

Predictive Effects of Distributed Leadership, Conflict Resolution, and Change Management on the Strategic Management Capability of School Administrators

Randy M. Magsalos¹; Raul C. Orongan²

¹San Nicolas National High School, Don Carlos, Bukidnon, Philippines

²Central Mindanao University, Maramag, Bukidnon, Philippines

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Abstract: This study explored the levels of distributed leadership, conflict resolution, and change management in the strategic management capability of school administrators and identified the variable (s) that, singly or in combination, predict strategic management capability. The study was conducted among 865 school administrators from elementary and secondary schools in the Northern Mindanao Region for the 2025-2026 school year. The study employed statistical methods, such as the mean and regression modeling, to identify the predictors influencing strategic management capability. The findings revealed that school administrators' practice of distributed leadership was highly evident, highly practiced conflict resolution, and highly demonstrated change management practices. The predicting variables for distributed leadership are strategic vision, values and beliefs, school structure, responsibility and accountability, and decision-making. In addition, collaboration and cooperation, a sub-variable of distributed leadership, was the strongest predictor. In conflict resolution, only the collaborating style was found to predict school administrators' strategic management capability. Finally, for change management, the predictor variables are awareness, reinforcement, ability, and knowledge. Strengthening distributed leadership and change management practices is encouraged to ensure a balanced use of conflict resolution strategies. Best practices of schools are encouraged to be institutionalized to ensure sustainability even during leadership transitions or staff turnover.

Keywords: *Distributed Leadership, Conflict Resolution, Change Management, Strategic Management Capability.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of education, schools' capacity to continually improve and adapt is essential to ensuring student success and fostering equitable learning environments. Strategic management capability refers to collective ability of educational institutions to identify areas for development, implement effective strategies, and sustain positive change over time. This capability is critical in addressing emerging challenges such as diverse students' needs, technological advancements, and policy reforms. Schools that are equipped with strong strategic management practices are more resilient, better positioned to adapt to the demands of society, and can contribute to enhanced educational outcomes and community development.

In the Philippine context, weak alignment between planning and execution remains a challenge. Pamor and Bauyot (2025) found that school administrators face

difficulties such as inadequate resources, weak support systems, and limited capacity for participatory planning, which hinder the effective implementation of School Improvement Plans (SIP). Although the Department of Education (DepEd) introduced capacity-building initiatives to strengthen the skills of school administrators in the crafting of SIPs, persistent issues related to resource allocation and leadership adaptability continue to affect outcomes (Toledo, 2025). Under Republic Act 9155, or the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, schools are empowered under the School-Based Management (SBM) to take initiatives that make education delivery more responsive to the needs of the learners. DepEd Order No. 44, Series of 2015, further enhanced the SIP process and introduced the School Report Card (SRC) to promote accountability and transparency.

Despite the afore-cited reforms, school administrators face obstacles in applying data-driven approaches to school improvement. Nnorom, Egwunyega, and Anho (2023)

highlighted challenges such as limited capacity to identify specific needs of students, concerns about data confidentiality, reluctance to change, and inadequate training. Moreover, the SBM framework grants school autonomy and flexibility, yet stakeholder involvement remains limited, affecting the successful implementation of strategic management initiatives (Gulac, 2023).

Strategic management requires varied leadership styles, with distributed leadership, conflict resolution, and change management emerging as critical components. Distributed leadership emphasizes shared responsibility among administrators, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders, fostering collaboration and collective responsibility (Hill et al., 2021; Nadeem, 2024). Conflict resolution practices ensure harmony and trust within the school community, while effective change management enables schools to adapt to reforms and innovations. However, school administrators often lack sufficient preparation for these complex responsibilities, facing challenges such as resistance to change, excessive administrative demands, and resource limitations (Lubguban et al., 2024; Nhlumayo & Mabeleng, 2025).

Given these realities, this study sought to explore how distributed leadership, conflict resolution, and change management capability of school administrators in the Northern Mindanao region. By examining these dimensions, the research aimed to provide insights into strengthening school improvement efforts and enhancing the overall effectiveness of educational leadership.

A. Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to answer the following:

➤ *What Level of Distributed Leadership do School Administrators Show in the Following Aspects:*

- School structure;
- Strategic vision;
- Values and beliefs;
- Collaboration and cooperation;
- Decision-making;
- Responsibility and accountability; and
- Initiatives?

➤ *What Level of Conflict Resolution Style do School Administrators Practice in the Following Aspect:*

- Collaborating style;
- Accommodating style;
- Competing style;
- Avoiding style; and
- Compromising style?

➤ *What Level of Change Management do School Administrators Demonstrate in the Following Aspect:*

- Awareness;
- Desire;

- Knowledge;
- Ability; and
- Reinforcement?

➤ *What Level of Strategic Management Capability do School Administrators Demonstrate in the Following Aspect:*

- Curriculum;
- Staff development and management;
- Learning environment;
- Resource management; and
- Community building?

➤ *Which of the Variables Singly or in Combination Best Predict School Administrators' Strategic Management Capability?*

II. METHODOLOGY

➤ *Research Design*

This study employed the descriptive-correlational design and causal-comparative to describe the school administrators' strategic management capability on distributed leadership, conflict resolution, and change management.

➤ *Locale of the Study*

This study was conducted in the Northern Mindanao region during the school year 2025-2026.

➤ *Respondents of the Study*

Elementary and Secondary school administrators rated themselves in their distributed leadership, conflict resolution, change management, and their strategic management capability. Table 2 presents the distribution of respondents.

➤ *Data Gathering Procedure*

In data gathering, the researcher formally requested permission from the Regional Director, then from the Schools Division Superintendents, through a letter signed by the Chair of the Thesis Advisory Committee and the Dean of the Graduate School, to distribute the survey questionnaire. The researcher personally visited schools to distribute and retrieve the questionnaires.

As an ethical procedure, the researcher also distributed an ethics statement to the individuals involved in the study. The letter mentions all the good ethical practices to be observed throughout by the researcher. The distribution of the ethical statement was carried out personally by the researcher, along with the letter of permission and the approval note.

➤ *Research Instruments*

This study employed survey questionnaires to gather data on school administrators' strategic management capability, distributed leadership, conflict resolution, and change management. The survey questionnaires were adopted from different sources, but some modifications were made to tailor them to the current study. A letter of

permission to adopt was sent to the authors through electronic mail and messaging applications.

The questionnaire focuses on distributed leadership practices of school administrators. It is composed of seven components. These are: school structure containing seven items, strategic vision with five items, values and beliefs with four items, collaboration and cooperation with six items, decision-making with five items, responsibility and accountability with five items, and initiatives with two items. The questionnaire was patterned from Distributed Leadership in Practice: A descriptive analysis of distributed in leadership in European Schools of Duif et al., (2013) and adopted by Ballentes (2018) in her study about Distributed Leadership, Work Environment, School Improvement on the School Administrators’ Performance with a Cronbach Alpha of .933.

The second part intended to measure the school administrators’ Conflict Resolution style in terms of: collaborating style with seven items, accommodating style with five items, competing style with seven items, avoiding style with seven items, and compromising style with six items. The research utilized the questionnaire of Rahim entitled: “Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (1983) and was adopted by Estojero (2023) in his study Leadership Roles, Conflict and Stress Management on Productivity of School Administrators. This instrument has a Cronbach alpha of 952. The third part is the questionnaire focused on change management of school administrators. It is composed of five components. These are awareness with five items, desire with four items, knowledge with five items, ability with four items, and reinforcement with five items. This survey questionnaire is anchored on ADKAR: A Model for Change in Business, Government, and our Community (Hiatt, 2006) as used by Bahamdan and Al-Subaie (2021). This instrument has a Cronbach alpha of .949. The above-mentioned questionnaire was pilot tested to establish their reliability and validity as an instrument suitable for use in the Philippine setting.

The fourth part is a questionnaire focused on the strategic management capability of school administrators through the School Improvement Plan. The research utilized the adoptive questionnaire of Cristobal (2020) in her study on

School Improvement Plan Implementation, Managerial Practices, and Accountability on Teachers’ Performance. It is composed of five components, each containing ten items. These are curriculum, staff management and development, learning environment, resource management, and community building. It has a Cronbach's alpha of .946, indicating high reliability of the instrument. Moreover, a five-point Likert Scale was used to score the responses of the respondents. The following criteria served as the basis for the interpretation of the statistical results.

➤ *Research Instruments*

This study was conducted in accordance with recognized ethical standards, including obtaining informed consent from all respondents before data collection in the Northern Mindanao region. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary, and respondents were assured of the right to withdraw at any time without penalty or disadvantage. The privacy and confidentiality of the research respondents were upheld through rigorous data anonymization and secure storage of research materials. Ali et al. (2025) stressed that upholding ethical standards not only protects the research participants but also enhances the reliability and societal impact of the scientific findings.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

➤ *Distributed Leadership*

The school administrators' distributed leadership is presented in Table 1 with a grand mean of 4.50, interpreted as "Highly Evident," indicating that school administrators show a high level of distributed leadership.

The highest-rated indicator is collaboration and cooperation (4.68) among the seven (7) indicators. It is followed by strategic vision (4.58) and values and beliefs (4.52), both of which are interpreted as "very highly evident." Meanwhile, four (4) of the indicators fall into "highly evident", these are: responsibility and accountability, with a mean score of 4.50, initiatives, with a mean score of 4.43, school structure, with a mean score of 4.40, and decision-making, with the lowest mean score of 4.36 among all indicators.

Table 1 Summary of School Administrators’ Distributed Leadership Practices.

Variables	Mean	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
Collaboration and cooperation	4.68	Strongly Agree	Very Highly Evident
Strategic vision	4.58	Strongly Agree	Very Highly Evident
Values and beliefs	4.52	Strongly Agree	Very Highly Evident
Responsibility and accountability	4.50	Agree	Highly Evident
Initiatives	4.43	Agree	Highly Evident
School structure	4.40	Agree	Highly Evident
Decision-making	4.36	Agree	Highly Evident
OVERALL MEAN	4.50	AGREE	HIGHLY EVIDENT

• Legend:

Scale	Range	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
5	4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very Highly Evident

4	3.51-4.50	Agree	Highly Evident
3	2.51-3.50	Uncertain	Moderately Evident
2	1.51-2.50	Disagree	Poorly Evident
1	1.0-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Not Evident

The above findings suggest that distributed leadership is evident in the school's culture and that school administrators are utilizing it to improve the schools they govern. Aquino (2025) supports the above findings on the practice of distributing tasks among schools and emphasizes that teachers are encouraged to lead programs and participate in collaborative planning.

The above findings align with those of Thornhill-Miller et al. (2023), who encourage school administrators to work collaboratively with stakeholders to achieve educational goals and adapt to challenges. This collaboration creates an environment where ideas are heard and all stakeholders have the opportunity to participate in discussions and decision-making.

Harris (2019) also noted that schools that practice distributed leadership experienced stronger professional learning communities, improved instructional practices, and greater adaptability to change, as leadership capacity is embedded in other stakeholders rather than concentrated in school administrators alone.

➤ *Conflict Resolution*

Table 2 presents the school administrators' conflict resolution. It shows that school administrators generally use higher-level conflict resolution styles. Among the five conflict resolution styles, four (4) were rated "Highly Practiced," while only one (1) was rated "Moderately Practiced." The overall mean score of 3.78, interpreted as "Highly Practiced," indicates that school administrators actively and consistently use conflict-resolution strategies.

Table 2 Summary of School Administrators' Conflict Resolution Practices.

Variables	Mean	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
Collaborating style	4.45	Agree	Highly Practiced
Accommodating style	4.10	Agree	Highly Practiced
Compromising style	4.04	Agree	Highly Practiced
Avoiding style	3.60	Agree	Highly Practiced
Competing style	2.72	Uncertain	Moderately Practiced
OVERALL MEAN	3.78	AGREE	HIGHLY PRACTICED

• *Legend:*

Scale	Range	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
5	4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very Highly Practiced
4	3.51-4.50	Agree	Highly Practiced
3	2.51-3.50	Uncertain	Moderately Practiced
2	1.51-2.50	Disagree	Poorly Practiced
1	1.0-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Not Practiced

The table implies that school administrators prioritize maintaining harmony and consensus in their schools, thereby promoting a balance of relationships and stability. In addition, the table reflects strong participatory leadership that promotes trust and shared responsibility among stakeholders.

The study by Pacardo (2024) revealed that resolving conflicts requires meeting the needs of all parties involved; using combined talents and creativity can help. Also, a culture of open communication and cooperation is vital in reducing conflict and improving relationships in an organization. It also promotes a growth-oriented school environment. In addition, Razon, Luistro, and Gabriel (2023) highlighted that when conflicts are resolved fairly, it benefits both students and teachers and eventually promotes a better school environment that is resilient to change.

However, several factors should be considered when using various conflict resolution styles. It may include the nature of the conflict or issue, interpersonal dynamics, time

constraints, and the specific requirements of the circumstances. Different conflicts may require different types of strategies, and working together is not always the best course of action (Cote, 2025).

➤ *Change Management*

Table 3 presents school administrators' change management. School administrators have identified priorities for implementing change initiatives. It can be observed that school administrators demonstrated greater change management across all dimensions, with an overall mean score of 4.39, indicating "highly demonstrated". Specifically, school administrators' desire for change had the highest mean, 4.44. It is followed by change management in terms of reinforcement, with a mean score of 4.43. The third in rank is the school administrators' change management in terms of awareness (4.39) and ability (4.39). The dimension that received the lowest score was school administrators' change management in terms of knowledge, with a mean score of 3.24.

Table 3 Summary of School Administrators’ Change Management Practice.

Variables	Mean	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
Desire	4.44	Agree	Highly Demonstrated
Reinforcement	4.43	Agree	Highly Demonstrated
Awareness	4.39	Agree	Highly Demonstrated
Ability	4.39	Agree	Highly Demonstrated
Knowledge	4.29	Agree	Highly Demonstrated
OVERALL MEAN	4.39	AGREE	HIGHLY DEMONSTRATED

• Legend:

Range	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very Highly Demonstrated
3.51-4.50	Agree	Highly Demonstrated
2.51-3.50	Uncertain	Moderately Demonstrated
1.51-2.50	Disagree	Poorly Demonstrated
1.0-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Not Demonstrated

These findings indicate that school administrators are effective at motivating teachers to adopt new policies and implement change initiatives. This motivation will drive teachers to work collaboratively to enhance educational outcomes.

This finding is supported by Hasan, Aparisi-Torrijo, and Gonzalez-Ladron-de-Guevarra (2025), who highlighted that effective change management practices are strongly associated with enhanced performance and resilience in a school. Those who adopt structured approaches to change are expected to be better at handling challenges and external pressures, and at sustaining educational outcomes.

In a global perspective, Darling-Hammond, Hylar, and Gardner (2017) highlighted that acknowledging and

celebrating teacher accomplishments is essential for sustaining reforms. When teachers' efforts are acknowledged through structured evaluation and feedback, their drive to adopt new practices increases. Finally, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2019) provided evidence that when teachers are recognized, it promotes educational improvement.

➤ *Strategic Management Capability of School Administrators*

The school administrators' strategic management capability is presented in Table 4, with an overall mean score of 4.66, in which school administrators performed very highly in terms of community building (4.73), learning environment (4.70), staff development and management (4.65), resource management (4.65), and curriculum (4.59).

Table 4 Summary of School Administrators’ Strategic Management Capability.

Variables	Mean	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
Community-building	4.73	Strongly Agree	Very Highly performed
Learning environment	4.70	Strongly Agree	Very Highly performed
Staff development and management	4.65	Strongly Agree	Very Highly performed
Resource management	4.65	Strongly Agree	Very Highly performed
Curriculum	4.59	Strongly Agree	Very Highly performed
OVERALL MEAN	4.66	STRONGLY AGREE	VERY HIGHLY PERFORMED

• Legend:

Scale	Range	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
5	4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very Highly Performed
4	3.51-4.50	Agree	Highly Performed
3	2.51-3.50	Uncertain	Moderately Performed
2	1.51-2.50	Disagree	Poorly Performed
1	1.0-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Not Performed

The findings imply that the school administrators are effective in managing schools, ensuring strong school-community partnerships, creating supportive learning spaces, developing their teachers, wisely managing their resources, and guiding and implementing the curriculum.

The result aligns with Larche's (2025) findings, which revealed that stakeholder engagement helps achieve long-

term success in schools. School administrators who use data-driven planning achieve better alignment between the school's goals and the community's needs.

Moreover, Asuque (2025) also reports the same findings, highlighting that when teachers, students, parents, and local officials are involved in planning and implementation, collaborative efforts enhance school

operations and increase learning outcomes among students. The stakeholders' active involvement promoted unity and commitment to school initiatives. Further, the study emphasized that inclusive decision-making is an effective part of leadership practice.

Similarly, Torres et al. (2025) emphasized that for school administrators to implement strategic management effectively, they must ensure clear goal alignment, stakeholder engagement, and data-driven decision-making. An effective leader was emphasized in Lapaz's (2024) study, which revealed that school administrators should possess strong strategic thinking skills to drive innovation, adapt to rapid change, and improve educational outcomes. They must engage in data-driven decision-making, planning, resource allocation, and risk and opportunity management.

➤ *Variable that Best Predicts the Strategic Management Capability of School Administrators*

Table 5 presents the regression model for the study, estimating the impact of various simultaneous influences on school administrators' strategic management capability. More precisely, the predicted scores for particular values of the

independent variables are indicated by the beta weights (β), which means that each additional score/unit accounted for by these eleven measure variables would imply an increase in school administrators' strategic management capability, holding other variables constant.

The R^2 , the measure of the total variation of the dependent variable, consisted of 43.7%, which reflects that the amount of variance in school administrators' strategic management capability could be explained by collaboration and cooperation, strategic vision, responsibility and accountability, values and beliefs, school structure, decision-making, awareness, reinforcement, ability, knowledge, and collaboration. In comparison, the remaining 56.3% of the variance can be attributed to factors beyond the regression model.

From the foregoing analysis, however, the equation useful in predicting the percentage of school administrators' strategic management capability (Y) as indicated by the F -value (60.301) with its corresponding probability value (.000) is significant at ($p < .01$).

Table 5 Predictor Variables of School Administrators' Strategic Management Capability.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.867	0.118		15.852	0
Collaboration and cooperation	0.132	0.024	0.179	5.517	0.000
Awareness	0.080	0.018	0.148	4.492	0.000
Reinforcement	0.066	0.020	0.122	3.249	0.001
Strategic vision	0.063	0.02	0.095	3.109	0.002
Ability	0.046	0.019	0.091	2.437	0.015
Values and beliefs	0.043	0.020	0.071	2.182	0.029
Knowledge	0.040	0.018	0.08	2.193	0.029
School structure	0.040	0.019	0.060	2.097	0.036
Responsibility and accountability	0.039	0.020	0.061	2.002	0.046
Collaborating	0.039	0.020	0.063	1.900	0.058
Decision-making	0.033	0.017	0.058	1.977	0.048
R = 0.661		R ² = 0.437	F-value- 60.301	Sig. = 0.000	

• *This Model is Illustrated:*

$$Y = 1.867 + .132x_1 + .063x_2 + .039x_3 + .043x_4 + .04x_5 + .033x_6 + .08x_7 + .066x_8 + .046x_9 + .04x_{10} + .039x_{11}$$

Where: 1.867 is the Strategic Management Capability

X_1 = Collaboration and cooperation

X_2 = Strategic vision

X_3 = Responsibility and accountability

X_4 = Values and beliefs

X_5 = School structure

X_6 = Decision-making

X_7 = Awareness

X_8 = Reinforcement

X_9 = Ability

X_{10} = Knowledge

X_{11} = Collaborating

The findings resonate with the study of Sanglitan (2025), which demonstrated that collaborative leadership practices and accountability significantly enhance school performance. Similarly, Magdato et al. (2025) highlighted that collaborative leadership and data-driven decision-making

strengthen strategic management, underscoring the indispensability of collective practices for effective management. The regression result was also supported by the study by Hsieh, Song, and Li (2025), which found that distributed leadership improves instructional quality through teacher autonomy and innovation.

A similar finding was presented by Larche (2025), which emphasized that strategic planning, rooted in vision and community alignment, is crucial for school success. Also, Rebugio (2025), who demonstrated that conflict management strategies such as collaboration is vital for maintaining organizational stability.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ *Conclusions*

School administrators were found to be very highly capable in community building, learning environment, staff development and management, resource management, and curriculum. The practice of distributed leadership is evident in collaboration and cooperation, strategic vision, values and beliefs, responsibility and accountability, initiatives, school structure, and decision-making.

The school administrators have highly practiced collaborating, accommodating, compromising, and avoiding styles, while moderately practicing competing in conflict resolution, and demonstrated strong change management across desire, reinforcement, awareness, ability, and knowledge.

The predicting variables for distributed leadership are strategic vision, values and beliefs, school structure, responsibility and accountability, and decision-making. In addition, collaboration and cooperation, a sub-variable of distributed leadership, was the strongest predictor. In conflict resolution, only the collaborating style predicted school administrators' strategic management capability. Finally, for change management, the predictor variables are awareness, reinforcement, ability, and knowledge.

➤ *Recommendations*

Strengthening distributed leadership practices to enhance participatory decision-making, refining school structures, and encouraging innovative programs and projects while ensuring the practice of responsibility and accountability to maintain trust and transparency. Through the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders, current strengths are not only sustained but also address areas for improvement, enhance stakeholder engagement, and foster more resilient leadership that can adapt to future challenges.

School administrators are encouraged to ensure a balanced use of conflict resolution strategies to achieve inclusive outcomes. Dialogues, negotiation, and shared problem-solving may be promoted to address disagreements constructively and uphold the school's standards. This balanced approach promotes trust, harmony, and long-term

effectiveness, and ensures constant fairness and accountability.

School administrators are encouraged to sustain the school's strong change-management practices to nurture motivation and commitment to change among school stakeholders. Ongoing professional development, capacity-building, and knowledge-sharing among school administrators are also encouraged so that practices remain adaptive and resilient.

Since strategic management capability is a strong feature of school leadership, best practices may be institutionalized to ensure their sustainability, even during leadership transitions or staff turnover. Benchmarking activities may be carried out to broaden the educational perspective and provide not only school administrators but also stakeholders with a fresh perspective to improve these practices.

The education planners, supervisors, and school administrators who uphold strategic management capability may initiate initiatives to address the challenges identified in this study. It will create opportunities for school administrators to improve their management and adapt to changing demands and challenges in the field.

Finally, more scientific research on similar topics is suggested to yield clearer outcomes and provide a basis for enhancing school administrators' strategic management capability.

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