

# STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION IN CEBU SCHOOLS: DRIVING INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION

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## ***ABSTRACT***

*Strategic leadership and effective instructional supervision are fundamental in advancing inclusive and equitable quality education, particularly in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4. In the Philippine educational landscape, a systematic examination of leadership and supervisory practices across various educational sectors offers meaningful insights for strengthening institutional effectiveness and improving student learning outcomes. Anchored on the study titled Strategic Leadership and Instructional Supervision in Cebu Schools: Driving Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education, this research employed a descriptive-evaluative mixed-methods design to assess leadership and supervision practices in basic education, technical-vocational, and higher education institutions in Toledo City, Pinamungajan, and Aloguinsan within Cebu Province's 3rd District. The study engaged 200 respondents, including school administrators, department heads, and teachers, with data gathered through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. Findings revealed that transformational leadership (36.5%) was the most widely practiced and was rated as "very highly effective." Instructional leadership (27.5%) and distributed leadership (22.0%) followed, both categorized as "highly effective." In contrast, traditional or hierarchical leadership (14.0%) and laissez-faire approaches were considered least effective. Overall, leadership and supervisory practices demonstrated a high to very high level of influence (WM = 4.20) on teacher performance, curriculum implementation, student achievement, and school climate. Qualitative findings further emphasized the importance of participatory decision-making, continuous professional development, adaptive leadership strategies, and equity-driven policies in enhancing institutional performance. These results affirm that the integration of strategic leadership and strong instructional supervision significantly contributes to fostering inclusive, accessible, and high-quality education. Based on the findings, the study recommends the institutionalization*

*of transformational leadership practices, strengthening of instructional supervision systems, expansion of distributed leadership approaches, sustained capacity-building programs, integration of technology in supervisory processes, and adoption of equity-focused policies. These findings provide context-specific evidence to inform educational reforms and leadership development initiatives in Cebu and similar settings.*

**Keywords:** Strategic Leadership, Instructional Supervision, Educational Quality, Transformational Leadership, Distributed Leadership, Sustainable Development Goal 4

## INTRODUCTION

Strategic leadership and instructional supervision are widely acknowledged as vital drivers of school effectiveness and the overall quality of education (White, Lowery, & Johnson, 2025). In the context of Cebu schools, these elements play an important part in determining institutional performance and ensuring that teaching and learning processes respond to evolving educational demands (Arcadio et al., 2025). Globalization's increasing influence, rapid technological advancements, and shifting socio-cultural dynamics expect school leaders to employ proactive, flexible, and innovative management strategies (Oguejiofor et al., 2025). This study is anchored in applied educational management, focusing on how leadership practices have evolved from conventional hierarchical approaches toward more progressive models such as transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership (Nadeem, 2024).

Aligned with the global agenda of the United Nations, particularly Sustainable Development

Goal 4, education systems are called to promote inclusivity, equity, and quality learning opportunities for all (Adipat & Chotikapanich, 2022; Alier, 2025). Recent studies indicate that transformational and instructional leadership greatly increase teacher engagement, improve school culture, and boost student learning outcomes (Mafe, 2023; Liu & Watson, 2023). Moreover, distributed leadership has gained prominence as an approach that encourages shared responsibility, collaborative decision-making, and the development of professional learning communities, all of which contribute to sustained school improvement (Ampofo, Onyango, & Ogola, 2019; Mutangampundu, 2022). Despite these advancements, the integration of global educational priorities into local school contexts remains a persistent challenge (Puspitadani, Yudea, & Loo, 2022).

In the Philippine setting, leadership and supervision reforms are central to the ongoing efforts to improve educational quality (Arcadio et al., 2025). However, schools continue to encounter challenges

such as limited supervisory capacity, inadequate resources, restricted access to technology, and the need for continuous professional development among educators (Cansoy, Gümüş, & Walker, 2025; Ameli, Ayaga, & Ouda, 2024). These issues are particularly evident in provincial and semi-urban areas, where school leaders must balance resource limitations while striving to deliver inclusive and high-quality education (Santos, 2025; Okafor et al., 2024).

Within Cebu Province, the 3rd District—comprising Toledo City, Pinamungajan, and Aloguinsan—presents varied educational environments that demand context-specific leadership approaches (Arcadio et al., 2025). Toledo City, as an urban-industrial hub, requires structured yet adaptive leadership strategies (Kucuksuleymanoglu, 2025); Pinamungajan, undergoing socio-economic transition, necessitates flexible and responsive administrative practices (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024), while rural Aloguinsan benefits from participatory and collaborative leadership to address resource constraints (Ahmed et al., 2025). This study seeks to address the deficiencies in current literature by investigating the implementation and experiences of strategic leadership and instructional supervision within specific local contexts, ultimately producing evidence-based insights to facilitate the progress of inclusive and equitable quality education in accordance with SDG 4 (Okafor et al., 2024; Alier, 2025).

## OBJECTIVES

1. Identify and describe school leadership and supervision approaches in basic education, technical-vocational, and higher education institutions (HEIs) in Toledo City, Pinamungajan, and Aloguinsan, Cebu.
2. Assess the impact of these leadership and supervisory strategies on teacher performance, curriculum delivery, student achievement, and overall school climate.
3. Propose effective, context-appropriate leadership practices to advance SDG 4, promoting inclusive, equitable, and quality education.

## NARRATIVE BACKGROUND

Research on school leadership and supervision underscores the essential function of effective management practices in realizing Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which seeks to guarantee inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education for all (Johnson, 2025; Loo et al., 2022). Empirical studies both globally and in the Philippine context emphasize that leadership approaches in schools significantly influence teacher performance, curriculum implementation, and student outcomes. Mafe (2023) has demonstrated that transformational leadership, in particular, fosters positive school climates, motivates teachers, encourages innovation, and enhances student achievement. Within Cebu, instructional supervision has emerged as a key mechanism to strengthen teaching practices, align instructional delivery with curriculum standards, and support

the attainment of SDG 4 objectives (Nadeem, 2024), which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Overall, effective leadership in educational institutions is characterized by collaboration, empowerment, context-sensitive decision-making, and continuous professional development (Alier, 2025).

Various theoretical frameworks provide the foundation for understanding how school leadership and supervision affect educational outcomes. Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978) emphasizes the importance of inspiring and motivating educators to exceed expectations while fostering a shared vision. Instructional Leadership Theory (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985) focuses on the principal's role in supervising, mentoring, and managing the curriculum to improve teaching quality. Distributed Leadership Theory (Spillane, 2006) promotes shared leadership responsibilities across teachers and department heads, creating professional learning communities that enhance collaborative decision-making. Situational Leadership Theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) underscores the need to adapt leadership styles to specific contexts and follower readiness to achieve effectiveness, suggesting that leaders must assess the maturity and competence of their followers to determine the most appropriate leadership approach. Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow,

1991) supports reflective practices and continuous professional development to foster innovative teaching approaches, which can lead to improved student engagement and learning outcomes by encouraging educators to critically assess their teaching methods and adapt them based on reflective insights.

Other frameworks offer different points of view. For example, systems theory (Von Bertalanffy, 1968) sees schools as interdependent systems, where leadership has an effect on all parts, such as instruction and student learning outcomes. Equity Theory (Adams, 1963) highlights the importance of fairness in resource allocation and opportunities, aligning with inclusive education goals. Motivation-Hygiene Theory (Herzberg, 1959) suggests that leadership directly influences teacher motivation and job satisfaction. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) emphasizes modeling and mentorship as strategies to strengthen teacher performance, while Change Management Theory (Lewin, 1947) guides schools in implementing reforms and sustainable improvements. Collectively, these theories provide a comprehensive understanding of how leadership and supervision practices can impact institutional performance and student success.

The study is also based on the laws that require and guide educational leadership in the Philippines. Republic Act No. 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013) requires school leaders to im-

plement K-12 curriculum reforms and ensure quality teaching. Republic Act No. 9155 (Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001) defines the roles and responsibilities of school heads and administrators to maintain effective school governance. Republic Act No. 10968 (Philippine Qualifications Framework Act of 2018) promotes ongoing professional development and competency-based supervision to improve the quality of teaching and make it more accessible to everyone.

In conclusion, the amalgamation of these theories and legal foundations establishes a robust conceptual and regulatory framework for comprehending the dynamics of strategic leadership and instructional supervision in Cebu schools. The evidence indicates that adaptive, collaborative, and equity-focused leadership, supported by systematic supervision and professional development, is essential for improving teacher effectiveness, student outcomes, and the overall quality of education in alignment with SDG 4.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a systematic and rigorous research methodology to investigate strategic leadership and instructional supervision practices in Cebu schools and their contribution to inclusive and equitable quality education, in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). The methodology is designed to ensure the generation of

reliable, valid, and contextually relevant data that provide a comprehensive understanding of how leadership approaches influence school effectiveness, teacher performance, and student outcomes.

A descriptive-evaluative mixed-methods design was adopted to capture both the prevalence and effectiveness of leadership practices as well as the experiences and perspectives of school personnel. The quantitative component utilized structured surveys to measure the frequency, perceived effectiveness, and impact of leadership and supervision strategies across diverse educational settings. Concurrently, the qualitative component employed semi-structured interviews with administrators and teachers to explore contextual factors, challenges, and strategies associated with leadership practices. The integration of these approaches allowed for triangulation of findings, enhancing the depth, validity, and interpretive power of the study.

## Environment

The research was conducted across basic education, technical-vocational, and higher education institutions in Toledo City, Pinamungajan, and Aloguinsan. These sites were purposively selected to represent urban, semi-urban, and rural contexts, ensuring that the study captured a range of institutional environments, resource settings, and community characteristics that influence leadership and supervision practices.

## Respondents

Participants were administrators, department heads, and teachers who hold active leadership or supervisory roles within their institutions. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that respondents could provide rich, relevant, and informed insights into the study objectives. This approach prioritized the inclusion of individuals with direct experience in strategic decision-making, instructional oversight, and professional development initiatives.

## Instrument

Two main instruments were utilized. A structured questionnaire measured the frequency, effectiveness, and perceived impact of leadership and supervisory practices and was validated by subject matter experts, achieving a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87. Semi-structured interviews were designed to explore participants' experiences, leadership challenges, adaptive strategies, and contextual considerations. The interview protocol was piloted to ensure clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness.

## Data Analysis

It involved both quantitative and qualitative procedures. Survey responses were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistical analysis to identify patterns, correlations, and variations in leadership practices and perceived effectiveness. Qualitative data from

interviews were analyzed thematically, employing intercoder checks and member validation to enhance reliability and trustworthiness. Emergent themes were used to complement quantitative findings and provide nuanced insights into leadership dynamics across different school contexts.

## Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained from all respondents. Measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, and participants were assured that findings would be reported in aggregate form. Ethical approval was secured from the institutional research ethics committee prior to data collection, ensuring compliance with established research standards and protecting the rights and welfare of participants.

Overall, this methodology provides a robust and systematic framework for examining strategic leadership and instructional supervision in Cebu schools, enabling the study to generate actionable insights for enhancing educational quality, equity, and alignment with SDG 4.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The study examined strategic leadership and instructional supervision practices in Cebu schools and their contribution to inclusive and equitable quality education, aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). A total of 200 respondents, comprising administrators, department heads, and

teachers across basic education, technical-vocational, and higher education institutions in Toledo City, Pinamungajan, and Aloguinsan, participated in the study. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses provided a comprehensive understanding of leadership approaches, perceived effectiveness, and their impact on school performance.

Quantitative findings revealed that transformational leadership was the most prevalent, practiced by 36.5% of respondents, and rated as "very highly effective" ( $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ). This leadership style was observed to foster a shared vision, collaboration, and innovation, resulting in enhanced teacher engagement, motivation, and student achievement. Instructional leadership followed at 27.5% prevalence and was rated "highly effective" ( $M = 4.30$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ), emphasizing structured supervision, mentoring, and curriculum management to improve teaching quality. Distributed leadership accounted for 22.0% of practices, also rated "highly effective" ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ), highlighting the benefits of shared decision-making and professional learning communities. In contrast, traditional/hierarchical leadership (14.0%) and laissez-faire approaches were minimally effective ( $M = 3.20$  and  $2.50$ , respectively), demonstrating that rigid or non-interventionist practices are less conducive to achieving inclusive and high-quality education. Overall, leadership and supervision demonstrated a

high-to-very-high impact ( $WM = 4.20$ ) on teacher performance, curriculum implementation, student achievement, and school climate.

Qualitative analysis revealed four principal themes that corroborate and enhance these quantitative findings. First, transformational leadership was central to school improvement, fostering participatory decision-making, teacher collaboration, and innovative practices. Second, instructional supervision, although constrained by time and resource limitations, was vital for guiding classroom practices, mentoring teachers, and ensuring curriculum fidelity. Third, continuous professional development emerged as critical for both leadership effectiveness and teacher performance, enabling adaptation to evolving educational demands. Fourth, context-sensitive and equity-driven strategies were emphasized, reflecting the need to tailor leadership approaches to urban, semi-urban, and rural school environments to ensure inclusivity and equitable learning opportunities.

Differences across municipalities were noteworthy. In industrialized Toledo City, instructional leadership was particularly effective, supporting structured teaching and systematic curriculum delivery. In Pinamungajan, a transitional semi-urban municipality, transformational leadership excelled in fostering innovation, motivation, and adaptability. Rural Aloguinsan benefited most from participatory and distributed leadership, enabling re-

source-sharing, collaboration, and community involvement. These contextual variations reinforce the need for adaptive leadership strategies responsive to local needs, resources, and institutional dynamics.

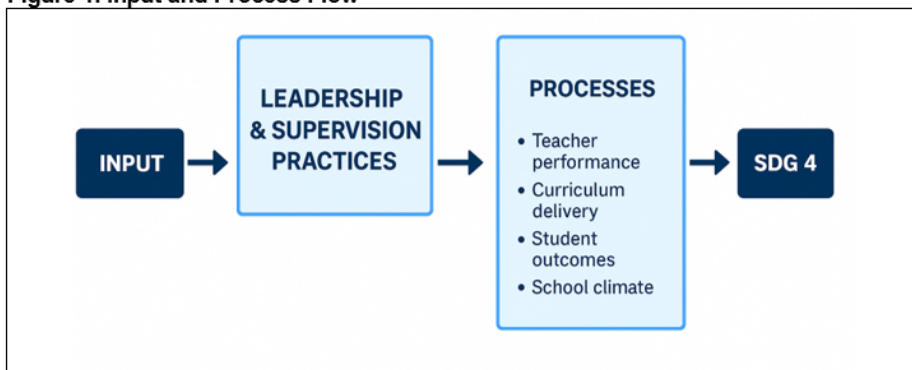
The findings indicate a robust correlation between strategic leadership, instructional supervision, and school effectiveness. This is in line with studies from around the world and the Philippines that show transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership as factors that lead to better teacher performance and student outcomes (Mafe, 2023; Nadeem, 2024; Alier, 2025). By integrating participatory decision-making, mentoring, professional development, and equity-focused policies, schools can foster inclusive and high-quality educational environments that directly contribute to achieving SDG 4 objectives.

In summary, the study demonstrates that effective leadership in Cebu schools combines vision-driven, collaborative, and context-sensitive strategies with structured supervision and professional development. These practices collectively enhance institutional performance, teacher engagement, and student learning outcomes, providing evidence-based guidance for educational reforms and leadership development initiatives tailored to local contexts.

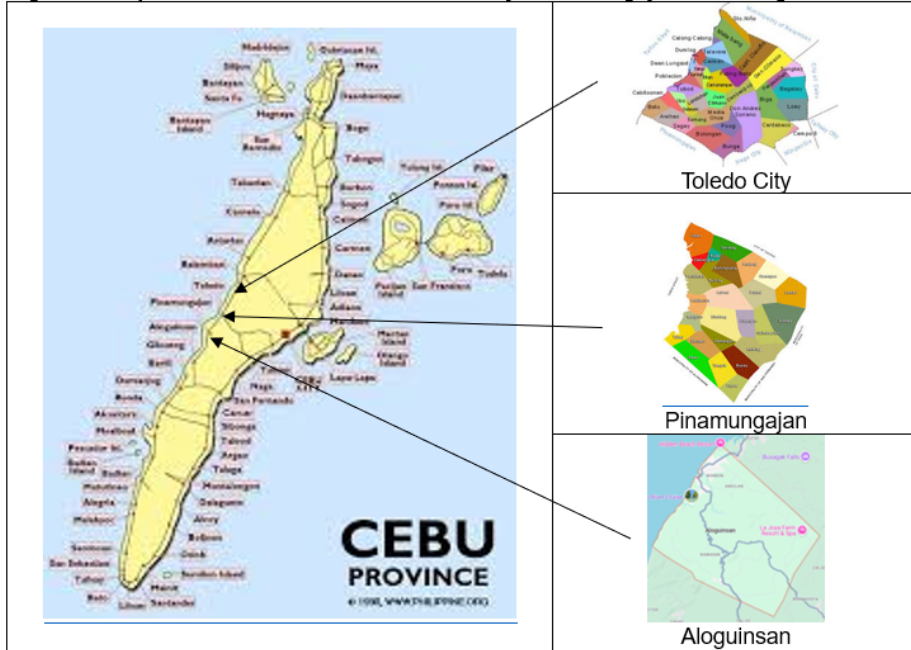
## FIGURES AND TABLES

The study's figures and tables illustrate respondent distribution, leadership approaches, perceived effectiveness, and key qualitative themes, providing a comprehensive view of school leadership practices in Cebu's 3rd District and their alignment with SDG 4 objectives.

**Figure 1. Input and Process Flow**



**Figure 2. Map of Cebu Province with Toledo City, Pinamungajan, and Aloguinsan**



**Figure 3. Examining various approaches to school administration and supervision emphasizes the critical role of effective leadership in improving teaching practices, curriculum delivery, student achievement, and the overall school environment.**



**Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Leadership Approach Across Institutions**

Leadership Approach	Basic Education (f)	Tech-Voc (f)	HEIs (f)	Total (f)	Percentage (%)
Transformational Leadership	35	20	18	73	36.5%
Instructional Leadership	28	15	12	55	27.5%
Distributed Leadership	20	10	14	44	22.0%
Traditional/Hierarchical	10	7	11	28	14.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Table 2. Perceived Effectiveness of Leadership and Supervisory Approaches**  
N=200

Leadership/Supervisor Approach	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation
Transformational Leadership	60	80%	4.45	0.52	Very Highly Effective
Instructional Supervision	55	73%	4.30	0.60	Highly Effective
Distributed Leadership	50	67%	4.10	0.68	Highly Effective
Bureaucratic/Traditional Administration	30	40%	3.20	0.75	Moderately Effective
Laissez-Faire Leadership	15	20%	2.50	0.85	Less Effective

**Table 3. Distribution of Leadership Approaches Practiced Across Institutions**  
N=200

Leadership Approach	Basic Ed (f)	Tech-Voc (f)	HEIs (f)	Total (f)	Percentage (%)
Transformational Leadership	35	20	18	73	36.5
Instructional Leadership	28	15	12	55	27.5
Distributed Leadership	20	10	14	44	22.0
Traditional/Hierarchical	10	7	11	28	14.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 4. Impact of Leadership Strategies on Educational Quality**

Indicator	N	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Teacher Performance	200	4.32	58	Very High Impact
Curriculum Delivery	200	4.15	61	High Impact
Student Achievement	200	4.08	65	High Impact
School Climate	200	4.25	59	Very High Impact
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>		<b>4.20</b>		<b>High to Very High Impact</b>

**Legend:** (Likert Scale: 1.00–1.49 = Very Low, 1.50–2.49 = Low, 2.50–3.49 = Moderate, 3.50–4.49 = High, 4.50–5.00 = Very High)

**Table 5. Leadership Practices to Advance SDG 4**  
N=200

Practices	N	Weighted Mean	SD	Rank	Verbal Interpretation
Strengthening participatory decision-making	200	4.45	0.52	1	Very Highly Recommended
Enhancing teacher mentoring & supervision	200	4.40	0.55	2	Very Highly Recommended
Promoting professional learning communities	200	4.35	0.57	3	Very Highly Recommended
Integrating technology in supervision	200	4.25	0.60	4	Highly Recommended
Establishing equity-driven school policies	200	4.20	0.62	5	Highly Recommended
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>		<b>4.33</b>			<b>Very Highly Recommended</b>

(Likert Scale: 1.00–1.49 = Not Recommended, 1.50–2.49 = Slightly Recommended, 2.50–3.49 = Moderately Recommended, 3.50–4.49 = Highly Recommended, 4.50–5.00 = Very Highly Recommended)

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study establishes that strategic leadership and instructional supervision are fundamental in enhancing educational quality across basic, technical-vocational, and higher education institutions in Cebu Province's 3rd District. The results show that transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership styles are the best ways to boost teacher performance, curriculum implementation, student achievement, and the overall school climate. In contrast, traditional hierarchical and laissez-faire leadership styles contribute minimally to institutional development, as they often lack the necessary engagement and support for teachers and students that are critical to creating a positive educational environment. Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasizes inclusive, equitable, and quality education, requires leadership that is adaptive, collaborative, and equity-driven. The study emphasizes significant strengths, including participatory practices, mentoring, and ongoing professional development, while also recognizing challenges, such as constrained resources and inadequate supervisory capacity. These insights provide a strong basis for context-responsive educational reforms in the Philippine setting.

These findings recommend that schools institutionalize transformational leadership by fostering shared vision, collaboration, and innovation among stakeholders.

Instructional supervision should be strengthened through adequate allocation of time and resources for mentoring, classroom observation, and instructional support. Schools are also encouraged to adopt distributed leadership by empowering teachers and department heads to take active roles in decision-making and governance. Continuous professional development programs must be prioritized to enhance leadership competencies and teaching effectiveness, while the integration of technology in supervision should be pursued to improve efficiency, communication, and inclusivity, particularly by providing training on digital tools that facilitate remote collaboration and feedback among educators.

To verify that all students, especially those in resource-poor areas, can obtain a satisfactory education, it is important to adopt equity-driven policies at the policy and system level. Furthermore, leadership practices should be aligned with SDG 4 through the establishment of monitoring and evaluation systems that track progress toward inclusive and sustainable educational outcomes. Collectively, these recommendations provide a strategic framework for strengthening leadership, addressing persistent challenges, and advancing quality education in Cebu and similar educational contexts.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Administration.** The process of managing school operations, resources, and policies to ensure effective teaching and learning.

**Assessment.** A systematic process of collecting and analyzing data to measure performance, outcomes, or effectiveness of programs and practices.

**Basic Education.** Refers to formal education covering elementary and secondary levels as mandated by the Philippine education system.

**Curriculum Delivery.** The implementation of planned teaching and learning activities to achieve desired learning outcomes.

**Distributed leadership.** Is a way of leading that involves everyone in the school, including leaders, teachers, and staff, making decisions and sharing responsibilities.

**Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)** . Colleges, universities, and other tertiary-level institutions offering academic and professional programs.

**Instructional Leadership.** A leadership approach focusing on improving teaching practices, mentoring teachers, and ensuring curriculum quality.

**Laissez-Faire Leadership.** A leadership style characterized by mini-

mal interference, where teachers or staff operate with little supervision.

**Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)** . A United Nations goal that seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

**Supervision.** The process of monitoring, guiding, and supporting teachers and staff to improve instructional practices and professional growth.

**Teacher Performance.** The effectiveness of teachers in delivering instruction, engaging students, and achieving learning outcomes.

**Technical-Vocational Education.** Training programs focused on equipping learners with practical skills and competencies for employment and entrepreneurship.

**Transformational Leadership.** A leadership style that inspires and motivates stakeholders through vision sharing, collaboration, and innovation, ultimately leading to improved teacher performance and enhanced student learning outcomes.

**Traditional/Hierarchical Leadership.** A top-down leadership style where authority and decision-making are concentrated in the school head or administrator.

**School Climate.** The overall at-

mosphere and culture of a school, shaped by relationships, leadership practices, teaching quality, and student engagement.

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### **Author's Profile**

Redjie D. Arcadio is a professor IV at Cebu Technological University – Pinamungajan Campus, Cebu, Philippines. He is an accomplished educator, researcher, and academic leader with extensive experience in technology education, educational management, and curriculum development.

Dr. Arcadio has actively contributed to research in the fields of educational leadership, instructional innovation, and technology integration, with a particular focus on improving teaching-learning processes and institutional effectiveness. His scholarly works often explore themes related to strategic leadership, supervision practices, and the alignment of educational systems with global standards such as Sustainable Development Goal 4. Besides his academic duties, Dr. Arcadio actively participates in various institutional and community-based programs that foster professional growth, educational transformation, and the enhancement of educator capacity. His dedication to excellence in teaching, research, and leadership continues to contribute to the advancement of quality and inclusive education in the Philippines.