

# Innovative Leadership Practices and Management Styles of School Heads in Cotabato Division

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**Abstract:** This study was designed to meticulously investigate the Innovative Leadership Practices and Management Styles employed by School Heads within the Cotabato Division and assess their relationship with perceived school performance and organizational climate. Recognizing that modern educational demands necessitate leaders who can navigate change and foster creativity, this research aimed to profile the leadership approaches that drive innovation in a dynamic local context. The investigation adopted a descriptive-correlational and qualitative research design (mixed methods), utilizing a researcher-made survey instrument and structured interviews administered to a purposive sample of School Heads and their senior teaching staff. Findings indicated a predominantly "Transformational" management style among School Heads, with a significantly high rating in the adoption of "Data-Driven Decision Making" as a key innovative practice. The qualitative data further revealed that successful innovative practices often revolved around community engagement and localized curriculum delivery. Crucially, statistical analysis demonstrated a strong positive correlation between the application of Participative Management Styles and higher self-reported scores in Organizational Effectiveness. These results provide a robust empirical foundation for the Cotabato Division to prioritize training and mentoring programs that emphasize shared governance and sustainable innovation, thereby fortifying the divisional capacity for adaptive and responsive educational management.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### ➤ *The Evolution of the School Head's Role*

In the ever-changing landscape of Philippine basic education, particularly within the distinct sociopolitical environment of the Cotabato Division, the School Head is not merely a custodian of rules but a catalyst for change. Traditional administrative styles, focused solely on control and compliance, are proving insufficient to meet the challenges of curriculum reform, technological integration, and diverse student needs. This transition necessitates an exploration into innovative leadership—the deliberate, proactive use of practices that challenge the status quo and introduce novel solutions to perennial problems.

### ➤ *The Research Imperative: Linking Style to Substance*

While much literature exists on leadership theory globally, there is a distinct lack of localized research that specifically maps the actual management styles (e.g., autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire) and the concrete innovative practices (e.g., embracing EdTech, flexible scheduling, resource

mobilization) of School Heads in this specific division. The central question this study addresses is: How do the observed innovative leadership practices and management styles of School Heads in the Cotabato Division relate to key indicators of school operational efficiency and teacher morale? Answering this question will empower the Division Office to identify, codify, and scale up successful leadership models, ultimately ensuring resource optimization and sustained academic growth across the district.

## II. METHODS

### ➤ *Design and Rationale*

A Sequential Explanatory Mixed-Methods Design (Quantitative  $\rightarrow$  Qualitative) was utilized. The initial descriptive-correlational phase profiled the prevalence of leadership styles and innovative practices, establishing statistical relationships. This was followed by a qualitative phase involving in-depth interviews to explain *why* and *how* these specific practices succeeded or failed in their context, providing the crucial human perspective.

### ➤ *Participants and Setting*

The quantitative participants included all 65 Public Secondary School Heads and a random sample of 150 Senior Secondary Teachers from various districts within the Cotabato Division. The subsequent qualitative phase involved purposive sampling of 10 School Heads identified as "highly innovative" based on the quantitative scores, and 10 teachers reporting the highest levels of school effectiveness.

### ➤ *Instruments and Data Sources*

The study employed two instruments:

- Leadership Practices Inventory (Modified): A survey adapted to assess the frequency of five key innovative practices (e.g., Fostering Experimentation, Promoting Collaboration) and four distinct management styles (Transactional, Transformational, Autocratic, Participative).
- Structured Interview Protocol: Used in the qualitative phase to explore the contextual factors, challenges, and success narratives behind the reported innovative practices, focusing on the decision-making process and impact on the learning environment.

### ➤ *Statistical Treatment and Analysis*

Quantitative data were analyzed using:

- Weighted Mean and Frequency Distribution: To profile the dominant management styles and practices.
- ANOVA (Analysis of Variance): To test for significant differences in innovative practices across demographic variables (e.g., school size, years of experience).
- Pearson  $r$  and Multiple Regression: To determine the strength of the relationship and predictive influence of leadership styles on school performance indicators.

Qualitative data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, systematically coding and grouping interview transcripts to identify recurring patterns, themes, and explanatory narratives regarding the adoption and impact of innovation.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### ➤ *The Dominant Leadership Style*

The quantitative analysis showed that the Transformational Management Style received the highest overall weighted mean score ( $\text{WM} = 4.52$  on a 5-point scale), indicating it is the most frequently adopted style. This style, characterized by motivating and inspiring staff, suggests a strong emphasis on vision-sharing and intellectual stimulation among Cotabato School Heads. The Autocratic style received the lowest mean score ( $\text{WM} = 2.15$ ).

### ➤ *Innovative Practices in Focus*

Among the specified innovative practices, Data-Driven Decision Making (using achievement scores and teacher-student ratio data to inform policy) was rated highest ( $\text{WM} = 4.60$ ). Qualitative interviews confirmed that School Heads often utilized local DepEd monitoring data as

their primary source of innovation inspiration. Conversely, the practice of Promoting Organizational Learning and Risk-Taking received the lowest score, pointing to a potential area of institutional conservatism.

### ➤ *Correlation: Style Predicts Success*

A significant finding was the strong correlation between the Participative Management Style (a component of the overall Transformational approach) and the perceived Organizational Effectiveness of the school. The computed Pearson  $r$  value was  $r = 0.81$  ( $p < 0.001$ ), signifying that when School Heads actively involve teachers, parents, and community stakeholders in governance, the school is rated as significantly more effective and innovative. Multiple Regression analysis confirmed that the Participative Style was the strongest unique predictor of innovative practice adoption.

### ➤ *Transformational Leadership as a Foundation*

The study validates that Transformational Leadership is the prevailing and effective style in the Cotabato Division, aligning with current international best practices in educational administration. This style fosters the intrinsic motivation necessary for teachers to embrace new, innovative methods. The emphasis on Data-Driven Decision Making is a positive indicator of managerial maturity, showing that innovation is guided by evidence, not just intuition.

### ➤ *The Power of Shared Governance*

The most critical insight is the robust link between Participative Management and positive outcomes. The strong correlation ( $r = 0.81$ ) suggests that innovation thrives not just under a visionary leader, but within a system where decision-making is distributed. Teachers are more likely to implement innovative practices when they have been part of the planning and policy formulation process. The qualitative findings underscored this, with one interviewee stating, "Our best innovations came from a team meeting, not from an office memo."

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

To address the lower scoring on Promoting Risk-Taking, the division should develop "Innovation Sandboxes"—low-stakes projects where School Heads and teachers can experiment with new instructional strategies without fear of punitive measures if the initial attempt fails. By leveraging the current strength in Transformational Leadership and prioritizing targeted training on participative policy design, the Cotabato Division can institutionalize these innovative practices, ensuring they are sustainable and continue to adapt to the region's evolving educational needs.

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