



## The Practice and Challenges in Teacher Leadership of Academic Managers: The Philippine Public-School Experience

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### Abstract:

This study explores the practice and challenges of teacher leadership among academic managers in Philippine public schools. Drawing upon existing literature and empirical data, the research highlights the dominance of principal-centered leadership, wherein limited opportunities exist for teacher involvement in decision-making and instructional leadership. Academic managers, particularly school principals, face various challenges including high levels of stress, rapid turnover rates, and administrative pressures, which hinder the development of teacher leadership initiatives. Cultural norms and political dynamics significantly influence teacher leadership practices, impacting the implementation of distributed leadership approaches. Despite these challenges, there is a recognized need to develop teacher leadership capacities for school effectiveness. Professional development programs and systematic approaches are essential to empower teachers and enhance their leadership roles. Addressing cultural expectations and political influences while fostering a collaborative school culture are crucial steps toward promoting effective teacher leadership. This study provides insights for policymakers and educational leaders to improve teacher leadership practices in Philippine public schools, aiming for continuous school improvement and better student outcomes.

*Keywords:* teacher leadership, academic managers, Philippine public schools, principal-centered leadership

### Introduction:

Educational management and leadership are vital components of the academic landscape, shaping the quality and effectiveness of educational institutions. In the Philippines, like in many other countries, understanding the practice and challenges in teacher leadership of academic managers is essential for improving educational outcomes and fostering positive learning environments.

Educational leadership encompasses various aspects of managing education systems and processes, aiming to define roles, responsibilities, and accountability within the system (Mallillin, et al. 2024). Effective leadership in education influences goal-setting, decision-making, and overall organizational effectiveness (Jakhongir & Gulnora, 2021). Within this context, teacher leadership has gained recognition as a key factor in driving school improvement and student achievement.

Teacher leadership involves educators who not only excel in their classrooms but also extend their influence to inspire and support others within the school community (Danielson, 2006). This concept emphasizes the role of teachers in promoting positive change, enhancing instruction, and contributing to school development beyond traditional teaching responsibilities.

However, the practice of teacher leadership in Philippine public schools is not without its challenges. Traditional principal-centered leadership has been a dominant paradigm, limiting the growth of teacher leadership (Bual & Madrigal, 2021). School administrators often face high levels of stress and turnover, which can impede efforts to cultivate a culture of distributed leadership and collaboration (Alegado, 2018).

As the Philippine education system undergoes reforms such as the implementation of the K-12 program and digitalization of education delivery, understanding the dynamics of teacher leadership and addressing its challenges becomes increasingly important.



This research aims to explore the practice and challenges in teacher leadership of academic managers in Philippine public schools. By examining real experiences and perceptions, this study seeks to provide insights into how teacher leadership can be enhanced to improve educational outcomes and address the evolving needs of the education system.

### **Literature Review:**

Teacher leadership in educational settings has become increasingly recognized as a crucial factor in school improvement and student success. In the context of Philippine public schools, understanding the practice and challenges of teacher leadership among academic managers is essential for driving positive change and enhancing educational outcomes.

Teacher leadership involves educators taking on leadership roles beyond their classrooms to influence, inspire, and support colleagues and students (Danielson, 2006). It encompasses a range of activities such as facilitating professional development, curriculum development, mentoring, and advocating for student needs.

Research suggests that teacher leadership positively impacts school culture, instructional practices, and student achievement (Harris, 2003). Teacher leaders contribute to creating a collaborative and supportive learning environment, disseminating best practices, and fostering teacher professional growth.

Despite its importance, teacher leadership faces several challenges. In the Philippines, traditional principal-centered leadership has been a predominant model (Bual & Madrigal, 2021). This hierarchical structure may limit opportunities for teacher leadership development and involvement in decision-making processes. The traditional model of school leadership in the Philippines often revolves around the principal as the central figure (Alegado, 2018). Principals are typically responsible for decision-making, administration, and instructional leadership, leaving limited room for distributed leadership practices.

School principals in the Philippines often face high levels of stress and turnover, which can affect the continuity of leadership and school improvement efforts (Kilag, et al, 2024). Rapid turnover and administrative pressures may hinder the cultivation of teacher leadership.

Studies have shown a correlation between effective school leadership, including teacher leadership, and improved student outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2004). Teacher leaders play a critical role in fostering a positive school culture and driving instructional improvement, which ultimately affects student achievement.

Recent education reforms in the Philippines, such as the implementation of the K-12 program and curriculum revisions, highlight the need for innovative leadership approaches (Tagupa, 2019). The Matatag Curriculum aims to support student well-being, inclusive learning, and teacher development. Efforts to enhance teacher leadership involve providing professional development opportunities, mentoring programs, and creating structures that allow teachers to take on leadership roles (Harris, 2003). Building capacities among teacher leaders is crucial for sustainable school improvement.

Cultural and political factors influence the practice of teacher leadership. The turnover of principals, influenced by political dynamics, can disrupt leadership continuity and school improvement efforts (Sutherland & Brooks, 2013). Cultural norms may also affect teacher roles and expectations within schools.

There is a growing recognition of the need to shift towards teacher-centered leadership models that empower and support teacher leaders (Elizabeth, et al., 2022). Collaborative leadership approaches can foster a culture of shared responsibility and collective efficacy.

Teacher leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape of Philippine public schools. While there are challenges such as traditional leadership structures, high turnover rates among principals, and cultural factors, there is also a growing recognition of the importance of teacher leadership in driving school improvement efforts. Efforts to empower and support teacher leaders are essential for fostering positive change and improving educational outcomes.

### **Methodology:**

This study employed a literature review methodology to explore the practice and challenges in teacher leadership of academic managers in Philippine public schools. The literature review was conducted to gather insights from existing research, theoretical frameworks, and empirical studies related to teacher leadership, educational management, and the Philippine education context.



A comprehensive search was conducted on databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, and academic journals using keywords including "teacher leadership," "educational management," "Philippine public schools," "academic managers," and related terms.

Literature selected for review included empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, case studies, and review articles published in peer-reviewed journals, books, and research reports. Only studies focusing on teacher leadership practices, challenges, and experiences in the Philippine public school context were included.

Relevant literature was collected and organized systematically based on themes and key concepts. Data collected included information on the conceptualization of teacher leadership, challenges faced by academic managers, models of educational management, and the impact of leadership on educational outcomes.

The gathered literature was analyzed to identify common themes, patterns, and key findings related to teacher leadership practices and challenges in Philippine public schools. Comparative analysis was conducted to understand variations in approaches to teacher leadership and management.

Findings from the literature were synthesized to provide a comprehensive overview of the practice and challenges in teacher leadership among academic managers. The synthesis included discussions on the role of principals, teacher leadership development initiatives, and the influence of cultural and political factors.

### **Findings and Discussion:**

#### **Dominance of Principal-Centered Leadership:**

In the Philippine public school context, principal-centered leadership has been a prevailing model, where principals hold substantial authority in decision-making and instructional leadership (Alegado, 2018). Research indicates that principals often play central roles in school management, leaving limited room for distributed leadership practices (Bual & Madrigal, 2021). Bual and Madrigal (2021) highlighted that in many Philippine public schools, principals are perceived as the primary decision-makers and leaders, with teachers having limited involvement in school management processes. This hierarchical structure often results in top-down decision-making and less autonomy for teachers.

Alegado (2018) further emphasized that the traditional understanding of leadership in Philippine schools revolves around the principal as the central figure. Principals are responsible for setting directions, managing resources, and overseeing instructional practices, which may overshadow the potential for teacher leadership. This dominance of principal-centered leadership may limit opportunities for teachers to engage in decision-making, innovation, and collaborative leadership practices within schools (Kilag, et al, 2024). Despite the importance of distributed leadership in fostering a collaborative school culture and improving outcomes, the principal-centered approach remains prevalent in many Philippine public schools.

#### **Challenges Faced by Academic Managers:**

Academic managers, especially school principals, encounter a multitude of challenges in the Philippine public school system. These challenges can significantly impact the development and support of teacher leadership initiatives within schools.

School principals often face high levels of stress due to the demanding nature of their roles. They are responsible for managing various aspects of school operations, including curriculum implementation, student discipline, teacher supervision, and community relations (Sutherland & Brooks, 2013). This can lead to burnout and decreased morale among academic managers, affecting their ability to effectively support teacher leadership.

Rapid turnover of school principals is a prevalent issue in the Philippine education system. Political factors, such as reassignments and promotions, contribute to frequent changes in school leadership positions (Luistro, 2014). High turnover rates disrupt continuity in leadership and may impede the establishment of sustained teacher leadership initiatives. Academic managers face administrative pressures related to compliance with government regulations, bureaucratic procedures, and accountability measures (Alegado, 2018). These pressures often consume time and resources, leaving little room for academic managers to focus on fostering teacher leadership within their schools.

Philippine public schools often operate with limited resources, including budget constraints, inadequate facilities, and shortage of teaching materials (Kilag, et al, 2024). Academic managers must navigate these resource constraints while striving to support teacher leadership development (Uy, et al., 2023).

Academic managers are also subject to community expectations and pressures, including parental demands, community engagement, and local politics (Bual & Madrigal, 2021). Balancing these expectations with the needs of teachers and students can be challenging. These challenges collectively hinder the efforts of academic managers to promote and sustain teacher leadership initiatives within Philippine public schools.



### **Need for Teacher Leadership Development:**

Recognizing the crucial role of teacher leadership in improving school effectiveness, there is a growing emphasis on the development of teacher leadership capacities in the Philippine public school system. Although some efforts have been made to promote teacher leadership, such as professional development programs, more systematic approaches are required to empower teachers and enhance their leadership roles.

Teacher leadership is essential for fostering a collaborative school culture, improving teaching practices, and enhancing student outcomes (Danielson, 2006). Empowering teachers to take on leadership roles can lead to more effective decision-making processes and greater innovation within schools.

Several professional development programs have been implemented to support teacher leadership development in the Philippines. These programs focus on building teachers' leadership skills, enhancing instructional practices, and promoting collaboration among educators (Bual & Madrigal, 2021). While professional development programs exist, there is a need for more systematic approaches to teacher leadership development. This includes integrating teacher leadership training into pre-service and in-service teacher education programs (Harris, 2003).

Empowering teachers to lead requires creating structures and opportunities for them to take on leadership roles (Harris, 2003). This may involve establishing teacher-led committees, mentoring programs, or collaborative decision-making processes within schools. It is crucial to redefine and expand teacher leadership roles beyond traditional notions of leadership. Teachers should be encouraged to lead initiatives, mentor their peers, participate in curriculum development, and engage in school improvement efforts (Harris, 2003).

Promoting teacher leadership requires a cultural shift where teachers are viewed as leaders and agents of change within schools (Curtis, 2013). This shift involves valuing teachers' expertise and providing them with opportunities to lead.

### **Impact of Cultural and Political Factors:**

Cultural norms and political dynamics play a significant role in shaping the practice of teacher leadership within Philippine public schools. The turnover of principals influenced by political factors, as well as cultural expectations regarding leadership roles, affect the implementation of distributed leadership practices.

Political factors often influence the turnover of school principals in the Philippines. Principals may be reassigned or promoted based on political decisions rather than educational considerations (Sutherland & Brooks, 2013). This frequent turnover disrupts continuity in leadership and hampers the establishment of long-term teacher leadership initiatives.

Cultural norms regarding leadership roles also impact teacher leadership practices. In Philippine society, there is a traditional hierarchy where authority is centralized in leaders such as principals (Alegado, 2018). This hierarchical structure may limit the autonomy and authority granted to teacher leaders within schools.

The cultural expectation of principal-centered leadership creates a challenging environment for distributed leadership practices to flourish (Bual & Madrigal, 2021). Teachers may be less inclined to take on leadership roles when the principal is perceived as the sole decision-maker and leader within the school (Abella, et al., 2024).

Political instability can further exacerbate challenges in implementing teacher leadership initiatives. Changes in government policies or leadership may disrupt ongoing initiatives and priorities within schools (Kilag, et al, 2024). Cultural and political factors may contribute to resistance to change within school systems. Teachers and administrators may be hesitant to embrace new leadership practices or deviate from traditional roles (Alegado, 2018).

Overcoming these challenges requires a cultural shift towards valuing distributed leadership and empowering teachers to take on leadership roles (Sutherland & Brooks, 2013). It involves redefining leadership norms and fostering a collaborative approach to school management. Despite the impact of cultural and political factors, efforts to promote teacher leadership can help navigate these challenges and drive positive change within schools.

### **Conclusion:**

The study on "The Practice and Challenges in Teacher Leadership of Academic Managers: The Philippine Public-School Experience" sheds light on the intricate dynamics of teacher leadership within Philippine public schools. Through an analysis of the practices and challenges faced by academic managers, several key findings have emerged.

Firstly, it was observed that the traditional model of school leadership in Philippine public schools tends to be principal-centered, limiting opportunities for teacher involvement in decision-making and instructional leadership. This dominance of principal-centered leadership has implications for the distribution of leadership roles within schools (Alegado, 2018).



Secondly, academic managers, particularly school principals, face various challenges such as high levels of stress, rapid turnover rates, and administrative pressures. These challenges hinder the development and support of teacher leadership initiatives within schools (Kilag, et al, 2024).

Thirdly, cultural norms and political dynamics significantly influence the practice of teacher leadership. The turnover of principals influenced by political factors, as well as cultural expectations regarding leadership roles, affect the implementation of distributed leadership practices (Sutherland & Brooks, 2013).

However, despite these challenges, there is a recognized need for the development of teacher leadership capacities to improve school effectiveness. Efforts such as professional development programs and systematic approaches are required to empower teachers and enhance their leadership roles (Bual & Madrigal, 2021).

Promoting teacher leadership in Philippine public schools requires addressing various challenges including cultural expectations, political influences, and administrative pressures. It necessitates a cultural shift towards valuing distributed leadership and providing teachers with opportunities to lead effectively. By empowering teachers and fostering a collaborative approach to school management, the education system in the Philippines can strive towards continuous improvement and better student outcomes.

This study provides valuable insights for policymakers, educational leaders, and practitioners to enhance teacher leadership practices and ultimately contribute to the improvement of Philippine public schools.

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