

## Understanding the Interplay of History, Culture, and Policies in Philippine School Leadership

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### **Abstract**

This study provides a comprehensive exploration of school leadership in the Philippines, focusing on historical, cultural, and policy dimensions. A systematic literature review uncovers the historical influences, tracing hierarchical structures established during the Spanish colonial era and pragmatic shifts introduced by American colonization. The enduring impact of these periods on contemporary leadership practices is revealed, emphasizing the need for a historically informed understanding. Cultural dimensions emerge as significant influences, with the cultural value of "pakikipagkapwa" shaping leadership styles. Effective leaders integrate this communal unity principle, fostering relational leadership and strong connections within the educational community. Moreover, cultural sensitivity is recognized as pivotal in decision-making, communication, and community engagement. Policy dynamics, particularly decentralization, reveal transformative shifts in decision-making

authority, necessitating school leaders to adapt to new administrative structures and navigate heightened autonomy. Challenges in aligning top-down policies with grassroots input underscore the mediating role of school leaders between policy directives and local contexts. Identified gaps in existing research underscore the need for more contemporary studies, particularly those capturing the day-to-day challenges faced by school leaders and their experiences amidst evolving policy changes. Bridging these gaps is crucial for a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of school leadership in the Philippines, guiding evidence-based practices and policy adjustments for an effective and responsive educational system.

**Keywords:** School leadership, Philippines, historical influences, cultural dimensions, policy dynamics

## Introduction

Education is a critical cornerstone of national development, and the role of school leadership is paramount in shaping the educational landscape of any country (Day, et al., 2020). In the Philippines, a nation with a rich tapestry of historical, cultural, and policy dynamics, the study of school leadership becomes particularly intriguing.

Historically, the Philippines has undergone a series of educational reforms, influenced by both colonial and indigenous forces (Shackford, 1990). Spanning centuries, these historical developments have left an indelible mark on the educational system and the leadership structures within it. The Spanish colonial era, American occupation, and subsequent self-governance have all contributed to the evolution of school leadership norms. Understanding these historical antecedents is crucial for comprehending the present-day challenges and opportunities faced by school leaders in the Philippines (Kilag, et al., 2023).

Cultural dimensions also play a pivotal role in shaping school leadership practices. The diverse cultural landscape of the Philippines, marked by a fusion of indigenous, Malay, Spanish, and American influences, contributes to a unique leadership context (Sutherland & Brooks, 2013). The importance of relational leadership, community engagement, and culturally sensitive decision-making cannot be overstated in a nation where cultural nuances significantly impact educational practices. This research aims to explore how cultural factors shape the expectations, behaviors, and effectiveness of school leaders in the Philippines.

Furthermore, the policy dynamics in the Philippines add another layer of complexity to the study of school leadership. Educational policies are crafted to address the evolving needs of society, and their impact on leadership practices is profound. Analyzing the various policy shifts, from curriculum changes to decentralization initiatives, provides insights into the challenges and opportunities encountered by school leaders. Additionally, examining how policy changes align with or diverge from cultural and historical contexts enhances our understanding of the multifaceted nature of school leadership in the Philippines.

## Literature Review

### Historical Dimensions of School Leadership:

The historical roots of school leadership in the Philippines are deeply embedded in the country's colonial past. The Spanish era, spanning over three centuries, significantly

influenced the establishment of educational institutions. According to De Guia (2005), the Spanish introduced a system wherein the friars took a central role in educational administration, laying the foundation for hierarchical leadership structures within schools. This historical legacy has left an enduring impact on the administrative traditions in Philippine schools.

Moreover, American colonization in the early 20th century brought further transformations to the education system. As Tschannen (1991) notes, the Americans introduced a more secular and practical approach to education, emphasizing English as the medium of instruction. This shift had implications for leadership practices, as schools became sites for both cultural assimilation and resistance. School leaders during this period were tasked with navigating the complexities of implementing policies that reflected American ideals while respecting local cultural nuances.

### **Cultural Influences on School Leadership:**

The Philippines' diverse cultural landscape shapes the expectations and behaviors of school leaders. The Filipino concept of "pakikipagkapwa" or communal unity emphasizes the importance of relationships and interconnectedness within communities (Meneses, 2019). This cultural value extends to school leadership, where relational leadership styles are often more effective. Leaders who understand and embrace the communal nature of Filipino culture can build stronger connections with their staff, students, and communities.

Cultural sensitivity is paramount, especially in a nation with a blend of indigenous, Malay, Spanish, and American influences. The cultural context influences decision-making processes, communication styles, and community engagement strategies. School leaders need to navigate this intricate cultural terrain, recognizing the diversity within the educational environment (Brooks & Brooks, 2019). Raguindin, et al. (2021) emphasizes the importance of leadership practices that acknowledge and celebrate cultural diversity, fostering inclusivity within schools.

Educational policies in the Philippines have undergone significant changes over the years, influencing the roles and responsibilities of school leaders. Diokno-Sicat and Maddawin (2018) highlights the impact of decentralization policies, transferring decision-making authority from the central government to local education offices. This shift has implications for school leaders, as they must adapt to new administrative structures and navigate increased autonomy (Kilag, et al., 2023).

Mirasol, et al. (2021) explores the complexities of policy implementation in the Philippine education system. He emphasizes the need for a balance between top-down policy directives and grassroots input, as well as the importance of aligning policies with the cultural and historical contexts of the Philippines. School leaders play a crucial role in mediating between policy requirements and the practical realities of their specific educational contexts.

While existing literature provides valuable insights into the historical, cultural, and policy dimensions of school leadership in the Philippines, there remains a need for more comprehensive and contemporary studies. Many existing works focus on specific historical periods or cultural aspects, leaving gaps in our understanding of the evolving nature of school leadership in the 21st century.

Additionally, empirical research is limited, with few studies offering direct insights into the experiences and perspectives of school leaders. A more in-depth examination of the day-to-day challenges faced by school leaders, especially in the context of current policy changes, would contribute significantly to the literature.

This literature review highlights the intricate interplay of historical, cultural, and policy factors shaping school leadership in the Philippines. The historical legacies of Spanish and American colonization, the cultural nuances of "pakikipagkapwa," and the ongoing policy dynamics all influence the roles and practices of school leaders. Understanding these dimensions is crucial for fostering effective leadership in Philippine schools and addressing the unique challenges and opportunities within this context. Further research is needed to bridge existing gaps and provide a more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in school leadership in the Philippines.

## **Methodology**

The methodology employed in this study involved a systematic literature review to comprehensively investigate and synthesize existing scholarly works on school leadership in the Philippines, with a focus on historical, cultural, and policy dynamics. The systematic review was conducted in accordance with established guidelines to ensure rigor, transparency, and replicability in the selection and analysis of relevant literature.

A systematic and comprehensive search strategy was developed to identify relevant literature. Multiple academic databases, including but not limited to JSTOR, ERIC, and PubMed, were systematically searched using a combination of keywords such as "school leadership," "Philippines," "historical," "cultural," and "policy dynamics." The search strategy aimed to capture a broad spectrum of literature while ensuring relevance to the research questions.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to filter the retrieved literature. Studies were included if they were published in peer-reviewed journals, books, or conference proceedings. Additionally, the literature needed to be directly related to school leadership in the Philippines and provide insights into historical, cultural, or policy aspects. Non-English publications were excluded to maintain consistency and to ensure a manageable scope.

The screening process involved two stages. In the first stage, titles and abstracts were screened to assess their relevance to the research questions. In the second stage, full texts of potentially relevant articles were reviewed to determine their eligibility for inclusion. The screening process was conducted independently by two researchers, with any discrepancies resolved through discussion.

Data extraction was carried out to systematically collect relevant information from the selected literature. A structured data extraction form was developed, encompassing key details such as authorship, publication year, research methods employed, and main findings. This process ensured consistency and facilitated the organization of information for analysis.

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the selected literature, a quality assessment was conducted. The methodological rigor of each study was evaluated using established criteria for assessing the quality of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research. This step allowed for the identification of potential biases and limitations within the reviewed literature.

The synthesized findings from the literature were analyzed thematically, identifying common patterns, divergences, and gaps in the existing research. The analysis focused on discerning historical trends, cultural influences, and policy dynamics shaping school leadership in the Philippines.

## Findings and Discussion

### **Historical Foundations of School Leadership:**

The systematic literature review conducted for this study unveiled a cohesive historical narrative that has significantly shaped the evolution of school leadership in the Philippines. The Spanish colonial era, spanning over three centuries, emerges as a critical juncture in the establishment of hierarchical leadership structures within educational institutions. De Guia (2005) notes the influential role of the Spanish friars during this period, as they assumed central administrative roles within schools. This historical legacy laid the groundwork for a system wherein authority and decision-making were concentrated at the top, influencing leadership practices that persist in contemporary Philippine schools.

The subsequent American colonization period brought about transformative changes in the educational landscape, further influencing the roles and expectations of school leaders. Hunt & McHale (1965) highlights the shift towards a more secular and practical approach to education during this time. The American emphasis on English as the medium of instruction and a pragmatic curriculum left a lasting impact on leadership functions within schools. School leaders were tasked with navigating the complexities of implementing policies that reflected American ideals while simultaneously respecting local cultural nuances. The historical imprint of the American era remains evident in the pragmatic and utilitarian aspects of school leadership practices observed today.

The convergence of these historical periods engendered a dynamic interplay of influences on school leadership in the Philippines. The enduring legacy of the Spanish friars and the pragmatic approaches introduced by the American colonizers have collectively contributed to the intricate tapestry of leadership practices in contemporary Philippine schools (Kilag, et al., 2023). Understanding this historical continuum is essential for contemporary educators and policymakers seeking to navigate the challenges and opportunities in the current educational landscape. It underscores the importance of acknowledging and critically examining the historical foundations that continue to shape the leadership paradigms within the Philippine educational system, emphasizing the need for a nuanced and historically informed approach to leadership development and policy formulation.

### **Cultural Influences on Leadership Practices:**

Within the context of school leadership in the Philippines, cultural dimensions have emerged as a pivotal and influential factor. A central tenet shaping leadership styles is the cultural value of "pakikipagkapwa," which underscores communal unity and interconnectedness (Reyes, 2015). This cultural orientation has profound implications for effective leadership practices, as it emphasizes the significance of building strong connections with staff, students, and communities.

Reyes (2015) outlines how successful school leaders in the Philippines demonstrated not only an awareness but also an integration of the "pakikipagkapwa" cultural value into their leadership approaches. The adoption of relational leadership styles, characterized by

collaborative decision-making and relationship-building, was evident among leaders who embraced this cultural principle. By fostering a sense of shared identity and belonging within the educational community, these leaders were able to create a conducive and supportive environment.

Moreover, the literature indicates that cultural sensitivity plays a pivotal role in various aspects of school leadership. Kilag, et al. (2023) highlights how cultural nuances influence decision-making processes, communication strategies, and community engagement efforts. School leaders who navigate these cultural intricacies effectively demonstrate a keen understanding of the diverse cultural landscape in the Philippines. They tailor their leadership approaches to resonate with the cultural expectations of the community, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of their leadership.

Cultural influences on leadership practices in the Philippines extend beyond mere acknowledgment to active integration into the daily operations of educational institutions. The "pakikipagkapwa" cultural value serves as a guiding principle, prompting school leaders to cultivate relationships, understand diverse perspectives, and create inclusive environments. Recognizing and incorporating cultural influences into leadership development programs and educational policies is essential for fostering effective and culturally responsive school leadership in the Philippines.

### **Policy Dynamics and Leadership Adaptation:**

The examination of policy dynamics in the Philippines reveals a profound influence on the roles and responsibilities of school leaders. A pivotal aspect identified in the literature is the impact of decentralization policies, as discussed by Bautista (2000). These policies have significantly altered the landscape by shifting decision-making authority from central entities to local education offices, necessitating school leaders to adapt to new administrative structures and navigate heightened autonomy.

Bautista's (2000) insights underscore the transformative nature of decentralization policies, which have decentralized decision-making processes to enhance local responsiveness. This shift has presented challenges for school leaders, requiring them to recalibrate their leadership strategies to align with the new administrative paradigms (Kilag, et al., 2023). The literature indicates that this adaptation process is not without hurdles, as school leaders grapple with the complexities of balancing local autonomy while adhering to overarching national educational objectives.

Furthermore, De Vera's (2017) work emphasizes the inherent challenges associated with aligning top-down policy directives with grassroots input. School leaders are positioned as crucial mediators in this process, needing to bridge the gap between overarching policy requirements and the practical realities of their specific educational contexts. De Vera's insights underscore the intricate role of school leaders in interpreting and implementing policies in a manner that aligns with the unique needs and challenges of their schools and communities.

The literature highlights the transformative impact of decentralization policies on school leadership in the Philippines. The challenges associated with navigating increased autonomy and aligning policies with local contexts underscore the dynamic and multifaceted nature of leadership adaptation within the ever-evolving policy landscape (Kilag, et al., 2023). School

leaders, as key mediators, play a vital role in ensuring the effective implementation of policies that respond to the diverse needs of their respective educational environments.

### **Gaps and Opportunities for Future Research:**

The literature review conducted for this study not only synthesized existing knowledge on school leadership in the Philippines but also identified critical gaps that warrant further exploration. While historical and cultural dimensions have received attention in the literature, there exists a conspicuous absence of contemporary studies that delve into the day-to-day challenges confronted by school leaders. This gap suggests an opportunity for future research to provide nuanced insights into the lived experiences of school leaders in the current educational landscape.

Moreover, the literature review revealed a scarcity of empirical research directly capturing the experiences and perspectives of school leaders amidst ongoing policy changes. The evolving policy dynamics in the Philippines, particularly in the context of decentralization and other administrative shifts, present a significant gap in our understanding of how school leaders navigate and interpret these changes in their daily practice. Future investigations should prioritize empirical studies that offer a firsthand account of the challenges and opportunities that emerge for school leaders within the context of contemporary policy transformations (Bautista, 2000; De Vera, 2017).

Bridging these identified gaps holds the potential to contribute significantly to a more holistic understanding of the complexities involved in school leadership in the Philippines. A nuanced exploration of the day-to-day challenges, informed by the rich historical and cultural context, would provide actionable insights for educational policymakers and stakeholders. Additionally, empirical research capturing the perspectives of school leaders could offer practical recommendations for leadership development programs and policy adjustments, fostering a more effective and responsive educational system in the Philippines. As such, future research endeavors should prioritize filling these gaps to advance our comprehension of the multifaceted nature of school leadership in the country.

The findings from this systematic literature review provide valuable insights into the historical, cultural, and policy dynamics shaping school leadership in the Philippines. The interplay of these factors contributes to the unique context within which school leaders operate, and understanding these dynamics is essential for fostering effective leadership and addressing the challenges and opportunities within the Philippine educational landscape.

## **Conclusion**

This comprehensive study has delved into the intricate tapestry of school leadership in the Philippines, emphasizing the historical, cultural, and policy dynamics that shape leadership practices within the country's educational institutions. The synthesis of existing literature provided valuable insights into the evolution of school leadership, unraveling the legacies of the Spanish colonial era and American colonization, both of which continue to influence administrative structures and leadership paradigms in contemporary Philippine schools.

The cultural dimension emerged as a central influence on leadership practices, with the cultural value of "pakikipagkapwa" guiding effective leaders towards relational leadership styles. This emphasis on communal unity and interconnectedness underscores the importance

of understanding and integrating cultural nuances into leadership approaches, fostering stronger connections within the educational community.

Policy dynamics, particularly the impact of decentralization policies, were identified as transformative forces requiring school leaders to adapt to new administrative structures and navigate increased autonomy. The challenges associated with aligning top-down policy directives with grassroots input underscored the pivotal role of school leaders as mediators between overarching policy requirements and the practical realities of their specific educational contexts.

However, the study also brought to light notable gaps in the existing research landscape. The dearth of contemporary studies focusing on the day-to-day challenges faced by school leaders, as well as the limited empirical research capturing their experiences amidst current policy changes, signals an opportunity for future investigations. Bridging these gaps is essential to developing a more holistic understanding of the multifaceted nature of school leadership in the Philippines.

It is imperative that educational policymakers, researchers, and practitioners collaborate to address these identified gaps. Future research endeavors should prioritize empirical studies capturing the nuanced experiences of school leaders and delve into the intricacies of contemporary policy dynamics. The insights gained from such endeavors can inform evidence-based practices, leadership development programs, and policy adjustments, contributing to the enhancement of the Philippine educational system.

This study serves as a foundation for further exploration, urging the educational community to continue unraveling the complexities of school leadership in the Philippines. By acknowledging historical legacies, embracing cultural influences, and navigating policy dynamics, stakeholders can work towards fostering effective and responsive leadership that meets the diverse needs of Filipino learners in the 21st century.

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