / Category	Description of Strategy	Examples from Online Reports & Frameworks (e.g., SDGs, ESD 2030, policy documents)
1. Capacity-Building and Professional Development	Strengthening school leaders' competencies through continuous training, leadership programs, and upskilling opportunities.	SDG 4 emphasizes quality education through strong leadership; ESD 2030 highlights ongoing professional capacity development; national reports call for leadership training in instructional, managerial, and transformational leadership.
2. Data-Driven and Evidence-Based Decision-Making	Encouraging school leaders to use data analytics, school performance indicators, and monitoring tools to guide decisions.	EDCOM-II reports emphasize the use of evidence in policymaking; UNESCO frameworks promote data-informed planning for inclusive and quality education.
3. Collaborative and Distributed Leadership	Promoting shared leadership among teachers, staff, parents, and community stakeholders to support school goals.	ESD 2030 and SDG 17 highlight partnerships; many policy documents encourage school-community collaboration and teacher leadership empowerment.
4. Digital and Technological Empowerment	Equipping leaders with digital literacy and ICT integration skills to manage modern learning environments.	SDG 4.4 focuses on digital skills; ESD 2030 promotes tech-enabled teaching and leadership; national reports recommend strengthening ICT policies and training.
5. Policy and Systems Support for Leadership Autonomy	Providing school leaders with decision-making authority, clear guidelines, and supportive governance structures.	Policy briefs stress decentralization and empowerment of school heads; SDG policies advocate enabling environments for leaders to implement localized strategies.
6. Inclusive and Equity-Oriented Leadership	Training leaders to promote inclusion, gender equality, culturally responsive education,	SDG 4.5 focuses on eliminating disparities; ESD 2030 promotes inclusive systems; national

	and supportive learning environments.	documents emphasize supporting marginalized learners.
7. Community Engagement and Stakeholder Partnership	Encouraging stronger partnerships with parents, LGUs, NGOs, and community sectors to support school programs.	EDCOM-II and SDG frameworks emphasize whole-of-community approaches; ESD 2030 highlights participatory governance.
8. Sustainability and Future-Oriented Leadership	Developing leaders who integrate sustainability principles, environmental awareness, and future skills into school planning.	ESD for 2030 framework explicitly calls for sustainability-focused leadership; SDG 4.7 requires education for sustainable development in schools.
9. Well-being and Support Systems for School Leaders	Promoting mental health, workload management, and emotional resilience programs to support leader well-being.	Global and national reports emphasize leadership burnout prevention; ESD 2030 encourages supportive environments for educators and leaders.

Themes on Systemic Challenges and Barriers to Effective School Leadership

The table below lists ten systemic challenges identified to impact the effectiveness of school administration within Philippine basic education, as have been observed both regionally and internationally. Data available online consistently shows that school administrators take leadership positions inadequately prepared, and without opportunities for sustained learning to upgrade this lack, as a call for leadership professionalism is a worldwide tendency. The workload of Philippine school administrators is excessive, restricting their involvement in instructional leadership, a condition already reported in other developing nations. Inadequate resources, such a lack of funding, technology, and infrastructure, continue to limit strategic administration of schools, conditions found to be common to other low- and middle-income nations. There are already imperfections of implementation, a lack of autonomy, and other issues regarding support infrastructure, a weak foundation for a leader to completely implement their tasks. School administrators, already pressed by socioeconomic factors, encounter problems related to human resources, and a growing digital divide between schools, conditions making it tougher to lead a school. Increasing demands for accountability continue to place a burden on administrators, conditions already mirrored in international studies.

TABLE 3. Themes on Systemic Challenges and Barriers to Effective School Leadership

Major Theme	**Description of the Challenge**	**Philippine Context**	**Regional / Global Perspectives**
1. Insufficient Leadership Preparation and Training	Lack of adequate pre-service and ongoing professional development; leadership roles assumed without formal preparation.	Many principals enter leadership positions without standardized or competency-based training; limited access to continuous learning programs.	Similar gaps reported in developing countries; global calls for leadership professionalization (UNESCO, OECD).
2. Heavy Administrative Workload	School leaders overloaded with clerical and bureaucratic tasks, reducing instructional leadership focus.	Principals frequently burdened by compliance reporting and administrative duties tied to DepEd policies.	Common in low- and middle-income systems where principals juggle multiple managerial responsibilities.

3. Resource Constraints	Shortages in funding, facilities, technology, and instructional materials.	Public schools often face inadequate budgets and infrastructure challenges, hindering strategic school improvement.	Developing countries report similar issues; resource inequality affects leadership effectiveness.
4. Policy Implementation Gaps	Disconnect between national policies and on-the-ground implementation.	Frequent changes in DepEd directives; lack of clarity and insufficient support for implementation.	Globally, overly centralized systems face similar challenges in executing reforms at school level.
5. Limited Autonomy and Decision-Making Power	School leaders lack authority to make context-sensitive decisions.	Philippine school heads often constrained by centralized governance and bureaucratic approvals.	Common in hierarchical systems; global push toward empowering school-level decision-making.
6. Inadequate Support Systems	Weak mentoring, supervision, and networking opportunities.	Limited coaching or leadership support from higher offices; very few structured peer networks.	International frameworks highlight similar needs for stronger professional learning communities.
7. Socioeconomic and Community-Related Pressures	Poverty, community instability, and parental disengagement affect school functioning.	High poverty rates and local crises (e.g., conflict-affected areas) burden school leaders.	Comparable issues in marginalized communities worldwide; school leaders often take on social welfare roles.
8. Teacher-Related Challenges	Teacher shortages, competency gaps, and morale issues affect leadership.	Frequent teacher deployment issues and varying teacher preparedness.	Globally, school leaders struggle when teacher capacity is uneven.
9. Digital Divide and Technological Limitations	Limited access to ICT and digital tools reduces leaders' ability to manage modern learning environments.	Many rural schools lack stable connectivity; leaders are under-equipped for digital transformation.	Developing nations face similar digital barriers; global goals emphasize tech-enabled leadership.
10. Accountability Pressures Without Support	High expectations but insufficient tools, data systems, or resources to meet them.	Increasingly strict performance and reporting requirements with minimal institutional backing.	International reports highlight similar tensions between accountability demands and support structures.

AI-Assisted Analysis Contributions to Identifying Patterns, Gaps, and Best Practices in Educational Leadership

The use of AI-based content analysis and coding thus facilitates improved pattern, gap, and best practices findings within educational leadership by efficiently processing a vast amount of online information. By means of natural language processing and automated coding, AI can identify emerging trends, gaps, and concepts within policy documents, national reports, published literature, and international frameworks. AI at the same time points to the underrepresented and missing topic areas, indicating strategic knowledge gaps in capacity and support

within educational leadership. Moreover, AI complements the recovery of global and local best practices on educational leadership consistently upheld by international and global literature, apart from facilitating comparative analysis on convergences and divergences of realities and international norms entailing the Philippine context. By ensuring object coding and minimizing subjectivity, AI improves the objectivity of findings and assists generating informed conclusions on factors affecting the reality of school-level leadership within the global context.

TABLE 4. AI-**Assisted Analysis Contributions to Identifying Patterns in Educational Leadership**

Theme	How AI-Assisted Analysis Helps	Insights Generated (Patterns, Gaps, Best Practices)
1. Pattern Detection Across Diverse Online Sources	AI can automatically scan large volumes of digital texts (reports, policies, journal articles, guidelines) and identify frequently occurring concepts, keywords, and phrases.	**Patterns Identified:** Recurrent leadership issues (e.g., insufficient training, heavy administrative workload), repeated recommendations (capacity building, inclusive leadership), and consistent terminology across documents.
2. Thematic Clustering and Categorization	AI groups related ideas into themes using natural language processing (NLP), revealing connections not easily visible through manual analysis.	**Emergent Themes:** Leadership challenges, empowerment strategies, systemic barriers, sustainability-linked competencies. AI shows how different sources emphasize similar or contrasting themes.
3. Identification of Gaps in the Literature	AI highlights concepts or areas that appear infrequently or are missing entirely in the collected sources.	**Gaps Revealed:** Lack of context-specific leadership frameworks for Philippine schools, limited discussion of long-term professional support systems, and minimal integration of AI literacy in leadership competencies.
4. Extraction of Best Practices	AI pinpoints strategies consistently mentioned across reputable sources (UNESCO, EDCOM-II, peer-reviewed journals).	**Best Practices Identified:** Continuous professional learning, participatory decision-making, distributed leadership models, data-driven school management, and sustainability-oriented leadership from SDG and ESD frameworks.
5. Comparative Analysis Across Global and Local Sources	AI can compare themes between Philippine materials and international frameworks, showing alignment or divergence.	**Comparative Findings:** Gaps between global standards (UNESCO, SDGs) and national realities; convergence on the need for leadership training, monitoring systems, and equity-based governance.
6. Enhanced Reliability Through Consistent Coding	AI reduces human bias by applying the same coding rules across all data, improving consistency.	**Reliable Codes:** Ensures that repeated leadership issues or strategies are consistently tagged, strengthening the validity of themes.
7. Efficient Synthesis of Large Online Data	AI accelerates the process of condensing scattered online materials into coherent themes.	**Synthesized Insights:** Clear, comprehensive themes on leadership practices, barriers, and strategic interventions without needing lengthy manual review.

Implications of Identified Strategies, Challenges, and Patterns for Strengthening Leadership Capacity and Advancing Sustainable Education Reforms

Emerging strategies, challenges, and trends that came forth from already existing online resources illuminate the following significant implications in terms of enhancing leadership capacity and making sure sustainable reform measures in the basic education sector in the Philippine setting. First, there is a significant need to focus on improving leadership development processes in terms of competency-based strategies, continuous professional education, and international leadership quality. Improving leaders' capabilities in data-driven, technology-enhanced, and AI-enhanced decision-making is most significant and essential in terms of leadership need for effective and efficient school management and implementation of reforms. Also, there is significant strategic importance in terms of enhancing leaders' skills in instructional and distributed leadership to foster cooperation, support teachers, and develop protective bubbles of the school itself. Moreover, the strategically significant implications and insights revealed by the underlying findings concerning the structural challenges in terms of lack of resources, too much bureaucratic work, and incongruence between policies and practices in the sector most clearly highlight the importance of leadership autonomy, policy clarity, and leadership support in leadership development processes. Embedding the essential guidelines of SDG4 and ESD2030 in leadership practices ensure leadership management in schools is future-resilient, just, and sustainable in nature. Finally, being aware of gaps in international and Philippine leadership competence provides essential strategic information to improve leadership development policy in implementing global leadership best practices in leadership process and activities.

TABLE 5. Empowerment Strategies for School Leaders

Major Themes Identified	Description of Theme	Implications for Leadership Capacity	Implications for Sustainable Educational Reform
1. Need for Systemic and Continuous Leadership Development	Online sources highlight inadequate preparation, limited professional development, and inconsistent capacity-building opportunities for school heads.	Requires institutionalizing structured, competency-based leadership development programs; investment in ongoing training; and alignment with global leadership standards.	Sustains long-term reforms by ensuring leaders have the skills to manage change, implement policies effectively, and foster innovation and accountability.
2. Importance of Data-Driven and Technology-Enabled Decision-Making	Reports emphasize the growing need for digital literacy, data use, and AI integration in educational management.	School leaders must be trained in data interpretation, AI-supported planning, and digital tools for monitoring school performance.	Supports evidence-based reform implementation, strengthens transparency, and enhances the accuracy of policy decisions at school and system levels.
3. Strengthening Instructional and Distributed Leadership	Global and national documents promote shared leadership, teacher empowerment, and collaborative governance as best practices.	Encourages leaders to shift from administrative to instructional leadership roles, enhance teacher mentoring, and delegate responsibilities effectively.	Builds school cultures that are collaborative, resilient, and aligned with SDG 4's emphasis on inclusive and equitable education.
4. Addressing Structural and Resource Constraints	Sources from EDCOM-II and other policy documents reveal persistent shortages in funding, staffing,	Leaders need training in resource mobilization, community partnerships, and	System-wide reforms must include equitable resource allocation and support mechanisms to ensure that leadership strategies

	facilities, and community support.	strategic planning to manage constraints more effectively.	translate to real school improvements.
5. Enhancing Policy Coherence and Leadership Autonomy	Materials highlight misalignment between national policies and on-the-ground school realities, limiting leadership effectiveness.	Increasing autonomy in school-level decision-making allows leaders to respond to local needs and innovate contextually.	Policy reforms must ensure clearer guidelines, reduced bureaucratic overload, and alignment with sustainability-focused frameworks such as ESD 2030.
6. Integrating SDG 4 and ESD 2030 Principles into School Leadership	International frameworks emphasize sustainability, equity, inclusiveness, and whole-school approaches to learning and governance.	Leaders must adopt systems thinking, sustainability leadership competencies, and inclusive governance practices.	Promotes reform directions that prioritize long-term, equitable, and community-integrated education systems aligned with global commitments.
7. Recognition of Local-Global Leadership Gaps and Opportunities	Comparative analyses show the Philippines lags behind regional and global leadership competencies and support structures.	Provides evidence-based areas where national training programs must be strengthened (e.g., crisis leadership, innovation, sustainability leadership).	Informs national reform agendas with international benchmarks, ensuring Philippine education remains regionally competitive and globally aligned.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The study aims to analyze openly accessible online content and discover leadership qualities, empowerment best practices, systemic challenges, and evolving patterns that affect the efficiency of school administrators in the basic education system of the Philippines. The results show that school administration in the Philippines is challenged by a different mix of personal qualities, systemic constraints, and shifting educational needs. Regardless of GCI reports, international best practices, and policy materials, there are distinct patterns that arise regarding the efficiency of school administrators as they lack instruction leadership, administrative and managerial skills, staff development opportunities, computerization and digital preparedness, and inclusive and crisis-responsive leadership qualities. In addition to these challenges, systemic constraints such as lack of resources, administrative burden, limited autonomy, and poor support structures also affect schools in the Philippines. These are parallel systemic constraints experienced by other affected educational systems nationwide.

The research further revealed that strategies of empowerment, which have been largely stressed across various local and international literatures, are competency-based capacity development, data-driven and technology-enabled leadership, collaboration and distributed governance, equity-based practices, leadership for sustainability, and strong public engagement. The strategies are very closely embedded within both SDG 4 and ESD 2030 and reinforce how there is a strong demand for adaptive, participatory, and foresighted leadership. Noteworthy is how content analysis leveraging AI capabilities was able to identify patterns, best practices, and areas of deficiency within a systematic way across a multitude of online content. The method improved overall validity, pointed to areas of relative ignorance, such as AI Literacy, and pointed to areas of both alignment and misalignment regarding Philippine realities and worldwide expectations.

The integrated findings generally echo the call for a holistic and systemic approach towards improving the leadership capacity in Philippine basic education. This will be through continuous improvement in leadership

development and support to education governance, autonomy, and equity in resource distribution. For instance, educational reform initiatives that would lead to long-term and sustainable schools would need competent school managers to go with supportive leadership structures, enabling collaborative, creative, and resilient outcomes. In aligning Philippine education leadership development initiatives with global standards, the Philippines will be moving into responsive and sustainable school leadership development.

Recommendations

For **school administrators** and **educational leaders**, the results underscore the need to focus on embracing continuous professional learning and development, data-informed decision-making, and collaborative leadership with teachers, parents, and members of society. School administrators and leaders should develop greater capacity in information and communication technology leadership, crisis response, and inclusive education for relevance in relation to global initiatives such as SDG and ESD for 2030.

For **teachers**, the report encourages them to be actively involved in shared leadership activities, engage with professional learning communities, and work with school heads on the execution of teaching improvements. Teachers are also urged to improve digital and teaching skills that will help in improvements at the schoolwide level.

For the **divisions** and the **regional offices of the DepEd**, the study recommends the provision of better mentorship, coaching, and technical support to school heads. Simplifying bureaucracy and eliminating redundant reporting will give the principal more time to attend to leadership in the classroom. Enhancing support in ICT, resources, and leadership development is crucial.

In relation to **LGUs** and **stakeholders involved in the community**, it is evident that there is required more active partnership work in school governance and resource mobilization. This partnership with schools could provide support in dealing with issues of poverty, safety, and digital connectivity in the local community to make it more supportive of learners.

Lastly, for **researchers**, this study recommends investigating the need for leadership models that can be tailored within the Philippine setting for schools, researching through empirical studies the efficacy of leadership programs, and even delving into how analysis through AI can contribute further to education in relation to leadership within schools.

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Finally, I acknowledge my own efforts for remaining resolute and committed despite the demands of the first semester of this course. Reaching this point affirms my dedication to persist, adapt, and move forward with purpose, even when faced with uncertainty and challenge.

Declaration of AI Use

The study uses AI tools with researcher oversight. The researcher manages coding and interpretation to limit bias. In this respect, the paper remains transparent, culturally sensitive, and recognizes new ideas.

Conflict of Interest

The authors state that there are no conflicts of interest regarding conducting this research and/or publishing this article. The above-mentioned research was conducted independently, relying solely upon public documentation and academic literature, without a hint of either financial or institutional conflict of interest.

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