

DIGITAL LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL HEADS' PROFICIENCY: BASIS FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

Saila sumalampong

Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between digital leadership and school heads' proficiency in the Province of Cotabato. A sequential-explanatory mixed-methods design was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were gathered from school heads through structured questionnaires, while qualitative insights were obtained through interviews with selected participants. Findings revealed that school heads demonstrated very high levels of digital leadership across dimensions such as creativity, thinking and inquisition, curiosity, deep knowledge, and global vision. Similarly, their proficiency in records management, financial management, school facilities and equipment, staff management, and disaster preparedness was also rated very high. Correlation analysis showed significant relationships between specific dimensions of digital leadership and areas of proficiency, particularly creativity and deep knowledge with records management, and thinking and inquisition with financial management. Regression results indicated that digital leadership significantly influences certain aspects of proficiency, although the strength of influence varies across domains. Qualitative findings highlighted themes such as strategic digital infrastructure, curriculum integration, and capacity building as key drivers of transformational school development. The study concludes that digital leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing school heads' proficiency and supports the transformation of school communities.

Keyword: DIGITAL LEADERSHIP, SCHOOL HEADS' PROFICIENCY

1. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has brought significant changes in educational leadership, particularly with the integration of digital technologies. Digital leadership emphasizes the ability of school heads to inspire innovation, foster collaboration, and guide their institutions toward achieving educational goals through technology-driven strategies. School leaders are expected not only to manage administrative functions but also to cultivate environments that encourage creativity, critical thinking, and continuous learning.

Digital leaders recognize the importance of teamwork and inclusivity in achieving organizational success. They promote a culture that values diverse perspectives and collaboration, enabling school communities to overcome challenges and adapt to rapid technological changes. Moreover, school heads with strong proficiency in various domains—including financial management, curriculum development, and instructional leadership—are

better equipped to align school goals with educational standards and emerging trends.

Despite the growing importance of digital leadership, there remains a lack of comprehensive studies examining its relationship with school heads' proficiency, particularly in the local context of Cotabato. This study aims to address this gap by investigating how digital leadership influences school heads' proficiency and contributes to transformational school development.

2. METHODS

This study utilized a sequential-explanatory mixed-methods design, where quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data to provide deeper insights. The study was conducted in the Schools Division of Cotabato, covering three congressional districts. Respondents were selected using simple random sampling, while informants for the qualitative phase were chosen through purposive sampling.

Data were gathered using validated questionnaires adapted from existing studies on

digital leadership and school heads' proficiency. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the level of digital leadership and proficiency. Interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences and perspectives regarding digital leadership and its impact on school operations.

Quantitative data were analyzed using weighted mean, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression to determine levels, relationships, and predictive effects. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were strictly observed throughout the study.

3. RESULTS

The findings revealed that school heads exhibited very high levels of digital leadership across all dimensions, including creativity (4.74), thinking and inquisition (4.62), curiosity (4.69), deep knowledge (4.62), and global vision (4.66). These results indicate strong competence in integrating technology, fostering innovation, and adapting to global educational trends.

Similarly, school heads demonstrated very high proficiency in all areas, including records management (4.76), financial management (4.65), school facilities and equipment (4.76), staff management (4.75), and disaster preparedness (4.76). These findings suggest that school heads are highly capable in managing both administrative and operational functions.

Correlation analysis showed significant relationships between digital leadership and proficiency. Creativity and deep knowledge were significantly related to records management, while thinking and inquisition were significantly associated with financial management. Curiosity showed a significant relationship with school facilities and equipment, and global vision was linked to infrastructure development.

Regression analysis revealed that digital leadership significantly influences school heads' proficiency, although the degree of influence varies. Creativity and deep knowledge were strong predictors of records management, while thinking and inquisition significantly influenced financial management. Curiosity was the only significant predictor of facilities and equipment management.

However, digital leadership did not significantly predict staff management, and its influence on disaster preparedness was minimal.

Qualitative findings supported these results and identified key themes, including strategic digital infrastructure and access, curriculum alignment and pedagogical integration, and capacity building with shared leadership. These themes highlight the role of digital leadership in shaping transformational school environments.

4. DISCUSSION

The results emphasize the critical role of digital leadership in enhancing school heads' proficiency. The strong influence of creativity and deep knowledge on records management suggests that innovative thinking and technical expertise are essential for improving administrative processes. Similarly, the significant role of thinking and inquisition in financial management highlights the importance of analytical and reflective leadership in ensuring accountability and effective resource utilization.

Curiosity emerged as a key factor in managing school facilities and equipment, indicating that leaders who actively explore new technologies and solutions are better equipped to maintain and improve school infrastructure. However, the lack of significant influence of digital leadership on staff management suggests that interpersonal skills, communication, and emotional intelligence play a more important role in managing human resources.

The limited influence of digital leadership on disaster preparedness indicates that external factors such as policies, training programs, and institutional support are more critical in this area. This finding highlights the need for a balanced approach that integrates digital leadership with organizational and policy-driven practices.

Qualitative findings further reinforce the importance of infrastructure, curriculum integration, and capacity building in achieving transformational development. Digital leadership not only enhances operational efficiency but also fosters a culture of innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement within schools.

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that digital leadership significantly influences school heads' proficiency, particularly in administrative and operational domains. While certain dimensions such as creativity, deep knowledge, and critical thinking play key roles in specific areas, others have more indirect effects.

The findings suggest that strengthening digital leadership among school heads can enhance school performance, promote innovation, and support transformational development. Educational institutions should invest in professional development programs that focus on digital competencies, critical thinking, and strategic leadership.

Future research may explore additional variables that influence school heads' proficiency and examine the long-term impact of digital leadership on educational outcomes.