

Correlates of intercultural competence and leadership skills of school leaders

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Abstract

This study determined the correlates of intercultural competence and leadership skills among 304 elementary school teachers in the Labo West District, Camarines Norte. Anchored on Deardorff's, Burns', and Vygotsky's theories, the research employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design using total enumeration. Findings revealed that educational leaders generally possess high intercultural competence in knowledge (3.35) and skills (3.50) but scored lower in attitudes (3.23). Similarly, leadership skills were moderately strong across knowledge (3.26), skills (3.17), and attitudes (3.28), with notable gaps in policy familiarity and collaboration. A significant relationship was established between the variables, with the strongest correlation found between leadership skills in the domain of skills and intercultural competence in knowledge ($r=.797$, $p<.01$), indicating that deep cultural knowledge drives practical leadership execution. However, weaker correlations in attitude-related areas highlighted a disconnect between valuing diversity and practicing it. In terms of opportunities, leaders prioritized institutional commitment to equity but reported limited access to intercultural exchange programs. Concluding that leaders are technically capable but require deeper attitudinal engagement and policy literacy, the study proposes the adoption of the I-LEAD (Intercultural Leadership Empowerment and Advancement for Diversity) Program. This intervention is designed to bridge identified gaps through policy development, professional training, and experiential community engagement to foster a more culturally responsive educational environment.

Keywords: Intercultural competence, leadership skills, inclusive education, culturally responsive leadership, I-LEAD Program, elementary school teachers

1. Introduction

The growing cultural diversity within educational institutions worldwide has presented both challenges and opportunities for school leaders. Today's schools are multicultural spaces where learners, teachers, and staff bring a myriad of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. This evolution requires educational leaders to demonstrate intercultural competence, an essential skill for fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments. This necessitates the development of intercultural competence, a vital skill encompassing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to interact effectively and respectfully with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Deardorff, 2006).

As articulated by Dzerviniks et al. (2024), intercultural competence encompasses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to interact respectfully and effectively with individuals from diverse cultures. This competence is increasingly recognized as critical for leaders tasked with addressing the needs of marginalized

groups, promoting cultural inclusion, and improving school performance through equitable leadership practices. This study aims to explore the relationship between intercultural competence and leadership skills, focusing on how school leaders in the Labo West District can enhance their effectiveness in culturally diverse educational settings.

The context of this study is anchored on the unique cultural landscape of the Labo West District, part of the Schools Division of Camarines Norte in the Philippines. The district mirrors the broader national diversity of the country, which boasts over 175 languages and a rich mix of indigenous and migrant communities (Ethnologue, n.d.). Despite the policy frameworks that support inclusive education, anecdotal reports suggest that some school leaders face challenges in addressing cultural barriers, mediating conflicts, and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders (Llego, 2022). These challenges underscore the necessity of evaluating the intercultural competence of school leaders to determine how their knowledge, skills, and attitudes align with the requirements of their roles.

The Philippine legal framework provides a strong foundation for this study. The 1987 Philippine Constitution, through Article XIV, Section 2, highlights the importance of inclusive education and indigenous learning systems, emphasizing sensitivity to community needs. The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10533) further promotes learner-centered, inclusive, and culturally responsive education. DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2015, specifically mandates the inclusion of indigenous peoples' perspectives in educational curricula, encouraging the adoption of culturally relevant teaching and leadership practices. These national mandates are complemented by international initiatives such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (United Nations, n.d.), which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education. Together, these policies emphasize the urgent need for educational leaders to embody intercultural competence in their practice.

Despite these policies, there remains a gap between policy directives and practical implementation, particularly in the leadership practices of elementary school teachers. Studies such as those by Bernardo and Gonzalez (2010) have highlighted that while Philippine education policies recognize cultural diversity, their application in schools often falls short due to a lack of training and resources. This gap is evident in the Labo West District, where school leaders face challenges in fostering intercultural understanding and managing diverse school communities. The presence of indigenous groups and migrant families in the district adds to the complexity of leadership, demanding a nuanced approach to inclusivity that many leaders feel ill-equipped to provide.

In the Labo West District reveal a disconnect between policy aspirations and the realities of school leadership. School leaders often lack the training and resources to implement inclusive practices effectively, leading to a fragmented approach to managing diversity. Indigenous and migrant communities within the district face systemic challenges, including cultural misrepresentation and limited educational opportunities. These barriers impact the school climate and create a ripple effect on learner engagement and academic performance. Addressing these challenges necessitates an evidence-based exploration of how intercultural competence influences leadership effectiveness and how it can be enhanced to foster equitable educational outcomes.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to bridge theoretical and practical gaps in the field of educational leadership. By examining the relationship between intercultural competence and leadership skills, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how educational leaders in diverse settings navigate cultural complexities. Furthermore, it identifies challenges and opportunities in fostering intercultural understanding, offering valuable insights for developing interventions that empower leaders to address the unique needs of their communities.

By grounding its analysis in global and local perspectives, this study contributes to the development of educational leadership practices that prioritize intercultural competence. It aims to inform the creation of policies, training programs, and frameworks that enhance leadership effectiveness in diverse educational environments. Ultimately, the findings of this research support the advancement of inclusive education in the

Philippines, ensuring that school leaders are equipped to meet the challenges and harness the opportunities of cultural diversity.

1.1. Objective of the Study

This study aimed to determine the correlates of intercultural competence and leadership skills among elementary school teachers in the Labo West District, Schools Division of Camarines Norte. Specifically, it sought to assess the levels of both variables across the domains of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and to establish the significant relationship between them. Furthermore, the research identified the opportunities encountered by these leaders to propose a specific intervention designed to improve their intercultural and leadership capacities.

2. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative method utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design to systematically examine the relationship between intercultural competence and leadership skills among school leaders in the Labo West District. The descriptive component assessed the respondents' levels of knowledge, skills, and attitudes using weighted means, while the correlational aspect utilized Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) to determine the significance and nature of the association between the two main variables. This dual approach allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the existing competencies and established whether higher levels of intercultural competence are significantly associated with enhanced leadership performance.

2.1. Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Technique

The respondents of the study comprised the entire population of 304 elementary school teachers in the Labo West District, Schools Division of Camarines Norte, selected through the total enumeration sampling technique. Representing diverse grade levels, subject areas, and professional backgrounds, this complete cohort was included to minimize sampling bias and ensure a comprehensive analysis of the district's leadership dynamics. This exhaustive sampling approach guaranteed that the findings accurately reflected the collective experiences and perceptions regarding intercultural competence and leadership skills across the district.

2.2. Data Gathering Procedures

Data gathering commenced after securing formal approval from the Schools Division Office and obtaining informed consent from the respondents, ensuring strict adherence to ethical standards of confidentiality and voluntary participation. The primary research instrument was a structured questionnaire comprising an intercultural competence assessment adapted from Dzerviniks et al. (2024), alongside researcher-developed scales for leadership skills and perceived opportunities. To ensure rigor, the instrument underwent content validation by a panel of five experts, including division-level supervisors and master teachers, followed by a pilot test with 20 respondents. Reliability analysis confirmed high internal consistency, yielding Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of .956 for intercultural competence and .928 for leadership skills, thereby establishing the tool's validity and reliability for the study.

2.3. Statistical Treatment of Data

To address the descriptive problems of the study, specific statistical tools were utilized based on the nature of the data. Weighted mean was employed to determine the levels of intercultural competence and

leadership skills across the domains of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (SOP 1 and 2). Meanwhile, frequency counts and ranking were used to identify the most and least common opportunities encountered by the educational leaders (SOP 4).

For the inferential component, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was applied to establish the significant relationship between the respondents' intercultural competence and their leadership skills (SOP 3). This parametric test determined the strength and direction of the association between the two main variables, identifying whether cultural responsiveness significantly correlates with leadership capacity.

$$r = \frac{n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

All statistical computations were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 to ensure accuracy and reliability. A significance level of 0.05 was established as the threshold for determining the statistical significance of the findings throughout the analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Level of Intercultural Competence of Educational Leaders

Educational leaders in the Labo West District generally exhibit a high level of intercultural knowledge (Overall Weighted Mean = 3.35, Strongly Agree), indicating a strong foundational awareness of inclusive practices. This is most evident in their awareness of educational resources (Weighted Mean = 3.42), manifested locally through the active utilization of DepEd's LRMDs and contextualized Bicolano materials to assist diverse learners, a practice supported by Eden et al. (2024) as vital for fostering inclusivity. Conversely, the lowest rating was observed in understanding cultural diversity in pedagogy (Weighted Mean = 3.18), reflecting a local gap where leaders recognize diversity but struggle to technically guide teachers in integrating indigenous knowledge systems into core subjects. This disconnect aligns with Abdulrahim and Orosco (2020) and Sheikh et al. (2024), who highlight the difficulty educators face in translating theoretical awareness into pedagogical application. Ultimately, while Leithwood et al. (2020) and Okken et al. (2022) confirm that this knowledge base is a crucial prerequisite for effective leadership, the findings suggest a specific need for professional development to bridge the gap between theoretical awareness and consistent contextual adaptation.

Table 1. Level of Intercultural Competence of Educational Leaders along Knowledge

Indicators		Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.	I am knowledgeable in teaching strategies that incorporate components of ethnic identity diversity.	3.39	Strongly Agree
2.	I have an understanding of the aspect of cultural diversity in pedagogy.	3.18	Agree
3.	I am knowledgeable about how the experience of newcomers can affect their learning.	3.39	Strongly Agree
4.	I am aware of various resources that can be used in the educational process of newcomers.	3.42	Strongly Agree
Overall Weighted Mean		3.35	Strongly Agree
Weighted Mean Range		Verbal Interpretation	
3.26 – 4.00		Strongly Agree	
2.51 – 3.25		Agree	
1.76 – 2.50		Disagree	
1.00 – 1.75		Strongly Disagree	

The educational leaders demonstrated a strong level of intercultural competence in terms of skills (Overall Weighted Mean = 3.50, Strongly Agree), with the highest proficiency observed in building supportive

relationships with parents of newcomers (Weighted Mean = 3.65). Locally, this is evidenced by proactive home visitations and the use of local dialects in PTA assemblies to bridge linguistic gaps, a practice aligned with Azcoitia et al. (2020) and Eden et al. (2024), who emphasize that strong parental engagement is a cornerstone of culturally responsive leadership. Conversely, the lowest, though still positive, rating was found in making changes to the learning environment (Weighted Mean = 3.36). This limitation reflects local challenges where resource constraints and fixed classroom setups hinder the physical transformation of spaces to suit diverse learning styles, a systemic barrier corroborated by Lindner et al. (2023) and Shahjahan et al. (2022). Overall, while Okken et al. (2022) and Abdulrahim and Orosco (2020) confirm that these skills are indispensable for bridging achievement gaps, the findings suggest that while interpersonal skills are strong, structural and environmental adaptations require further institutional support.

Table 2. Level of Intercultural Competence of Educational Leaders along Skills

Indicators		Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.	I integrate the cultural values and lifestyles of newcomers into my lessons.	3.53	Strongly Agree
2.	I build supportive relationships with the parents of newcomers.	3.65	Strongly Agree
3.	I include examples of newcomers' experience in my lessons.	3.64	Strongly Agree
4.	I organize activities to increase children's knowledge of other cultures.	3.52	Strongly Agree
5.	When planning the educational activities, I take into account the customs of newcomers.	3.52	Strongly Agree
6.	I consult with other teachers or administration to better understand issues related to the planning and implementation of the newcomers' educational process.	3.39	Strongly Agree
7.	I check the educational materials I use in the teaching process to ensure that cultural and ethnic biases are excluded.	3.39	Strongly Agree
8.	I make changes to the learning environment so that all children have an equal opportunity to succeed.	3.36	Strongly Agree
Overall Weighted Mean		3.50	Strongly Agree
Weighted Mean Range		Verbal Interpretation	
3.26 – 4.00		Strongly Agree	
2.51 – 3.25		Agree	
1.76 – 2.50		Disagree	
1.00 – 1.75		Strongly Disagree	

Educational leaders in the Labo West District demonstrate a generally favorable level of intercultural competence along the domain of attitudes (Overall Weighted Mean = 3.23, Agree). The highest rating was observed in the belief that "Newcomers enrich Philippine culture" (Weighted Mean = 3.28, Strongly Agree), which is manifested locally by the integration of Kabiugan tribal histories and diverse regional traditions into Araling Panlipunan and Values Education. This positive disposition toward cultural plurality as a learning asset is corroborated by Eden et al. (2024) and Fisher (2021), who assert that valuing diverse perspectives is central to cultivating inclusive environments and effective leadership in multicultural settings.

Table 3. Level of Intercultural Competence of Educational Leaders along Attitudes

Indicators		Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.	Newcomers enrich the environment of my institution.	3.24	Agree
2.	Newcomers enrich learning.	3.21	Agree
3.	Newcomers enrich Philippine culture.	3.28	Strongly Agree
4.	I think my institution could be more multicultural.	3.19	Agree
Overall Weighted Mean		3.23	Agree
Weighted Mean Range		Verbal Interpretation	
3.26 – 4.00		Strongly Agree	
2.51 – 3.25		Agree	
1.76 – 2.50		Disagree	
1.00 – 1.75		Strongly Disagree	

However, the indicator "I think my institution could be more multicultural" received the lowest rating (Weighted Mean = 3.19, Agree), reflecting a perception that multiculturalism remains episodic rather than systemic. Locally, this is evident in institutions that celebrate cultural months through costumes but maintain Tagalog-centric curricula and mono-religious traditions in daily operations. This finding aligns with Shahjahan et al. (2022) and Chua Reyes et al. (2022), who note that many institutions operate within monocultural paradigms due to systemic constraints. Furthermore, Lindner et al. (2023) and Sheikh et al. (2024) emphasize that while educators express positive attitudes, these are often limited by a lack of resources, necessitating institutional reinforcement and sustained professional development to fully embed multiculturalism into school structures.

3.2. Level of Leadership Skills Exhibited by Educational Leaders

Educational leaders in the Labo West District exhibited a strong level of leadership knowledge (Overall Weighted Mean = 3.26, Strongly Agree), with the highest competence observed in understanding the importance of cultural sensitivity in communication (Weighted Mean = 3.37). This is practiced locally through code-switching during community assemblies and respecting the cultural value of *hiya* during conflict resolution, an approach validated by Eden et al. (2024) as essential for enhancing stakeholder engagement. However, the lowest rating was found in familiarity with inclusive policies (Weighted Mean = 3.14), revealing a gap where leaders often default to standard procedures rather than applying specific frameworks like the IPed policy or DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2021. Shahjahan et al. (2022) corroborate that such policy literacy gaps hinder the realization of inclusive practices. Consequently, while foundational knowledge exists, Leithwood et al. (2020) emphasize that deepening this understanding through targeted capacity building is crucial for improving educational equity and student achievement.

Table 4. Level of Leadership Skills Exhibited by Educational Leaders along Knowledge

Indicators		Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.	I understand how cultural diversity influences teaching and learning in schools.	3.33	Strongly Agree
2.	I am familiar with cultural norms and practices that may affect students' learning.	3.19	Agree
3.	I know strategies to create an inclusive classroom that respects cultural diversity.	3.25	Strongly Agree
4.	I understand the importance of cultural sensitivity when communicating with staff and students from diverse backgrounds.	3.37	Strongly Agree
5.	I am familiar with policies and frameworks that promote inclusive education and leadership in diverse environments.	3.14	Agree
Overall Weighted Mean		3.26	Strongly Agree
Weighted Mean Range	Verbal Interpretation		
3.26 – 4.00	Strongly Agree		
2.51 – 3.25	Agree		
1.76 – 2.50	Disagree		
1.00 – 1.75	Strongly Disagree		

The educational leaders demonstrated moderate proficiency in leadership skills (Overall Weighted Mean = 3.17, Agree), with the highest capability observed in promoting the integration of cultural diversity into the curriculum (Weighted Mean = 3.26). This strength is locally evident in the active mobilization of students for festivals like *Busig-On* and the incorporation of local history, such as Wenceslao Q. Vinzons, into the curriculum, a practice aligned with Eden et al. (2024) regarding the value of embedding diversity to enhance learning outcomes. However, the lowest rating was found in facilitating collaboration among diverse teams (Weighted Mean = 3.08), reflecting local challenges in bridging generational and geographic divides between teachers with differing work styles. This difficulty supports Cabahug et al. (2024), who noted that Filipino educators require further support in collaborative competencies. Ultimately, the findings suggest that while

foundational skills exist, Abdulrahim and Orosco (2020) correctly argue that without deliberate, context-responsive training, these competencies often remain underdeveloped in practice.

Table 5. Level of Leadership Skills Exhibited by Educational Leaders along Skills

Indicators		Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.	I apply inclusive teaching strategies for students from diverse backgrounds.	3.09	Agree
2.	I communicate effectively with staff and students from different cultures.	3.20	Agree
3.	I adapt my leadership style to meet the needs of a culturally diverse school.	3.09	Agree
4.	I am skilled at facilitating collaboration and teamwork among a culturally diverse group of teachers.	3.08	Agree
5.	I resolve conflicts that arise from cultural misunderstandings.	3.14	Agree
6.	I provide training to improve staff intercultural competence.	3.23	Agree
7.	I use culturally relevant resources in teaching and school activities.	3.23	Agree
8.	I promote the integration of cultural diversity into the curriculum and school activities.	3.26	Strongly Agree
9.	I lead initiatives that celebrate cultural diversity in the school community.	3.19	Agree
10.	I consider cultural perspectives when making school decisions.	3.22	Agree
Overall Weighted Mean		3.17	Agree
Weighted Mean Range		Verbal Interpretation	
3.26 – 4.00		Strongly Agree	
2.51 – 3.25		Agree	
1.76 – 2.50		Disagree	
1.00 – 1.75		Strongly Disagree	

Educational leaders in the Labo West District exhibit strong leadership attitudes (Overall Weighted Mean = 3.28, Strongly Agree), particularly in valuing diverse contributions in decision-making (Weighted Mean = 3.33). This inclusive mindset is practically demonstrated through the active involvement of Indigenous Peoples and stakeholders from remote sitios in School Improvement Plan (SIP) formulations, a participatory approach validated by Eden et al. (2024) as essential for equitable governance. However, the lowest rating was found in confidence to lead diverse teams (Weighted Mean = 3.18, Agree), reflecting local hesitations in managing sensitive religious accommodations and navigating Filipino values like *pakikisama* and *hiya* during conflict resolution. This lack of self-efficacy supports Fisher (2021), who emphasizes that confidence relies on structural support and continuous development. Ultimately, while the general outlook is positive, Shahjahan et al. (2022) affirm that the practical implementation of inclusive ideals often remains a work in progress, highlighting the critical need to transform these attitudes into stronger professional conviction.

Table 6. Level of Leadership Skills Exhibited by Educational Leaders along Attitudes

Indicators		Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.	I believe cultural diversity strengthens the school environment.	3.29	Strongly Agree
2.	I am open to learning from different cultural perspectives.	3.28	Strongly Agree
3.	I show empathy toward staff and students from diverse backgrounds.	3.32	Strongly Agree
4.	I am committed to building an inclusive school culture.	3.29	Strongly Agree
5.	I value the contributions of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds in decision-making processes.	3.33	Strongly Agree
6.	I am confident in my ability to lead a diverse team and create a harmonious work environment.	3.18	Agree
7.	I promote respect and understanding among all members of the school.	3.30	Strongly Agree
8.	I address cultural bias or prejudice proactively.	3.23	Agree
Overall Weighted Mean		3.28	Strongly Agree
Weighted Mean Range		Verbal Interpretation	
3.26 – 4.00		Strongly Agree	
2.51 – 3.25		Agree	
1.76 – 2.50		Disagree	

1.00 – 1.75

Strongly Disagree

3.3. Significant Relationship Between the Level of Intercultural Competence of Educational Leaders and Their Leadership Skills

The study revealed significant positive correlations across most dimensions, establishing that intercultural competence and leadership skills are strongly interlinked, particularly in the domains of knowledge and skills. The most notable finding was the strong positive relationship between Leadership Skills in the domain of Skills and Intercultural Competence in the domain of Knowledge ($r = .797$, $p < .01$). This implies that a leader's ability to execute practical tasks, such as reviewing lesson plans for curriculum contextualization or guiding teachers on indigenous topics like Queen Formosa Pineapple, is heavily dependent on their depth of cultural knowledge. As Azcoitia et al. (2020) emphasized, leadership effectiveness in diverse environments relies on enacting cultural competence through practical community partnerships, confirming that cognitive mastery is the engine driving capable leadership execution.

Table 7. Test for Significant Relationship Between the Level of Intercultural Competence and the Leadership Skills of Educational Leaders

Leadership Skills	Intercultural Competence					
	Knowledge		Skills		Attitude	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Knowledge	.431**	.000	.347**	.000	.133*	.021
Skills	.797**	.000	.165**	.004	-.096	.094
Attitude	.443**	.000	.278**	.000	.273**	.000

*Correlation is Significant @ 0.05 level

**Correlation is Significant @ 0.01 level

Moderate correlations in other domains further suggest that understanding cultural diversity enhances policy design and decision-making. Locally, this connection is vital for conflict mediation, where a leader's knowledge of Filipino values like *hiya* (shame) or *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) allows them to resolve disputes without causing professional rifts. Furthermore, the relationship between intercultural and leadership attitudes ($r = .273$) reinforces the importance of aligning personal beliefs with professional behavior. Eden et al. (2024) corroborated this, arguing that leaders who internalize diversity values are significantly more likely to demonstrate inclusive practices, although the study suggests that valuing diversity alone does not guarantee deep conceptual mastery.

Conversely, the insignificant correlation between Leadership Skills (Skills) and Intercultural Competence (Attitude) ($r = -.096$) reveals a critical gap between belief and action. In Labo West, this is evident where leaders may hold positive attitudes toward inclusion, such as desiring to host multifaith prayer rooms, but lack the technical skill or resources to implement them due to administrative constraints. This disconnect supports Lindner et al. (2023), who noted that positive attitudes do not automatically translate into inclusive practices when external barriers exist. Consequently, Leithwood et al. (2020) stress that effective leadership requires a balance between personal commitment and professional competency, highlighting the need for holistic training that bridges the gap between "meaning well" and "doing well."

3.4. Opportunities Encountered by Educational Leaders in Intercultural Competence and Leadership Skills

Educational leaders in the Labo West District frequently encounter opportunities centered on institutional commitment and awareness, with "Strengthening the school's commitment to equity and inclusion" ranking first (Frequency = 256). Locally, this commitment is operationalized during early registration and School Improvement Plan (SIP) formulation, where leaders enforce the "No Refusal Policy" to prioritize

learners from *Kabihug* Indigenous communities and those with special needs, while strictly prohibiting fees to eliminate economic barriers. This alignment with national mandates like the IPed Framework (DO 32, s. 2015) and the Child Protection Policy (DO 40, s. 2012) is corroborated by Eden et al. (2024) and Leithwood et al. (2020), who assert that inclusive leadership is a critical determinant of student achievement and school success. The findings suggest that leaders effectively utilize policy-driven opportunities to foster a welcoming school climate and promote fairness across the district.

Table 8. Opportunities Encountered by the Educational Leaders in Intercultural Competence and Leadership Skills

Indicators		Frequency	Rank
1.	Creating a more inclusive school environment	215	2
2.	Enhancing cultural awareness among staff and students	214	3
3.	Building partnerships with diverse community groups	135	17
4.	Improving student outcomes through culturally responsive teaching	188	5
5.	Expanding professional development on intercultural competence	150	12
6.	Promoting global citizenship among learners	140	15
7.	Strengthening relationships with culturally diverse stakeholders	171	7
8.	Encouraging collaboration across cultural groups	181	6
9.	Increasing multicultural content in the curriculum	156	10
10.	Supporting staff engagement with cultural diversity	153	11
11.	Hosting cultural exchange programs or events	107	18
12.	Integrating intercultural themes into school projects and activities	147	13
13.	Using multilingual resources to support diverse learners	159	9
14.	Celebrating cultural heritage through school-wide initiatives	142	14
15.	Promoting intercultural exchange programs for students and staff	93	20
16.	Addressing bias and stereotypes through education	163	8
17.	Facilitating student-led diversity initiatives	95	19
18.	Leveraging technology to connect with global classrooms	138	16
19.	Leading initiatives that promote cultural understanding	210	4
20.	Strengthening the school's commitment to equity and inclusion	256	1

Conversely, the study highlights a strategic gap in active, external engagement, as “Promoting intercultural exchange programs” ranked last (Frequency = 93), followed by student-led diversity initiatives. In Labo West, these opportunities are constrained by logistical and financial limitations, such as the full allocation of MOOE to essential utilities and poor internet connectivity in remote barangays, which prevents even virtual exchanges. This lack of immersive experience is corroborated by Okken et al. (2022), who emphasize that intercultural competence is enriched through experiential learning that is currently missing in the district. While leaders are proficient in local policy implementation, Azcoitia et al. (2020) underscore that they must eventually move toward intentional community partnerships and systemic exchange efforts to fully cultivate cultural understanding, moving beyond internal awareness toward global and interactive engagement.

3.5. Proposed Intervention to Improve Intercultural Competence and Leadership Skills of Educational Leaders

The proposed intervention, titled I-LEAD: Intercultural Leadership Empowerment and Advancement for Diversity Program, is a comprehensive school-based framework designed to bridge the gap between high institutional commitment and low experiential engagement identified in the study. While Table 8 showed a top ranking for equity commitment (Frequency = 256), it also revealed that intercultural exchange programs were the least encountered opportunity (Rank 20). The program is structured around four pillars: Policy Development and Institutionalization, which formalizes inclusivity by integrating co-developed policies into the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and Annual Implementation Plan (AIP); Professional Development, which provides technical capacity-building to align diversity values with practical knowledge; Experiential and Community Engagement, which introduces authentic interactions such as an annual Intercultural Day and mini-exchange

programs; and Resource Development, which establishes Diversity Resource Corners to ensure sustained access to culturally relevant materials.

The design of I-LEAD is directly informed by the study's correlational and descriptive results. The Professional Development component addresses the weak relationship found between intercultural attitude and leadership knowledge ($r = .133$), ensuring that leaders move from merely valuing diversity to possessing the technical skills required for its management. Furthermore, the Resource Development pillar capitalizes on the strong correlation between leadership skills and intercultural knowledge ($r = .797$) by providing the necessary tools to maintain this high competency level. As supported by Lindner et al. (2023), who noted that resource constraints often hinder the translation of inclusive attitudes into practice, this holistic program ensures that physical, digital, and institutional supports are in place. By employing a rigorous Monitoring and Evaluation framework, the I-LEAD Program aims to transform cultural awareness into proactive, sustained leadership practices, positioning the district as a model for culturally responsive and inclusive education.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concludes that while educational leaders in the Labo West District possess strong technical knowledge and skills in intercultural competence, their comparatively lower scores in attitudes and policy literacy reveal a disconnect between professional capability and personal internalization of multicultural values. This gap is further evidenced by the strong correlation between leadership skills and cultural knowledge ($r = .797$), suggesting that while cognitive understanding effectively drives practical execution, the weaker relationship with attitude-related domains necessitates targeted training to align personal beliefs with professional behavior. Furthermore, although institutional commitment to equity remains high, the lack of experiential engagement through intercultural exchange programs hinders full competency development. Consequently, the proposed I-LEAD Program serves as a vital intervention to bridge these theoretical and practical divides by institutionalizing inclusive policies, enhancing collaborative capacity, and providing the authentic cultural exposure necessary to elevate the district's leadership standards.

It is recommended that the Schools Division of Camarines Norte and local educational leaders implement targeted activities, such as reflection sessions and diversity storytelling, to deepen multicultural attitudes and complement existing technical skills. To address gaps in policy literacy and teamwork, school heads should engage in structured workshops focused on inclusive education frameworks and collaborative leadership. Furthermore, administrators should prioritize the allocation of resources for intercultural exchange programs and community partnerships to provide the immersive, experiential learning currently lacking in the district. Central to these efforts is the systematic adoption of the proposed I-LEAD Program into School Improvement Plans and Learning Action Cells to institutionalize inclusive practices. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to evaluate the long-term impact of the I-LEAD intervention and explore broader strategies for embedding cultural responsiveness within pedagogical and governance structures across diverse educational settings.

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