School Heads' Adaptive Leadership Style and Teachers' Motivation

Raquel Theresa F. Ducot[1], Julius N. Ubaub[2]

[1]Southern De Oro Philippines College, Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines

[2]DepEd- Division of Misamis Oriental, Misamis Oriental, Philippines

Abstract: *Adaptive leadership is crucial for fostering a motivated teaching staff. This study examined the relationship between school heads' adaptive leadership styles and teachers' motivation at the elementary level in Villanueva North District, School Year 2024-2025. Specifically, this study aimed to determine the school heads' adaptive leadership styles in decision-making involvement, collaborative problem-solving, recognition and empowerment, and how these factors influenced teachers' motivation. A descriptive correlational research design was used in this study. It utilized a researcher-made questionnaire administered to 124 teacher-respondents from the four schools to gather the data needed. Data analysis included mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's correlation to assess both leadership styles and teachers' motivation levels. The study revealed that teachers generally perceived their school heads as exhibiting adaptive leadership styles and reported high levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. A significant positive correlation was found between adaptive leadership style and teachers' motivation. Teachers were reported feeling more motivated when school heads involved them in decision-making, fostered collaborative problem-solving, and provided them due recognition. These findings emphasized the importance of adaptive leadership in cultivating a motivated teaching workforce. The study suggests that school administrators prioritize an adaptive leadership style and foster empowerment and professional growth.*

Keywords: adaptive leadership style, collaborative problem solving, recognition and empowerment, teachers' motivation

1. Introduction

Adaptive leadership is one of the many leadership styles practiced by school administrators. This style that school heads employ in their respective schools aims to alleviate and solve challenges. Likewise, this leadership style focuses on guiding leaders in identifying key aspects of operations while discarding what is unnecessary. In this leadership approach, administrators control both operational processes and service delivery standards.

The rise of educational standards demands that leaders fulfill their duties beyond administrative tasks. They demonstrate flexibility, emotional intelligence, and inclusiveness to guide their teams. The design of adaptive leadership provides a promising approach through its ability to handle complex changing situations effectively. Moreover, in this approach, the opinions of every participant are prioritized, especially those of educators, while developing open communication and collaborative work practices. Thus, this leadership approach may create conditions that motivate educators to progress professionally while empowering them to share their perspectives.

In addition, the importance of adaptive leadership grows substantially because of the challenges present in the Philippine educational system. It can be noted that quality education faces continuing challenges mainly in underserved areas due to scarce resources and old educational techniques, together with insufficient infrastructure. Teaching staff in these environments experience excessive workload with less preparation in dealing with poverty-related issues, including malnutrition and parentless teen concerns. Such conditions can diminish teacher motivation levels and consequently affect learner achievement outcomes.

The need for school administrators to shift and respond to the demands of present-day educational conditions has reached unprecedented levels. The creation of successful learners depends on having motivated teaching staff. As such, school administrators need the ability to oversee changes while backing up their teachers (Oco & Mariano, 2024). They should direct their transformative efforts toward motivating their teaching staff to achieve desirable results. Likewise, school environments are expected to succeed when teachers demonstrate motivation and build stronger relationships with learners while teaming up with colleagues. This concept can also elevate the educational culture.

In the same way, personal fulfillment with purposeful aims stands as intrinsic motivation, while outer praise and favorable workplace settings act as extrinsic motivators. School administrators who aim to develop successful teaching environments understand how to use intrinsic and extrinsic motivational sources effectively. However, despite the numerous initiatives dedicated to creating these roles, many teachers remain unwilling to accept coordinator tasks in addition to their classroom responsibilities. The insufficient appreciation, combined with minimal rewards, leads teachers to demonstrate hesitation towards new responsibilities. Leadership acceptance becomes weaker when teachers do not receive proper acknowledgment or appropriate rewards.

Public awareness of motivational effects from leadership exists, but researchers have not fully explored how adaptive leadership methods affect teachers' morale and work outcomes. The investigation focuses on how specific actions and tactics applied by adaptive school administrators influence teacher motivation to bridge the present knowledge gap. The study hopes to determine analytical findings that can aid the development of leadership curricula and classroom policy reforms, and instructional school improvement projects.

This investigation sought to determine the effect of adaptive leadership on the teachers' motivation while fostering teamwork among the academic community.

This study builds its foundation on the Adaptive Leadership Theory, which the primary authors Heifetz, introduced together with his colleagues in 2019. According to this theory, the defining capability of leaders involves enabling others to embrace demanding tasks through motivational inspiration. The educational practice of adaptive leadership addresses deep systemic problems together with technical matters. The implementation of this strategy by leaders enables the creation of learning environments that give teachers both power and encouragement to bring fresh ideas to their educational practices.

Schools in modern times operate with complex issues that make adaptive leadership an optimal approach. By nature, this theory compels administrators to enhance their school's capacity and practice active listening while enabling educator participation in decision-making processes. The collaborative approach developed by this mindset enables administrators to better serve the specific needs of their community members.

The analysis reveals through its conceptual framework that teacher motivation forms a direct link with adaptive leadership practices. The performance of adaptive school administrator behaviors leads to better intrinsic motivation outcomes for teachers through praise recognition and autonomy encouragement, and collaborative participation in decision-making processes. External motivation receives enhancement through the provision of outside support, along with recognition and performance-based rewards. Such combined efforts produce better educational results, together with increased teacher involvement and job engagement.

This relationship appears on a schematic diagram. Through its approach, adaptive leadership develops a better school environment through staff trust building and promotion of initiative alongside educator appreciation. Teachers who demonstrate greater engagement and a strong commitment toward their work will tend to work together and introduce innovative strategies, and dedicate themselves to student success. Extrinsic recognition and rewards serve as a potent force for keeping motivation alive because they strengthen both professional value and sense of purpose. The analytical system demonstrates the fundamental relationship between leadership and motivation in educational institutions.

2. Methodology

This study employed a correlational and causal research designs to investigate the relationship between the adaptive leadership style of school heads and teachers' motivation. A correlational research design aims to identify whether a change in one variable is associated with another variable, reflecting the change in direction and their relationship (Creswell, 2019). For in-depth analysis and treatment of the data, the researcher employed the following statistical tools: Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer problems 1 and 2, to determine the adaptive leadership style exhibited by school heads and the level of teachers' motivation. Pearson Product-Moment Coefficient Correlation (r) for problem 3 to ascertain the significant relationship between the school heads' adaptive leadership style and the teachers' motivation.

3. Results

Table 1: Test for Correlation between Adaptive Leadership Style and Teachers' Motivation

Variables	r-value	p-value	Level of Correlation	Decision	Interpretation
Involvement In Decision-Making	0.275	0.012	Low Positive Correlation	Reject Ho	Significant
Collaborative Problem-Solving	0.603	0.001	Moderate Positive Correlation	Reject Ho	Significant
Recognition and Empowerment	0.241	0.0015	Low Positive Correlation	Reject Ho	Significant

Note: 0.91 - 1.00 Very High Positive Correlation   0.71 – 0.90 High Positive Correlation
0.51 – 0.70 Moderate Positive Correlation   0.31 – 0.50 Low Positive Correlation
0.00 – 0.30 Negligible Positive Correlation   *Significant when computed p-value <0.05*

Table 1 explores the correlation between teachers' motivation and three dimensions of adaptive leadership. Results show a moderate positive relationship between collaborative problem-solving and teacher motivation, with a moderate positive correlation with an r = 0.603 and p = 0.001. This indicates that teachers typically feel much more motivated when school administrators actively involve them in working together to solve problems related to the school. Collaborative work fosters a sense of unity and purpose, which can improve teachers' perceptions of their jobs. Teachers may feel more effective and have a sense of agency as a result of working together to solve issues. Increased enthusiasm and job satisfaction are probably a result of these shared experiences.

In terms of involvement in decision-making and recognition and empowerment, results revealed a low positive correlation, although their values differ (r = 0.275 and p = 0.012). This indicates that, while the degree of this relationship is rather weak, teachers' motivation tends to rise as school administrators include teachers more in decision-making processes. This implies further that merely involving teachers in decision-making may not be sufficient; rather, the significance and impact of that involvement may be more crucial. According to Alene and colleagues (2025), adaptive leadership increases teacher engagement by promoting empowerment, collaboration, and input. The discrepancy between this more comprehensive understanding and the weak correlation seen here, however, might be due to restrictions in the way teacher involvement is carried out. The motivational impact may be negligible if teachers are only consulted on low-stakes issues. Additionally, genuine, inclusive leadership supports equity and teacher satisfaction, according to Davenport (2022). Decision-making may not result in motivation if it isn't truly shared or doesn't address issues that are important to teachers. For there to be genuine involvement, school administrators must make room for significant contributions that produce observable results.

This result is consistent with research by Naim and Yuliana (2024), who emphasize that open and cooperative communication among teachers is beneficial for adaptive leadership, particularly when curriculum changes are taking place. According to their research, resistance falls and morale rises when educators are given the opportunity to actively engage in school-level problem-solving. In a similar vein, Sumiati and colleagues (2021) discovered that a collaborative culture enhances teacher performance, supporting the notion that group problem-solving under capable leadership produces an inspiring workplace. This data emphasizes how crucial it is to involve teachers in the development of school solutions rather than merely consulting them. Teachers' motivation and dedication increase when they perceive themselves as collaborators in school improvement.

Finally, recognition and empowerment were also found to have a statistically significant, though weak, positive correlation with teacher motivation value r = 0.241 and p = 0.015. This suggests that teachers' motivation increases when they feel valued and empowered by school administrators, though the impact is not very strong. This may indicate that empowerment and recognition are not frequent, significant, or reliable enough to have a significant impact on motivation in the current environment. When recognition is genuine and connected to actual accomplishments, or when empowerment manifests as real autonomy and decision-making power, teachers may react more favorably.

In conclusion, teacher motivation is positively correlated with all three aspects of adaptive leadership decision-making, collaborative problem-solving, and recognition and empowerment albeit to differing degrees. The most effective approach is collaborative problem-solving, probably because it encourages sincere participation and a common goal. In the meantime, recognition and decision-making exhibit weaker ties and this is perhaps as a result of their application limitations. According to these results, adaptive leadership needs to focus on giving teachers real, empowering, and cooperative experiences rather than just using superficial tactics to boost their motivation.

4. Conclusions

From the findings identified, the following conclusions are formulated:
1) Adaptive leadership effectively encourages teachers' flexibility, resilience, and innovation.
2) Teachers demonstrate strong motivation, engagement, and commitment to the profession.
3) School heads' adaptive leadership practices help develop teachers' motivation.

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Author Profile

Raquel Theresa F. Ducot is a Master of Arts in Education (MAED) major in Educational Management at Southern de Oro Philippines College, Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines.

Julius N. Ubaub, EdD is a school principal in one of the schools in the Division of Misamis Oriental, Philippines.