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Leadership in Action: Teachers' Lived Experiences of School Leaders' Leadership Styles and Their Influence on Professional Skills Development in the City Division of Santiago

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ABSTRACT

School leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping teachers' professional competence, instructional effectiveness, and organizational commitment. As educational systems continue to respond to curriculum reforms, technological advancements, and evolving learner needs, school leaders are expected to adopt leadership styles that foster teacher empowerment, continuous professional learning, and organizational excellence. Although previous studies have established the relationship between leadership styles and teacher performance, limited qualitative investigations have explored how teachers personally experience school leaders' leadership styles and how these experiences contribute to the development of their professional skills. This study explored the lived experiences of teachers regarding school leaders' leadership styles and their influence on professional skills development in the City Division of Santiago. Using a transcendental phenomenological research design, twelve (12) purposively selected public school teachers participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that effective leadership styles significantly influence teachers' instructional competence, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, innovation, leadership capacity, and professional confidence. The study recommends strengthening leadership development programs for school leaders, institutionalizing collaborative professional learning communities, enhancing mentoring systems, and implementing sustainable leadership frameworks that promote continuous teacher professional growth and educational excellence.

Keywords: leadership styles, school leadership, teachers' lived experiences, professional skills development, phenomenology, educational leadership, teacher development, City Division of Santiago

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Background of the Study

Educational leadership has become one of the most influential factors affecting teacher effectiveness, school performance, and learner achievement. In today's rapidly evolving educational environment, school leaders are expected not only to manage organizational operations but also to inspire innovation, cultivate collaborative learning environments, empower teachers, and promote continuous professional growth. Leadership in education has therefore shifted from traditional administrative supervision toward transformational, instructional, participative, and servant leadership approaches that directly influence teachers' professional competencies and organizational commitment. As schools continue to respond to educational reforms, technological advancements, and increasingly diverse learner needs, the quality of school leadership has become fundamental in achieving sustainable educational excellence.

Leadership styles determine how school leaders interact with teachers, make decisions, communicate organizational goals, resolve conflicts, and facilitate professional development. Different leadership styles create varying organizational climates that influence teachers' motivation, instructional effectiveness, job satisfaction, collaboration, and professional growth. Transformational leaders inspire teachers through a shared vision, individualized support, intellectual stimulation, and professional empowerment, whereas participative leaders encourage collaboration, shared governance, and collective decision-making. Instructional leaders prioritize curriculum implementation, coaching, mentoring, and instructional improvement, while servant leaders focus on supporting teachers' personal and professional needs. Collectively, these leadership approaches contribute significantly to the development of teachers' professional skills, enabling them to become more competent, reflective, innovative, and committed educators.

Research consistently demonstrates that effective school leadership positively influences teacher development and organizational performance. Hallinger (2022) emphasized that leadership remains one of the strongest school-based determinants of instructional quality because effective leaders create environments where teachers continuously learn, collaborate, and improve instructional practices. Similarly, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020) argued that successful school leaders enhance educational outcomes by fostering professional learning cultures, strengthening teacher commitment, and promoting collaborative organizational practices. Leadership therefore extends beyond administrative authority by directly shaping teachers' instructional behaviors, professional attitudes, and lifelong learning.

Leadership styles refer to the behaviors, strategies, and approaches school leaders employ to influence teachers in achieving organizational goals. Educational leadership literature identifies transformational, instructional, participative, servant, and distributed leadership as among the most effective leadership approaches in contemporary schools. Hallinger (2022) emphasized that effective school leaders establish clear organizational visions, encourage collaborative learning, promote instructional excellence, and create supportive environments that enhance teacher performance. Rather than relying solely on authority and supervision, successful school leaders inspire teachers through empowerment, trust, communication, and professional support.

Similarly, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020) argued that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors influencing student achievement. Their research demonstrated



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that effective school leaders significantly influence teachers' professional attitudes, instructional competence, organizational commitment, and willingness to embrace educational reforms. Leadership styles that encourage collaboration, reflective practice, and teacher participation produce more sustainable organizational improvement than traditional hierarchical leadership models.

cent educational studies indicate that transformational leadership positively influences teachers' instructional competence, self-confidence, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and professional growth (Leithwood et al., 2020). School leaders who inspire teachers through vision, encouragement, and recognition cultivate organizational cultures characterized by trust, collaboration, and lifelong learning. Teachers working under transformational leaders become more willing to participate in professional development programs, conduct classroom action research, integrate innovative teaching strategies, and contribute actively to school improvement initiatives.

Spillane (2006) introduced the concept of Distributed Leadership, which argues that leadership responsibilities should be shared among administrators, department heads, master teachers, and classroom teachers rather than concentrated solely in school principals. Distributed leadership enables teachers to assume leadership roles while contributing their professional expertise to curriculum innovation, instructional improvement, and organizational decision-making.

Similarly, DuFour and Fullan (2018) emphasized that Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) provide collaborative environments where teachers exchange instructional practices, analyze learner performance, solve educational problems collectively, and continuously improve professional competence. Such collaborative cultures significantly enhance teachers' communication, teamwork, instructional decision-making, and leadership skills.

Professional skills development among teachers has likewise become increasingly important within contemporary educational systems. Beyond mastery of subject matter, teachers are expected to demonstrate communication skills, instructional competence, technological literacy, collaboration, critical thinking, classroom management, research capability, leadership, adaptability, and reflective practice. These competencies enable educators to respond effectively to changing curriculum standards, diverse learner characteristics, and emerging educational challenges. School leaders significantly influence the development of these professional skills by providing mentoring, coaching, constructive feedback, opportunities for continuous learning, and supportive organizational environments that encourage innovation and instructional excellence.

Within the Philippine educational context, the Department of Education recognizes school leaders as catalysts for teacher development and organizational transformation. The Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) identify leadership as a multidimensional competency encompassing instructional leadership, human resource development, organizational management, community engagement, and professional learning. Likewise, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) emphasize the importance of continuous professional development supported by school leaders through coaching, mentoring, collaborative learning, and reflective instructional practice. The Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030 and the MATATAG Agenda further reinforce the crucial role of educational leadership in strengthening teacher competence, improving instructional quality, and achieving equitable and learner-centered education.



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Within the City Division of Santiago, school leaders continuously implement leadership practices that influence teachers' professional development through instructional supervision, mentoring, faculty development programs, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, classroom observations, collaborative planning, leadership opportunities, and school improvement initiatives. These practices aim to enhance teachers' instructional competencies while fostering positive organizational cultures that encourage continuous learning and educational innovation. However, despite these ongoing initiatives, limited qualitative evidence exists regarding how teachers personally experience different leadership styles and how these leadership experiences contribute to their professional skills development.

Most existing studies examining leadership styles have utilized quantitative research designs that measure relationships between leadership variables and organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or teacher performance. Although these studies provide valuable empirical evidence, they often fail to capture the lived experiences, meanings, and personal reflections of teachers who directly interact with school leaders on a daily basis. Furthermore, qualitative phenomenological studies exploring leadership styles and professional skills development within Philippine public schools remain limited, particularly in local educational settings such as the City Division of Santiago.

The research gap lies in the scarcity of phenomenological studies investigating teachers' lived experiences of school leaders' leadership styles and their influence on professional skills development within Philippine public basic education. Existing literature predominantly emphasizes statistical relationships while providing limited understanding of how teachers personally interpret leadership behaviors and how these experiences shape their instructional competence, leadership capacity, communication, collaboration, innovation, and professional growth. Additionally, little contextual evidence exists concerning teachers within the City Division of Santiago, where leadership development remains an essential strategy for improving educational quality and organizational performance. Addressing this gap, the present study seeks to explore the lived experiences of teachers to generate a deeper understanding of leadership styles that effectively promote professional skills development and educational excellence.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach utilizing a transcendental phenomenological research design to explore and understand the lived experiences of teachers regarding school leaders' leadership styles and their influence on teachers' professional skills development in the City Division of Santiago. Qualitative research is appropriate when the objective is to understand how individuals interpret and give meaning to their experiences within a particular social context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, transcendental phenomenology, developed by Moustakas (1994), seeks to describe the essence of participants' lived experiences while allowing the researcher to set aside personal assumptions through the process of *epoche* or bracketing. This design was deemed most appropriate because the study aimed to capture the authentic experiences of teachers concerning various leadership styles demonstrated by school leaders and how these leadership practices contributed to the enhancement of their professional competencies. Rather than measuring leadership effectiveness quantitatively, the study focused on understanding the meanings teachers attribute to leadership experiences that shaped their instructional competence, communication skills, collaboration, innovation, leadership capacity, and professional



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growth.

The study was conducted in selected public elementary and secondary schools under the City Division of Santiago, Department of Education. The division is recognized for its continuous implementation of leadership development programs, teacher capacity-building initiatives, instructional supervision, mentoring systems, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and School Improvement Plan (SIP) implementation. School leaders within the division actively practice various leadership approaches to strengthen instructional quality, organizational effectiveness, and teacher professional development in accordance with the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030, and the MATATAG Agenda. These educational initiatives provided an appropriate research environment for examining how teachers experience school leaders' leadership styles and how these experiences influence their professional skills development.

The participants of the study consisted of twelve (12) licensed professional teachers from selected public schools in the City Division of Santiago. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique commonly employed in phenomenological research to identify individuals who possess rich and direct experiences related to the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure the credibility and richness of the data, participants met the following inclusion criteria: (1) permanent public school teachers; (2) at least three years of teaching experience within the City Division of Santiago; (3) direct experience working under school leaders exhibiting different leadership styles; (4) active participation in instructional supervision, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, faculty development programs, mentoring, or school improvement initiatives; and (5) willingness to voluntarily participate in the study. Teachers representing different grade levels, learning areas, and school classifications were included to obtain diverse perspectives. Participant recruitment continued until data saturation was achieved, wherein no new themes or significant insights emerged from subsequent interviews (Saunders et al., 2018).

The primary research instrument was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide composed of open-ended questions designed to elicit rich descriptions of teachers' lived experiences concerning school leaders' leadership styles and their influence on professional skills development. The interview guide was developed based on the objectives of the study, the reviewed literature, Bass and Avolio's Transformational Leadership Theory, Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Model, Spillane's Distributed Leadership Theory, and Knowles' Adult Learning Theory. The questions focused on teachers' experiences with school leaders' leadership approaches, instructional supervision, mentoring, communication, collaborative decision-making, recognition, professional support, leadership opportunities, innovation, and the development of professional competencies. To establish content validity, the interview guide was reviewed and validated by experts in educational leadership, qualitative research, and teacher professional development. A pilot interview with teachers outside the study locale was likewise conducted to refine the clarity, sequencing, and comprehensibility of the interview questions before the actual data collection. Prior to data gathering, formal approval was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent, school principals, and other appropriate educational authorities. Prospective participants received invitation letters explaining the objectives, significance, procedures, confidentiality measures, and ethical safeguards



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of the study. Teachers who voluntarily agreed to participate signed informed consent forms before the interviews commenced. Individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted in a quiet and private setting within each participating school to encourage open and honest sharing of experiences. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' permission to ensure accurate documentation of their responses. Field notes were also maintained to capture non-verbal behaviors, contextual observations, and reflective insights that complemented the interview transcripts. Following each interview, audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were returned to the participants through member checking to verify the accuracy of the recorded information and to allow participants to clarify or expand their responses when necessary.

The collected data were analyzed using Colaizzi's Seven-Step Phenomenological Method (Colaizzi, 1978). Initially, all interview transcripts were read repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences. Significant statements directly related to school leaders' leadership styles and teachers' professional skills development were extracted and carefully examined. Meanings were then formulated from these significant statements while preserving the participants' intended perspectives. Similar meanings were organized into thematic clusters that eventually developed into the major emergent themes of the study. These themes were integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon, leading to the formulation of the fundamental structure that represented the essence of teachers' lived experiences. Finally, the interpreted findings were returned to the participants for validation through member checking to ensure that the synthesized descriptions accurately reflected their lived experiences. To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the study, the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were observed throughout the research process. Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with participants, member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation of interview transcripts and field notes. Transferability was enhanced by providing thick descriptions of the research setting, participants, and research procedures, enabling readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar educational contexts. Dependability was ensured by maintaining a detailed audit trail documenting all stages of the research process, including interview protocols, coding procedures, thematic development, and methodological decisions. Confirmability was strengthened through reflexive journaling, bracketing, and the inclusion of verbatim participant quotations to ensure that the findings emerged from the participants' lived experiences rather than the researcher's personal interpretations.

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study in accordance with the National Ethical Guidelines for Health and Health-Related Research (2022) issued by the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board. Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Schools Division Office and the respective school heads prior to data collection. Participants were fully informed of the study's objectives, procedures, potential benefits, and possible risks before voluntarily signing informed consent forms. They were likewise informed of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by assigning pseudonyms such as *Participant 1*, *Participant 2*, and so forth instead of using actual names. All interview recordings, transcripts, and research documents were securely stored in password-protected digital files accessible only to the researcher. Throughout the entire research process, the principles of



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Methodology

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Results and Discussion

The phenomenological analysis of the interview data revealed that teachers in the **City Division of Santiago** perceive school leaders' leadership styles as fundamental catalysts in their professional skills development. Participants consistently described leadership not merely as the exercise of authority or the administration of school operations but as an interpersonal and transformational process that nurtures professional competence, confidence, collaboration, innovation, and lifelong learning. Teachers emphasized that the way school leaders communicate, mentor, recognize accomplishments, involve teachers in decision-making, and model professional behavior significantly influences their instructional practices and personal growth.

The participants viewed effective school leaders as individuals who inspire rather than command, guide rather than control, and empower rather than dictate. They shared that leadership styles characterized by trust, empathy, collaboration, and professional support created an organizational culture where teachers felt valued, respected, and motivated to continuously improve. Conversely, participants acknowledged that leadership styles lacking communication, recognition, and teacher involvement often hindered



motivation and limited opportunities for professional growth. Overall, teachers perceived leadership as a dynamic and reciprocal relationship that shapes not only instructional practices but also their professional identity and commitment to educational excellence.

Theme 1. Inspiring Professional Excellence through Transformational Leadership

One of the strongest themes that emerged from the participants' narratives was the transformative influence of visionary leadership on their professional development. Teachers consistently described school leaders who inspired them through a clear educational vision, positive encouragement, and unwavering commitment to teacher development. Rather than simply assigning responsibilities, these school leaders motivated teachers to strive for excellence by fostering a shared sense of purpose and emphasizing that every teacher plays a vital role in improving learner outcomes.

Participants explained that transformational leaders created an environment where teachers willingly embraced challenges because they believed their efforts contributed to meaningful educational change. Many participants narrated that their principals inspired them to pursue graduate studies, attend national and international seminars, participate in educational research, and continuously improve their pedagogical practices. Such encouragement enhanced not only their instructional competence but also their professional aspirations and confidence in assuming greater responsibilities within the school.

One participant stated:

"Our principal always reminds us that learning never stops. She encourages us to enroll in graduate school, attend seminars, and keep improving because she believes our students deserve teachers who continue learning." (Participant 4)

Another participant shared:

"Whenever we encounter difficulties, our school head reminds us of our purpose as educators. That motivation keeps us going even during challenging times." (Participant 9)

A third participant expressed:

"Our principal believes in our abilities even before we believe in ourselves. That confidence inspires us to become better teachers every day." (Participant 12)

Teachers further explained that transformational leadership cultivated optimism, resilience, and organizational commitment. They appreciated leaders who communicated openly, celebrated successes, acknowledged teachers' efforts, and maintained a positive outlook despite educational reforms and increasing workloads. These experiences encouraged teachers to develop initiative, accountability, creativity, and professional excellence.

The findings affirm Bass and Avolio's (1994) Transformational Leadership Theory, which explains that transformational leaders inspire followers by articulating a compelling vision, intellectually stimulating employees, and providing individualized support. Similarly, Leithwood et al. (2020) argued that transformational school leaders enhance teacher motivation, organizational commitment, and instructional effectiveness by cultivating shared educational goals. Hallinger (2022) likewise emphasized that visionary school leadership promotes continuous teacher development and sustained school improvement.

Theme 2. Strengthening Instructional Competence through Supportive and Participative Leadership

Teachers consistently described supportive leadership as one of the most influential factors contributing



to the improvement of their instructional competence. Participants emphasized that effective school leaders regularly visited classrooms, conducted constructive observations, provided individualized coaching, and encouraged reflective dialogue rather than merely evaluating teacher performance. They viewed classroom supervision as an opportunity for learning rather than a mechanism for fault-finding. Participants explained that constructive feedback enabled them to improve lesson planning, classroom management, learner engagement, assessment strategies, differentiated instruction, and technology integration. They also appreciated leaders who listened to teachers' concerns, respected diverse teaching styles, and collaboratively developed solutions to instructional challenges.

Participant 6 narrated:

"Every classroom observation becomes a learning opportunity. Instead of criticizing, our principal asks us how we can improve together."

Participant 2 stated:

"After every observation, our principal discusses practical strategies that we can immediately apply in our classrooms. That coaching helped improve my confidence in teaching."

Participant 10 remarked:

"The support we receive is continuous. Even outside observations, our principal checks on us and asks how she can help us become better teachers."

Teachers explained that participative leadership strengthened professional relationships because school leaders actively involved them in curriculum planning, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, instructional planning, and school improvement initiatives. This participatory environment promoted collaborative problem-solving, increased accountability, and strengthened ownership of educational programs.

The findings support Hallinger's (2022) Instructional Leadership Model, which emphasizes that effective school leaders improve teaching quality through instructional supervision, curriculum monitoring, coaching, and professional development. Likewise, Knight (2018) emphasized that instructional coaching significantly improves teachers' classroom practices by encouraging reflective conversations and collaborative learning. Robinson et al. (2020) similarly found that instructional leadership has one of the strongest effects on teacher effectiveness because it directly supports teaching and learning processes.

Theme 3. Developing Leadership Capacity through Empowerment and Shared Decision-Making

Participants consistently emphasized that school leaders empowered teachers by involving them in meaningful educational decision-making. Rather than making decisions independently, school leaders consulted teachers during curriculum planning, policy implementation, committee assignments, school improvement planning, and instructional innovations. Teachers perceived these opportunities as expressions of trust that strengthened their confidence, leadership skills, and professional identity.

Many participants explained that being entrusted with leadership responsibilities enabled them to discover their own leadership potential. Serving as committee chairpersons, Learning Action Cell facilitators, research coordinators, subject coordinators, and project leaders enhanced their communication skills, organizational abilities, decision-making capacity, and confidence in leading colleagues.

Participant 1 shared:

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"Our principal allows us to lead projects and trusts us to make important decisions. That experience developed my leadership skills more than any seminar."

Participant 7 stated:

"Being involved in school planning made me realize that teachers can also become leaders."

Participant 5 reflected:

"Leadership is not limited to principals. Our school leader teaches us that everyone has something valuable to contribute."

Teachers further explained that shared leadership promoted mutual respect, strengthened professional collaboration, and created a culture where everyone's ideas were valued regardless of position or years of service. They felt more committed to implementing school programs because they actively participated in designing and improving them.

These findings strongly support Spillane's (2006) Distributed Leadership Theory, which argues that leadership becomes more effective when responsibilities are shared among organizational members according to their expertise. Similarly, DuFour and Fullan (2018) emphasized that collaborative leadership within Professional Learning Communities develops teacher leadership, strengthens collective efficacy, and improves organizational performance.

Theme 4. Enhancing Professional Confidence through Recognition and Mentoring

Another significant theme that emerged from the participants' narratives was the importance of recognition and mentoring in strengthening teachers' professional confidence. Participants consistently expressed that appreciation from school leaders whether through formal recognition, verbal praise, or simple words of encouragement motivated them to continue improving their instructional performance. Teachers explained that recognition validated their hard work and reinforced their commitment to excellence. They particularly appreciated school leaders who celebrated small achievements, acknowledged innovative teaching practices, and recognized teachers' efforts during faculty meetings and school activities.

Participant 8 remarked:

"When our principal recognizes our efforts, we feel that our hard work matters. That motivates us to continue giving our best."

Participant 3 shared:

"Recognition is not always about awards. Sometimes a simple 'thank you' from our principal gives us confidence to keep improving."

Participant 11 explained:

"Mentoring sessions helped me overcome self-doubt. My principal believed in me before I learned to believe in myself."

Teachers further emphasized that mentoring extended beyond instructional coaching. School leaders also provided emotional support, professional guidance, career advice, and encouragement during difficult situations. These supportive relationships fostered resilience, increased self-confidence, and strengthened teachers' willingness to embrace educational innovations.

These findings align with Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory, which explains that encouragement, successful experiences, and positive feedback strengthen individuals' beliefs in their capabilities. Likewise, Ryan and Deci's (2020) Self-Determination Theory suggests that supportive interpersonal relationships satisfy teachers' psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, thereby enhancing



intrinsic motivation and professional engagement.

Theme 5. Cultivating Lifelong Professional Growth through Continuous Learning and Reflective Practice

The final theme revealed that effective leadership styles fostered a culture of continuous professional learning and reflective practice. Teachers consistently described school leaders who encouraged them to evaluate their instructional practices, participate in action research, integrate educational technology, pursue graduate education, and continuously seek innovative teaching approaches.

Participants viewed professional learning as an ongoing journey rather than a requirement for compliance. They explained that school leaders created numerous opportunities for growth through seminars, workshops, Learning Action Cell sessions, peer observations, mentoring, research presentations, and collaborative reflection.

Participant 2 stated:

"Our principal always reminds us that every experience—whether successful or challenging—is an opportunity to learn."

Participant 6 shared:

"Reflection has become part of our teaching. We constantly evaluate what works best for our learners."

Participant 9 explained:

"Because our principal encourages innovation, we are not afraid to try new teaching strategies that improve student learning."

Teachers believed that reflective leadership cultivated adaptability, creativity, resilience, and lifelong learning. Continuous reflection enabled them to identify instructional strengths, recognize areas needing improvement, and make informed decisions that enhanced learner outcomes.

These findings support Knowles' Adult Learning Theory (1984), which posits that adults learn best through meaningful experiences, reflection, and self-directed learning. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasized that sustained, collaborative, and job-embedded professional development significantly improves teachers' instructional competence and educational effectiveness. Hallinger (2022) further argued that school leaders who cultivate reflective organizational cultures create schools capable of sustaining continuous improvement and educational innovation.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that school leaders' leadership styles profoundly shape teachers' professional skills development by creating environments characterized by trust, collaboration, empowerment, mentoring, and continuous learning. Teachers experienced leadership as a relational and transformative process that extended far beyond administrative management. Transformational, instructional, participative, and supportive leadership styles collectively enhanced teachers' instructional competence, leadership abilities, communication, collaboration, innovation, resilience, and professional confidence. The lived experiences of the participants affirm that effective school leaders do not merely manage educational institutions they develop people, cultivate leadership in others, and create learning organizations where continuous professional growth becomes a shared responsibility. Collectively, the findings strongly support Bass and Avolio's Transformational Leadership Theory, Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Model, Spillane's Distributed Leadership Theory, Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, and Knowles' Adult



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Learning Theory, demonstrating that effective educational leadership is fundamentally centered on empowering teachers to achieve both personal and organizational excellence.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of teachers regarding school leaders' leadership styles and their influence on professional skills development in the City Division of Santiago. The findings demonstrate that leadership extends far beyond administrative management and organizational supervision. Teachers perceived effective school leaders as transformational, instructional, participative, and supportive leaders who continuously inspire professional excellence, strengthen instructional competence, empower teachers through shared leadership, recognize professional accomplishments, and cultivate a culture of lifelong learning. The participants consistently described leadership as a relational process that nurtures trust, collaboration, innovation, resilience, and continuous professional growth. Through these leadership practices, teachers developed greater confidence in their instructional abilities, improved their communication and collaboration skills, enhanced their leadership capacity, and became more committed to achieving educational excellence.

The first theme, Inspiring Professional Excellence through Transformational Leadership, revealed that transformational leadership significantly motivates teachers to pursue continuous professional development and instructional excellence. Teachers experienced school leaders as vision-driven individuals who inspired them to attend seminars, pursue graduate studies, participate in educational research, and continuously improve their pedagogical practices. The participants emphasized that school leaders who consistently communicated meaningful educational goals, demonstrated optimism, and recognized teachers' potential fostered stronger organizational commitment and professional motivation. These findings suggest that transformational leadership encourages teachers to exceed routine expectations by cultivating a shared commitment toward quality education and continuous improvement. The second theme, Strengthening Instructional Competence through Supportive and Participative Leadership, demonstrated that instructional supervision, coaching, mentoring, and collaborative leadership significantly enhanced teachers' professional competencies. Participants viewed classroom observations as developmental opportunities rather than evaluative exercises because school leaders provided constructive feedback, reflective discussions, and individualized coaching. Teachers likewise appreciated leaders who encouraged participation in curriculum planning, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, and collaborative instructional decision-making. These supportive leadership practices strengthened instructional competence, classroom management, learner engagement, assessment strategies, technology integration, and reflective teaching. The findings indicate that school leaders who prioritize coaching and collaborative learning contribute substantially to improving teachers' instructional effectiveness.

The third theme, Developing Leadership Capacity through Empowerment and Shared Decision-Making, highlighted that teachers' leadership skills developed when school leaders entrusted them with meaningful responsibilities and involved them in school governance. Participants shared that opportunities to lead committees, facilitate Learning Action Cell sessions, coordinate projects, conduct action research, and participate in school planning enhanced their communication skills, decision-making abilities,



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organizational competence, and leadership confidence. Teachers emphasized that participative leadership strengthened professional ownership and accountability because they became active contributors rather than passive implementers of school programs. These findings demonstrate that empowering teachers through shared leadership cultivates future educational leaders while strengthening organizational collaboration and innovation.

The fourth theme, Enhancing Professional Confidence through Recognition and Mentoring, underscored the importance of appreciation, encouragement, and mentoring in strengthening teachers' self-confidence and professional identity. Participants consistently emphasized that school leaders who acknowledged their accomplishments, celebrated instructional innovations, and provided emotional and professional support created positive organizational climates where teachers felt respected, valued, and motivated. Mentoring relationships extended beyond instructional coaching by providing career guidance, emotional encouragement, and continuous professional advice that enabled teachers to overcome challenges and pursue instructional excellence. The findings indicate that recognition and mentoring enhance teachers' self-efficacy, resilience, and willingness to embrace educational reforms and innovations.

The fifth theme, Cultivating Lifelong Professional Growth through Continuous Learning and Reflective Practice, demonstrated that effective leadership styles promote sustainable professional development by encouraging teachers to engage in reflective teaching, classroom action research, graduate education, technology integration, and collaborative professional learning. Participants perceived continuous learning as an integral part of their professional responsibilities because school leaders consistently created opportunities for seminars, workshops, mentoring, peer learning, and reflective dialogue. Teachers emphasized that reflective practice enabled them to evaluate instructional effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and adopt innovative teaching strategies responsive to learners' needs. These experiences contributed to the development of adaptive, reflective, and research-oriented educators capable of responding to the dynamic demands of contemporary education.

Overall, the study concludes that school leaders' leadership styles significantly influence teachers' professional skills development by fostering environments characterized by trust, collaboration, empowerment, innovation, and continuous learning. Leadership practices grounded in transformational, instructional, participative, and supportive approaches enhance teachers' instructional competence, communication, collaboration, leadership capacity, problem-solving abilities, professional confidence, and commitment to lifelong learning. The findings affirm Bass and Avolio's Transformational Leadership Theory, Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Model, Spillane's Distributed Leadership Theory, Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, and Knowles' Adult Learning Theory, all of which emphasize that educational leadership becomes most effective when it empowers teachers to realize their full professional potential while contributing meaningfully to school improvement and learner success.

Educational Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for educational leadership, teacher development, and educational policy. First, school leaders should adopt leadership styles that balance transformational, instructional, participative, and supportive leadership practices to foster teachers' professional growth and



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instructional excellence. Leadership should extend beyond administrative functions by emphasizing coaching, mentoring, collaboration, reflective practice, and teacher empowerment. Second, schools should strengthen professional learning structures by institutionalizing Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), peer mentoring, lesson study, and action research to provide continuous opportunities for teacher development. Third, teachers should be empowered to participate actively in curriculum planning, school governance, and instructional innovation to strengthen leadership capacity and organizational commitment. Fourth, the Department of Education should continue enhancing leadership capability-building programs aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030, and the MATATAG Agenda, ensuring that school leaders possess the competencies necessary to cultivate teacher excellence and organizational effectiveness. Finally, educational institutions should foster organizational cultures that promote trust, recognition, collaboration, innovation, and lifelong professional learning as essential foundations of sustainable school improvement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **School leaders** should continuously strengthen transformational, instructional, participative, and supportive leadership practices by emphasizing mentoring, coaching, collaborative decision-making, reflective supervision, and teacher empowerment.
2. **Teachers** should actively engage in graduate education, seminars, professional learning communities, classroom action research, peer mentoring, and instructional innovation to continuously develop their professional competencies.
3. **School administrators** should institutionalize collaborative professional development programs, including Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), lesson study, mentoring systems, and peer coaching initiatives that strengthen instructional quality and organizational learning.
4. **The Department of Education** should expand leadership development programs focusing on transformational leadership, instructional leadership, emotional intelligence, coaching, mentoring, distributed leadership, and organizational development consistent with the PPSSH, PPST, BEDP 2030, and the MATATAG Agenda.
5. **Educational policymakers** should provide sustained technical assistance, funding, and professional development opportunities that support innovative leadership practices and continuous teacher capacity-building across schools.



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6. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct comparative studies involving elementary and secondary schools, employ mixed-methods or longitudinal designs, and investigate the influence of leadership styles on teacher well-being, organizational resilience, instructional innovation, learner achievement, and educational transformation.

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