



Leadership Capacity and Equity in Resource Management: Addressing Global Gaps in Basic Education

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Abstract

Background and Aim: Leadership capacity and equitable resource management are widely recognized as essential drivers of education quality and inclusivity. Global frameworks from UNESCO, OECD, and the World Bank emphasize that effective leadership shapes teacher motivation, resource allocation, and equity in learning opportunities, directly supporting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4, 10, and 16. Despite these insights, the Philippine basic education system continues to face challenges of centralization, fragmented governance, and inequitable distribution of resources. This study aims to examine leadership and equity themes across global and national reports, compare international frameworks with Philippine priorities, evaluate the utility of AI-assisted qualitative content analysis, and propose actionable recommendations aligned with the SDGs.

Materials and Methods: A qualitative content analysis was conducted using AI-assisted tools to systematically review extensive online educational documents, including global reports and Philippine policy papers. Thematic coding, triangulation, and comparative analysis were applied to identify recurring patterns, gaps, and opportunities for reform.

Results: Five major findings emerged: (1) persistent misalignment among CHED, PRC, and DepEd in teacher education and standards; (2) entrenched centralization limiting participatory governance; (3) inequitable resource allocation across regions, genders, and income groups; (4) limited leadership capacity at the school level due to inadequate training and fiscal support; and (5) fragmented datasets that weaken evidence-based policymaking. AI-assisted analysis enhanced efficiency, consistency, and rigor by automating coding, reducing bias, and detecting latent patterns across documents.

Conclusion: Strengthening leadership capacity and promoting equitable resource management requires systemic alignment of teacher standards, phased decentralization, equity-sensitive budgeting, institutionalized leadership training, and unified inter-agency data systems. These strategies advance inclusive, transparent, and accountable education governance aligned with SDGs 4, 10, and 16, offering practical pathways for reform in Philippine basic education.

Keywords: Educational leadership; Resource equity; Decentralization; Teacher education; AI-assisted qualitative analysis; Sustainable Development Goals; Philippine basic education

Introduction

Educational leadership is increasingly acknowledged as a decisive factor in shaping student learning outcomes and overall school effectiveness. International evidence consistently underscores its significance. UNESCO's *Global Education Monitoring Report 2024/5* identifies leadership as the second most influential determinant of learning outcomes after teaching quality, situating it at the core of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on quality education (UNESCO, 2024). Likewise, OECD's *Education at a Glance* and TALIS surveys emphasize that leadership capacity directly affects teacher motivation, resource allocation, and equity in learning opportunities (OECD, 2021; OECD, 2025). The World Bank further warns that weak leadership and inequitable resource management intensify "learning poverty," with more than half of children in low- and middle-income countries unable to read proficiently by age 10 (World Bank, 2022). Collectively, these global perspectives establish leadership as a cornerstone of education reform and equity.





Despite this recognition, many education systems struggle to translate global leadership frameworks into actionable, equity-focused strategies. UNESCO reports highlight that while leadership models exist, their localization often lacks coherence and inclusivity (UNESCO, 2025). OECD findings reveal that principals frequently enter leadership roles without adequate preparation for participatory governance or data-driven decision-making (OECD, 2023). In the Philippines, policy frameworks such as the *Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030* and *EDCOM II Year 2 Report* acknowledge leadership challenges but provide limited empirical evidence on how leadership capacity concretely addresses inequities in resource distribution (DepEd, 2022; EDCOM II, 2025). This disconnect between global frameworks and local realities underscores a critical knowledge gap: the absence of systematic research that bridges policy aspirations with practical implementation.

To address this gap, the present study—*Leadership Capacity and Equity in Resource Management: Addressing Global Gaps in Basic Education*—examines how leadership capacity influences equitable resource management in basic education. Using qualitative content analysis, it systematically reviews global reports (UNESCO, OECD, World Bank) alongside Philippine policy documents (BEDP 2030, EDCOM II) (Department of Education (Philippines), 2022). The study identifies recurring leadership challenges in resource allocation, highlights globally effective strategies, and formulates localized recommendations for strengthening leadership capacity in Philippine schools. In doing so, it contributes directly to SDG 4 by promoting inclusive and equitable quality education, SDG 10 by reducing inequalities in resource allocation, and SDG 16 by advancing participatory, transparent, and accountable governance. Ultimately, this research bridges global benchmarks with local realities, offering actionable insights for policymakers, school leaders, and researchers committed to building equitable and resilient education systems.

Research Objectives

To identify leadership and equity themes from global and national education reports using qualitative content analysis.

To compare global frameworks with Philippine policy priorities by systematically coding and analyzing documents to highlight convergences and gaps.

To examine the implications of leadership capacity and resource equity for governance and teacher quality.

To recommend actionable, evidence-based strategies that strengthen leadership capacity and equitable resource management in Philippine basic education, aligned with SDGs 4, 10, and 16.

Literature Review

Global Perspectives on Educational Leadership and Equity

Educational leadership is widely recognized as a critical determinant of student learning outcomes and school effectiveness. UNESCO's *Global Education Monitoring Report 2024/5* emphasizes that leadership is the second most important factor influencing learning outcomes after teaching quality, underscoring its centrality in achieving SDG 4 on quality education (UNESCO, 2024). OECD's *Education at a Glance* and TALIS surveys similarly highlight that leadership capacity shapes teacher motivation, resource allocation, and equity in learning opportunities (OECD, 2021; OECD, 2025).

The World Bank warns that weak leadership and inequitable resource management exacerbate “learning poverty,” with over half of children in low- and middle-income countries unable to read proficiently by age 10 (World Bank, 2022). Collectively, these reports establish leadership and equity as foundational to inclusive and effective education systems.

Gaps in Localizing Global Frameworks

Despite global recognition, many education systems struggle to translate leadership frameworks into actionable strategies. UNESCO notes that while leadership models exist, their localization often lacks coherence and equity focus (UNESCO, 2025). OECD findings reveal that





principals frequently lack preparation for participatory governance and data-driven decision-making (OECD, 2023).

In the Philippine context, policy frameworks such as the *Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030* and *EDCOM II Year 2 Report* acknowledge leadership challenges but provide limited empirical evidence on how leadership capacity concretely addresses inequities in resource distribution (DepEd, 2022; EDCOM II, 2025). Studies such as Generalao et al. (2022) and PBE (2023) further highlight mismatches between teacher preparation, licensure examinations, and classroom realities, pointing to systemic gaps in leadership and accountability.

Decentralization, Governance, and Resource Equity in the Philippines

Research on Philippine education governance underscores entrenched centralization within DepEd, which limits responsiveness and innovation at regional and school levels (Aquino et al., 2024). Although RA 9155 institutionalized shared governance, fiscal control remains concentrated in the Central Office, constraining equity in resource distribution.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (2019) documents disparities in enrollment, dropout rates, and literacy across regions, with ARMM and other underserved areas lagging behind national averages. These findings highlight the need for equity-sensitive budgeting formulas, decentralized governance structures, and strengthened leadership training to ensure inclusive resource management.

Methodological Innovations in Policy Analysis

Recent scholarship points to the utility of AI-assisted qualitative content analysis in synthesizing large volumes of policy documents. Kuckartz and Rädiker (2024) and Kuang et al. (2024) demonstrate that AI tools enhance efficiency by automating coding, improve consistency by reducing human bias, and strengthen rigor by detecting latent patterns across datasets. Applied to education policy, this approach enables timely and evidence-based insights, bridging global benchmarks with local realities. Co (2025) further shows that AI integration in Philippine education research uncovers gaps in equity and infrastructure, reinforcing the need for innovative methodologies.

Synthesis and Knowledge Gaps

The reviewed literature establishes that leadership capacity is central to education quality and equity, yet gaps persist in translating global frameworks into localized strategies. Theoretical perspectives such as Distributed Leadership Theory (Spillane, 2006), Equity Theory (Adams, 1965), and the Resource-Based View of Organizations (Barney, 1991) provide lenses for analyzing these challenges.

However, empirical evidence in the Philippine context remains limited, particularly regarding how leadership capacity concretely addresses inequities in resource distribution. This gap demonstrates the necessity of the present study, which systematically analyzes global and national policy documents to generate actionable recommendations. By synthesizing knowledge across variables—leadership preparation, governance structures, resource equity, and methodological innovations—the study contributes to bridging global benchmarks with local realities, advancing inclusive and equitable education systems.



Conceptual Framework

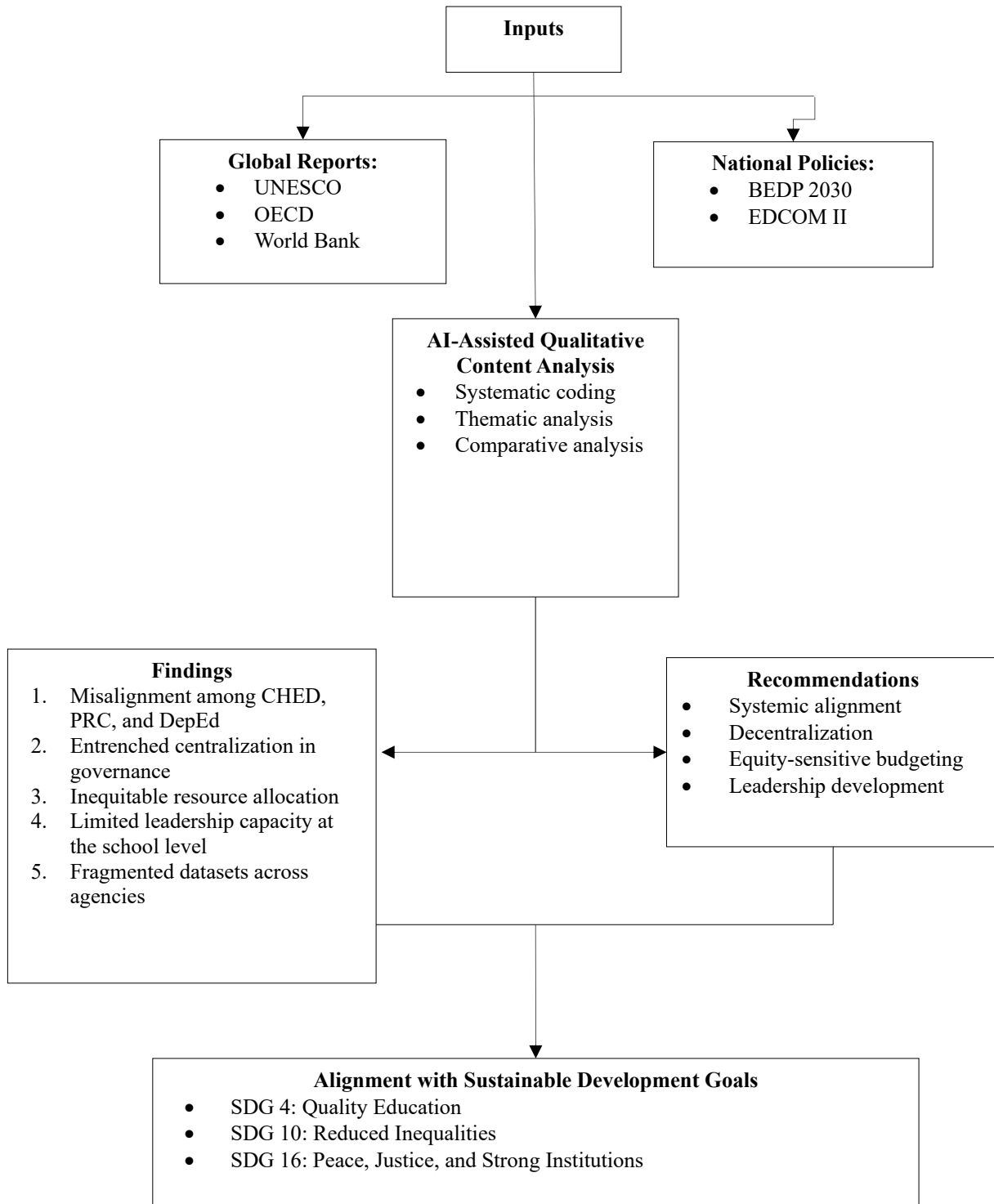


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Research Methodology

This part introduces the fundamental ideas of study design, population and scope determination, data collection methods, research instrument preference, and data analysis techniques. The provided information is outlined as follows:

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research design, specifically document analysis through AI-assisted qualitative content analysis. The design was chosen to systematically examine both global and national education policy documents, allowing for the identification of recurring themes on leadership capacity and equity in resource management. Comparative analysis was also applied to highlight areas of convergence and divergence between international frameworks and Philippine priorities.

Population and Scope

The population of the study consisted of authoritative documents and reports relevant to educational leadership and resource equity. Global sources included UNESCO's *Global Education Monitoring Report*, OECD's *Education at a Glance* and TALIS surveys, and the World Bank's Learning Poverty studies. National sources included the *Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030*, EDCOM II Green Papers, DepEd Orders, PRC licensure frameworks, and Philippine Statistics Authority equity assessments. The scope was limited to basic education in the Philippines, with emphasis on leadership capacity, governance structures, and resource allocation aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4, 10, and 16).

Data Collection

Data were collected from reputable online repositories and institutional websites to ensure authenticity and reliability. Official reports and policy papers were downloaded in PDF or official formats, and selection criteria focused on relevance to leadership, governance, and equity in resource allocation. The collection process emphasized documents that provided both global benchmarks and local realities, ensuring a comprehensive dataset for analysis.

Research Instrument

The primary instrument used was an AI-assisted qualitative content analysis framework, supported by coding matrices and thematic categorization. A coding guide was developed to classify data into themes such as leadership capacity, governance structures, resource equity, and accountability. AI tools were employed to enhance efficiency, consistency, and rigor in coding large volumes of text, reducing human bias and enabling systematic review.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved several steps: systematic coding to identify recurring themes and categories across documents; thematic analysis to group codes into broader concepts such as decentralization, teacher standards, and equity-sensitive budgeting; comparative analysis to highlight similarities and gaps between global frameworks and Philippine priorities; and triangulation to cross-validate findings across multiple sources. Finally, synthesis was conducted to derive actionable recommendations aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4, 10, and 16).

Results

1. What themes on leadership capacity and equity in resource management emerge from global reports (e.g., UNESCO, OECD, World Bank) and national policy documents (e.g., BEDP 2030, EDCOM II) available online?

The analysis of global reports (UNESCO GEM, OECD, World Bank) and national policy documents (BEDP 2030, EDCOM II) (Department of Education (Philippines), 2022) revealed six interrelated themes that shape leadership capacity and equity in resource management. These themes highlight the complex relationship between leadership legitimacy, governance structures, and equitable resource allocation.

First, values-driven and merit-based leadership emerged as foundational. International evidence emphasizes impartiality, transparency, and competitive recruitment, while Philippine policies





acknowledge the need to codify values-based standards. Leadership legitimacy is strengthened when fairness guides resource allocation, fostering trust among stakeholders.

Second, capacity building and professional development remain critical gaps. Many leaders lack structured training in finance, data use, and participatory governance, limiting their ability to advance equity goals.

Third, autonomy with accountability is essential. Global frameworks stress that delegated authority must be paired with oversight, while Philippine reforms call for decentralization and participatory governance. Autonomy enables responsiveness to local needs, but accountability safeguards fairness in resource distribution.

Fourth, collaborative and distributed leadership promotes inclusivity and resilience. Although global evidence highlights its importance, Philippine training programs underemphasize this dimension.

Fifth, equity in resource management requires predictable financing and participatory ownership. Global reports warn of declining education budgets, while Philippine policies highlight inequities in teacher deployment and infrastructure.

Finally, innovation and responsiveness are vital for leadership relevance. Leaders must adapt to crises, integrate foresight, and embed sustainability in resource decisions.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that leadership capacity and equity are mutually reinforcing. Strong, values-based leadership enables fair resource distribution, while equitable resource management strengthens leadership legitimacy. For the Philippines, aligning BEDP 2030 and EDCOM II with these themes requires embedding equity into funding formulas, professionalizing leadership pipelines, institutionalizing participatory governance, and ensuring resilience against political turnover.

2. How do global frameworks on educational leadership and resource equity compare with Philippine policy priorities in basic education?

The comparison of global frameworks (UNESCO GEM, OECD, UNICEF, World Bank) with Philippine policy priorities (BEDP 2030, EDCOM II, DepEd standards) reveals six converging themes. Globally, leadership is framed around autonomy, values, and equity, with school heads empowered to drive teaching quality and resource fairness. In the Philippines, while laws such as R.A. 9155 and initiatives like SBM intend shared governance, practice remains highly centralized, limiting responsiveness and innovation. Instructional leadership is emphasized in both contexts, but Philippine practice often leans toward tactical, compliance-driven supervision rather than strategic improvement, highlighting the need for stronger competency development through NEAP. Resource equity is a global priority defined as fairness and inclusion, yet Philippine financing formulas (MOOE, SEF) remain constrained and uneven, requiring revision with equity weights and participatory budgeting. Gender diversity is recognized internationally as a driver of better outcomes, but Philippine leadership pipelines remain limited in addressing representation, suggesting reforms in inclusive recruitment and mentorship. Both global and local studies also highlight weak policy communication and limited data access, which reduce reforms to compliance; toolkits, dashboards, and feedback loops are needed to strengthen innovation.

Finally, global evidence shows that stakeholder ownership drives reform success, while Philippine decentralization suffers from weak LGU involvement, underscoring the importance of building coalitions through co-planning and participatory governance. Overall, the findings show that leadership capacity and equity are mutually reinforcing: values-based, autonomous, and inclusive leadership enables fair resource distribution, while equitable resource management strengthens legitimacy and effectiveness.

3. In what ways can AI-assisted qualitative content analysis enhance the efficiency, consistency, and rigor of analyzing large volumes of online educational documents within time constraints?

AI-assisted qualitative content analysis enhances the efficiency, consistency, and rigor of analyzing large volumes of online educational documents in several interconnected ways. First, efficiency is improved because AI tools automate repetitive tasks such as transcription, coding,





clustering, and sentiment analysis, allowing researchers to process thousands of documents in minutes rather than weeks. This finding means that time constraints—often a barrier in policy and education research—can be mitigated by delegating mechanical tasks to AI while researchers focus on interpretation. Literature supports this through Kuckartz & Rädiker (2024), who emphasize AI’s ability to quickly summarize large datasets and generate category suggestions, and **Kuckartz and Rädiker (2024)** note that the use of natural language processing and machine-learning tools can substantially reduce the manual workload involved in qualitative analysis. Consistency is further strengthened as AI-assisted coding helps limit human bias and error in coding and categorization, enabling themes to be applied more uniformly across large datasets. This interpretation suggests that AI can act as a “super competent colleague” that standardizes coding frameworks, as highlighted by Kuckartz & Rädiker (2024), while maintaining transparency through human oversight. Third, rigor is enhanced by enabling deeper thematic exploration and triangulation: AI can detect latent patterns, semantic relationships, and sentiment shifts that may be overlooked in manual reviews. Studies such as Kuang et al. (2024) demonstrate that AI text mining models achieve higher accuracy and recall in policy text analysis, while Co (2025) shows that AI integration in Philippine education research uncovers gaps in equity and infrastructure. The implication is that AI-assisted analysis not only accelerates research but also raises its methodological quality, allowing education leaders and policymakers to base decisions on more comprehensive evidence. However, the literature also cautions that human validation remains essential to ensure contextual sensitivity and ethical integrity. Overall, AI-assisted qualitative content analysis transforms the research process into a hybrid model where machines provide speed and consistency, and humans safeguard meaning and rigor—an approach particularly valuable for education systems facing urgent policy demands and limited time.

4. What actionable recommendations can be derived from the analysis to strengthen leadership capacity and promote equitable resource management in Philippine basic education, aligned with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4, 10, and 16)?

The analysis of Philippine basic education governance reveals a set of interrelated findings that highlight both the strengths and persistent challenges in leadership capacity and equitable resource management. Emerging themes from global reports such as UNESCO’s *Global Education Monitoring Report*, OECD’s *Education at a Glance* and TALIS surveys, and the World Bank’s Learning Poverty studies, alongside national policy documents like BEDP 2030 and EDCOM II, consistently emphasize participatory governance, coherent teacher standards, equitable resource allocation, and accountability systems as critical drivers of quality education and reduced disparities. These themes converge with Philippine priorities in intent—improving teacher quality, decentralizing governance, and promoting equity—but diverge in implementation, as Philippine policies remain highly centralized and fragmented compared to the integrated, equity-driven approaches of high-performing systems.

The use of AI-assisted qualitative content analysis strengthened the rigor of this study by automating coding and clustering across large datasets, reducing human bias, and detecting latent patterns that might otherwise remain obscured. This methodological innovation enabled timely and evidence-based insights, particularly valuable given the complexity of education governance and the breadth of documents analyzed. The findings underscore systemic misalignments, entrenched centralization, inequitable resource distribution, limited leadership capacity, and fragmented datasets—all of which directly affect the ability of the education system to deliver inclusive and equitable outcomes.

From these findings, several actionable recommendations can be derived to strengthen leadership capacity and promote equitable resource management in Philippine basic education. First, the persistent misalignment among CHED’s teacher education curriculum, PRC’s licensure exam, and DepEd’s Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers weakens teacher preparation, pointing to the need for a unified competency framework across agencies to ensure coherence and accountability. Second, DepEd’s entrenched centralization stifles innovation and responsiveness, suggesting that phased decentralization and empowerment of Local School Boards and LGUs are essential to build participatory leadership and equitable service delivery. Third, inequalities in dropout rates and enrollment, particularly among boys and in poorer regions such as ARMM, reveal inequitable resource





distribution, implying that equity-sensitive budgeting formulas and targeted interventions for vulnerable groups must be prioritized. Fourth, limited capacity in school-based management underscores the need for institutionalized leadership training, mentoring, and equitable funding mechanisms to empower principals and school leaders. Finally, fragmented datasets across CHED, PRC, and DepEd hinder evidence-based policymaking, pointing to the importance of a unified inter-agency education data system with disaggregated indicators to strengthen transparency and accountability.

Collectively, these recommendations advance teacher quality and inclusive education (SDG 4), reduce disparities across gender and regions (SDG 10), and foster coherent, participatory governance (SDG 16). More importantly, they demonstrate that leadership capacity and equity are mutually reinforcing: strong, values-based leadership enables fair resource distribution, while equitable resource management strengthens leadership legitimacy and effectiveness. By aligning global benchmarks with local realities, the Philippine education system can move toward a more inclusive, transparent, and accountable governance model that directly supports the achievement of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that leadership capacity and equity in resource management are inseparable dimensions of educational effectiveness. By synthesizing global frameworks and Philippine policy priorities, it identifies systemic misalignments, entrenched centralization, inequitable resource distribution, limited leadership preparation, and fragmented datasets as critical barriers to inclusive education. The originality of this research lies in its integration of AI-assisted qualitative content analysis with theoretical perspectives, enabling a rigorous synthesis of large volumes of policy documents.

The findings contribute new knowledge by showing how leadership legitimacy is strengthened through equity-sensitive governance and by offering actionable pathways for reform in the Philippine context. While constrained by reliance on secondary sources, the study highlights the methodological value of AI-assisted analysis and sets the stage for future research incorporating primary data from school leaders and communities.

In sum, this research bridges global benchmarks with local realities, advancing practical strategies for strengthening leadership capacity and promoting equitable resource management. Its significance lies in demonstrating that leadership and equity are mutually reinforcing, and in providing evidence-based recommendations that support the achievement of SDGs 4, 10, and 16.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight six interrelated themes—values-driven leadership, capacity building, autonomy with accountability, collaborative governance, equity in resource management, and innovation—that collectively shape leadership capacity and equitable resource allocation in basic education. These results align with Distributed Leadership Theory (Spillane, 2006), which emphasizes shared responsibility and participatory governance, and with Equity Theory (Adams, 1965), which underscores fairness as a foundation for legitimacy. The evidence supports global perspectives from UNESCO (2024) and OECD (2025), which stress that leadership directly influences teacher motivation and equity in learning opportunities.

At the same time, the findings reveal contradictions. While global frameworks advocate decentralization and participatory governance, Philippine practice remains highly centralized, limiting responsiveness and innovation (Aquino et al., 2024). This tension demonstrates the gap between policy aspirations and implementation, echoing Generalao et al. (2022) and PBE (2023), who note persistent mismatches between teacher preparation, licensure, and classroom realities.

The significance of these findings lies in their demonstration that leadership and equity are mutually reinforcing: strong, values-based leadership enables fair resource distribution, while equitable resource management strengthens leadership legitimacy. However, limitations must be acknowledged.





The study relied on secondary data, which constrains contextual depth, and AI-assisted analysis, while efficient, requires human validation to ensure cultural sensitivity.

Practical recommendations include: (1) aligning CHED, PRC, and DepEd standards through a unified teacher competency framework; (2) pursuing phased decentralization to empower local governance; (3) adopting equity-sensitive budgeting formulas to prioritize vulnerable groups; (4) institutionalizing leadership training and mentoring; and (5) establishing a unified inter-agency education data system. These strategies directly advance SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 16 (Strong Institutions).

Recommendation

Based on the findings and the identified stakeholders, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. For Policymakers and Government Agencies (DepEd, EDCOM II): Institutionalize stronger inter-agency coordination mechanisms among CHED, PRC, and DepEd to align teacher education curricula, licensure examinations, and professional standards. Pursue phased decentralization of selected DepEd functions to empower regional and local governance structures and adopt equity-sensitive budgeting formulas to ensure resources reach marginalized regions and groups. These reforms should be explicitly linked to national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4, 10, and 16).

2. For School Leaders and Administrators: Strengthen participatory governance by institutionalizing school-based management with adequate fiscal support, transparent resource allocation, and accountability mechanisms. Provide continuous leadership training through NEAP and localized mentoring programs to build capacity in financial management, inclusive decision-making, and community engagement.

3. For Teachers and Educators: Ensure equitable distribution of teaching resources, professional development opportunities, and support systems to foster effective teaching environments. Encourage collaboration with school leaders in implementing PPST-aligned practices and promote inclusive classroom strategies that reduce disparities in student learning outcomes.

4. For Students and Communities: Advocate for fairness in access to quality education by prioritizing marginalized groups in resource allocation and leadership initiatives. Strengthen community participation in school governance through School Governing Councils and Local School Boards, ensuring that local voices inform decision-making and accountability processes.

5. For Researchers and Scholars: Expand the use of AI-assisted qualitative content analysis to synthesize global and local perspectives on educational leadership and equity. This methodological innovation should be further developed to enhance efficiency, consistency, and rigor in large-scale policy reviews, thereby enriching the literature and providing timely evidence for education reforms.

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