Exploring Collaborative Leadership for Teacher Professional Development

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Abstract

This qualitative, ethnographic study was conducted to explore collaborative leadership for teacher professional development at five (5) public secondary schools namely, Calatrava National High School, Carmen National High School, San Agustin National Trade School, Cabulutan National High School and Esteban Madrona National High School in the division of Romblon. Focus group discussion was utilized to answer the guiding question. The research focused on three questions: (RQ1) What dynamics or mechanism of collaborative leadership have teachers utilized to achieve professional development? (RQ2) What professional development opportunities have been gained from the utilization of collaborative leadership? (RQ3) What benefits have been derived from the utilization of the principles of collaborative leadership to achieve professional development? Fifteen (15) teachers were used as participants of the study who were selected through purposive sampling.

Data gathered from focus group discussions revealed common themes or mechanisms that teachers utilized to achieve professional development: collaborative learning communities, professional development opportunities, reflective practices, technology integration, research engagement and study groups. The professional development gained from the utilization of collaborative leadership includes enhanced teaching techniques, access to resources and materials, collaboration and knowledge sharing, problem solving and practical solutions, professional growth and career advancement and self-awareness and reflection. The benefits that have been derived from the utilization of the principles of collaborative leadership to achieve professional development include higher job satisfaction, better student outcomes, stronger professional relationships, reduced teacher burnout, continuous improvement culture and enhanced school climate.

The results of this study led the researcher to conclude that collaborative leadership help enhance teacher professional development. Recommendations include implementing formal learning communities, increasing access to professional development opportunities, and establishing structured mentorship and reflective practices.

Keywords: Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Professional Development, Focus Group Discussion, Ethnographic Approach

INTRODUCTION

In the world of education, it's important for teachers to keep getting better at what they do. One way to do that is through "collaborative leadership." This study is all about exploring collaborative leadership for teacher professional development. Collaborative leadership is when teachers work together as a team, instead of one person being in charge all the time. It's like everyone pitches in their ideas, skills, and



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support to make teaching and learning awesome for everyone. In this study, we're going to dig into why collaborative leadership matters for teacher professional development. We'll look at real examples, ask teachers what they think, and figure out how schools can make collaborative leadership work best for them. In a world where teaching can be challenging, collaborative leadership is like a weapon that helps teachers in their professional development.

Traditional approaches to teacher professional development often focus on individual efforts or top-down directives, overlooking the potential benefits of collaborative leadership. Despite the recognized importance of collaborative leadership, there remains a gap in understanding its full potential and implementation in teacher professional development. Many existing professional development programs lack meaningful collaboration among educators, leading to isolated efforts and limited impact on teaching practices. Additionally, teachers often encounter barriers when attempting to engage in collaborative professional development activities. The current state of collaborative leadership in enhancing teacher professional development differs widely across educational institutions. While some schools or districts may have embraced collaborative approaches, others may still rely on traditional models of professional development. Even within schools that promote collaboration, challenges such as conflicting priorities, communication gaps, and unequal participation among staff members may hinder the effectiveness of collaborative leadership initiatives. One common problem encountered by teachers in professional development settings is the lack of relevance and practical application to their specific classroom contexts. Many professional development activities fail to address the diverse needs and challenges faced by educators in their daily teaching practice. Teachers may feel disengaged with professional development opportunities that do not directly contribute to their growth as effective instructors. As a result, collaborative leadership offers a promising solution to the challenges encountered in teacher professional development. Collaborative leadership empowers teachers to actively engage in their own development. An ethnographic approach makes this research stronger by capturing real-life experiences and interactions within schools. Instead of relying only on numbers or reports, it dives into the daily lives of teachers, showing how collaborative leadership truly shapes professional growth. Through collaborative approaches, teachers can leverage collective expertise, resources, and support networks to address specific teaching challenges, exchange best practices, and co-create innovative solutions tailored to their unique classroom contexts. By promoting collaboration among educators, collaborative leadership not only enhances the quality of professional development but also cultivates a sense of responsibility and dedication among teachers towards improving their teaching practices.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this qualitative ethnographic study design was to explore the collaborative leadership for teacher professional development, specifically it intends to address the following questions:

- 1. What dynamics or mechanism of collaborative leadership have teachers utilized to achieve professional development?
- 2. What professional development opportunities have been gained from the utilization of collaborative leadership?
- 3. What benefits have been derived from the utilization of the principles of collaborative leadership to achieve professional development?





MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This research study utilized a qualitative research approach. To explore collaborative leadership for teacher professional development, an ethnographic study approach was utilized. Tenny et. al. (2022) stated that qualitative research collects the experiences, perceptions, and behavior of the participants. In addition, they emphasized that the qualitative approach encourages participants to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences at a certain time or during an event of interest.

Research Participants

The samples of the study were chosen through purposive sampling to select participants who had direct experience with collaborative leadership in the context of teacher professional development. This includes a mix of teachers categorized as highly proficient and proficient teachers. Participants were chosen based on key criteria, including at least three years of teaching experience, active involvement in team teaching or mentoring, participation in professional development programs, and leadership roles in their schools. School administrators helped identify qualified participants, who were then screened for eligibility. Selected teachers voluntarily participated in focus group discussion, ensuring that the study gathered meaningful insights on the exploration of collaborative leadership for teacher professional development. The samples of this study were 8 proficient teachers and 7 highly proficient teachers who had firsthand direct experience with collaborative leadership in the context of teacher professional development. The samples composed of fifteen (15) participants.

School	Ν	0⁄0
Calatrava National High School	3	20
Carmen National High School	3	20
San Agustin National Trade School	3	20
Cabulutan National High School	3	20
Esteban Madrona National High School	3	20
TOTAL	15	100

Table 1: Distribution of the Participants in the Study

Research Instruments

The researcher formulated research instruments for focus group discussion, which was the primary method for data collection in this study. Data collection was conducted in a natural setting to better understand phenomenon in a real-life context (Creswell, 2013). Focus group will be conducted to qualitative inquiry at the school site to seek answers to the research questions (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Focus-Group. The researcher conducted focus group discussion for each participating school to answer the research questions. The group discussion was audiotaped, transcribed, and verified for accuracy through member checking and peer review. Focus-group interview, as defined by George (2023), is a research method that brings together a small group of people to answer questions in a moderate setting. The members of the group are selected due to predefined demographic traits, and the questions are designed to shed light on a topic of interest. Focus group discussion allows the participants to interact with each other, to listen to each other's responses, so they can give additional comments and ideas to the topic. The discussion



revolves around a specific topic or research question, allowing participants to interact, share insights, and build upon each other's contributions.

After formulating the research questions for this study, the three experts collaboratively assessed and evaluated the validity of the research instrument. The first validator was a campus director of Romblon State University- San Andres Campus, the second validator was an Associate Professor V of Romblon State University- Calatrava Campus and the third validator was a retired Associate Professor V of Romblon State University- San Agustin Campus. They were all graduates of Doctor of Philosophy Major in Educational Management. Their comments, suggestions and recommendations were the basis for revision of the research instrument.

Table 2 displays the alignment of the research questions with the interview questions.

Research Questions	Aligned Interview Questions
RQ1. What dynamics or mech-	1. What specific examples of strategies or mecha-
anism of collaborative leader-	nisms have teachers used to enhance their profes-
ship have teachers utilized to	sional development?
achieve professional develop-	2. How do teachers collaborate with each other to
ment?	pursue professional growth opportunities?
	3. What challenges have you encountered in seek-
	ing professional development opportunities, and
	how have you overcome them?
RQ2. What professional devel-	4. Reflecting on your experiences, what profes-
opment opportunities have	sional development opportunities have you gained
been gained from the utilization	from engaging with collaborative leadership?
of collaborative leadership?	5. Can you describe a specific instance where col-
	laborative leadership positively impacted your pro-
	fessional growth or learning outcomes?
	6. In what ways have collaborative leadership influ-
	enced the acquisition of new skills or knowledge in
	your actual practice of teaching?
RQ3. What benefits have	7 From your permantive, what are the primary here
RQ3. What benefits have been derived from the utiliza-	7. From your perspective, what are the primary ben- efits that can be derived from incorporating collab-
tion of the principles of collab-	orative leadership principles into professional de-
orative leadership to achieve	velopment initiatives for teachers?
professional development?	8. How does collaborative leadership contribute to
professional development?	creating a supportive and inclusive learning envi-
	ronment within schools or organizations?
	9. In your opinion, what are the long-term ad-
	vantages of fostering a culture of collaborative
	leadership to enhance professional development?
	readership to enhance professional development:

 Table 2: Alignment of the Research Questions with the Interview Questions



Data Gathering Procedure

Before conducting the study, the researcher sought permission from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent of Romblon to conduct the research. The researcher then coordinated with and identified research locales, as well as secured the necessary permits for the study's execution. Additionally, the researcher identified and recruited participants with direct experience in collaborative leadership within teacher professional development. Purposive sampling was utilized to ensure diversity in perspectives and experiences among participants. Detailed information regarding the study's objectives, procedures, risks, and benefits was provided to all participants.

The researcher arranged focus group sessions with small groups of participants sharing common characteristics or experiences. The researcher facilitated the focus group discussions using the predetermined protocol, encouraging active participation from all members. Focus group sessions were recorded with participants' consent to capture the dynamic interaction and diverse perspectives. Additionally, a note-taker was assigned by the researcher to document key points, group dynamics, and emergent themes during the discussions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

I. Description of Participants

The participants in the study were fifteen (15) teachers, a mix of proficient and highly proficient teachers. They were all teaching in junior high school, from grade 7 to grade 10. All of them met the criteria to ensure they were well-qualified and had relevant experiences in collaborative leadership that enhances teacher professional development.

II. Research Question 1

What dynamics or mechanism of collaborative leadership have teachers utilized to achieve professional development? The research explored the mechanisms and strategies of teachers at five public secondary schools utilized to achieve professional development, using focus group discussions as the primary method of data collection. The study identified six key mechanisms: collaborative learning communities, professional development opportunities, reflective practices, technology integration, research engagement and study groups.

Table 3: Mechanism for Professional Development Summary of Themes					
Focus Group Discussions	Descriptive Themes	Interpretive Themes (Mecha-			
		nisms for Teacher Professional			
		Development)			
Focus Group Discussion 1	Peer Observation and Feedback	Collaborative Learning Commu-			
(Participants 1,2,3)	Session, Modern Technology,	nities, Technology Integration,			
	Workshop or Conference	Professional Development Op-			
		portunities			
Focus Group Discussion 2	Action Learning Cell, Collabora-	Collaborative Learning Commu-			
(Participants 4,5,6)	tive Lesson Planning, Peer	nities			
	Coaching Sessions				

able	3:	Mecl	hanism	for	Prof	fessio	nal	Develo	pment	Summary	v of '	Themes
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Focus Group Discussion 3	Graduate Studies/Continuing	Professional Development Op-
(Participants 7,8,9)	Education, Reflective Journals,	portunities, Reflective Practices,
	Modern Technology	Technology Integration
Focus Group Discussion 4	Graduate Studies/Continuing	Professional Development Op-
(Participants 10,11,12)	Education, Online	portunities, Reflective Practices
	Courses/Webinars, Mentorship	
Focus Group Discussion 5	Action Research, Book Study	Research Engagement, Study
(Participants 13,14,15)	Group, Technology Platforms	Group/ Literature Review, Tech-
		nology Integration

The research explored the mechanisms and strategies of teachers at five public secondary schools utilized to achieve professional development, using focus group discussions as the primary method of data collection. The study identified six key mechanisms: collaborative learning communities, professional development opportunities, reflective practices, technology integration, research engagement and study groups. Collaborative learning communities were found to be a key strategy. Teachers highlighted the importance of observing and giving feedback to each other, which helps them understand their teaching styles and improve their effectiveness. Activities like planning lessons together and coaching each other also help teachers design better learning experiences for students. In addition, teachers mentioned "action learning cells," where they work together to solve real-world problems and learn from each other's experiences. These collaborative efforts not only improve individual teaching practices but also create a supportive environment where teachers can continuously grow and improve together.

Another important strategy is making use of Professional Development Opportunities. Teachers actively participate in workshops, conferences, online courses, webinars, and pursue further education, such as graduate studies. These opportunities expose them to new teaching ideas, techniques, and the latest trends in education. Attending these events helps teachers stay motivated and up to date with their skills, which they can then apply in their classrooms. While pursuing further education, like a master's degree, can be challenging, teachers see it as valuable for their professional growth and career advancement.

Reflective Practices are also crucial for professional development. Teachers talked about using reflective journals to think critically about their teaching experiences. Writing in these journals helps them identify what went well, what challenges they faced, and how they can improve in the future. Seeking mentorship from more experienced teachers is another strategy. Mentorship provides valuable advice and support, helping teachers grow professionally and feel more confident in their roles.

Technology Integration is another important factor. Teachers use technology platforms to communicate, collaborate, and share resources with each other. These digital tools allow them to engage in discussions and access a wide range of materials, making professional development more convenient and effective.

Research Engagement was also highlighted as a key strategy. Teachers engage in action research projects, where they investigate their own teaching practices to find ways to improve. By sharing their research findings with colleagues, they contribute to a culture of continuous improvement and innovation within the school community.

Finally, Study Groups and Literature Review are used by teachers to enhance their professional development. Participating in study groups, especially those focused on educational books, allows teachers



to explore new ideas and strategies together. This collaborative learning helps them apply new knowledge in their teaching.

II. Research Question 2

What professional development opportunities have been gained from the utilization of collaborative leadership? The responses from the focus group discussions provide valuable insights into the specific professional development opportunities gained through the utilization of collaborative leadership. Key opportunities include the enhancement of teaching strategies, increased access to resources, facilitated collaboration and knowledge sharing, practical problem-solving, support for professional growth and career advancement, and the promotion of self-awareness and reflective practices. These opportunities demonstrate how collaborative leadership directly impacts teachers' professional development by fostering continuous learning, innovation, and improvement in educational practices.

Focus Group Discussions	Descriptive Themes	Interpretive Themes (Profes-		
		sional Development)		
Focus Group Discussion 1	Peer Observation and Feedback	Enhanced Teaching Strategies,		
(Participants 1,2,3)	Session, Modern Technology,	Access to Resources and Materi-		
	Workshop or Conference	als, Collaboration and		
		Knowledge Sharing		
Focus Group Discussion 2	Action Learning Cell, Collabora-	Problem Solving and Practical		
(Participants 4,5,6)	tive Lesson Planning, Peer	Solutions, Enhanced Teaching		
	Coaching Sessions	Strategies		
Focus Group Discussion 3	Graduate Studies/Continuing	Professional Growth and Career		
(Participants 7,8,9)	Education, Reflective Journals,	Advancement, Self-awareness		
	Modern Technology	and Reflection, Collaboration		
		and Knowledge Sharing		
Focus Group Discussion 4	Career Advancement, Online	Professional Growth and Career		
(Participants 10,11,12)	Courses/Webinars, Mentorship	Advancement, Collaboration		
		and Knowledge Sharing		
Focus Group Discussion 5	Action Research, Book Study	Enhanced Teaching Strategies,		
(Participants 13,14,15)	Group, Technology Platforms	Professional Growth and Career		
		Advancement ,Access to Re-		
		sources and Materials		

 Table 4: Professional Development Gained from Collaborative Leadership

Collaborative leadership significantly contributes to the enhancement of teaching strategies. Teachers benefit from peer observation, feedback sessions, and collaborative lesson planning, allowing them to refine their instructional methods. Teachers who engage in these collaborative activities not only improve their classroom practices but also develop a deeper awareness of their teaching styles. This leads to more intentional and effective teaching that is responsive to the diverse needs of students. Collaboration under leadership fosters greater access to resources and materials. By utilizing digital platforms, online courses, and webinars, teachers can access a wide range of teaching materials and educational innovations. This empowers them to stay updated with the latest trends in education and integrate innovative teaching



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strategies into their practice. Such access to diverse resources ensures that teachers are well-equipped to meet the evolving needs of their students. The responses highlight the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing in professional development. Workshops, conferences, technology platforms, and mentorship programs facilitate the exchange of ideas, best practices, and resources among colleagues. These collaborative opportunities foster a culture of learning and support, enabling teachers to build stronger networks with their peers. This not only enhances their professional knowledge but also creates a supportive environment where teachers can continuously learn and grow. Collaborative leadership encourages teachers to actively participate in problem-solving processes. Through shared experiences, such as action learning cells, teachers collectively address the challenges they face in the classroom. The focus on practical solutions helps teachers develop and implement strategies that improve both teaching practices and the overall learning environment. The study reveals that collaborative leadership provides opportunities for teachers to pursue continuous professional growth. Engaging in graduate studies, attending workshops, and participating in study groups allows teachers to deepen their knowledge and develop specialized skills. These opportunities not only enhance teachers' expertise but also provide pathways for career advancement, motivating them to pursue further education and take on leadership roles within their educational institutions. Collaborative leadership also promotes self-awareness and reflection, which are essential components of professional development. Through reflective journals and mentorship programs, teachers gain deeper insights into their teaching practices. This reflective process helps them identify areas for growth and develop strategies for continuous improvement, both individually and collectively. Self-reflection, supported by collaborative practices, enables teachers to critically assess their effectiveness and make informed adjustments to their teaching methods.

III. Research Question 3

What benefits have been derived from the utilization of the principles of collaborative leadership to achieve professional development? The focus group discussions reveal that collaborative leadership plays an important role in helping teachers grow professionally and improving the overall school environment. When school leaders encourage teamwork and shared learning, it creates a supportive space for teachers to develop their skills, reduce stress, improve teaching practices, and positively impact students and the school.

Focus Group Discussions	Descriptive Themes	Interpretive Themes (Benefits)		
Focus Group Discussion 1	Peer Observation and Feedback	Better Students' Outcome, Con-		
(Participants 1,2,3)	Session, Modern Technology,	tinuous Improvement Culture,		
	Workshop or Conference	Higher Job Satisfaction		
Focus Group Discussion 2	Action Learning Cell, Collabora-	Continuous Improvement Cul-		
(Participants 4,5,6)	tive Lesson Planning, Peer	ture, Enhance School Climate,		
	Coaching Sessions	Stronger Professional Relation-		
		ship		

Table 5: Benefits Derived from the Utilization of the Principles of Collaborative Leadership toachieve Professional Development



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Focus Group Discussion 3	Graduate Studies/Continuing	Higher Job Satisfaction, Re-		
(Participants 7,8,9)	Education, Reflective Journals,	duced Teacher Burnout, Contin-		
	Modern Technology	uous Improvement Culture		
Focus Group Discussion 4	Career Advancement, Online	Higher Job Satisfaction, Re-		
(Participants 10,11,12)	Courses/Webinars, Mentorship	duced Teacher Burnout ,Contin-		
		uous Improvement Culture		
Focus Group Discussion 5	Action Research, Book Study	Better Students Out-		
(Participants 13,14,15)	Group, Technology Platforms	come ,Stronger Professional Re-		
		lationship, Continuous Improve-		
		ment Culture		

One of the main benefits discussed was higher job satisfaction among teachers. By participating in workshops, conferences, and professional development programs, teachers gain new knowledge, improve their skills, and feel more confident in their work. This supportive environment, where teachers learn from and help each other, leads to a greater sense of fulfillment and happiness in their roles. This shows that when schools invest in opportunities for teachers to grow and collaborate, teachers feel more valued and motivated, which can help retain good teachers and maintain a positive work environment. Another important benefit of collaborative leadership is better student outcomes. When teachers work together by observing each other's lessons, giving feedback, and participating in research projects, they can improve their teaching methods. This leads to more effective and innovative teaching strategies that better meet the needs of students, ultimately improving their performance. This highlights the clear connection between teachers working together and the quality of education students receive. Collaborative leadership also leads to stronger professional relationships. When teachers coach, mentor, or work in study groups together, they build trusting, supportive connections with one another. This teamwork not only helps individual teachers grow, but it also creates a sense of community among staff members. These strong professional relationships encourage teachers to share ideas, solve problems together, and continue learning from one another. A key benefit of collaborative leadership is reducing teacher burnout. By providing opportunities for teachers to mentor and reflect on their work, schools can help teachers manage stress and avoid feeling overwhelmed. Mentorship programs, where experienced teachers guide others, and reflective practices, such as keeping a teaching journal, give teachers the emotional support they need to thrive. This shows that schools should focus on these areas to help teachers stay motivated, avoid burnout, and feel supported in their roles. This study also highlighted how collaborative leadership fosters a culture of continuous improvement. By encouraging teachers to use technology, take online courses, and participate in ongoing training, schools help teachers stay up to date with the latest educational methods and innovations. This mindset of continuous learning ensures that teachers are always improving, adapting, and growing in their profession, which benefits both them and their students. Lastly, collaborative leadership improves the overall school climate. When teachers work together to plan lessons and share ideas, it creates a sense of teamwork and shared responsibility. This positive atmosphere not only makes the school a better place to work but also creates a supportive learning environment for students. Schools that promote collaboration and teamwork among teachers are likely to see a healthier, more dynamic, and more successful school culture. In conclusion, the focus group discussions clearly show that collaborative leadership greatly enhances professional development for teachers. By fostering



teamwork, continuous learning, and shared responsibility, schools can improve teacher satisfaction, reduce stress, build stronger relationships, and ultimately create a more positive and effective school environment. Schools that prioritize collaboration are likely to see lasting benefits for both teachers and students.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Collaborative leadership is a key driver of teacher professional development and school improvement. Schools should establish structures that encourage peer interaction, collaborative lesson planning, and feedback sessions to enhance teaching strategies. Providing access to professional development opportunities such as workshops, conferences, and further studies ensures continuous growth, while mentorship programs and reflective practices support teachers' self-improvement. Technology plays a vital role, and schools must invest in digital platforms for collaboration, resource-sharing, and professional learning. Encouraging action research and study groups promotes innovation and continuous learning. Schools should also prioritize career advancement pathways and problem-solving forums to empower teachers in addressing classroom challenges. The implications of collaborative leadership include higher teacher satisfaction, stronger professional relationships, reduced burnout, and improved student outcomes. A culture of continuous learning and teamwork leads to a more dynamic, supportive, and effective school environment. Schools that embrace these strategies will foster motivated educators, engaged students, and long-term educational success.

To enhance teacher professional development and the educational environment, the following recommendations were made:

- 1. Establish Formal Collaborative Learning Communities (CLCs) Schools may create structured CLCs where teachers engage in peer observation, action learning cells, and collaborative lesson planning. These activities enhance teaching strategies, foster teamwork, and build a culture of continuous learning.
- 2. Increase Access to Professional Development Opportunities Schools must support teachers in attending workshops, conferences, and online learning while also encouraging graduate studies through financial aid and flexible schedules. This ensures teachers stay motivated and up to date with new educational trends.
- 3. **Implement Structured Mentorship and Reflective Practices** Schools may develop mentorship programs to pair experienced teachers with newer ones, promote reflective journals for self-assessment, and schedule reflective discussions to share insights and improve teaching.

These strategies create a supportive, growth-oriented school culture, ensuring teachers continuously develop and enhance student learning.

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