



# Leading Schools in A Digital Era: Appreciating the Success Stories of Adaptive School Heads

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## Abstract

This study explored the success stories of twelve (12) school heads both in the elementary and secondary schools in the Division of Iligan City, selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered using an interview guide and analyzed through the Appreciative Inquiry 4D model—Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny. Findings revealed four core themes: (1) Adaptive Leadership as a Catalyst for Digital Transformation in Schools, (2) Empowering Visionary Leadership for a Technology-Driven and Collaborative School of the Future, (3) Digital Leadership for School Transformation, and (4) Sustaining Digital Leadership Culture. Digital leadership should be institutionalized through policies, routines, and evaluation systems to sustain growth. Regular monitoring and evaluation can identify effective practices and expand successful strategies. Together, these actions help ensure that digital transformation is meaningful, sustainable, and beneficial for the whole school community.

## Keywords

Adaptive Leadership, Digital Leadership, Digital Transformation, Technology-driven and school collaboration, Visionary Leadership.

## 1. Introduction

New knowledge on education springs from many aspects. It can come from an innovation or from a problem. It can be from a new development or new theories springing out of the efforts to explain phenomena. It can be forwarded when a situation stimulates the curiosity of the educators (Daing & Mustapha, 2023).

In the field of education, it has been diverted towards a new framework referred to as the new normal. The new normal is an experience new to the educators. It brings along various environments, and educators have to adapt to these new environments, such as the discomfort and the ruggedness of the experience that these environments entail. This is a condition that calls for attention, and it is an imperative assignment—a call to action for teachers to respond to these new shifts and employ them to harness opportunities to counter the challenges posed by the new education terrain (Yeh & Tsai, 2022).

As central figures in school leadership, school heads are expected to carry the weight of both instructional and operational challenges. The challenges faced by teachers and other personnel under a school head's supervision inevitably become the school head's own challenges, expanding their responsibilities as administrators (Onai & Ligembe, 2022).

In light of the challenges brought by the digital era and the transition to the new normal, it is evident that school heads play a pivotal role in navigating educational transformations. While many have demonstrated resilience and adaptability in leading their schools through uncertainty, others continue to struggle under the weight of increased responsibilities and systemic pressures (Bozkurt & Sharma



,2020). The varying responses of school heads highlight the urgent need for sustained support, professional development, and a deeper understanding of their lived experiences. As education continues to evolve, recognizing and addressing the challenges school leaders face is crucial in ensuring they are equipped not only to survive but to thrive in leading meaningful, responsive, and effective learning environments.

The study highlighted the effectiveness of a school head is closely tied to their ability to support teaching and learning while navigating systemic pressures. The school leadership today requires a multidimensional skill set to manage increasing accountability demands, instructional quality, and community engagement (Hallinger, 2018).

## 2. Research Questions

This study explored the success stories of adaptive school heads in navigating their adaptability in the digital era in the Division of Iligan City for the School Year 2025-2026.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do school leaders use adaptive leadership to effectively lead digital transformation in schools?
2. What does effective school leadership look like in a digital era, and how can schools achieve it in the next five years?
3. What structures, strategies, and roles are needed to build a digitally empowered and collaborative school?
4. What actions will you take to sustain a strong digital leadership culture and support others in implementing it?

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1. Research Method Used

The study utilized the Appreciative Inquiry research design. The design is considered appropriate for appreciating the success stories by the school heads in navigating their adaptability in the digital era.

### 3.2. Research Setting

This study was conducted within the elementary and secondary schools of the Division of Iligan City. The Division of Iligan City has been actively implementing digital initiatives and blended learning approaches in response to the evolving demands of education in the new normal. This dynamic educational landscape offers a meaningful backdrop to appreciate the success stories of adaptive leadership amidst digital transformation.

### 3.3. Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were the Twelve (12) school heads specifically school principals, school in-charge from both elementary and secondary public schools within the Division of Iligan City. They are chosen through purposive sampling based on the following inclusion criteria: 1) school head for 3 years with performance rating of "recent outstanding" 2) Implementer of the school digital program and 3) willing to participate in the study.

### 3.4. Instruments of the Study

A researcher-made Appreciative Interview Guide was used in the study. This is a semi-structured interview tool designed to help school heads share high-point experiences, values, aspirations, and successes in leading schools in the digital era. It reflects the Discover and Dream phases of AI by uncovering what gives life to the organization or individual when they are at their best (Cooperrider, D., & Whitney, D., 2020).



All interviews were digitally recorded to capture the essence of the data and provided an accurate detailed account of the interview process. Following the interviews, a transcription of the process was made and a copy was sent to each respective participant to check for accuracy and validate the interview process.

### 3.5. Data Gathering Procedure

The following steps were strictly observed during the data collection process. Upon completion and validation of the research instruments, the researchers secured formal permission from the Dean of the Graduate School of Misamis University and the Schools Division Superintendent of DepEd-Iligan City to administer the study. Once approval was granted, the researchers oriented the selected participants on the purpose of the study and requested their voluntary and honest participation.

The validated appreciative interview guide was administered to the participants. All responses were then retrieved, and the results were coded, categorized, and translated into themes. The themes were analyzed and interpreted.

## 4. Results And Discussion

The analysis yielded four core themes that were drawn from the data: (1) Adaptive leadership to catalyze digital transformation in schools; (2) Empowering the visionary leadership in the technology-driven, collaborative future school; (3) Digital leadership for school transformation; and (4) Sustaining Digital Leadership Culture.

### 4.1. Adaptive Leadership as a Catalyst for Digital Transformation in Schools

Two subthemes further showed this broader picture of success in digital transformation: Cultivating a Culture of Continuous Learning and Collaboration, and Leading with Flexibility, Empathy, and Technological Adaptability.

*Cultivating a Culture of Continuous Learning and Collaboration.* This subtheme emphasizes how school administrators should foster an atmosphere that supports continuous professional development and peer-to-peer cooperation in order for adaptive leadership to flourish. SLAC sessions, workshops, and mentoring are just a few of the learning activities that educators and leaders often participate in. Collaboration promotes collective competence and confidence by ensuring that knowledge and skills—particularly those pertaining to digital tools—are shared across generations and ability levels. The school can sustain its digital transformation pace and foster the development of both teachers and students by fostering such a culture.

In order to foster cooperation, knowledge sharing, and a collective increase in digital competency within the school, P5 participated in ICT training that equipped the teacher with new digital abilities that they then shared with colleagues at the SLAC. According to P4, baby boomers enjoy and appreciate training that improves their digital abilities, which promotes teamwork and closes the gap in learning between generations, whereas millennial teachers readily adopt new technologies because they are tech-savvy. P7 promoted digital skills, teamwork, and a creative, encouraging learning atmosphere by assisting instructors in successfully incorporating technology into their lessons, providing mentorship to boost confidence, and encouraging collaboration through online platforms. According to P12, educators should welcome change by utilizing technology to improve instruction, foster teamwork among educators, and facilitate ongoing professional development, thereby establishing a creative, flexible, and student-focused learning environment. These assertions were corroborated by the statements of the individuals.

*"I was sent for training about ICT... I shared the knowledge to my co-teachers during the SLAC." (P5)*

*"Millennial teachers are more adaptive... baby boomers appreciated the training." (P4)*



*"Guided teachers in integrating technology into instruction, provided mentoring, encouraged collaboration using online platforms." (P7)*

*"Embrace change, use technology to empower learning, and foster collaboration and professional growth." (P12)*

The findings indicate that professional development is a shared, cooperative process in which teachers learn and teach, fostering a culture of reciprocal development. The results, which build on the previous findings, are in line with previous studies on digital and adaptive leadership in educational contexts. Research indicates that effective digital transformation requires adaptive leadership, which strikes a balance between people-centered approaches and technology expertise. For example, Maulana et al. (2024) stress that adaptive school leaders lead their organizations through digital transformation by encouraging flexibility, responsiveness, and ongoing education. This aligns with the participants' knowledge-sharing, mentorship, and teamwork methods. Paralleling the observed bridging of generational gaps in the current study, Windi Nur Oktaviani et al. (2025) find that successful school leaders foster a culture of collective competence where professional progress is promoted across generations.

Syauta, Titaley, and Pelupessy (2025) emphasize that resilient and cooperative leadership that promotes peer-to-peer learning is just as important to the success of digital transformation in schools as technological infrastructure. This is similar to how participants in SLAC sessions shared ICT skills to improve collective digital competence. Furthermore, adaptive leaders use empathy, adaptability, and strategic vision to empower educators, support professional development, and maintain a collaborative environment that is favorable to technology integration, according to transformational-digital leadership frameworks (Wijayati et al., 2024). Similarly, studies on leadership competency and digital fluency (Akhmad, 2024) highlight how leaders' flexibility and encouraging behaviors greatly boost teacher confidence and student involvement in technology-mediated learning.

The significance of adaptive leadership in fostering a shared, cooperative, and ever-changing professional culture is supported by this research taken together. In line with the experiences and strategies shared by study participants, they affirm that digital transformation in schools involves more than just implementing technology; it also entails creating an atmosphere where educators and learners are encouraged, inspired, and enabled to experiment.

*Leading with Flexibility, Empathy, and Technological Adaptability.* This subtheme stresses that adaptive leadership is about helping people through change with empathy and responsiveness, not merely about utilizing technology. Leaders respond to changing issues, such as pandemics or the advent of new digital platforms, by modifying policies, teaching tactics, and support systems. Understanding teacher needs, offering practical assistance, and acknowledging accomplishments are their top priorities. Flexibility enables managers to effectively integrate technology while protecting employees' mental and professional health.

In order to assist teachers, develop their digital competency, enhance their confidence, and create a collaborative learning environment, P2 individually assisted them in exploring digital platforms and listened to their challenges with empathy and patience. P1 underlined that flexibility, ongoing education, and careful implementation of technology are key components of adaptive leadership, which flourishes in a digital school. By taking this strategy, leaders may effectively address issues, encourage teachers' professional development, promote creativity, and establish a dynamic, technologically advanced learning environment. In order to improve teaching and learning, P8 emphasized that leaders should maintain their flexibility and use technology-based approaches. Teachers and students can encourage active involvement, collaborative effort, and shared ownership by participating in school activities together. This fosters engagement, creativity, and a welcoming, inclusive learning atmosphere. In order to maintain continuity in learning, P10 encouraged leaders to exhibit flexibility by effectively dealing with setbacks and challenges. They actively plan teacher training sessions to improve skills,



build resilience, and encourage a culture of continuous learning and readiness among the school community. The narratives of the participants supported these conclusions.

*"I personally guided teachers in using digital platforms and listened to their challenges with patience and empathy." P2:*

*"Adaptive leadership thrives on flexibility, learning, and smart use of technology in a digital school." (P1)*

*"Be flexible and apply technology-based strategy... let teachers and learners participate in school activities." P8*

*"Leaders demonstrate adaptability by responding to disruptions... organized training sessions for teachers." P10*

Results show that adopting technology by itself does not characterize adaptive leadership. In order to empower educators and provide seamless transitions during digital changes, empathy, responsiveness, and flexibility are essential.

The results also indicate that adaptive leadership is characterized by flexibility, empathy, and technological adaptability, which are crucial for assisting educators and students in navigating the digital transformation. It also promotes collaboration. This is consistent with study by Wijayati et al. (2024), who contend that transformational-digital leaders use strategic technology use in conjunction with emotional intelligence to inspire and assist their employees during times of transition. Similarly, Tarali (2025) highlights that responsiveness and empathy are essential skills for maintaining a positive school culture, especially in situations when teachers find it difficult to embrace new digital technologies.

These ideas are reflected in the participants' actions of offering practical assistance, paying attention to teacher concerns, and modifying plans of action to accommodate new demands. This suggests that effective leadership in digital schools requires more than simply technical know-how. This viewpoint is further supported by Akhmad (2024), who points out that flexible leaders who offer focused professional development boost teacher confidence and student involvement, fostering a creative and resilient learning environment. In order to ensure that school communities are able to cope with change and sustain digital transformation over time, the experiences of the participants thus support the idea that adaptive leadership in the digital age necessitates a balance of technological proficiency, emotional intelligence, and flexibility.

The findings imply that effective leadership in digital schools extends beyond technical skills, emphasizing the importance of adaptive leadership that integrates flexibility, emotional intelligence, and responsiveness. By offering practical support, addressing teacher concerns, and adjusting plans to meet emerging demands, school heads foster teacher confidence, engagement, and resilience. This approach not only strengthens instructional practices but also sustains digital transformation over time, creating a creative, collaborative, and adaptable learning environment. As Akhmad (2024) notes, balancing technological proficiency with human-centered leadership enables schools to navigate change effectively, ensuring that both educators and students can thrive in evolving digital contexts.

#### **4.2. Empowering Visionary Leadership for a Technology-Driven and Collaborative School of the Future**

The dedication to future expansion was further emphasized by two subthemes: Technology-Driven Learning and Empowerment and Visionary and Collaborative Leadership for Digital Transformation. The first subtheme emphasizes how vision and teamwork are essential components of good digital leadership, which engages stakeholders to promote creativity, shared accountability, and ongoing school development. The second subtheme centers on how digital leadership empowers educators and learners by using technology to promote creativity, education, career advancement, fair access, data-driven choices, and significant involvement for a vibrant, digital future.



*Visionary and Collaborative Leadership for Digital Transformation.* This sub-theme stresses that collaborative methods and a clear vision are essential for effective school leadership in the digital age. In addition to being tech-savvy, leaders are visionary, establishing objectives for cutting-edge learning environments and encouraging collaboration between educators, learners, and stakeholders. Working together guarantees that everyone is accountable for carrying out digital projects, trying out novel concepts, and maintaining a continuous development culture. Schools can methodically move toward becoming digital leadership models by establishing a common vision and involving stakeholders. By offering continual training, participating in cooperative planning, and cultivating a school climate that welcomes change, appreciates flexibility, promotes experimentation, and fosters creativity among educators and learners, P1 was able to accomplish success. Through the development of a common vision, P5 helps all teachers coordinate their efforts in order to accomplish the objectives of digital transformation. This promotes teamwork, guarantees that initiatives are implemented cohesively, instills a sense of collective responsibility, and inspires educators to develop and successfully incorporate technology. P12 is based on a common goal of using technology to improve learning, active support from stakeholders, and good teacher cooperation. Improvements in instruction and student results that are inclusive, creative, and long-lasting are guaranteed by this collaborative method. The accounts of the participants supported these conclusions.

*"We got there through continuous training, collaborative planning, and a culture that embraces change and experimentation." P1*

*"Build a shared vision where every teacher focuses on hitting the goal for digital transformation." P5*

*"Strong collaboration, stakeholder support, and a shared vision of using technology to enhance learning for all." P12*

Results show that visionary leadership unites all school personnel in pursuit of a single goal when paired with collaborative methods. Teachers, students, and stakeholders are able to collaborate because of this alignment, which promotes shared responsibility, efficient communication, and coordinated activities. In order to ensure that digital transformation is not only successfully executed but also maintained over time, such synergy fosters innovation, strategic technology utilization, and continual development.

Consistent with these findings, the study emphasizes that successful school leadership in the digital age necessitates not just a distinct vision but also cooperative methods that actively involve all stakeholders.

This viewpoint is supported by research, which indicates that schools with leaders who promote cooperation and express a forward-thinking vision have a higher chance of achieving long-term digital transformation (Sri Nuraini, 2019; Wijayati et al., 2024). In order to foster collective accountability and guarantee the smooth execution of digital initiatives, visionary leaders establish common objectives, promote experimentation, and include educators, students, and stakeholders in decision-making (Oktaviani et al., 2025).

These results are supported by the experiences of the participants: P1 stressed ongoing training, cooperative planning, and creating a culture that welcomes innovation and change; P5 emphasized the significance of coordinating every teacher's efforts toward accomplishing digital transformation goals; and P12 emphasized that strong collaboration, stakeholder support, and a shared vision are essential to improving learning outcomes.

The integration of technology with human-centered, collaborative, and strategic approaches to school development is what Maulana et al. (2024) characterize as the characteristic of effective digital leadership. As a result, schools create synergy that fosters creativity, strategic technology use, and continuous professional and organizational development when visionary leadership is combined with



cooperative practices. This alignment promotes a long-lasting culture of continual development in addition to guaranteeing the effective implementation of digital initiatives.

This alignment promotes a sustained culture of continuous development and adaptive learning in addition to guaranteeing the effective implementation of digital initiatives.

*Empowerment and Technology-Driven Learning.* This sub-theme emphasizes how digital leadership is both technology-enabled and human-centered, enabling educators and learners to use digital tools for creativity, learning, and meaningful engagement. Leaders provide equal access, make data-driven decisions, promote ongoing professional development, and seamlessly incorporate technology into teaching and learning. Technology boosts productivity, facilitates interactive, research-based education, and gets students ready for a digital, global, and dynamic future. With more freedom and creative agency, empowerment guarantees that educators and learners can securely adjust to new developments.

P2 is a prime example of digital leadership, with smooth technology integration, self-assured educators, students interacting through interactive platforms, and parents linked through open online systems that promote creativity, teamwork, and a cutting-edge, technologically advanced learning environment. With the help of ongoing professional development and a school culture that promotes cooperation, creativity, and the successful integration of digital tools for better teaching and learning outcomes, P7 uses technology to increase learning and collaboration. P9 uses technology to improve teaching and learning by facilitating quick access to reports, streamlining submissions, and conducting effective data analysis. This makes lessons more interesting, dynamic, and pleasurable while also assisting with informed decision-making and creating a vibrant, student-centered learning environment. These visions were corroborated by the participant accounts.

*"Five years from now, our school is a model of digital leadership where technology is seamlessly integrated... Teachers confidently use digital tools, students learn through interactive and creative platforms, and parents stay connected through transparent online systems." P2*

*"Leaders use technology to enhance learning, cooperation... achieved through continuous professional development and fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation." P7*

*"Easy report access, submission, data analysis... teaching and learning are fun, interactive, and very interesting." P9*

The results indicate that technology has the greatest influence when it supports human development, meaningful contact, and innovation rather than just automating tasks. Teachers and students become active participants in the school's digital journey when they are empowered, which encourages innovation, participation, and ownership. This strategy guarantees that learning, teamwork, professional growth, and the educational process as a whole are all improved by digital transformation.

Research shows that technology works best when schools focus on empowerment. Voogt et al. (2022) explain that teachers integrate digital tools more effectively when they receive training, autonomy, and support. Agustin et al. (2023) add that strong leadership improves engagement by providing access to tools and clear digital systems.

The participants' views reflect these ideas. P2 noted that digital use in their school feels natural and consistent. This aligns with Fullan and Langworthy's (2023) idea of "technology-enabled empowerment." P7 emphasized ongoing training, which supports Ertmer et al.'s (2022) claim that leadership builds teacher confidence. P9 described better data management and more interactive lessons, echoing Sung et al.'s (2022) findings on efficient and engaging digital practices. When leaders provide support, training, and access, teachers and students benefit. Digital learning becomes more engaging, creative, and effective.



### 4.3. Digital Leadership for School Transformation

The main theme illustrates the central role of leadership in driving digital transformation in schools. Digital leadership combines visionary planning, strategic technology use, fostering innovation, and promoting collaboration among all stakeholders. School heads guide this process by setting a clear digital vision, providing resources, supporting teacher development, and monitoring initiatives. Teachers act as innovators and facilitators, integrating technology effectively into instruction. Meanwhile, parents, community members, and technology partners contribute support, feedback, and resources.

This theme shows that digital transformation is not just about using technology. It requires leadership that empowers the school community, encourages professional growth, and maintains collaborative efforts.

Findings emphasize that digital leadership aligns infrastructure, training, and teamwork toward meaningful transformation. Technology adoption alone is not enough. Visionary leadership that fosters innovation, builds skills, and engages the community is what drives sustainable improvement.

The main theme brings together the two sub-themes: School Capacity & Readiness and Leadership & Collaboration. It shows how a school's infrastructure, human resources, and collaborative culture are all connected under effective digital leadership.

*School Capacity & Readiness.* This sub-theme reflects the school's capacity to support digital transformation through its infrastructure, resources, and professional development programs. Schools need stable ICT systems—such as reliable internet, functional computers, and consistent electricity—along with accessible learning tools and continuous training for teachers and staff. When these elements are present, the school can create an environment that supports digital learning, innovation, and individualized instruction.

P1 described achieving this vision through strong digital infrastructure, ongoing professional development, and a collaborative culture among leaders, teachers, and stakeholders. This combination encourages innovation, supports effective technology use, and sustains a thriving digital learning environment. P4 shared a similar view, emphasizing solid infrastructure, regular teacher training, and collective efforts that promote innovation and long-term digital integration. P9 explained that classrooms and laboratories were equipped with fast and reliable internet, allowing continuous training and programming activities. Teachers and staff participated in professional development, while 24/7 connectivity supported learning, collaboration, and consistent implementation of digital initiatives. These insights were affirmed through the participants' testimonies.

*"To make this vision a reality, we need strong digital infrastructure, ongoing professional development...all collaborating to foster a thriving digital learning environment." (P1)*

*"Classrooms should be equipped with more computers if possible in 1:1 ratio for learner to computer...Lessons are now structured and embedded into the computer package and learning becomes highly individualized to address learners' needs, interests and styles." (P4)*

*"All laboratories and classrooms have access to fast internet connectivity. Attend digital trainings and programming...Secure Fast Internet connectivity 24/7." (P9)*

The findings further suggested that a school's readiness for digital learning depended on both tangible and intangible factors. Tangible resources included hardware, stable internet, and software. Intangible capacities involved ongoing training, professional development, and a supportive learning culture. By investing in these areas, schools equipped teachers and students with the skills, confidence, and environment needed to engage in meaningful, technology-driven learning.

Research consistently shows that effective digital transformation depends not only on technology but also on the strength of leadership that guides and sustains change. Leithwood et al. (2020) note that



digital leadership involves setting a clear vision, allocating resources wisely, and building capacity over time. These ideas mirror the participants' descriptions of strong infrastructure and ongoing teacher development.

Aldosemani (2022) adds that leaders who invest in ICT infrastructure and support teacher growth create environments where digital learning can flourish. This supports the view that readiness depends on both available resources and teacher skills. Tondeur et al. (2019) also found that collaborative school cultures, combined with accessible technologies, strongly influence teachers' willingness and ability to use digital tools. This echoes the accounts of P1, P4, and P9, who emphasized stable connectivity, structured training, and a supportive school climate. Sheninger and Murray (2022) argue that digital leadership works best when infrastructure, human resources, and community partnerships function as a unified system. This aligns with the combined sub-themes of Capacity & Readiness and Leadership & Collaboration. Together, these studies affirm that digital transformation succeeds when school leaders provide both the material support and the professional culture needed to empower teachers and students in a technology-rich environment.

*Leadership & Collaboration.* This sub-theme indicates the shared role of school leaders, teachers, and stakeholders in advancing digital transformation. Leadership involves more than setting a vision and providing resources. It also requires modeling adaptive practices and encouraging collaboration. Teachers serve as innovators and facilitators of learning, while stakeholders offer support, feedback, and resources. Through strong collaboration, all groups work toward a common goal: improving teaching, learning, and digital literacy.

P2 explained that leaders provide direction, set clear goals, and model positive attitudes toward digital change. Teachers act as innovators and lifelong learners, while stakeholders contribute support, feedback, and resources. Together, they help sustain effective digital transformation. P5 emphasized setting a clear digital vision, practicing adaptive leadership, and ensuring resource provision. Teachers integrate technology into instruction and personal learning, while learners, parents, and other partners support innovation and responsible technology use. Their combined efforts strengthen the school's digital development. P10 noted the importance of regular monitoring and evaluation. Continuous assessment, feedback, and strategy adjustments help improve school practices. Clear communication with teachers, students, parents, and community partners builds trust and encourages collaboration. This shared effort promotes ownership of initiatives, supports better decision-making, and sustains effective teaching, learning, and digital transformation. These points were affirmed by the participants' testimonies.

*"School heads must serve as visionary leaders who set clear goals, provide resources, and model a positive attitude toward digital change. Teachers must embrace their role as innovators and lifelong learners...Stakeholders must offer support through collaboration, feedback, and resource sharing."* (P2)

*"For school head: set a clear digital vision, model adaptive leadership, provide resources and support. For teachers: integrate technology effectively in teaching and personal learning...For stakeholders: learners take active role as digital learners and innovators, parents monitor responsible use of technology at home..."* (P5)

*"Strengthen the Monitoring and Evaluation regularly, and assess progress, gather feedback, and adjust strategies to ensure continuous improvement. Communicate regularly with teachers, students, parents, and community partners to build buy-in and collaborative effort."* (P10)

Findings showed that leadership and collaboration are essential for digital transformation. Infrastructure and training alone are not enough. A shared vision, supported by teamwork among leaders, teachers, students, and stakeholders, ensures meaningful and sustainable technology integration that aligns with the school's goals.



Recent literature supports the participants' views. Hew et al. (2022) found that digital initiatives succeed when leaders present a clear technological vision, model openness to innovation, and create structures that empower teachers. This reflects the practices described by P2, P5, and P10. Ng and Park (2021) also noted that teachers gain confidence in technology use when they work in collaborative settings with shared planning, open communication, and steady peer support.

Studies also affirm the role of stakeholders. Salmon et al. (2023) reported that parents and community partners contribute by providing resources, joining planning efforts, and giving feedback—echoing the participants' emphasis on shared responsibility. Ainley and Fraser (2022) stressed that regular monitoring, communication, and feedback help build trust and keep digital strategies responsive to school needs. This aligns with P10's focus on continuous evaluation and dialogue.

Together, these studies confirm that strong leadership and a collaborative culture reinforce each other. They help shape a shared vision, strengthen professional relationships, and support long-term, meaningful digital transformation.

#### 4.4. Sustaining Digital Leadership Culture

The main theme shows the shared commitment of school leaders and staff to make digital innovation, collaboration, and professional growth part of daily school work. It reflects both individual efforts, such as building skills, working together, and mentoring and system-level support through digital tools, infrastructure, policies, resources, and stakeholder involvement.

This theme also stresses that sustaining a digital leadership culture is more than using technology. It requires an environment where teachers, learners, and stakeholders feel supported and empowered. Continuous training, sharing of good practices, teamwork, and recognition of achievements help keep this culture strong. Policies, budgeting, resources, and partnerships ensure that digital initiatives can grow and remain stable.

The two sub-themes, Professional Growth & Collaboration and Digital Integration & Support—work together. They show how people and systems combine to maintain a strong and sustainable digital leadership culture in the school.

*Professional Growth and Collaboration.* This sub-theme reflects the participants' dedication to building teacher capacity, strengthening teamwork, and promoting mentoring and open communication. It shows their belief that a digital leadership culture grows through steady professional development and regular collaboration. Shared learning, peer support, and a climate that welcomes new ideas help both teachers and school leaders improve their digital skills and the quality of instruction.

P1 focused on ongoing training, active collaboration, and the consistent use of digital tools. They encouraged a supportive environment where staff share practices, work together, and help one another solve problems. On the other hand, P2 sought to build a culture where teachers communicate openly and share innovative ideas. They valued the regular review of digital practices to ensure they improve teaching, learning, and daily school operations.

P7 showed a strong commitment to digital learning and mentoring. By guiding colleagues, sharing effective strategies, and offering constructive feedback, they helped strengthen teamwork and promote continuous growth. P10 emphasized creating spaces for teamwork, peer mentoring, and professional learning communities. These efforts allowed teachers and students to learn from one another, build confidence, and develop their skills together.

The participants' experiences collectively show that collaboration, steady training, and mutual support help sustain a positive and growing digital culture in the school.

*"I am committed to ongoing teacher training, promoting collaboration, staying updated on digital tools, and fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. We can support one*



*another by sharing best practices, collaborating regularly, offering encouragement, and collectively solving challenges as a team.” (P1)*

*“I will promote a culture of collaboration and open communication, where innovative ideas are shared and celebrated, and regularly evaluate our digital practices to make sure they truly improve teaching, learning, and school operations.” (P2)*

*“My commitment of course, continuous digital learning, mentor teachers and foster collaboration. Share our best practices, have open hearts to help others and provide positive feedback and support to encourage continuous learning and innovation.” (P7)*

*“Create opportunities for teamwork, peer mentoring, and professional learning communities where staff and students can learn from each other’s experiences.” (P10)*

This analysis is supported by current research. A recent review of teacher professional development showed that digital integration works best when teachers receive ongoing mentoring, peer support, and strong institutional backing (Frontiers, 2025). Studies on professional learning communities also found that regular sharing of resources and collective problem-solving help teachers develop stronger digital skills and use technology more confidently in class (Owolabi et al., 2025). Research on mentoring in design-based learning further showed that feedback from mentors improves teachers’ digital competence and strengthens their confidence in creating technology-rich lessons (Science STEM study, 2025).

Leadership studies in the Philippines likewise emphasize the role of clear vision, strategic resource allocation, and collaborative management in sustaining digital transformation (Baldera, 2025). Qualitative work in Filipino schools also highlights the importance of continuous mentorship, strong learning communities, and steady investments in infrastructure for building teachers’ digital literacy (Ablasa & Liwan, 2024).

Taken together, these studies support your interpretation: digital leadership becomes sustainable when mentoring and collaboration are paired with supportive policies, resources, and an enabling school culture.

*Digital Integration and Support.* This sub-theme focuses on the systemic and infrastructural aspects of sustaining digital leadership. Participants stressed the need for access to digital tools, proper resource allocation, clear policies, stakeholder engagement, and formalized digital practices. These measures ensure that technology integration is not solely an individual effort but is embedded within school systems, supported by policies, and maintained through collaboration.

P3 emphasized promoting the use of digital tools to support teachers and learners. They focused on aligning technology use with the goals of staff and students, ensuring that skills and knowledge are applied effectively to improve teaching, learning, and school performance, while P4 develops clear policies to guide technology integration, ensuring alignment with the enhanced School Improvement Plan (E-SIP). Policies are shared with all stakeholders, and best practices are exchanged among pilot schools with support from education partners. This fosters collaboration, consistency, and long-term success in sustaining digital initiatives across the division.

P6 allocates sustainable budgets and provides the necessary digital materials and equipment. They stressed the importance of engaging stakeholders to contribute resources and support the continuity and success of the school’s digital transformation. On the other hand, P9 highlighted allocating a dedicated budget for digitalization, offering annual professional development for teachers, and organizing yearly stakeholder meetings. They recommended sharing best practices and inviting teachers and school heads to conduct orientations and trainings to ensure effective, sustainable, and continuously improving use of digital platforms.

These experiences collectively show that infrastructure, policy, resources, and collaboration are essential for sustaining a strong digital leadership culture in schools.



*“To patronize the utilization of digital tools to pursue the interest of the teachers and learners in the integration of ICT to learning process. Support always the goals of the learners, teachers and personnel and put into applications all they have learned.” (P3)*

*“For sustainability and institutionalization of this direction, the school head will craft the school policy on the digitalization of learning. This must be reflected in the school enhanced School Improvement Plan (E-SIP) and communicated to the stakeholders. Sharing of best practices among the pilot schools in the division with the support of education partners.” (P4)*

*“Provision of budget for this purpose investing a big amount with sustainability. Provision of logistics such as digital materials and equipment also is necessary. Ask support from stakeholders to collaborate this vision with sustainability.” (P6)*

*“Allocate budget for digitalization, teachers annual advancement training, annual convergence with stakeholders. Maybe through adopting best practices and invite teachers, school heads to conduct orientation, trainings on how they sustain digital platforms.” (P9)*

Research on school leadership and digital transformation shows that sustaining a digital leadership culture requires both individual initiative and strong systemic support (Reis Andersson, 2024; Dacer, Magana, Asis, & Volante, 2024). The Digital Integration and Support sub-theme shows how leaders provide access to digital tools, allocate budgets, set policies, and engage stakeholders to make technology use sustainable.

P3 emphasized using digital tools aligned with learners’ and teachers’ goals to enhance teaching and learning. P4 focused on clear policies guiding technology integration, aligning them with the enhanced School Improvement Plan (E-SIP), and sharing best practices with partner schools. P6 highlighted budgeting for digital resources and involving stakeholders to secure support for long-term continuity. P9 stressed the importance of funding digitalization, organizing annual teacher training, and convening stakeholders to ensure effective and ongoing use of digital platforms.

Experiences align with research showing that lack of resources and infrastructure can hinder digital governance. Partnerships and active stakeholder engagement, however, strengthen the sustainability of digital initiatives (Dacer et al., 2024; RSIS International, n.d.; MDPI, n.d.). Overall, embedding digital practices requires systemic support through policies, budgets, infrastructure, and collaboration to ensure resilient and lasting digital innovation in schools.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are reached:

- Adaptive leadership drives successful digital transformation by combining flexibility, empathy, and technology skills to support teachers and students, foster collaboration, and sustain an inclusive, resilient, and continuously improving learning environment.
- Visionary leadership drives sustainable digital transformation by integrating technology with human-centered collaboration, fostering shared vision, professional growth, and stakeholder engagement to enhance learning and innovation.
- Successful digital transformation requires visionary leadership, collaboration, and strong infrastructure, where school heads guide, empower, and engage stakeholders to foster meaningful, student-centered, and sustainable learning.
- Sustaining a digital leadership culture requires both committed, collaborative school leaders and staff, and strong systemic support to ensure effective technology use, enhanced learning, and lasting innovation.



- It is recommended that school heads strengthen and sustain:
- adaptive leadership by combining professional development, collaboration, and human-centered approaches with technological proficiency to empower teachers, enhance student engagement, and sustain resilient, innovative digital transformation.
- visionary and collaborative leadership by combining a clear vision, stakeholder engagement, professional development, and equitable technology use to sustain digital transformation and foster an adaptive, innovative, and collaborative learning environment.
- digital transformation by combining visionary and collaborative leadership with professional development, strong infrastructure, and a culture of shared responsibility and continuous learning to enhance teaching, engagement, and long-term school improvement.
- a digital leadership culture by combining professional development, collaboration, and mentoring with strategic policies, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement to ensure continuous innovation and long-term digital transformation success.

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