



**LEADERSHIP STYLES AMONG SCHOOL  
ADMINISTRATORS EMBRACING SITUATIONAL  
LEADERSHIP MODEL: THE CASE OF T'BOLI WEST DISTRICT,  
SOUTH COTABATO DIVISION, PHILIPPINES**

**Joyee L. Gicain<sup>i</sup>**

Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges,  
General Santos City,  
Philippines

**Abstract:**

This study utilized a multiple case design to describe and gain insights from the leadership styles among school administrators embracing the situational leadership model: the case of T'boli West district, South Cotabato division, Philippines. This study used an in-depth interview to gather the data needed. A total of five school administrators were the respondents of this study. The results showed that most participants gained positive benefits from their experiences, challenging them to strive for greater advancement to become better educators despite the rigors of life. Nevertheless, even if they have faced many difficulties, the study found that principals embracing situational leadership are even more inspired. Understanding their difficulty as principals added to the body of information in education. Their attitude toward their personal and professional well-being would change if they valued the importance of resilience in the leading professionals.

**Keywords:** leadership styles, school administrators, situational leadership model, educational management, Philippines

**1. Introduction**

*"It's not about titles when it comes to leadership. It has nothing to do with seniority. It has nothing to do with rank or management. Transformational leadership is about utilizing your actions to raise others and set them on the path to greatness. Leadership is about having the capacity to know when and how to use your authority to persuade those around you to do and become something moral." (Terina Allen, 2021)*

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<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [joyee.lutan@deped.gov.ph](mailto:joyee.lutan@deped.gov.ph)

The quotation elucidates the value of leadership; it expatiates that managing specific organizations like schools is a gigantic responsibility, and it is not that easy because of numerous factors to consider; hence, the organization needs to be fully attentive to this situation. Some of the said factors are employees' behavior, facilities and equipment, financial resources, and other related challenges in managing a school. With this, the school administrators may struggle to find solutions to the existing problems and exercise their leadership skills, ability, and power to influence people in the organization.

Additionally, the case of the scenario stated above represents a lengthy history of instructional materials used to educate professionals in various professions. Case materials are frequently developed and used in education training programs in business, law, health, education, and social work to help some organizations. School leaders gain the ability to diagnose problems, understand many effects and views on schooling and student development, and engage in deep and instructive conversations with other professionals by reading these kinds of cases. These are real situations that address perplexing dilemmas that the school leaders have faced in their institutions. The issues in this project describe an event that occurred in a school setting but does not include any analysis of the circumstance; thus, the researchers find it interesting to conduct a study like this (Emmel, 2015; Flynn & McDermott, 2016; Sternglass, 2017; Mintrop & Charles, 2017; Parker, 2019; Cederman, 2021).

On the other hand, educational institutions are dynamic and complex organizations. As a result, new challenges for school principals continue to arise, as they see the need to change away from traditional school management and toward a new pedagogical approach to teaching, learning, and improving students' academic accomplishment. To address these problems, developing a single solution for all concerns is no longer sufficient. Instead, it is vital to establish an ethical commitment to solving them in collaboration with stakeholders involved in teaching and learning processes, as well as daily concerns in our schools (Reimer, 2020).

Moreover, the current study showed the emergence of situational leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, called New Normal Leadership (Francisco & Nuqui, 2020). In addition, T'boli West District principals are adopting situational leadership. Leadership, on the other hand, is not new, having been conceived in 1969 by Blanchard, but items to consider are: how the model works, how the principal experiences and applies the model, and whether it is still working or not. The experiences of the principals of T'boli West District are evidence of its significance. This research is essential since there is a lack of proof that situational leadership is still effective, particularly in the Philippines with the COVID-19 pandemic. From this study, future principals may understand through the experiences of the T'boli West district principals.

Therefore, in this context, as a researcher, I was interested in learning about the experiences and leadership styles of these school administrators as they adopt the situational leadership approach. It may raise concerns among the study's intended

recipients and result in implications for practice; thus, conducting an investigation is necessary.

## **2. Objective of the Study**

This study aimed to describe the in-depth interview of the perspectives told by the school administrators about their leadership styles embracing the situational leadership model such as coaching, delegating, directing, and supporting and providing recommendations for improving leadership performance in the schools.

### **2.1 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to describe the leadership styles among school administrators embracing situational leadership model focusing on the case of T'boli West district, division of South Cotabato and understand the need of the recipients of the community for better improvement of the school and attain the culture of excellence.

Therefore, the researcher focused on the leadership styles of school administrators as they embrace situational leadership models such as coaching, delegating, supporting, and directing.

### **2.2 Research Questions**

This study aimed to determine the overarching questions that were formulated to guide the study:

- 1) How can the leadership styles of the school leaders embracing the situational leadership model be described?

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 The Rationale for the Qualitative Approach**

A case study using a qualitative approach was applied to understand the phenomenon of school administrators' leadership styles embracing the situational leadership model, such as coaching, delegating, directing, and supporting. A qualitative study is a research approach that helps investigate and interpret a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2015). The researcher asked the participants about big general questions to understand more about this phenomenon, collected participants' detailed views in words, pictures, or videos, and analyzed the information for explanations and themes. Additionally, the researcher discussed the significance of the knowledge from this information, drawing on personal reflections and previous studies.

On the other hand, case study analysis allows the exploration and comprehension of complex problems through reports of past studies. In particular, when a holistic, in-depth investigation is required, it can be considered a robust research process. Recognized as an instrument in many social science studies, the role of the case study approach in research becomes more prevalent when topics such as poverty,

unemployment, drug abuse, and illiteracy Yin (2015). In addition, it has been raised about education (Gulsecen & Kubat, 2015), sociology (Grassel & Schirmer, 2015), and community-based problems (Johnson, 2017).

Moreover, a researcher can go beyond the quantitative statistical findings through case study approaches to consider the participants' viewpoints in behavioral circumstances. Through total observation, reconstruction, and analysis of the cases under review, a case study helps understand both the mechanism and the result of a phenomenon (Tellis, 2015; Spradley, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Mastroianni & Kahn, 2017).

Furthermore, the case study approach aided a researcher in closely analyzing data in a specific setting. In most cases, a case study technique chooses a specific geographical region or a small number of persons to analyze. Case studies, in their true form, evaluate and investigate contemporary real-life phenomena by thoroughly investigating a small number of occurrences or situations and their relationships. Yamar, *et al.* (2019) describe the method of case study analysis as an empirical investigation that explores a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not obvious and when multiple sources of evidence are used.

Therefore, in this research study, the case study provided means for emphasizing and extracting practical principles and techniques for creating and expediting progress in solving real problems in the community. Meanwhile, they inform sprouting theories associated with complexity to be conceived, developed, fielded, and applied to improve and upgrade a system in the community. Accordingly, this case study is also concerned with how people perceive events or phenomena in the real world. Thus, it entails recreating the study participants' experiences and delving further into their thoughts, as well as determining the substance of the experience as reported by the participants through extensive discussions.

### **3.2 Research Samples and Site**

This qualitative - case study was conducted in T'boli West 3 District, T'boli, Province of South Cotabato. The public school district supervisor led the district. T'boli West 3 District has eleven schools and one extension school. Some schools are located in far-flung areas and are led by Teacher In-Charge.

The inclusion criterion for choosing the participants was: five (5) school principals in T'boli West District. They have been serving as school leaders for more than five years and employing the situational leadership model. Their ages range from 30-50, regardless of their gender. They were also regular employees of the Department of Education South Cotabato.

### **3.3 Role of the Researcher and Potential Ethical Issues**

As a researcher, my choice of the subject of inquiry was influenced by the opportunity presented by a gap in research on hard facts and data regarding school administrators' issues in the T'boli West District.

I have observed that principals have studied the leadership style of school administrators. The topic could not be easier to do the task due to some political issues and cultural barriers. Our school has neo-fight school administrators in managing the schools. Hence, it is necessary to address the concerns of school administrators' schools. I hope that the problem that arises will be solved shortly through this research study. I have also fully observed and understood the existing leadership styles among school administrators in this district.

In the study, as the primary researcher, I coordinated with school heads and duly designated personnel in the arrangements related to the in-depth interview and made sure not to intrude or disrupt the scheduled work of the key informants. Thus, I served as the main instrument in this study, putting together all the needed components to form coherent research. Initially, I conceptualized this study, put together an implementation plan, sought necessary permits, and reviewed literature relevant to the study.

Before the actual interview, I provided orientation to the key informants about the purpose of the study and carefully explained the steps taken to ensure the confidentiality of the discussion. In the actual interview, I acted as the moderator; I also guided and facilitated the interviews in a relaxed manner to create a positive atmosphere wherein the participants could answer with confidence. In addition, I made sure that the flow of the activity would run smoothly. I had taken notes and observed their manner of answering interview questions. Lastly, all gathered data were transcribed, saturated, analyzed, and reported.

### **3.4 Data Gathering Procedure**

Qualitative research employed interviews to explore systems of meaning that participants used to organize their interactions and make sense of their environment. These structures were frequently concealed from direct observation and assumed by participants; however, such meanings may be revealed through qualitative interview techniques (Hatch, 2015). A qualitative research interview is a conversation in which details about the interviewee's life are gathered to understand better the nature of the phenomenon mentioned (Kvale, 2015). Furthermore, Sapsford and Jupp (2015) emphasized the importance of a structured data-gathering approach. It validates that the data collected is both defined and accurate and that subsequent decisions based on arguments embodied in the conclusions are reliable.

Before conducting the in-depth interviews with the study participants, I ensured that ethical considerations were observed correctly. I employed the critical principles of ethical issues (Bloom & Crabtree, 2015; Bricki & Green, 2015; Kaiser, 2015; Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest, Namey, 2015) considered in any research study, which is consent and confidentiality.

Because developing rapport is an essential part of an interview (Bloom & Crabtree, 2015), I initiated a preliminary meeting with the informants. I explained the study's details to understand that I would do everything with the utmost confidentiality. I also

identified school administrators in the district with the help of my friends in the teaching field.

Moreover, I went to each participant's place and verified the informants' information from the people in their community and from the data I gathered. The informants were also respected, esteemed, and praised by their colleagues for their diligence, hard work, and good leadership (Creswell, 2015; Merriam, 2015; Spradley, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Mastroianni & Kahn, 2017).

Furthermore, all school administrators were assured that this was for research purposes and that all processes undertaken during the interviews were correct. There will be three open-ended research questions to be employed for this study. Each research question had sub-questions that served as guides during the personal interview with each participant. I also jotted down notes during the whole course of the interview. All essential documents gathered after the interview were placed in a large archival plastic envelope correctly labeled for safekeeping (Creswell, 2015; Merriam, 2015; Spradley, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Mastroianni & Kahn, 2017).

In the process of in-depth interviews, I asked a colleague to help me take notes while I facilitated the discussions. During the interviews, there might have been instances that those specific details were not adequately expressed or missed out because the informants would not be that articulate or well-equipped to communicate with people. It might have created misconceptions and ambiguity.

Meanwhile, I used face-to-face interviews as the primary method for collecting the data. Collected data were collected during one-hour audio-recorded interview sessions conducted onsite at the convenience of the participants. Conducting interviews of each study participant allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the environment and community of each participant (Creswell, 2015; Merriam, 2015; Spradley, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Mastroianni & Kahn, 2017).

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

In this research project, data analysis entailed summarizing the data, gathering information, and presenting it in a way that communicated the most significant parts (Hancock *et al.*, 2015). The data reduction method, display, conclusion drawing, and verification were used to analyze the data (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2015). In the data analysis, some steps were employed that were patterned after the study of Gempes, Sayson, Manalaysay, Mejica, and Noveno (2015). First, analysis is the process of breaking down a whole into its essential elements for individual examination. Converting raw data into information that users can utilize to make decisions is known as data analysis. Second, data is collected and examined to answer questions, test hypotheses, or disprove theories (Judd & McClelland, 2015; Spradley, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Mastroianni & Kahn, 2017).

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

Since my research study involved educators, they were hesitant to disclose information and withheld some data out of fear. However, as part of research rigor and preventing the desire to explore this study, several safeguards were employed to assure the informants of its secrecy and non-disclosure, wipe out their fears, and establish trust and confidence. I ensured that my study was guided by ethical principles as described by Spradley, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Mastroianni & Kahn, 2017), namely respect for persons, beneficence, justice, consent, and confidentiality.

Respect for persons requires a commitment to ensure the autonomy of research participants and, where freedom may be decreased, protect people from exploiting their weaknesses. Therefore, before conducting the study, it was necessary to secure permission from the Division Heads and Superintendents. In addition, the school where they were assigned for the data collection was involved in the study. Hence, obtaining consent to gather data from school heads as research participants was done in the research (Creswell, 2015; Spradley, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Mastroianni & Kahn, 2017).

Informed and voluntary consent is a process for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a research study and make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate. One of the most crucial aspects is scholarly consent instruments for ensuring respect for persons during the research (Spradley, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Mastroianni & Kahn, 2017). Before conducting the in-depth interviews, I explained the objectives and purpose of this research study verbally and in writing and clarified that the proceedings would be audio-taped. I made sure that the informant's participation was voluntary and that they were not forced to participate in this study.

Beneficence requires a commitment to minimizing the risks associated with research, including psychological and social risks and maximizing the benefits of research participants. To reduce the risks or harm that may come to the participants, the interviewee's anonymity about the information shared is maintained (Bloom & Crabtree, 2015; Spradley, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Mastroianni & Kahn, 2017).

Confidentiality of the findings and protection of the identities of the informants by using a coding system to hide their true identities are explained to them (Maree and Van der Westhuizen, 2015; Spradley, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Mastroianni & Kahn, 2017). I explained to the principals that the data gathered in this research will be kept confidential and they have nothing to worry about.

Justice necessitates a commitment to a just allocation of the risks and benefits associated with research. Therefore, it is critical to include a mechanism of honoring contributions in the research strategy that participants contribute to the research process's success and to reimburse them in various ways for their efforts (Bloom and Crabtree, 2015; Spradley, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Mastroianni & Kahn, 2017). In this study, the participants were not excluded based on their ethnicity, gender, race, culture, or sexual orientation; rather, they were treated fairly and equally. I made certain that the participants were appropriate for the study; fairness was ensured in this study, and the participants were given the utmost care.

Lastly, as a researcher, I must also have the ability to listen carefully, digest, and comprehend the participants' answers. It is also of equal importance that a researcher and interviewer have a clear and logical mind and think quickly about the critical points of the participants' answers (Spradley, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Mastroianni & Kahn, 2017).

## 4. Findings

This chapter presented the findings, which consist of describing individuals in the study, analyzing themes followed by similarities, advantages, differences, and difficulties across cases.

### 4.1 Analysis of Themes

This part merged the themes that described their experiences as leading teachers while embracing the Situational Leadership Model. The main findings were based on this research question: How can the leadership styles of the school leaders embracing the situational leadership model be described?

**Table 1:** The leadership styles of the school leaders embracing the situational leadership model

Clustered themes	Emergent themes
<b>A. School leadership style</b>	
Leading by empowering and motivating teachers. Leading by directing and supporting teachers. Teaching on a case-to-case basis. Leading by modelling. Leading by supporting, coaching, and directing.	Matching leadership style to teachers' maturity.
<b>B. Description of situational leadership</b>	
It has a more flexible school. It directs, coaches, supports, and delegates to improve performance and satisfaction. It is adherent to DepEd standards and realistic. It is grateful and linked with teachers' needs. It has a strong bond and high engagement.	Leading in a case-to-case leadership style.
<b>C. Description of leadership style when coaching teachers</b>	
Leading by giving technical assistance. Leading by coaching with expertise. Leading by active interaction. Leading based on teachers' needs.	Effective coaching is for approaching skilled teachers.
<b>D. Description of leadership style when delegating teachers</b>	
Empowering capable teachers. Trusting skilled and strong teachers. Believing talented teachers can handle situations. Capability-fitting works.	Delegating is for capable and authorized teachers. Leading through trust leadership.
<b>E. Description of Leadership style when directing teachers</b>	
Directing is doing whatever it takes to get the job done. Directing needs a memorandum. Directing is modeling.	Directing is for new and low-skilled teachers.



Directing is for beginning teachers or those with low self-confidence teachers.	
<b>F. Description of leadership style when supporting teachers</b>	
Supporting focus on the improvement of quality learning. Supporting is listening to the teacher's sentiments and goals. Keeping is building a solid relationship. Supporting involves diversity.	Keeping is to create a strong bond. Leading through affiliative leadership.
<b>G. Description of the overall experiences in embracing situational leadership (SL)</b>	
Situational leadership is fulfilling and effective. There is a sense of direction. Best manpower came out.	Situational leadership is effective and enjoyable.

## 5. Summary

The leadership styles among school administrators embracing the situational leadership model, such as coaching, delegating, directing, and supporting, focusing on the case of T'boli West district, division of South Cotabato, were described as follows.

### A. School Leadership Style

Utterances of principals in terms of their leadership styles matched the teachers' maturity level. This theme is supported by the following utterances "*I support, coach, and direct my teachers depending on the situation being faced by the school and the teachers*" (A5). Another principal answered, "*I lead my teachers on a case-to-case basis. If it requires coaching, I coach them*" (A3). In addition, Principal A2 is the youngest principal among the participants that utilizes directing leadership, which is described as the initial or primary level of leadership style.

### B. Description of Situational Leadership

With the findings, situational leadership is viewed as the umbrella of different leadership styles flexibly suited to the teachers' needs, real situations, and skills. For example, it may use realistic leadership, affiliative leadership, grateful leadership, directing, coaching, delegating, and supporting leadership. Also, the findings show that situational leadership is thought to be dynamic and receptive; it is described as flexible and adapts to the current workplace as well as the needs of the institution. Situational leadership does not rely on the leader's competence to do a specific task; instead, it adapts the management style to the stakeholder's demands.

### C. Description of Leadership Style in Coaching Teachers

Based on the individual cases, by cross-analysis, coaching is based on teachers' needs. Its goal is to improve and develop the teacher's alignment with its needs. Coaching is for approaching skilled teachers. The teacher must show some weakness in order to know when to coach directly.

#### **D. Description of Leadership Style when Delegating Teachers**

Based on the findings, the principal describes the delegating leadership style as empowering skilled, capable, and trusted teachers. Thus, the charging leadership style is defined as trust leadership.

#### **E. Description of Leadership Style when Directing Teachers**

Principals view directing in situational leadership as specifying what and how to do for new and low-skilled teachers. Findings also show that directing needs a memorandum. School principals strengthen and specify what to do; they teach teachers to anchor their tasks on their job descriptions and expectations.

#### **F. Description of Leadership Style when Supporting Teachers**

Based on individual cases, the principal embracing Situational leadership viewed supporting leadership as two-way communication, listening, and involving diversified ideas to create a strong bond that leads to better decision-making. Supporting is for those effective teachers who lack a consistent commitment to being involved in the decision-making. Thus, affiliative leadership is applicable. That is inspirational leadership.

#### **G. Description of the Overall Experiences in Embracing Situational Leadership**

The best workforce emerged as a result of situational leadership. Taking care of all of the teachers' needs helped every principal become better, less stressed, and more pleasant.

From the descriptions of situational leadership, principals are selective, adaptive, and hierarchical in skills, with shared leadership, and acknowledging diverse ideas brings better decisions and effective school. These characteristics made them handle their schools for more than five years, be more strategic, and be determined to accomplish their reports and implement their programs. Therefore, it is recommended that school principals use situational leadership at all times and at all levels.

### **6. Implications for Practice**

As a researcher, I believe that situational leadership is effective and enjoyable. It is coherent with Fiedler's contingency model of leadership. Matching leadership style to a teacher's maturity is essential in leading to putting themselves in the right people with the right leadership style. The situational leadership style has grateful leaders who suit the situation of the school and the skills of the teachers, who are called realistic leaders. Hence, leaders always look for new opportunities for the school to succeed. It is recommended that the school principal use situational leadership in the modern era, specifically in the new normal.

Next, as a researcher, I believe effective coaching directly addresses teachers' needs for approaching skilled teachers. This means that to be an expert is to be coached by an expert, which is why it is difficult to coach an effective teacher or uncommitted teachers.

It is recommended that the school principal provide an anecdotal record of all teachers who may be coached and who are willing teachers from the SWOT analysis result.

Moreover, delegating a task is not easy because it may be a success or a failure. To overcome this, charging a reading is for skilled and trusted teachers. Delegating empowers competent, capable, and trusted teachers. Trust Leadership is effective for qualified teachers. It is recommended that the school principal explain the reasons for delegating the task. Empowered teachers may be given awards and duly recognition awards every year.

Furthermore, as a researcher, I also observed that all teachers experienced being directed, supported, coached, and delegated once. Handling is effective if assumptions are specified on what and how to do it. Handling is for new teachers and low-skilled teachers. It is recommended that the school principals conduct a deep understanding of every teacher's mastered and less mastered skills and may use a directing way of leadership for newly hired or low-level skilled teachers.

Additionally, principals firmly believe that it is essential to profile the teachers based on their strengths and weaknesses. They were listening to the voices of the teachers and working on the support system, school progress, and teachers' development. Being appreciated by principals motivated the teachers to do their jobs efficiently. They felt empowered whenever they accomplished and implemented their projects and programs at school. Supporting is two-way communication, listening, and involving diversified ideas to create a strong bond that leads to better decision-making. That makes an effective principal.

## **7. Implication for Future Research**

For future research on situational leadership, being selective, adaptive, hierarchical, and sharing leadership among diverse teachers could be advantageous. From the start, I have recognized that a study like this needs generalizability so that other scholars can see it and, therefore, provide a larger picture. I believe that there are other issues and concerns from principals embracing situational leadership.

Also, principal empowerment should be in line with the relationship between situational leadership and teacher satisfaction. If there is a clear link between jobs, supervisors may use the practice of inspiring principals to strengthen the organization's overall working conditions and morale.

Other researchers may also consider the emotional well-being of principals embracing situational leadership.

## **8. Overall Significance of the Study**

Principals embracing situational leadership were gathered from the results of this study, which showed that most participants gained positive benefits from their experiences, challenging them to strive for more significant advancement to become better educators

despite the rigors of life. Despite the many difficulties, the study found that principals embracing situational leadership are even more inspired. Understanding their plight as a principal added to the body of education information. Their attitude toward their personal and professional well-being would change if they valued the importance of resilience in the leading professionals.

As a future principal, I have found that principals who embrace situational leadership have distinct leadership styles, abilities, and values that distinguish them from other principals. They showed all principals how to value teachers and support their involvement in all aspects of their principalship. It also has far-reaching implications for all instructors around the world. This study provides the descriptions and viewpoints of principals who embrace situational leadership, as well as the settings derived from the findings, available to the broader audience. Understanding the real-life experiences of principals who took on situational leadership opened up new possibilities and suggestions for future research on many case studies in the educational setting.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

### **About the Author(s)**

Joyee L. Gicain is a Master of Arts in Education student at Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges, General Santos City, Philippines. She taught at the Department of Education, South Cotabato, in a TIII position. She is interested in educational administration research. She participated in research forums with <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-6297-4663>.

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Joyee L. Gicain

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LEADERSHIP MODEL: THE CASE OF T'BOLI WEST DISTRICT, SOUTH COTABATO DIVISION, PHILIPPINES

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