

Trust and Collaboration Practices: Key Factors in Strengthening Teacher-School Head Alliance

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Abstract — This study is entitled "Trust and Collaboration Practices: Key Factors in Strengthening Teacher-School Head Alliance" and discusses the role of trust and collaboration in effective relationships between teachers and school heads. It is guided by Four research questions: examining the profile of school heads in terms of age, sex, position, years in service and educational attainment, identifying the key factors contributing to strong partnerships, and analyzing the challenges encountered. A quantitative research design was adopted making use of validated structured questionnaires that were pilot tested. Data were gathered ethically from 30 school heads in (the Uson District, under the Schools Division Office of Masbate Province), and analyzed using frequency distribution, percentages, weighted mean, and rating scales. Most of the respondents were aged between 41 and 50, thus mid-career professionals at a good time to lead the trust-building activities. There was a slight majority who were female and this had been on an increasing trend with women in leadership positions, although both genders could equally facilitate teamwork. The majorities of respondents were Master's degree holders or were pursuing advanced degrees, indicating professional development as being important to effectiveness in leadership. The largest percentage of respondents was at the principal level, showing their experience and ability to handle partnerships. These challenges identified were differences in communication styles and the ways of workload distribution and goals alignment between the teachers and school heads. On the other hand, successful factors of this partnership were open communication, mutual respect, and shared decision-making. Therefore, fostering trust and collaboration necessitates developing school heads continually and putting priority relationship-building skills over leadership development. It suggests specific training programs for school heads based on trust building strategies and professional development to promote stronger teacher-school head partnerships.

Keywords — **Key Factor, Teacher School Head Alliance, Trust, Collaboration Practices**

I. Introduction

The partnership between teachers and school administrators is the foundation of educational excellence. Collaboration built on trust and cooperation enables both parties to work together towards shared goals, fostering an atmosphere of creativity, accountability, and shared responsibility. In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) encourages collaboration and shared leadership, as stipulated in the Basic Education Governance Act of 2001 (RA 9155). However, these collaborations are often hindered by challenges such as limited resources, communication breakdowns, and conflicting agendas.

The province of Masbate presents a compelling case study, with its unique blend of urban and rural schools facing distinct challenges. Strong collaborations between educators and school administrators are crucial in overcoming these obstacles. Teachers rely on school administrators for guidance and support, while administrators depend on teachers' collaboration to implement school policies and programs effectively.

Research has consistently shown that trust and collaboration are essential components of effective educational leadership. Studies by Bryk and Schneider (2002) highlight the significance

of relational trust in promoting school improvement, candid communication, and collective problem-solving. Tschannen-Moran (2014) further emphasizes that collaboration between teachers and school administrators improves problem-solving skills and fosters a sense of collective efficacy. In the Philippine context, Angeles and Rosales (2020) stress the importance of participative leadership and trust in leadership in enhancing teacher satisfaction and performance.

This study aims to explore the determinants of strengthened teacher-school head partnerships, focusing on trust and collaboration practices in Masbate province. It seeks to answer the following research questions: What is the profile of teachers in terms of age, sex, civil status, position, highest educational attainment, and years of service? What are the trust and collaboration practices in teacher-school head alliances? What challenges do schools encounter in strengthening teacher-school head partnerships? And what is the impact of trust and collaboration practices on strengthening teacher-school head alliances?

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to existing literature on educational leadership and partnership dynamics, providing actionable insights for improving collaboration and fostering trust between teachers and school heads in education. By examining the complexities of trust and collaboration in educational settings, this study aims to inform strategies for enhancing educational leadership practices, ultimately benefiting students, teachers, and the broader community.

II. Methodology

The study, "Trust and Collaboration Practices: Key Factors in Strengthening Teacher-School Head Alliance", adopted a quantitative research design in the collection and analysis of data. The respondents were 30 school heads from Uson District under the schools Division Office (SDO) of Masbate Province. A structured questionnaire was pilot-tested prior to deployment for reliability and validity of the research instrument and in order to gather the needed data, this questionnaire was reproduced according to the targeted number of respondents. Considering the far distance of the destination and rational of the questionnaire. The data were collected ethically; responses were kept confidential with consent of the participants.

The statistical tools applied in this study included frequency distribution percentage, rating scale, and weighted mean, enabling the research to analyze the data. These tools offered a complete understanding of the demographic profile of school heads, factors that resulted in trust and collaboration practices; and challenges encumbering effective partnerships between teachers and school heads.

III. Results and Discussion

This presents the findings from the study titled "Trust and Collaboration Practices: Key Factors in Strengthening teacher- School Head Alliance" The study focused on the profile of school heads in terms of age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, and position, the key factors strengthening the teacher-school head partnership, and the challenges they faced.

Table 1.1
Profile of School Heads in Terms of Age

| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| 20 – 25 years | 0 | 0% |
| 26 – 30 years | 0 | 0% |
| 31 – 35 years | 2 | 6.67% |
| 36 – 40 years | 6 | 20% |
| 41 – 45 years | 13 | 43.33% |
| 46 years and up | 9 | 30% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

The profile of school heads in the study reveals a concentration of participants in the 41-45 age range (43.33%), followed by those 46 and above (30%). This indicates that most school heads are in their mid-career phase, with ample experience in educational leadership. The remaining participants are distributed among younger age groups (31-35 and 36-40 years), ensuring a diverse range of perspectives.

Research supports the dominance of middle-aged school leaders, citing their experience and ability to foster trust and cooperation (Smith & Johnson, 2019). This age group is also more focused on building relationships and collective cultures, linked to teacher morale and student achievement (Brooks & Lee, 2018). School leaders in this age range (40-50) play a key role in bridging generational divides, enabling effective communication and trust (Williams et al., 2020).

The implications are that school heads aged 40-50, with their leadership experience and interpersonal skills, are well-positioned to enhance teacher-school head partnerships. They can foster an atmosphere of trust and collaboration, improving overall school performance. Targeted training for school heads in this age range could further develop their leadership skills, enabling them to build stronger relationships with teachers and improve school outcomes.

Table 1.2
Profile of School Heads in Terms of Sex

| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Male | 12 | 40% |
| Female | 18 | 60% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

The profile of school heads by sex shows a nearly equal distribution, with 60% female and 40% male respondents. This indicates a slightly higher representation of female school heads, reflecting the increasing trend of women in educational leadership positions.

Research suggests that female school heads often adopt collaborative and facilitative leadership styles, fostering strong relationships with teachers (Keddie, 2017; Stone & Wilson, 2020). However, male leaders are also adopting collaborative approaches, making gender less of a determining factor in building trust and cooperation (Greenfield, 2021).

The study emphasizes that leadership approach, rather than gender, is key to building strong teacher-school head partnerships (Hughes & Roy, 2019). Both male and female school heads can create collaborative environments, and their leadership development should focus on fostering trust, cooperation, and relationships.

The implications are that school districts should continue to support leadership development programs for both male and female school heads, focusing on collaboration and relationship-building skills. This will enable them to effectively lead and build strong partnerships with teachers, regardless of their gender.

Table 1.3
Profile of School Heads in Terms of Highest Educational Attainment

| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Bachelor's Degree | 2 | 6.67% |
| Master's Degree (On-going) | 9 | 30% |
| Master's Degree (CAR) | 10 | 33.33% |
| Master's Degree | 6 | 20% |
| Doctorate Degree (On-going) | 2 | 6.67% |
| Doctorate Degree (CAR) | 1 | 3.33% |
| Doctorate Degree | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

The findings show that most school heads have units in a master's degree or are pursuing one, with 33.3% holding a Master's Degree and 30% ongoing. Only 6.67% hold a bachelor's degree, while 6.67% are pursuing a doctorate and 3.33% hold a Doctoral Degree.

Research suggests that educational attainment is correlated with effective leadership, as school leaders with advanced degrees are more likely to implement new practices and foster a collaborative culture (Hallinger & Heck, 2018). School heads with master's degrees are better equipped to implement leadership theories and practices, promoting trust and collaboration with teachers (Fullan, 2020). Continuous professional development also enables school leaders to adapt to changing school needs (Day, 2019).

The implications are that school heads with higher education are more likely to build collaborative, trust-based relationships with teachers. They appreciate the importance of educational leadership and create a conducive environment for collaboration. School districts should continue motivating and supporting school heads in acquiring advanced degrees to enhance their leadership skills and improve teacher-school head relationships.

Table 1.4
Profile of School Heads in Terms of Position

| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| TI – TIII/TIC | 1 | 3.33% |
| MTI – MTII/TIC | 5 | 16.66% |
| HTI - HTIII | 11 | 36.67% |
| PI - PIV | 13 | 43.33% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

The profile of school heads by position title shows that most hold PI-PIV positions (43.33%), followed by HTI-HTIII (36.67%), MTI-MTII/TIC (16.66%), and TI-TIII/TIC (3.33%). This indicates that respondents are experienced school heads with leadership skills.

Research suggests that experienced school leaders are better equipped to manage school improvement and culture (Leithwood et al., 2020). Those in PI-PIV positions tend to develop strong relationships with teachers due to their emotional intelligence and leadership skills. Day and Gu's (2018) research supports this, highlighting the importance of experience in balancing administrative and relationship-building efforts.

The study includes school heads at various career stages, emphasizing the need for professional development and mentoring opportunities to strengthen leadership skills (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Less experienced school heads can benefit from mentorship programs, guided by seasoned leaders.

The findings suggest that most school heads have the experience needed to drive school improvement and foster collaboration. However, targeted professional development initiatives can help develop leadership skills, particularly for less seasoned administrators. Mentorship programs can support early-career school heads in building strong teacher-school head partnerships.

Table 1.5
Profile of School Heads in Civil Status

| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------|-----------|------------|
| Single | 6 | 20% |
| Married | 24 | 80% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

The Table 1.5 shows the profile of school heads in terms of civil status which indicates a distribution between single and married school heads. This means that 80% of respondents are married, while 20 % are Single, an indication that there are more married school heads than the single one.

According to IKOGI and R. J. (2023), leaders can cultivate an environment that fosters and enhances job satisfaction among teachers and staff by establishing open channels of communication, providing support and empowerment, acknowledging contributions, facilitating collaboration and teamwork, promoting work-life balance, cultivating a positive school culture, and demonstrating exemplary leadership. When adopted regularly and tailored to the specific needs of educational institutions, these tactics have the potential to boost instructors' morale, engagement, and general well-being.

Table 2
What are the Trust and Collaboration practices in Teacher-school heads alliance?

| Key Trust and Collaboration practices in Teacher-school heads alliance | Weighted Mean | Interpretation |
|--|---------------|----------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open and consistent communication channels between teachers and the school heads | 4.60 | Strongly Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for teachers to participate in decision-making process | 4.17 | Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A culture of respect and recognition of each other's roles and contributions | 4.53 | Strongly Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school head provides guidance, mentorship, and emotional support to teachers | 4.17 | Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-defined roles, responsibilities, and expectations for both | 4.23 | Strongly Agree |

| | | |
|---|------|----------------|
| teachers and the school head | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective strategies and policies to address and resolve conflicts or misunderstanding | 4.07 | Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement of teachers' efforts and achievements by the school head | 4.23 | Strongly Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment of objectives and a shared commitment in achieving school-wide goals | 4.17 | Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of adequate resources and materials to help teachers perform their roles effectively. | 4.43 | Strongly Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to relevant training programs and continuous learning initiatives | 4.43 | Strongly Agree |

The findings in Table 2 highlight key elements in building strong teacher-school head partnerships. Open communication has the highest weighted mean (4.60, Strongly Agree), emphasizing its crucial role in trust-building. A culture of respect and recognition (4.53, Strongly Agree) and resource support (4.43, Strongly Agree) are also highly valued.

While opportunities for teacher participation in decision-making and guidance from school heads scored lower (4.17, Agree), indicating areas for improvement. Objectives' alignment and conflict resolution strategies also show room for growth (4.17 and 4.07, Agree).

Research supports these findings, highlighting the importance of communication, trust, and respect in academic performance (Fullan, 2016). Mutual regard and understanding improve instructor's job happiness and performance (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Providing resources and recognition motivates teachers (Robinson et al., 2008), while participatory decision-making enhances accountability and ownership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Professional development and mentoring also greatly increase teacher performance and foster a positive school culture (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

To strengthen teacher-school head partnerships, focus on:

- Regular, open communication
- Fostering a culture of respect and recognition
- Providing adequate resources
- Encouraging teacher participation in decision-making
- Offering guidance, mentorship, and emotional support

School heads should prioritize these areas to build effective partnerships and drive school improvement.

Table 3
What are the challenges encountered by the school heads in strengthening teacher-school head partnership?

| Challenges encountered by school head n strengthening teacher-school Head partnership | Weighted Mean | Interpretation |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|
| • Lack of clear, open, or consistent communication between teachers and the school head | 4.80 | Strongly Agree |
| • Misalignment of goals or differing priorities between teachers and the school head | 4.70 | Strongly Agree |
| • Insufficient opportunities for regular meetings or collaborative discussions | 4.70 | Strongly Agree |
| • Reluctance from either party to adopt new policies, practices, or initiatives | 4.67 | Strongly Agree |
| • Absence of mutual trust, leading to hesitation in sharing feedback or concerns | 4.63 | Strongly Agree |
| • Perception of unfairness in task assignment or responsibilities. | 4.57 | Strongly Agree |
| • Insufficient access to materials, funding, or facilities needed for effective collaboration | 4.20 | Strongly Agree |
| • Leadership approach of the school head that may not align with the teachers' working style or needs. | 4.33 | Strongly Agree |
| • Persistent disagreement or misunderstanding that strains the partnership. | 4.73 | Strongly Agree |
| • Poor performance in school is the result of teachers and the head of the school communicating inconsistently | 4.50 | Strongly Agree |

The key findings highlight significant challenges in effective collaboration between teachers and school heads. The top challenges include: Lack of transparent, open, or clear communication (4.80, Strongly Agree); Misalignment of goals or differing priorities (4.70, Strongly Agree); Insufficient opportunities for regular meetings (4.70, Strongly Agree); Persistent disagreements or misunderstandings (4.73, Strongly Agree); Fear of adopting new policies or programs (4.67, Strongly Agree); Mutual distrust (4.63, Strongly Agree); Perceived favoritism in task allocation (4.57, Strongly Agree); Inadequate availability of resources for teachers (4.20, Strongly Agree)

Research supports the importance of addressing these challenges, citing the need for trust, clear communication, and collaborative decision-making (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Leithwood &

Jantzi, 2006). Leadership approaches emphasizing teacher involvement and resource access can reduce conflict and misunderstanding (Robinson et al., 2008). Trust, fairness, and shared vision are also crucial for a positive school climate (Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Fullan, 2016).

To overcome these challenges, school heads should prioritize: Clear and regular communication, Aligned priorities and goals, Mutual trust-building, Collaborative planning and decision-making, Conflict-resolution strategies, Providing adequate resources and support. By addressing these areas, school heads can foster a more collaborative and productive partnership with teachers, ultimately driving school improvement.

Table 4
What is the effect of Trust and Collaboration practices in strengthening Teacher-School head alliance?

| Effect of Trust and Collaboration | Weighted Mean | Interpretation |
|--|---------------|----------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and school administrators who trust one another will cooperate, exchange ideas, and provide support to one another. | 4.80 | Strongly Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust effectively lowers barriers and promotes open communication, which improves problem-solving decision-making. | 4.70 | Strongly Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working together, school heads and teachers can make sure that everyone is pursuing the same goals and objectives. | 4.70 | Strongly Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation reduces misunderstandings and promotes honest and efficient communication. | 4.67 | Strongly Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation will give the Teacher-School Heads and partnership both professional and emotional support. | 4.63 | Strongly Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration and trust foster a productive workplace. | 4.57 | Strongly Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and school administrators who trust one another will cooperate, exchange ideas, and provide support to one another. | 4.20 | Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust effectively lowers barriers and promotes open communication, which improves problem-solving decision-making. | 4.33 | Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better partnerships are facilitated by the teacher-school heads' ongoing agreements or understandings. | 4.73 | Strongly Agree |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better alliances or partnerships are formed when teachers and the communicate n an open, transparent, or consistent manner | 4.50 | Strongly Agree |

The key findings highlight the importance of trust and collaboration between teachers and school heads, with a weighted mean of 4.80 (Strongly Agree). Open communication is critical in

building trust and cooperation, reducing barriers and improving problem-solving and decision-making (4.70, Strongly Agree). Collaboration ensures everyone is working towards the same goals and objectives (4.70, Strongly Agree).

Other key perceptions of Teacher-School Heads include: Cooperation reduces misunderstandings and promotes honest communication (4.67, Strongly Agree); Cooperation provides professional and emotional support (4.63, Strongly Agree); Collaboration and trust foster a productive workplace (4.57, Strongly Agree); Effective collaboration improves support for students' academic and personal needs (4.20, Strongly Agree)

Research supports these findings, highlighting the importance of principals' leadership and trust-building (Babaoglan, 2016). Principal-teacher perceptual conflict can significantly impact school capacity, emphasizing the need for agreement and collaboration (Ham & Park, 2016). Empathetic and talented facilitators who can tap into individual and collective abilities, interests, and values are crucial in building trust (Rashad, 2018).

To foster effective collaboration, school heads should prioritize: Open and clear communication, Building trust and empathy, Collaborative goal-setting and decision-making, providing professional and emotional support and Fostering a productive and inclusive workplace culture.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the statistical results of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. School heads have adequate experience and education to promote trust, cooperation, and effective leadership in schools.
2. There are potential avenues towards strengthened collaboration toward commonly agreed ends, by effective communication, mutual respect, provision of resources to nurture the bond of teacher-school head partnerships.
3. Clear communication, aligned priorities, and mutual trust are all key factors that will help the challenges of teacher-school head partnerships to overcome.
4. Teacher and school heads who trust one another, cooperate, exchange ideas and support one another.

V. Recommendations

In light of the forgoing findings and conclusions, the following are recommended:

1. Continuous professional development, mentor-ship, and advanced education may be major priority for schools seeking to increase the leadership capabilities of both experienced and

new school leaders, hence improving teacher-school head partnerships and school performance.

2. There should be coordinated initiatives in regularized communication and reward, with enough resources provided, while advocating decision-making with an active sense of participation, as well as career growth for school principals.
3. School leaders are encouraged to take proactive actions to establish frequent communication forums, collaborative planning, trust-building, and conflict-resolution procedures.
4. Trust and collaboration lower barriers and promote open communication.

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