

## Educational Leadership Practices and School Quality as Foundations of a Sustainable School Leadership Model

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### Abstract

This study examined educational leadership practices and school quality as foundations for developing a sustainable school leadership model in public secondary schools in the Malimono District, Division of Surigao del Norte, Philippines. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design using a cross-sectional survey was employed. The respondents comprised 85 teaching and non-teaching personnel selected from six public secondary schools. Data were collected using a researcher-made structured questionnaire and analyzed through frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, standard deviations, and the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The findings showed that educational leadership practices were highly practiced, with ethical and servant leadership receiving the highest assessment, while instructional leadership obtained the lowest rating but remained within the highly practiced category. School quality was highly evident, with instructional quality obtaining the highest rating, whereas governance and School-Based Management practices and organizational effectiveness were relatively lower. Sustainable school leadership was also highly practiced, particularly in continuous professional growth and community engagement and partnerships, while school resilience and innovation received the lowest rating. Educational leadership practices were not significantly related to sustainable school leadership,  $r = .017$ ,  $p = .879$ , or to school quality,  $r = -.012$ ,  $p = .916$ . In contrast, school quality had a very strong and significant relationship with sustainable school leadership,  $r = .929$ ,  $p < .001$ . The findings indicate that sustainable school leadership is more strongly associated with institutionalized school-quality systems than with leadership practices alone. The developed model therefore positions instructional quality, school climate, teacher professionalism, participatory governance, and organizational effectiveness as the principal foundations of sustainable school leadership.

**Keywords:** Educational Leadership Practices, School Quality, Sustainable School Leadership, School-Based Management, Public Secondary Schools

### 1. Introduction

Schools are expected not only to meet immediate instructional and administrative demands but also to remain effective through policy changes, leadership transitions, resource constraints, and unexpected disruptions. At the center of this responsibility are school heads, whose decisions influence teaching, teacher development, school culture, governance, resource management, and relationships with families and communities. Educational leadership is therefore not limited to supervising personnel or ensuring compliance with regulations. It involves creating the conditions in which teachers can perform effectively, learners can develop holistically, and improvement efforts can continue over time. Research has shown that successful school leadership influences educational outcomes primarily through teacher motivation, professional capacity, working conditions, and organizational processes rather than through direct action alone (Leithwood et al., 2020). Instructional and distributed leadership have also been associated with teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction, particularly when

leaders nurture collaboration and a supportive school culture (Liu et al., 2021). These findings suggest that leadership becomes meaningful when it is reflected in the everyday quality of school systems and relationships.

The need for sustainable and quality-centered leadership has become more pronounced as schools face increasingly complex responsibilities. The disruptions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic showed that school leaders must be capable of adapting quickly, supporting personnel, coordinating with communities, and maintaining learning under uncertain conditions (Harris & Jones, 2020). More recently, Global Education Monitoring Report (2024) emphasized that effective educational leadership requires clear expectations, adequate preparation, collaborative practice, and attention to teaching and learning. Within the Philippine basic education system, these expectations are reflected in the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads, which identifies strategic leadership, operational management, instructional leadership, personnel development, and school-community engagement as essential areas of professional practice (Department of Education [DepEd], 2020). School heads are also expected to guide schools through curriculum reforms and accountability systems while responding to the actual needs of teachers and learners. However, strong leadership behaviors do not automatically result in sustained school improvement. Leadership must be supported by instructional quality, a positive school climate, committed and professional teachers, participatory governance, and effective organizational systems.

Although educational leadership, school effectiveness, and sustainable leadership have received considerable scholarly attention, they are often studied as separate concerns. Many studies examine particular leadership styles or their relationships with teacher satisfaction, commitment, performance, and learner outcomes. Comparatively fewer studies investigate educational leadership practices, school quality, and sustainable school leadership within one empirical framework, particularly in district-level Philippine public secondary schools. There is also limited local evidence showing whether sustainable school leadership is associated more closely with the visible practices of school heads or with the institutional quality of the schools they lead. This gap is important because schools may report positive leadership practices while still experiencing weaknesses in governance, organizational effectiveness, resilience, innovation, or succession planning. Accordingly, the present study examined educational leadership practices and school quality as foundations of a sustainable school leadership model among public secondary schools in the Malimono District, Division of Surigao del Norte. It assessed instructional, transformational, distributed, ethical and servant, and capacity-building leadership; examined key dimensions of school quality and sustainable school leadership; and determined the relationships among these variables. The findings were intended to provide a locally grounded basis for a leadership model that moves beyond individual leadership behavior and strengthens the school systems needed to sustain long-term improvement.

## Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in an integrated theoretical framework that explains sustainable school leadership as the product of effective leadership practices operating through strong school-quality systems. Instructional Leadership Theory provides the basis for examining how school heads improve teaching and learning through goal setting, instructional supervision, curriculum coordination, and teacher support (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985), while Transformational Leadership Theory explains how leaders build shared vision, motivate personnel, and promote commitment to school improvement (Bass, 1985). Distributed Leadership Theory further emphasizes that leadership responsibilities should be shared among school heads, teachers, coordinators, and stakeholders to strengthen collaboration, continuity, and collective accountability (Spillane, 2006; Liu et al., 2021). Ethical and Servant Leadership Theory supports the importance of fairness, integrity, service, trust, and concern for the development of teachers and learners (Eva et al., 2019), whereas capacity-building leadership highlights mentoring, coaching, professional learning, and the continuous development of school personnel (Fullan, 2020). These perspectives are complemented by School Effectiveness and School Quality Theory, which holds that leadership contributes to school improvement through instructional quality, positive school climate, teacher professionalism, participatory governance, and organizational effectiveness (Leithwood et al., 2020). Finally, Sustainable Leadership Theory explains that meaningful school improvement must be maintained over time



through resilience, innovation, leadership succession, professional growth, and community partnerships rather than relying solely on the performance of one leader (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Taken together, these theories support the study's assumption that educational leadership practices provide the leadership foundation, school quality represents the institutional mechanism, and sustainable school leadership constitutes the long-term outcome.

Conceptual Framework

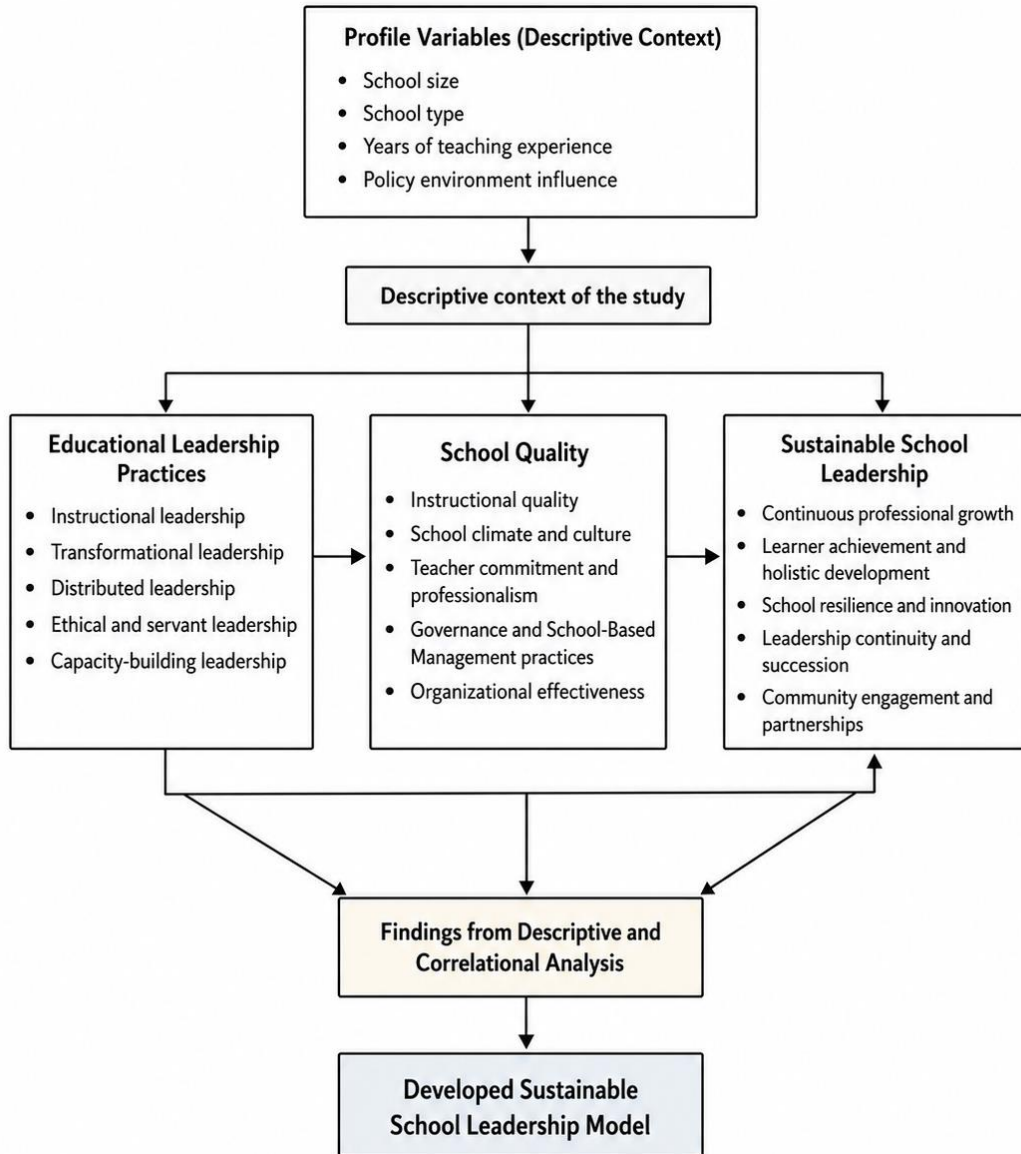


Figure 1. Diagram of Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study, showing how educational leadership practices and school quality are examined in relation to sustainable school leadership. The profile variables—school size, school type, years of teaching experience, and policy environment influence—provide the descriptive context of the study but are not treated as moderating variables. Educational leadership practices include instructional, transformational, distributed, ethical and servant, and capacity-building leadership, while school quality is assessed

through instructional quality, school climate and culture, teacher commitment and professionalism, governance and School-Based Management practices, and organizational effectiveness. Sustainable school leadership is reflected in continuous professional growth, learner achievement and holistic development, school resilience and innovation, leadership continuity and succession, and community engagement and partnerships. The arrows indicate the relationships examined among educational leadership practices, school quality, and sustainable school leadership. The results of the descriptive and correlational analyses serve as the empirical basis for developing the proposed sustainable school leadership model. The framework does not assume that school quality mediates the relationship between leadership practices and sustainable leadership; rather, it examines each relationship independently within the descriptive-correlational design of the study.

### **Aim of the Study**

This study aimed to examine educational leadership practices and school quality as foundations of sustainable school leadership in public secondary schools in the Malimono District, Division of Surigao del Norte, and to use the findings as bases for developing a sustainable school leadership model.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study sought to examine educational leadership practices, school quality, and sustainable school leadership among public secondary schools in the Malimono District, Division of Surigao del Norte. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the schools and respondents in terms of:
  - 1.1 school size;
  - 1.2 school type;
  - 1.3 years of teaching experience; and
  - 1.4 policy environment influence?
2. To what extent are educational leadership practices demonstrated by school heads as perceived by the respondents in terms of:
  - 2.1 instructional leadership;
  - 2.2 transformational leadership;
  - 2.3 distributed leadership;
  - 2.4 ethical and servant leadership; and
  - 2.5 capacity-building leadership?
3. What is the level of school quality as perceived by the respondents in terms of:
  - 3.1 instructional quality;
  - 3.2 school climate and culture;
  - 3.3 teacher commitment and professionalism;
  - 3.4 governance and School-Based Management practices; and
  - 3.5 organizational effectiveness?
4. What is the level of sustainable school leadership as perceived by the respondents in terms of:
  - 4.1 continuous professional growth;
  - 4.2 learner achievement and holistic development;
  - 4.3 school resilience and innovation;
  - 4.4 leadership continuity and succession; and
  - 4.5 community engagement and partnerships?
5. Is there a significant relationship between educational leadership practices and sustainable school leadership?
6. Is there a significant relationship between school quality and sustainable school leadership?
7. Is there a significant relationship between educational leadership practices and school quality?
8. Based on the findings of the study, what sustainable school leadership model can be developed?

### **Hypotheses**

At the 0.05 level of significance, the following null hypotheses were tested:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between educational leadership practices and sustainable school leadership.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between school quality and sustainable school leadership.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between educational leadership practices and school quality.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

Educational leadership is increasingly understood as a relational and organizational process rather than the work of a school head acting alone. School leaders influence learning by establishing direction, supporting teachers, improving working conditions, and developing structures that allow effective teaching to occur. Leithwood et al. (2020) explained that leadership affects learner outcomes mainly through its influence on teacher motivation, professional capacity, school conditions, and instructional processes. This perspective is relevant to the present study because it avoids treating leadership as an isolated personal attribute. Instead, it supports the examination of instructional, transformational, distributed, ethical and servant, and capacity-building leadership as complementary practices that may shape the quality and long-term development of schools.

Among these practices, instructional and distributed leadership have received considerable attention because they connect school leadership directly with teaching, collaboration, and professional responsibility. Instructional leadership keeps teaching and learning at the center of school decision-making through curriculum coordination, classroom observation, feedback, assessment monitoring, and teacher development. Distributed leadership, meanwhile, recognizes that sustainable improvement cannot depend solely on one administrator. Leadership responsibilities must also be shared with teachers, coordinators, committees, and other stakeholders. Using international survey data, Liu et al. (2021) found that instructional and distributed leadership were associated with teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction, while supportive school culture and teacher collaboration helped explain these relationships. More recent longitudinal evidence has similarly shown that principal instructional leadership, when combined with teacher collaboration, is relevant to learner achievement (Persson et al., 2025). These findings support the present study's inclusion of instructional and distributed leadership while also suggesting that their value may become visible through the school conditions they create.

Transformational, ethical, servant, and capacity-building practices extend this leadership process by addressing shared purpose, trust, professional commitment, and personnel development. Transformational leadership helps school personnel understand and commit to a common direction, particularly when schools are implementing reforms or responding to change. Ethical and servant leadership strengthen fairness, accountability, care, and trust, which are essential in organizations where decisions affect teachers, learners, families, and communities. Capacity-building leadership translates these principles into professional learning, mentoring, coaching, and opportunities for teachers to improve their practice. These dimensions should not be viewed as competing leadership styles. In practice, effective school heads may combine instructional direction, shared leadership, ethical decision-making, motivation, and professional support according to the needs of their schools. Global Education Monitoring Report (2024) similarly emphasized that effective educational leadership requires clear expectations, professional preparation, collaboration, and a sustained focus on teaching and learning. The present study therefore evaluates leadership as a multidimensional practice rather than limiting it to a single leadership orientation.

Leadership, however, is unlikely to sustain improvement unless it becomes embedded in the quality of school systems. School quality involves more than examination results or compliance with institutional targets. It includes the strength of instruction, the safety and inclusiveness of the school climate, teachers' professional commitment, participatory governance, and the organization's capacity to use resources and accomplish shared goals. Leithwood et al. (2020) maintained that leadership effects are largely indirect because leaders influence outcomes through organizational conditions and teacher-related processes. This helps explain why visible leadership



practices may not necessarily correspond to stronger school outcomes unless those practices are translated into routines, relationships, and institutional mechanisms. In the present study, instructional quality, school climate and culture, teacher commitment and professionalism, governance and School-Based Management practices, and organizational effectiveness are therefore examined as interconnected dimensions of school quality.

Instructional quality is closely linked with the support teachers receive and the conditions under which they work. Leaders who protect instructional time, coordinate the curriculum, facilitate professional collaboration, and use evidence to guide improvement can create a more coherent learning environment. Yet these actions are more likely to succeed within a positive school climate characterized by trust, psychological safety, shared responsibility, and constructive professional relationships. Liu et al. (2021) demonstrated that supportive school culture and teacher collaboration were important mechanisms linking leadership with teacher outcomes. This relationship is central to the present study because it suggests that school quality does not arise from administrative action alone. It is built through the interaction of leadership, teacher professionalism, organizational culture, and consistent instructional practices.

Governance and organizational effectiveness are equally important because schools need stable systems for planning, decision-making, resource allocation, accountability, and stakeholder participation. In the Philippines, the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads positions strategic leadership, school operations, teaching and learning, personnel development, and school-community engagement as central domains of school leadership practice (Department of Education [DepEd], 2020). These domains indicate that school heads are responsible not only for influencing people but also for ensuring that systems function effectively. Shared governance and School-Based Management can provide opportunities for teachers, parents, and community stakeholders to participate in school improvement. However, participation becomes meaningful only when roles are clear, decisions are transparent, resources are managed responsibly, and improvement initiatives are regularly monitored. This supports the current study's examination of governance and organizational effectiveness as substantive components of school quality.

Sustainable school leadership extends the discussion from current school performance to the capacity to preserve and improve effective practices over time. Sustainability requires schools to develop personnel continuously, support both academic achievement and holistic learner development, remain resilient during disruptions, prepare future leaders, and maintain productive community partnerships. Leadership during disruptive change depends on the ability to provide direction while enabling staff members to learn, collaborate, and adapt to new conditions (Vanlommel et al., 2025). Sustainable leadership therefore cannot rest on the competence or personality of one school head. It requires institutional memory, shared leadership capacity, succession preparation, adaptable systems, and a culture in which improvement continues despite personnel changes or external challenges.

The relationship between school quality and sustainable leadership is especially important to the present study. A school may have a highly visible or well-regarded leader, but improvements may weaken when that leader transfers, retires, or encounters changing policy demands. In contrast, improvements are more likely to endure when they are embedded in instructional routines, professional norms, governance structures, collaborative relationships, and organizational systems. Global Education Monitoring Report's (2024) global analysis emphasized that leadership contributes to better education when it remains focused on learning and is supported by appropriate professional and institutional conditions. Thus, school quality may represent the concrete organizational foundation through which sustainable leadership is experienced and maintained.

Within the Philippine public-school system, these relationships are shaped by national professional standards, accountability requirements, curriculum reforms, and School-Based Management structures. DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2020 institutionalized the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads and established expectations for strategic leadership, operational management, instructional improvement, professional development, and community engagement (DepEd, 2020). These expectations provide a strong policy basis for leadership development. Nevertheless, policy standards do not automatically demonstrate how leadership practices, school



quality, and sustainability are related within specific districts. Local schools differ in size, personnel experience, resources, organizational capacity, and exposure to policy reforms. Empirical investigation at the district level is therefore needed to determine how these constructs are perceived in actual school settings.

The reviewed literature reveals three related research gaps. First, leadership studies frequently concentrate on individual styles or teacher outcomes, while school quality and sustainable leadership are often examined separately. This creates limited understanding of how the three constructs relate within one framework. Second, existing evidence largely explains how leadership affects teacher attitudes, collaboration, or learner outcomes, but provides less clarity on whether leadership practices themselves or institutionalized school-quality systems are more closely associated with sustainable school leadership. Third, there remains limited district-level evidence from Philippine public secondary schools, particularly from smaller provincial settings such as the Malimono District. The present study addresses these gaps by jointly examining educational leadership practices, school quality, and sustainable school leadership; testing the relationships among them; and using the findings to develop a locally grounded sustainable school leadership model.

### 3. Methodology

#### Research Design

The study employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component was used to determine the profile of the schools and respondents and to assess the extent of educational leadership practices, school quality, and sustainable school leadership. The correlational component examined the relationships among educational leadership practices, school quality, and sustainable school leadership. A cross-sectional survey was conducted because the data were collected from the respondents at one point in time. No variables were manipulated, and the results were interpreted in terms of association rather than causation.

#### Research Locale

The study was conducted in six public secondary schools in the Malimono District, Division of Surigao del Norte, Philippines. These were Malimono National High School, Bunyasan National High School, Masgad National High School, Cantapoy National High School, Villa Riza National High School, and Pili National High School. The locale was considered appropriate because the participating schools operated within the same public basic education system and were guided by national policies and frameworks, including School-Based Management, the Results-Based Performance Management System, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads, and the MATATAG Curriculum.

#### Respondents and Sampling Procedure

The respondents were 85 teaching and non-teaching personnel from the participating public secondary schools during School Year 2025–2026. They were selected because they had direct knowledge of the leadership practices of school heads, school-quality processes, and sustainable leadership practices in their respective schools. The minimum sample size was determined using Slovin's formula based on a total population of 111 personnel and a 5% margin of error. Purposive sampling was then employed to select respondents who had sufficient exposure to school operations and leadership practices. Personnel who were newly assigned, unavailable during data collection, or unwilling to participate were excluded from the study.

#### Research Instrument

A researcher-made structured questionnaire was used as the primary data-gathering instrument. It consisted of four parts. The first part collected information on school size, school type, years of teaching experience, and policy environment influence. The second part measured educational leadership practices in terms of instructional



leadership, transformational leadership, distributed leadership, ethical and servant leadership, and capacity-building leadership. The third part assessed school quality through instructional quality, school climate and culture, teacher commitment and professionalism, governance and School-Based Management practices, and organizational effectiveness. The fourth part measured sustainable school leadership in terms of continuous professional growth, learner achievement and holistic development, school resilience and innovation, leadership continuity and succession, and community engagement and partnerships.

The instrument used a four-point Likert scale: 4 for strongly agree, 3 for agree, 2 for disagree, and 1 for strongly disagree. Mean scores from 3.26 to 4.00 were interpreted as very high extent, highly evident, or highly practiced; 2.51 to 3.25 as high extent, evident, or practiced; 1.76 to 2.50 as low extent, less evident, or less practiced; and 1.00 to 1.75 as very low extent, not evident, or not practiced.

### Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was subjected to expert validation to ensure that the items were relevant, clear, and aligned with the study variables. It was also pilot-tested among 20 respondents who were not included in the actual study. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine internal consistency. The individual dimensions obtained coefficients ranging from .87 to .92, indicating good to excellent reliability. Educational leadership practices obtained an alpha coefficient of .94, school quality obtained .95, and sustainable school leadership obtained .96. The overall instrument yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .97, indicating excellent internal consistency and confirming its suitability for the actual data collection.

### Data-Gathering Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was secured from the appropriate education authorities and school administrators. After approval, the questionnaire was finalized based on the validators' comments and pilot-test results. The purpose and procedures of the study were explained to the respondents before the administration of the instrument. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained. The questionnaires were distributed to eligible teaching and non-teaching personnel, who were given sufficient time to complete them. Retrieved questionnaires were checked for completeness and consistency before the responses were encoded, cleaned, and prepared for statistical analysis.

### Data Analysis

Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the profile of the schools and respondents. Weighted means and standard deviations were used to determine the extent of educational leadership practices and the levels of school quality and sustainable school leadership. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was employed to test the relationships between educational leadership practices and sustainable school leadership, school quality and sustainable school leadership, and educational leadership practices and school quality. The hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance. The descriptive and correlational findings were then used as the empirical basis for developing the proposed sustainable school leadership model.

### Ethical Considerations

The study observed the principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and non-maleficence. Respondents were informed that they could decline or withdraw from participation without penalty. No personally identifying information was disclosed in the analysis or presentation of the findings. Completed questionnaires and electronic data were stored securely and accessed only for research purposes. The results were reported objectively, and no data were fabricated, altered, or misrepresented.

## 4. Results and Discussion



**Table 1. Profile of the Schools and Respondents**

Profile variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
School size	Small	12	14%
	Medium	72	85%
	Large	1	1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100%</b>
School type	Public	85	100%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100%</b>
Years of teaching experience	Less than 5 years	35	41%
	5–10 years	35	41%
	11–15 years	8	9%
	More than 15 years	7	8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100%</b>
Policy environment influence	RPMS	5	6%
	PPST	8	9%
	MATATAG Curriculum	8	9%
	SBM, RPMS, and PPST	9	11%
	SBM, RPMS, and MATATAG Curriculum	2	2%
	SBM, RPMS, PPST, and MATATAG Curriculum	17	20%
	RPMS and PPST	5	6%
	RPMS, PPST, and MATATAG Curriculum	13	15%
	PPST and MATATAG Curriculum	6	7%
	Missing/no response	12	14%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note. Percentages were rounded to whole numbers.

Most respondents in Table 1 came from medium-sized schools, accounting for 72 or 85% of the sample. All 85 respondents were employed in public schools, indicating that the findings represent a purely public-school context. In terms of experience, 70 respondents or 82% had ten years of teaching experience or less, suggesting that the sample was largely composed of early- to mid-career personnel. The most frequently reported policy context was the combined influence of SBM, RPMS, PPST, and the MATATAG Curriculum, reported by 17 respondents or 20%. Overall, the profile shows that the findings were primarily shaped by personnel from medium-sized public secondary schools operating within several national policy and performance frameworks.

**Table 2. Educational Leadership Practices Demonstrated by School Heads**

Educational leadership practice	Mean	SD	Verbal interpretation	Descriptive qualification
Instructional leadership	3.46	0.28	Strongly agree	Highly practiced
Transformational leadership	3.53	0.35	Strongly agree	Highly practiced
Distributed leadership	3.52	0.47	Strongly agree	Highly practiced
Ethical and servant leadership	3.66	0.42	Strongly agree	Highly practiced
Capacity-building leadership	3.55	0.45	Strongly agree	Highly practiced
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>3.54</b>	—	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Highly practiced</b>

Note. 3.26–4.00 = strongly agree/highly practiced; 2.51–3.25 = agree/practiced; 1.76–2.50 = disagree/less practiced; 1.00–1.75 = strongly disagree/not practiced.



Educational leadership practices in Table 2 obtained an overall mean of 3.54, indicating that the respondents perceived all five dimensions as highly practiced. Ethical and servant leadership received the highest mean of 3.66, showing that fairness, integrity, concern for personnel, accountability, and service were the most visible leadership qualities. Capacity-building leadership ranked second with a mean of 3.55, suggesting that school heads provided professional development, mentoring, coaching, and learning opportunities for teachers and personnel.

Instructional leadership received the lowest mean of 3.46, although it remained highly practiced. This indicates that school heads generally supported teaching and learning, but practices involving classroom monitoring, curriculum coordination, instructional feedback, and the use of learner-performance evidence may require greater emphasis. The result suggests that the leadership foundation of the schools was strong, particularly in ethical conduct and personnel development, but further strengthening of instructional leadership could help connect leadership more directly with teaching quality and learner outcomes.

**Table 3. Level of School Quality**

School-quality dimension	Mean	SD	Verbal interpretation	Descriptive qualification
Instructional quality	3.63	0.41	Strongly agree	Highly evident
School climate and culture	3.57	0.43	Strongly agree	Highly evident
Teacher commitment and professionalism	3.58	0.42	Strongly agree	Highly evident
Governance and School-Based Management practices	3.54	0.47	Strongly agree	Highly evident
Organizational effectiveness	3.54	0.44	Strongly agree	Highly evident
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>3.57</b>	—	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Highly evident</b>

*Note.* 3.26–4.00 = strongly agree/highly evident; 2.51–3.25 = agree/evident; 1.76–2.50 = disagree/less evident; 1.00–1.75 = strongly disagree/not evident.

School quality in Table 3 obtained an overall mean of 3.57 and was therefore highly evident. Instructional quality received the highest mean of 3.63, indicating that curriculum implementation, teaching practices, learner engagement, and instructional support were perceived as the strongest school-quality areas. Teacher commitment and professionalism followed with a mean of 3.58, reflecting strong dedication, responsibility, ethical practice, and professional engagement among teachers.

Governance and School-Based Management practices and organizational effectiveness both obtained the lowest mean of 3.54, although they were still highly evident. These relatively lower ratings indicate areas where planning, participation, accountability, resource management, monitoring, and organizational processes may be strengthened. The results show that the schools had a generally strong quality foundation, particularly in instruction and teacher professionalism, but sustaining this quality may require more systematic governance and organizational mechanisms.

**Table 4. Level of Sustainable School Leadership**

Sustainable school leadership dimension	Mean	SD	Verbal interpretation	Descriptive qualification
Continuous professional growth	3.62	0.44	Strongly agree	Highly practiced
Learner achievement and holistic development	3.61	0.44	Strongly agree	Highly practiced
School resilience and innovation	3.58	0.45	Strongly agree	Highly practiced
Leadership continuity and succession	3.60	0.44	Strongly agree	Highly practiced
Community engagement and partnerships	3.62	0.43	Strongly agree	Highly practiced
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>3.61</b>	—	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Highly practiced</b>

*Note.* 3.26–4.00 = strongly agree/highly practiced; 2.51–3.25 = agree/practiced; 1.76–2.50 = disagree/less practiced; 1.00–1.75 = strongly disagree/not practiced.



Sustainable school leadership in Table 4 obtained an overall mean of 3.61, indicating that it was highly practiced. Continuous professional growth and community engagement and partnerships received the highest means of 3.62. These results suggest that the schools gave considerable attention to personnel development and maintained active relationships with parents, community organizations, local government units, and other stakeholders.

School resilience and innovation obtained the lowest mean of 3.58, although it remained highly practiced. This result indicates that schools were generally capable of responding to challenges and implementing improvements, but adaptive planning, risk preparedness, digital readiness, innovation systems, and institutional responses to disruption may still be enhanced. Sustainable leadership was therefore visible across the schools, but greater attention to resilience and innovation would help ensure that improvement can be maintained under changing conditions.

**Table 5. Relationship Between Educational Leadership Practices and Sustainable School Leadership**

Variables correlated	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	Decision on H <sub>0</sub>	Interpretation
Educational leadership practices and sustainable school leadership	.017	.879	Fail to reject H <sub>0</sub>	Not significant

*Note.* The relationship was tested at the .05 level of significance.

As shown in Table 5, the correlation between educational leadership practices and sustainable school leadership was negligible and not statistically significant,  $r = .017$ ,  $p = .879$ . Since the probability value exceeded .05, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This indicates that differences in respondents' ratings of educational leadership practices were not associated with corresponding differences in sustainable school leadership.

The result does not imply that leadership practices are unimportant. Rather, the uniformly high ratings may have reduced score variation and weakened the correlation. Sustainable leadership may also depend on whether leadership practices are institutionalized through school systems, professional routines, governance mechanisms, and organizational processes. Thus, leadership practices may provide a foundation, but their long-term effects may not become evident unless they are translated into concrete school-quality conditions.

**Table 6. Relationship Between School Quality and Sustainable School Leadership**

Variables correlated	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	Decision on H <sub>0</sub>	Interpretation
School quality and sustainable school leadership	.929	< .001	Reject H <sub>0</sub>	Very strong and significant

*Note.* The relationship was tested at the .05 level of significance.

School quality in Table 6 had a very strong positive and statistically significant relationship with sustainable school leadership,  $r = .929$ ,  $p < .001$ . The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The positive coefficient indicates that higher levels of instructional quality, school climate and culture, teacher professionalism, governance, and organizational effectiveness were associated with higher levels of sustainable school leadership.

This was the strongest empirical finding of the study. It indicates that sustainability was closely connected with the quality of the school's instructional, professional, governance, and organizational systems. Schools were more likely to demonstrate professional growth, learner-centered development, resilience, leadership continuity, and community partnership when their internal quality systems were strong. However, because the study was correlational, the result should be interpreted as a strong association rather than a causal effect.

**Table 7. Relationship Between Educational Leadership Practices and School Quality**

Variables correlated	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	Decision on H <sub>0</sub>	Interpretation
Educational leadership practices and school quality	-.012	.916	Fail to reject H <sub>0</sub>	Not significant

*Note.* The relationship was tested at the .05 level of significance.

Educational leadership practices in Table 7 were not significantly related to school quality,  $r = -.012$ ,  $p = .916$ . The coefficient was nearly zero, indicating the absence of a meaningful linear relationship between the two variables in the present dataset. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Although both educational leadership practices and school quality received high descriptive ratings, these high scores did not vary together statistically. One possible explanation is the limited dispersion of responses, since respondents generally evaluated both constructs positively. School quality may also be influenced by factors beyond the leadership practices measured in the study, including teacher competence, staffing, facilities, resource availability, learner characteristics, community support, and the implementation of national policies. The result suggests that leadership practices must be connected more explicitly with instructional, governance, and organizational mechanisms before their relationship with school quality becomes empirically observable.

**Table 8. Empirical Bases of the Developed Sustainable School Leadership Model**

Component	Major finding	Implication for the model
Profile variables	Respondents were mainly from medium-sized public schools and were exposed to multiple DepEd policy systems.	Profile variables provide the descriptive and policy context of the model.
Educational leadership practices	Highly practiced overall; ethical and servant leadership was highest, while instructional leadership was lowest.	Leadership practices remain foundational inputs, with instructional leadership identified as an enhancement priority.
School quality	Highly evident overall; instructional quality was highest, while governance/SBM and organizational effectiveness were relatively lower.	School quality serves as the central institutional foundation of sustainable leadership.
Sustainable school leadership	Highly practiced overall; professional growth and community engagement were highest, while resilience and innovation were lowest.	Sustainable school leadership remains the desired outcome, with resilience and innovation requiring further development.
Leadership practices and sustainable leadership	Not significant, $r = .017$ , $p = .879$ .	A direct empirical path from leadership practices to sustainable leadership was not supported.
School quality and sustainable leadership	Very strong and significant, $r = .929$ , $p < .001$ .	The strongest supported path places school quality at the center of the developed model.
Leadership practices and school quality	Not significant, $r = -.012$ , $p = .916$ .	Leadership should be translated into clearer operational and quality-improvement mechanisms.

The developed model in Table 8 places school quality as the strongest empirical foundation of sustainable school leadership. Educational leadership practices remain important as foundational leadership inputs, but their direct relationships with school quality and sustainable leadership were not statistically supported. The model therefore emphasizes instructional quality, school climate and culture, teacher commitment and professionalism, participatory governance, School-Based Management, and organizational effectiveness as the institutional conditions most closely associated with sustainable leadership.

The model also identifies practical priorities. Instructional leadership should be strengthened so that leadership becomes more directly connected with classroom practice and learner outcomes. Governance and organizational effectiveness should be enhanced through clearer participation, accountability, resource management, monitoring, and evaluation systems. Finally, resilience and innovation should be developed through continuity planning, risk preparedness, digital capability, adaptive decision-making, succession planning, and sustained

community partnerships. These findings support a school-quality-centered sustainable leadership model rather than one based solely on the personal practices of individual school heads.

## 5. Implications of the Study

The findings indicate that sustainable school leadership depends less on the visibility of individual leadership practices and more on the strength of institutionalized school-quality systems. Although educational leadership practices were rated highly, they were not significantly related to either school quality or sustainable school leadership. This suggests that positive leadership behaviors alone may not be sufficient to produce lasting organizational outcomes unless they are translated into stable instructional processes, collaborative professional practices, participatory governance, and effective school-management systems.

For school heads, the results highlight the need to move beyond demonstrating leadership qualities toward embedding these practices in daily school operations. Instructional leadership should be strengthened through systematic classroom supervision, evidence-based feedback, curriculum monitoring, and the use of learner-performance data. Ethical, servant, transformational, distributed, and capacity-building practices should also be connected with clear improvement targets, accountability mechanisms, and measurable school-quality outcomes. For teachers and non-teaching personnel, the strong relationship between school quality and sustainable school leadership emphasizes the importance of professional commitment, collaboration, shared responsibility, and continuous learning. Sustainable improvement is more likely when teachers participate in decision-making, engage in professional development, support organizational goals, and contribute to a positive school culture. Leadership continuity should therefore be supported by developing teacher-leaders and distributing responsibilities across school teams and committees.

For school governance, the relatively lower ratings for governance, School-Based Management practices, and organizational effectiveness suggest the need to strengthen participatory planning, transparency, resource management, monitoring, and stakeholder accountability. Schools should institutionalize clear procedures that allow effective practices to continue despite leadership transitions. Succession planning, documentation of school processes, and the development of leadership capacity among personnel are necessary to prevent improvement initiatives from becoming dependent on a single school head.

For policymakers and education authorities, the findings suggest that leadership-development programs should not focus only on personal competencies or leadership styles. Training and evaluation systems should also assess how school heads translate leadership into instructional quality, teacher professionalism, governance, organizational effectiveness, resilience, and innovation. District and division-level support may be needed to help schools strengthen institutional systems, particularly in resource-constrained and medium-sized public-school contexts.

The very strong relationship between school quality and sustainable school leadership also has implications for school-improvement planning. Programs aimed at sustainability should prioritize instructional quality, positive school climate, professional development, governance, and organizational capacity. Since resilience and innovation received the lowest rating among the sustainable leadership dimensions, schools should develop stronger continuity plans, crisis-response systems, digital readiness, innovation mechanisms, and adaptive leadership practices.

Methodologically, the findings demonstrate that high descriptive ratings do not necessarily indicate significant relationships among variables. The absence of significant relationships involving educational leadership practices may have resulted from limited variation in respondents' ratings, contextual factors, or the indirect nature of leadership effects. Future studies may therefore use larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal designs, mixed methods, multilevel analysis, or structural equation modeling to examine how leadership practices influence sustainable school leadership through school-quality processes.



Overall, the study implies that sustainable school leadership should be treated as an institutional responsibility rather than the achievement of one administrator. Leadership becomes sustainable when effective practices are embedded in school culture, professional routines, governance structures, organizational systems, and community partnerships. The developed model therefore positions school quality as the central foundation for maintaining improvement, ensuring leadership continuity, and strengthening the long-term effectiveness of public secondary schools.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that educational leadership practices, school quality, and sustainable school leadership were all perceived at high levels across the participating public secondary schools in the Malimono District. Ethical and servant leadership emerged as the most strongly practiced leadership dimension, while instructional leadership received the lowest rating, although it remained highly practiced. School quality was also highly evident, particularly in instructional quality and teacher professionalism, while governance, School-Based Management practices, and organizational effectiveness obtained comparatively lower ratings. Sustainable school leadership was likewise highly practiced, with continuous professional growth and community engagement receiving the highest assessments, while school resilience and innovation ranked lowest. The correlational findings showed that educational leadership practices were not significantly related to either school quality or sustainable school leadership. In contrast, school quality had a very strong and significant relationship with sustainable school leadership. These findings indicate that long-term school improvement is more closely associated with the strength of institutionalized school-quality systems than with leadership practices alone. Sustainable school leadership is therefore more likely to develop when instructional quality, professional commitment, governance, organizational effectiveness, resilience, and community partnerships are embedded in the school's structures and daily operations.

School heads should strengthen instructional leadership by increasing systematic classroom observation, curriculum monitoring, evidence-based feedback, and the use of learner-performance data in school improvement planning. Leadership practices should also be translated into concrete institutional mechanisms, including clear accountability systems, documented procedures, participatory decision-making, and measurable quality targets. Governance and School-Based Management practices should be reinforced through broader stakeholder participation, transparent resource management, regular program monitoring, and stronger communication among school personnel, parents, and community partners. Schools should also prioritize organizational effectiveness by improving workflow systems, continuity planning, documentation, and resource utilization.

Teacher leadership and succession planning should be institutionalized to reduce dependence on a single school head and to ensure continuity during leadership transitions. Professional development programs should focus not only on individual competencies but also on collaboration, innovation, resilience, crisis preparedness, and digital readiness. Division and district education authorities should provide targeted support to schools in strengthening governance, organizational systems, and adaptive capacity. Future researchers may replicate the study using larger and more diverse samples, mixed-methods or longitudinal designs, and more advanced statistical techniques to examine possible indirect relationships among leadership practices, school quality, and sustainable school leadership. The proposed sustainable school leadership model should also be pilot-tested and evaluated in other public-school settings to determine its applicability and effectiveness.

## Declarations

### Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The study was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical standards for research involving human participants. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the appropriate education authorities and school administrators in the Malimono District, Division of Surigao del Norte. All participants were informed of the



purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, and scope of the study before data collection. Informed consent was secured from each respondent. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process, and participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

### Consent for Publication

The participants provided consent for the use of their anonymized responses for academic research and publication purposes. No personally identifying information is included in the manuscript.

### Availability of Data and Materials

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to ethical, institutional, and confidentiality restrictions.

### Competing Interests

The author declares that there are no competing interests related to the conduct, analysis, interpretation, or publication of this study.

### Funding

This research received no specific grant from any public, commercial, or not-for-profit funding agency.

### Author Contributions

Carmela D. Resare conceptualized the study, developed the research framework and instrument, conducted the data collection, analyzed and interpreted the findings, prepared the sustainable school leadership model, and wrote and revised the manuscript.

### Acknowledgments

The author expresses sincere appreciation to the education authorities, school administrators, teaching personnel, and non-teaching personnel of the participating public secondary schools in the Malimono District, Division of Surigao del Norte, for their cooperation and valuable participation in the study.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

### Declaration of Originality

The author confirms that the manuscript is an original work, has not been published previously, and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. All sources used in the study have been properly acknowledged and cited.

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