

Exploring the Readiness of Schools for Distributed Leadership: Perspectives of Private School Teachers in Guyana

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Abstract

This study investigated K-12 private school teachers' perceptions in Guyana about their schools' readiness for transitioning to distributed leadership, an approach emphasizing collaborative management and decision-making. Unlike traditional leadership models, distributed leadership encourages participation from all stakeholders. The study focuses on several aspects of distributed leadership, including alignment with mission and vision, leadership support, organizational culture, professional development, trust, staff competencies, and resource allocation. The research utilized a quantitative descriptive approach. The main objective was to collect and analyze data systematically to evaluate teachers' perceptions of their schools' readiness for distributed leadership within the private school sector in Guyana. Data was gathered through a survey assessing teachers' views on eleven distributed leadership dimensions: leadership roles, strategic planning, curriculum development, community involvement, and data-driven decision-making. The findings show a balanced view of leadership roles and commitment to the school's mission and vision but highlight challenges in strategic resource management, parent engagement, shared accountability, and data utilization for decision-making. The study underscores the need for robust professional development to foster collaborative and innovative practices, deeming it crucial for successful distributed leadership implementation and effective, inclusive schooling. It provides valuable insights for administrators and policymakers on the benefits of a collaborative approach to educational leadership in K-12 schools.

Keywords

Distributed Leadership, School Readiness, Private School. Private School Teachers

1. Introduction

In the field of education, several researchers promote distributed leadership as a viable alternative for the effective leadership of both public and private K-12 schools (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2006; Harris, 2008; Bolden, 2007; Bolden, 2011; Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016; Tian et al., 2016). In theory and practice, distributed leadership emphasizes the dispersion of leadership responsibilities across various school community stakeholders, fostering effective collaboration and reciprocal accountability at every level (García Torres, 2019; Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016). Distributed leadership differs from traditional models by emphasizing a shared, collaborative decision-making process where leadership functions are spread among individuals rather than centralized in a single leader (Harris, 2008). This approach has been linked to improved organizational outcomes, such as teacher collaboration, student achievement, and school innovation (Leithwood et al., 2006). However, the readiness of schools to shift towards this model is contingent upon several factors, including the current leadership structure, the alignment of the school's mission and vision, the professional development of staff, and the culture of trust and psychological safety within the organization (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). This research problem seeks to explore the extent to which private school teachers in Guyana perceive their schools as being ready to adopt a distributed leadership model.

In the context of private schools in Guyana, where educational leadership has traditionally been a top-down approach, the transition to distributed leadership represents a significant paradigm shift. Equally, in Guyana, private schools play a critical role in the educational landscape, serving various parent and student communities—religious, secular, local and international, and offering diverse curricula. While they operate within the boundaries of the Ministry of Education's legal requirements, private schools have a significant degree of autonomy, making them ideal institutions for engaging in innovative, evidence-based leadership practices. Also, given Guyana's unique socio-cultural and educational landscape, there is a need to investigate the specific challenges and opportunities that private school teachers perceive in transitioning to distributed leadership.

The literature suggests that successful implementation of distributed leadership requires re-evaluating traditional power structures, a commitment to continuous professional development, and establishing a school culture that values and supports distributed leadership practices (Gronn, 2002; Harris & Spillane, 2008). On the other hand, transitioning to distributed leadership is challenging (Harris & Spillane, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2009; García Torres, 2019). Factors such as precise alignment of mission and vision, effective stakeholder engagement, receptive organizational culture, and stakeholders' receptiveness are essential determinants of private schools' readiness for such a shift (Harris, 2008; Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016).

The private education sector in Guyana plays a vital role in the country's educational landscape, offering an alternative to the public school system. Private

schools in Guyana cater to students at the primary and secondary levels, providing a range of educational options. These institutions often follow various curricula, including international programs like Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC). While private education in Guyana is known for its diversity and quality, it tends to be more expensive than public education, limiting access primarily to families with higher income levels. The sector includes religious-affiliated and secular schools, with some institutions serving the expatriate and international community. Private schools in Guyana are subject to some levels of government regulations and oversight to ensure that they meet educational standards.

Although it has a smaller enrollment than the public sector, the private education sector in Guyana has demonstrated resilience and adaptability. Many private schools focus on providing a nurturing and academically rigorous environment, often preparing students for national and international examinations such as the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) and the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE). While challenges such as affordability and competition with the public education system persist, private schools continue to contribute to the educational development of Guyana by offering diverse educational opportunities and helping to maintain educational standards and choices for families in the country.

Given the transformative potential of distributed leadership, this study offers a unique opportunity to examine leadership status in Guyana's private school setting. The findings provide valuable data that school administrators, policymakers, teachers, and other key stakeholders can draw on to enhance current leadership practices that are effective and contextually relevant. This study, therefore, addresses a gap in the literature by focusing on the perceptions of those directly involved in the educational process within a context that has not been extensively studied. It aims to contribute to the broader discourse on educational leadership in Guyanese private schools and provide insights that could inform policy and practice in public school educational settings.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership is a conceptual and practical framework within organizations characterized by the collective leadership approach, where leadership roles and responsibilities are shared among multiple individuals rather than centralized in a single leader. This framework suggests that leadership is stretched over the social and situational contexts of the organization (Spillane et al., 2004). It operates on the premise that expertise and initiative are distributed across various organizational levels, and it involves the collaboration and influence of both formal and informal leaders in decision-making processes (Gronn, 2002). Distributed leadership is not merely delegating tasks but empowering individuals at all levels to actively contribute to leadership functions and organizational out-

comes (Harris, 2008). This approach emphasizes the importance of interactions among leaders, followers, and situations involving multiple actors and their activities tied to specific contexts (Spillane, 2006). Therefore, distributed leadership is seen as a way to leverage the collective potential of an organization's members to enhance decision-making, foster innovation, and improve the effectiveness and adaptability of the organization as a whole.

2.2. Factors Influencing Schools' Readiness for Distributed Leadership

Schools' readiness for distributed leadership refers to the capacity of their leadership teams, teachers, supporting staff, students, and other relevant stakeholders to share leadership responsibilities and decision-making authority across various individuals and roles within their communities. This concept is rooted in the idea that leadership should not be concentrated solely in the hands of one person, for example, the head of school or principal, but should be dispersed amongst different stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, students, and other vital members of their communities such as Parent Teachers Associations, to enhance their overall effectiveness, including students' performance (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2006; Harris, 2008; Bolden, 2011; Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016). This distributed leadership approach to schooling also recognizes that leadership is a collective endeavour where multiple stakeholders, regardless of their formal titles, play vital roles in the leadership process (Harris & Spillane, 2008). In practice, distributed leadership goes beyond merely delegating tasks to take advantage of the capabilities and experience across schools. As a result, it promotes a shared commitment and responsibility for leadership, thus creating more innovative, flexible, and responsive school environments that meet the needs of their school communities (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2006; Harris & Spillane, 2008; Mascall et al., 2009; Woods & Gronn, 2009).

A variety of factors, both internal and external, influence a school's readiness for distributed leadership.

First, a school's organizational culture determines its readiness for distributed leadership. As Harris (2009) highlights, a school culture that promotes collaboration, openness, and collective decision-making creates a fertile ground for distributed leadership to flourish. In such environments, the norms and values align with shared leadership principles, facilitating a smoother transition to this approach. A culture of collaboration implies that staff members are accustomed to working together, sharing ideas, and valuing each other's contributions. Openness refers to the willingness to consider new ideas and approaches, a critical aspect for any institution looking to shift its leadership paradigm. Collective decision-making ensures that different perspectives are considered and decisions are made democratically and inclusively. When these elements are present in a school's culture, adopting distributed leadership becomes a natural progression rather than a disruptive change.

Conversely, the shift to distributed leadership can be challenging in schools

where the culture is deeply entrenched in hierarchy and centralized decision-making. Such cultures often feature a top-down approach where decisions are made by a few individuals in positions of authority, with little input from others (Bush & Gayover, 2014). In these settings, introducing distributed leadership requires structural changes and a significant shift in mindset and attitudes (Harris, 2009). Overcoming resistance in these environments involves addressing deeply rooted beliefs about leadership and authority. In this context, Bush and Glover (2014) emphasize the difficulty of moving away from a top-down approach, which is characterized by decision-making concentrated in the hands of a few. Harris (2009) further elaborates on the need for a change in mindset and attitudes, highlighting the importance of shifting the school culture to embrace the principles of distributed leadership. Equally, Fullan (2020) points out the necessity of addressing and challenging the traditional beliefs about leadership and authority, which are often deeply ingrained in the school's culture. This holistic approach is crucial for successfully implementing distributed leadership in schools with a more hierarchical and centralized legacy.

Second, leadership support and commitment to transitioning to distributed leadership in schools are crucial. Spillane et al. (2004) underscore the importance of the support from principals and senior staff in this process. Their commitment to adopting and actively modelling distributed leadership practices is pivotal in setting a positive precedent for the school community. Leadership in this context goes beyond mere endorsement; it requires active engagement in distributed leadership practices. School leaders, particularly principals and senior staff, must demonstrate their commitment in words and actions. They are critical in creating an environment where distributed leadership is accepted, encouraged, and valued. One of the essential aspects of this commitment is the willingness to delegate authority. Delegation here involves more than just assigning tasks; it means empowering staff at various school levels to make decisions and take on leadership roles in their areas of expertise (Harris, 2009). This empowerment is essential in distributed leadership as it fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among staff.

Furthermore, school leaders need to encourage leadership at all levels. This encouragement can take various forms, such as providing opportunities for professional development, offering platforms for staff to voice their ideas and opinions, and recognizing and rewarding leadership initiatives taken by staff (Leithwood, 2007). By doing so, leaders not only cultivate a culture of leadership throughout the school but also demonstrate their genuine commitment to the principles of distributed leadership.

Third, the role of professional development and training in equipping staff for the challenges of distributed leadership is pivotal. Bush and Glover (2014) assert the importance of such initiatives, noting that they are essential for imparting the skills and knowledge required for effective distributed leadership. Training programs focusing on collaborative leadership, effective communication, and conflict resolution are particularly crucial. These areas are fundamental to the

distributed leadership model, as they address the core competencies needed for effective collaboration and shared decision-making (Harris, 2009). Collaborative leadership training helps staff understand how to work effectively in teams, share leadership roles, and leverage collective expertise (Leithwood, 2007). Effective communication is another critical area, as distributed leadership relies heavily on open and transparent communication channels (Gronn, 2002). Training in this area can help staff learn how to communicate clearly, listen actively, and convey ideas effectively, all essential for collaborative work environments.

Conflict resolution is also a vital component of training for distributed leadership. Given that distributed leadership involves multiple stakeholders with potentially differing viewpoints, navigating and resolving conflicts is crucial (Spillane et al., 2004). Training in conflict resolution equips staff with the tools to handle disagreements constructively and maintain a positive working environment. Such training ensures that the principles of distributed leadership are not just theoretical concepts for staff members but are integrated into their everyday practices. This integration is necessary for successfully implementing distributed leadership, as it allows the principles to be lived and experienced within the school's daily operations (Fullan, 2020; García Torres, 2019; Liu et al., 2020).

Fourth, trust and psychological safety are paramount in distributed leadership in schools. Edmondson (1999) emphasizes the critical role of psychological safety in fostering a conducive environment for distributed leadership. Psychological safety refers to the ability to express and voice one's opinions, ideas, and concerns without fear of reprisal or negative consequences. This concept is fundamental in creating a school culture where staff members feel secure and valued, thus encouraging open communication and risk-taking.

Trust, closely linked to psychological safety, is equally essential in a distributed leadership framework. Bryk and Schneider (2002) discuss the importance of relational trust in educational settings, pointing out that trust among teachers, administrators, and other staff is crucial for effective collaboration and shared decision-making. When trust is present, individuals are more likely to engage in meaningful dialogue, share responsibilities, and work cooperatively towards common goals. Moreover, developing trust and psychological safety in school requires intentional effort and strategies. Leaders play a crucial role in this process. Kouzes and Posner (2002) suggest that leaders can foster trust by being consistent, reliable, and open in their interactions with staff. Demonstrating respect, offering support, and valuing the contributions of all school community members are also vital in building a trusting environment.

The relationship between trust, psychological safety, and distributed leadership is bidirectional. While distributed leadership can enhance trust and psychological safety by promoting shared decision-making and valuing diverse perspectives, a pre-existing foundation of trust and psychological safety can also facilitate the implementation and effectiveness of distributed leadership practices (Fullan, 2020).

Fifth, the competencies and skills of school staff are integral to the effective implementation of distributed leadership. [Leithwood \(2007\)](#) have articulated that staff members with strong collaboration, decision-making, and innovation skills are particularly well-suited for engaging in a distributed leadership model. These skills are essential for ensuring that leadership is not just a top-down process but is shared across various levels and roles within the school. Collaboration is a critical competency in this regard. Effective collaboration involves working with others, valuing diverse perspectives, and building consensus. Collaborating effectively becomes even more crucial in a distributed leadership context, where decision-making and leadership responsibilities are shared. [Hargreaves and O'Connor \(2018\)](#) emphasize the importance of collaborative professionalism in schools, where staff members work together in deep, sustained, and purposeful ways. Decision-making is another critical skill. Distributed leadership requires staff members to participate in decision-making processes, often in areas beyond their immediate responsibilities. This involvement necessitates understanding effective decision-making processes, including problem-solving, analyzing information, and considering the impact of decisions on various stakeholders. [Hallinger and Heck \(2010\)](#) discuss the significance of distributed decision-making in schools, highlighting its impact on school effectiveness. Innovation is also essential. In the rapidly changing landscape of education, the ability to innovate and adapt to new challenges is invaluable. Staff members comfortable with innovation can bring new ideas and approaches to their roles, contributing to the school's overall capacity for change and improvement. [Robinson \(2011\)](#) discusses the role of creative leadership in schools, noting that fostering an environment that encourages innovation is critical to school success.

Finally, the availability and allocation of resources in terms of time and finances play a crucial role in determining a school's readiness and ability to implement distributed leadership effectively. Adequate resources are essential for supporting the various initiatives and programs that facilitate the adoption and sustainment of distributed leadership practices. Financial resources are significant as they enable the school to invest in professional development programs, critical for training staff in the competencies required for distributed leadership, such as collaboration, decision-making, and innovation. [Hallinger and Heck \(2010\)](#) emphasize the importance of such investments, noting that with the necessary financial backing, providing more accessible training and development needed for effective distributed leadership becomes challenging. Equally, implementing distributed leadership often requires a significant investment of time, both in terms of initial training and ongoing collaboration among staff. [Gronn \(2002\)](#) highlights the importance of allocating time for staff to engage in leadership activities, collaborate, and reflect on their practice. With sufficient time, the effectiveness of distributed leadership can be significantly improved, as staff may not be able to engage fully in the collaborative processes that underpin this leadership approach.

In addition to training and collaboration, resources are also needed to develop and implement systems and structures that support distributed leadership. This might include technology for communication, tools for collaborative decision-making, and resources for monitoring and evaluating the impact of distributed leadership practices. [Spillane et al. \(2004\)](#) discuss the need for such systems in supporting distributed leadership, noting that they are essential for ensuring that the approach is implemented effectively and sustainably.

Conversely, the readiness of schools for distributed leadership hinges on a multifaceted array of factors. The organizational culture's alignment with collaboration and openness, the committed support and active modelling of leadership practices by school leaders, comprehensive professional development and training programs, the establishment of trust and psychological safety, staff competencies in collaborative and innovative practices, and the availability of adequate resources collectively determine how effectively a school can adopt and sustain distributed leadership. Each of these elements plays a critical role in creating an environment conducive to distributed leadership, thereby enhancing the overall functionality and adaptability of the educational setting. Addressing these factors in unison is essential for schools to successfully navigate the shift towards a more collaborative and inclusive leadership model.

3. Methodology

3.1. The Research Design

The research utilized a quantitative descriptive approach. The main objective was to collect and analyze data systematically to evaluate teachers' perceptions of their schools' readiness for distributed leadership within the private school sector in Guyana. Descriptive research is frequently employed in education ([Mohajan, 2020](#)). [Robson \(2002\)](#) points out that descriptive research accurately represents individuals, occurrences, or circumstances. The quantitative descriptive approach is employed to depict the attributes of the phenomenon under investigation precisely.

3.2. Instrumentation and Data Collection

This research targeted all 22 registered private schools in Guyana. A random sampling method was employed to select 13 schools, aiming for a diverse cross-section of teachers. This sampling strategy was designed to guarantee a diverse representation of teachers from different schools ([Tille & Wilhelm, 2017](#)). The primary data collection tool was a survey instrument based initially on the Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale by the Connecticut State Department of Education. This instrument was subsequently modified by [Phillips \(2013\)](#) into the IB Distributed Leadership Readiness Survey (IBDLS), which was tailored further to suit the Guyanese private school context. The survey included a series of closed-ended questions on a Likert scale that covered vital areas such as the current leadership structure, attitudes towards distributed leadership, expe-

periences with collaborative decision-making, opportunities for leadership-focused professional development, and the perceived readiness of school culture for distributed leadership. Before being distributed, the survey was subjected to a pilot study with a select group of private school teachers to validate its relevance and effectiveness. The feedback from the pilot study was instrumental in refining the survey for clarity and usefulness. Utilizing the Survey Monkey platform, the survey was disseminated electronically, combining convenience with efficiency to maximize response rates. Participants were given a two-week window to complete the study, with periodic reminders to increase participation. Also, strict confidentiality and anonymity protocols were observed to foster candidness in responses. This approach helped collect reliable and insightful data, pivotal for analyzing distributed leadership readiness in Guyanese private schools.

3.3. Data Analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a powerful statistical package, was used for descriptive statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics provided a foundational understanding of the sample's demographics and the overarching trends evident in the collected responses. Prior to the analysis, a rigorous data preparation process was undertaken. This process involved addressing missing values, identifying, and appropriately coding the data for effective analysis within SPSS. Predominantly, the dataset comprised categorical variables. Consequently, the analysis adopted percentage distribution as the primary analytical approach. This method was particularly effective in revealing the dynamics and prevalence of various dimensions of distributed leadership as perceived by the respondents. By converting raw frequency counts into percentages, the analysis offered a clearer and more comparative understanding of how different dimensions of distributed leadership were represented and perceived across the sample.

4. Presentation and Discussion of Findings

4.1. Formal and Informal Leadership Roles

The findings from the data indicate a nearly even split between respondents holding formal leadership roles and those who do not align with and contribute to existing studies on distributed leadership in educational settings.

Firstly, the fact that 53.1% of respondents occupy formal leadership positions reflects a significant proportion of the staff being in roles where they can directly influence decision-making and policy implementation. This scenario aligns with the principles of distributed leadership, which suggest that leadership should not be confined to top administrative positions but should be spread across various roles within a school. A substantial number of staff members in formal leadership roles can facilitate the implementation of distributed leadership practices, as noted in studies by [Spillane et al. \(2004\)](#) and [Harris \(2009\)](#). These staff members can act as catalysts for change, driving the adoption of collaborative and shared

leadership practices.

On the other hand, the nearly equal number of respondents without formal leadership roles presents an opportunity to capitalize on informal leadership capacities. Gronn (2002) and Leithwood (2007) have highlighted the importance of recognizing and nurturing leadership potential outside formal leadership structures. Although informal leaders may not have designated leadership titles, they often possess significant influence and can contribute to the school's leadership dynamics through their expertise, relationships, and informal networks. Engaging these individuals in leadership processes can further enhance the distributed nature of leadership within the school, as they bring diverse perspectives and skills to the table.

This balanced distribution between formal and informal leaders is crucial for distributed leadership, as it suggests a more democratic and inclusive approach to leadership within the schools. It indicates that a few individuals do not monopolize leadership but are more broadly distributed across the staff. This distribution can lead to a more collaborative and participatory form of decision-making, aligning with the findings of Bush and Glover (2014), who emphasize the benefits of inclusive leadership practices in educational settings.

Moreover, many staff members in non-leadership roles also suggest potential areas for professional development and capacity building. As Fullan (2020) points out, developing leadership skills among all staff members, not just those in formal roles, is vital to effective distributed leadership. Training and professional development opportunities can be tailored to encourage and develop leadership skills among those outside of formal roles, thereby strengthening the overall leadership capacity within the school.

Equally, the findings regarding perceptions of informal leadership among respondents reveal insightful aspects of the school's leadership culture. The data, indicating that most respondents (85.7%) view themselves as leaders to some extent (either moderate or excellent), suggests a prominent presence of informal leadership within the school.

This perception aligns with the notion in distributed leadership literature that leadership extends beyond formal titles and roles. 34.7% of respondents believe they are viewed as leaders to a great extent, and 51.0% "to a moderate extent demonstrates a widespread recognition and acceptance of informal leadership within the school community. This scenario resonates with the ideas presented by Gronn (2002) and Spillane et al. (2004), who emphasize the value of leadership contributions from various members of an organization, regardless of their formal positions.

A significant proportion of individuals perceiving themselves as leaders to a moderate extent could indicate a healthy distribution of leadership responsibilities. While not all individuals may feel they are at the forefront of leadership, a considerable number recognize their role in contributing to leadership processes in the school. This distribution can be seen as a positive indicator of a collaborative environment, where leadership is shared and not concentrated in a few

hands, as supported by the findings of Harris (2009).

However, the 14.3% of respondents who see themselves as leaders to a minimal extent also highlight an area for potential growth in the school's leadership development efforts. This group may represent untapped potential for further development of leadership capacities. As Fullan (2020) suggests, encouraging and nurturing leadership skills across all members of an organization is crucial for a truly distributed leadership model. This approach can harness the diverse talents and perspectives within the school.

Ultimately, the data demonstrates a balanced distribution of leadership roles within the schools, which is conducive to distributed leadership. A significant number of formal leaders provide a solid foundation for leadership practices. In contrast, the nearly equal number of non-leadership staff indicates opportunities for leveraging informal leadership and further developing leadership capacities across the school. The coexistence of both formal and informal leaders establishes a robust basis for a more cooperative and collective leadership paradigm. This balance is critical for fostering a more democratic, inclusive, and effective leadership environment in educational settings. Equally, the perceptions of informal leadership within the school suggest a culture where leadership is broadly distributed and not strictly tied to formal roles. Most staff members perceive themselves as leaders with significant informal leadership influence, indicative of a collaborative and inclusive leadership culture. This finding underscores the importance of recognizing and nurturing leadership potential at all levels within the school to realize the benefits of distributed leadership.

4.2. Mission and Vision Alignment

When assessing the preparedness for distributed leadership in a school environment, it is also essential to examine the comprehensibility of the vision and mission statements and the level of comprehension and endorsement they get from different stakeholders.

The fact that a significant majority of respondents (75.5%) indicate that private schools have written vision and mission statements “continually”, supplemented by an additional 14.3% indicating “frequently”, is highly encouraging. This high percentage suggests that private schools in Guyana have a strong foundation for distributed leadership. Clear and well-articulated vision and mission statements are essential in guiding collective efforts and shared decision-making, a key component of distributed leadership (Leithwood, 2007). They provide a common direction and a sense of purpose, aligning the actions and decisions of various stakeholders within the school.

Likewise, the data indicates that over half of the respondents (53.1%) state that teachers and administrators understand and support the school's mission “continually”, with an additional 28.6% doing so “frequently”, which is also positive. This general understanding and support are vital for the effective implementation of distributed leadership, as they ensure that leadership actions are aligned

with the school's overarching goals (Harris, 2009). However, the 18.4% who indicate only "sometimes" understanding and supporting the mission point to areas where further development, clarification, or communication might be needed.

However, the findings on parents' and students' understanding of their school's mission are disappointing. Only 38.7% of parents (combining "continually" and "frequently") and 49% of students (combining "continually" and "frequently") appear to understand the school's mission clearly. This situation suggests a gap in effectively communicating the mission to these crucial groups, potentially limiting the effectiveness of distributed leadership. Involving parents in the school's mission is essential for creating a holistic educational environment and for the success of distributed leadership (Epstein, 2018). Parents play a critical role in the broader educational community, and their alignment with the school's mission can enhance collaborative efforts and shared understanding. This finding also indicates challenges in integrating the mission into students' everyday experiences (Robinson, 2011). Students' knowledge of the school's mission is essential, as it can contribute to a cohesive and inclusive school culture, an aspect that is valuable for distributed leadership. Addressing these gaps is critical to enhancing the school's readiness for distributed leadership by fostering a more inclusive and informed school community, ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned and actively participating in the school's mission and vision.

4.3. Strategic Planning and Goal Setting

The readiness for distributed leadership in the school is supported by vital strategic planning and goal alignment, as indicated by the data. Most respondents (55.1%) suggest that the school's goals are "continually" aligned with its mission statement. An additional 34.7% state that this happens "frequently", demonstrating a strong and consistent alignment between the school's articulated purpose and its operational objectives. This alignment is crucial in providing a clear strategic direction for the school, which is a fundamental element for the success of distributed leadership (Leithwood, 2007). It ensures that the various leadership efforts across the school are cohesive and collectively steering towards common, clearly defined goals.

Moreover, this strong alignment implies that the school's mission effectively guides its goals and objectives. Having a clear and commonly understood mission and goals is essential in a distributed leadership context, where decision-making and leadership responsibilities are shared among various stakeholders. It helps ensure that even when leadership is distributed, the actions and decisions at different levels and by different individuals or groups coherently contribute to the school's overall mission (Spillane et al., 2004).

Furthermore, the cohesive action and decision-making facilitated by this alignment are fundamental under a distributed leadership model. It allows for a

more unified approach to school improvement and ensures that all efforts are synergistic and strategically focused (Harris, 2009). The fact that only a tiny percentage (6.1%) report that this alignment occurs only “sometimes” suggests that there is room for improvement in ensuring that the alignment between the school’s mission and its goals is consistently communicated and understood across the entire school community.

The strong alignment between the school’s goals and its mission statement is a positive indicator of the implementation of distributed leadership. It reflects a strategic coherence essential for ensuring that all leadership and management efforts within the school are aligned with its overarching mission, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and impact of distributed leadership practices.

Additionally, a substantial number of respondents (81.7%, combining “continually” and “frequently”) indicate that a school improvement plan is regularly used to evaluate progress towards these goals, demonstrating a commitment to systematic evaluation and continuous improvement. This approach aligns with the principles of distributed leadership, which prioritize reflective practice and adaptive learning. Furthermore, about 77.6% of respondents (combining “continually” and “frequently”) state that the collective establishment and revision of school goals involve teachers and administrators, showcasing a collaborative approach to goal setting. This reflects the prominence of collective decision-making as a core aspect of distributed leadership (Harris, 2009).

4.4. Alignment with Academic Standards

The data indicating a strong alignment of the school’s curriculum with state or country academic standards is an encouraging sign for the effective implementation of distributed leadership in private schools in Guyana.

The fact that most respondents (63.3%) report that the school’s curriculum is “continually” aligned with state/country academic standards, and an additional 28.6% indicate this alignment occurs “frequently”, demonstrates a robust and consistent commitment to meeting educational benchmarks. This alignment is crucial as it ensures the school’s curriculum is relevant, up-to-date, and in sync with broader educational goals and requirements.

From the distributed leadership perspective, this strong alignment is a positive indicator. It suggests a clear and shared understanding of curriculum goals and standards across the school. Such a shared understanding is essential for cohesive and effective educational planning and delivery under a distributed leadership model (Spillane et al., 2004). When curriculum goals are aligned with academic standards and are commonly understood by all stakeholders, it facilitates a more coordinated and collaborative approach to education delivery.

Furthermore, this alignment aids in creating a focused and unified direction for teaching and learning activities. In distributed leadership, where leadership roles and responsibilities are shared among various school community members, having a clearly defined and universally understood curriculum goal helps ensure that all educational efforts are harmoniously directed towards achieving

these goals (Harris, 2009). However, the small percentage (6.1%) indicating less frequent alignment suggests that there may be occasional gaps or inconsistencies in aligning the curriculum with academic standards. Addressing these gaps is essential for maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of the curriculum and ensuring that the school continues to meet educational standards.

The data indicating a high rate of administrator receptiveness to staff input on curriculum, instruction, and student performance reflects positively on the school's implementation of distributed leadership principles.

More than half of the respondents (57.1%) state that school administrators "continually" welcome staff input, with another 26.5% reporting this happens "frequently", suggesting a solid participative and collaborative culture within the school. This level of openness and receptiveness to staff input is a hallmark of distributed leadership, where leadership is viewed as a shared activity, and the contributions of all members of the school community are valued (Spillane et al., 2004). Also, the high rate of receptiveness to staff input indicates that administrators are open to and actively encourage input from various staff members. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among staff, as they feel their ideas and feedback are valued and can influence school policies and practices. Such an environment is conducive to shared decision-making and collaborative problem-solving, particularly in areas crucial to educational outcomes like curriculum development and instructional strategies (Harris, 2009).

Furthermore, involving staff in decision-making processes related to curriculum and instruction can lead to more innovative and effective educational practices. It allows for the pooling of diverse experiences and perspectives, which can enrich the educational approaches adopted by the school (Leithwood, 2007). However, the 16.3% indicating less frequent welcoming of input suggests some areas where the school could further strengthen its participative practices. Ensuring all staff members feel their input is welcomed and valued is crucial for fully realizing distributed leadership.

Therefore, the school's high rate of administrator receptiveness to staff input on curriculum and instructional matters indicates a distributed leadership approach. It suggests an environment where collaborative and shared decision-making is practised, enhancing the school's capability to develop and implement effective educational strategies. For distributed leadership to be fully effective, this openness and collaboration should be consistently fostered across all levels of the school community.

4.5. Data-Driven Decisions in Curriculum and Instructional Programs

The responses regarding using data in decision-making for curriculum and instructional programs shed light on the school's approach to evidence-based practices, a critical component of effective distributed leadership. The data indicating that about 38.8% of respondents feel that decisions to change curriculum and instructional programs are "continually" based on assessment data, with

another 26.5% stating this occurs “frequently”, suggests a substantial commitment to evidence-based practices in the school. Using data to inform decisions is a critical aspect of modern educational leadership, as it ensures that changes in curriculum and instruction are not just based on anecdotal evidence or personal preferences but are grounded in objective, empirical evidence (Hattie, 2009).

In the context of distributed leadership, the reliance on assessment data for decision-making is significant. Distributed leadership emphasizes informed, collaborative decision-making where the contributions and insights of various stakeholders are considered (Spillane et al., 2004). Using data as a basis for these decisions ensures that they are objective, transparent, and aligned to improve student outcomes. It allows for a more analytical and reflective approach to curriculum development and instructional strategies, where decisions are made based on what has been proven to work (Harris, 2009).

However, the fact that 24.5% report that data-driven decision-making occurs only “sometimes” or “rarely/never” indicates potential areas for growth. Enhancing the use of data in decision-making processes can strengthen the school’s approach to curriculum and instruction, ensuring that changes are always made to improve student learning and performance.

In summary, a significant portion of the school staff’s reliance on assessment data for decision-making in curriculum and instructional changes highlights a commitment to evidence-based practices. This approach is crucial for effective distributed leadership, as it ensures that decisions are grounded in factual evidence, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and informed decision-making. To fully realize the benefits of distributed leadership, it would benefit the school to embed data-driven practices in all aspects of its decision-making processes further.

4.6. Expectations and Accountability for Students’ Performance

The responses regarding high expectations for students’ academic performance and shared accountability among teachers and administrators provide insight into the school’s alignment with distributed leadership principles.

The data shows that a substantial majority of respondents (75.5%) report that teachers and administrators have high expectations for students’ academic performance “continually”, with an additional 16.3% indicating this happens “frequently”, which is a strong indicator of a culture of excellence within the school. This emphasis on high expectations is critical in a distributed leadership model. It suggests a commitment to setting ambitious goals and striving for superior academic outcomes, which is vital for motivating and guiding the entire school community towards excellence (Hattie, 2009). High expectations can serve as a unifying force, fostering a shared commitment to student success, a fundamental aspect of distributed leadership (Leithwood, 2007). Equally, the data indicates that approximately 43.8% of respondents feel that teachers and administrators share accountability for students’ academic performance “continually”, with

33.3% indicating “frequently”, reflecting a collective approach to student success. In distributed leadership, the concept of shared accountability is vital. It suggests that teachers and administrators perceive themselves as jointly responsible for educational outcomes, fostering a sense of collective responsibility (Spillane et al., 2004). This shared accountability is essential for collaborative problem-solving and decision-making, ensuring that efforts to improve student performance are a collective endeavour rather than the responsibility of individual teachers or administrators alone.

However, the 18.8% reporting less frequent or rare shared accountability highlights an area for potential improvement. Strengthening this sense of shared accountability could further enhance the collaborative and collective approach to student achievement, aligning closely with the ethos of distributed leadership.

This strong emphasis on high expectations and the school’s relatively high shared accountability are positive indicators of its alignment with distributed leadership principles. These findings suggest a school culture that values excellence, collective responsibility, and a unified approach to student success, all of which are integral to effective distributed leadership. Enhancing these aspects further could solidify the school’s commitment to distributed leadership and its impact on student outcomes.

4.7. Resource Management Focus

The finding that 34.7% of respondents believe that school and district resources are “continually” directed to areas where student learning needs to improve most, and an additional 38.8% state that this happens “frequently” indicates a considerable focus on strategic resource allocation. In the context of distributed leadership, the ability to identify and target resources to areas of greatest need is essential. This approach demonstrates responsiveness to changing educational demands and a commitment to addressing the most pressing challenges in student learning (Spillane et al., 2004).

A key element of distributed leadership involves making informed decisions about where to allocate resources to maximize the impact on student learning and performance (Harris, 2009). The data suggests that the school is somewhat successful, with most respondents noting that resource allocation is frequently aligned with areas of need. This alignment indicates adaptability and responsiveness in the school’s leadership and management practices, which is crucial for effectively addressing diverse and evolving educational challenges.

However, the 22.4% reporting that resource allocation to areas of need only occurs “sometimes”, and the 4.0% indicating “rarely/never” or “insufficient information” highlight areas where the school’s resource management could be further improved. Enhancing the alignment of resources with student learning needs can lead to more effective and efficient use of resources, ultimately supporting better educational outcomes.

Overall, the data on resource allocation to areas of most need suggests that the

school strongly focuses on strategic resource management, a vital aspect of distributed leadership. The responsiveness and adaptability indicated by a significant portion of respondents are positive signs. However, there is potential for further improvement to ensure that resources are consistently and effectively directed to the most needed areas to support student learning and achievement.

4.8. Organizational Learning and Community

The data regarding the school as a learning community and the levels of mutual respect and trust among teachers, staff, and administration provide valuable insights into the school's implementation of distributed leadership.

The report that most respondents (55.1%) feel the school “continually” improves its effectiveness as a learning community, with an additional 34.7% stating this happens “frequently”, is a strong indicator of a positive environment for distributed leadership. In distributed leadership, a learning community is fundamental as it promotes shared learning, reflection, and collective growth (Stoll et al., 2006; Katz et al., 2009). Learning from successes and failures is crucial in creating a culture that supports continuous improvement and adaptability. This approach aligns with the principles of distributed leadership, where collaborative learning and collective problem-solving are vital elements (Spillane et al., 2004).

Also, nearly half of the respondents (46.9%) believe a high level of mutual respect and trust among teachers and staff “continually”, with 30.6% feeling this way “frequently”, indicating a solid foundation of trust within the school community. Mutual respect and trust are critical components of distributed leadership as they facilitate open communication, collaboration, and shared decision-making (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). However, the 18.4% reporting lower levels of mutual respect and trust suggest areas where the school's culture of trust and respect could be strengthened.

Regarding the relationship between administration and staff, the data shows that about half of the respondents (49.0%) perceive mutual respect and trust “continually”, with 36.7% reporting “frequently”, highlighting a supportive and collaborative leadership environment. This level of trust between staff and administration is essential for distributed leadership, as it underpins a culture where leadership is shared and collective goals are pursued (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Mutual respect and trust support the implementation of distributed leadership practices by fostering open dialogue and shared responsibility.

The findings suggest that the school possesses critical attributes of a distributed leadership environment, with strong indications of being a learning community and having high levels of mutual respect and trust among teachers, staff, and administration. These factors contribute to a supportive and collaborative culture, which is essential for the effective implementation of distributed leadership. Strengthening these aspects further can enhance the school's capacity for distributed leadership, promoting a more inclusive, adaptive, and effective educational setting.

4.9. Innovation and Instruction Support

The responses regarding support for new instructional ideas and innovations, time for collaborative instructional work, and responsibility in decision-making provide essential insights into the extent to which the school embodies distributed leadership principles.

The finding that a significant portion of respondents (55.1%) indicate that the school “continually” supports new instructional ideas and innovations, with an additional 30.6% stating it does so “frequently”, points to a culture that values and fosters innovation. Encouraging new ideas and creative approaches is vital in a distributed leadership framework. It creates an environment where diverse perspectives and solutions are welcomed and where the collective intelligence of the staff is leveraged for educational improvements (Harris & Jones, 2010). This openness to innovation is critical to adapting to changing educational needs and ensuring the continuous development of the school’s instructional practices.

The data indicates that 28.6% of respondents feel the school’s schedules “continually” provide time for teachers to collaborate on instructional issues, with 36.7% stating this occurs “frequently”, indicating a commitment to collaborative practices. The provision of time for collaboration is a crucial aspect of distributed leadership, as it enables teamwork and collective problem-solving, which is essential for a cohesive educational approach (Leithwood, 2007). While the data suggests a good level of collaborative practice, the 34.7% indicating less frequent opportunities point to a potential area for improvement in ensuring more consistent and inclusive collaboration opportunities.

Regarding decision-making, approximately 30.6% of respondents believe professional staff members continually have the responsibility to make decisions affecting school goals, with 32.7% indicating this happens “frequently”, demonstrating a significant level of staff involvement in crucial decision-making processes. This involvement is a cornerstone of distributed leadership, promoting a shared sense of ownership and empowerment among staff (Spillane et al., 2004). However, the 22.5% reporting less frequent involvement or “insufficient information” suggests room for enhancing staff participation in decision-making, ensuring that more professional community members actively shape the school’s direction and goals.

In conclusion, the school demonstrates several critical aspects of distributed leadership, including support for innovation, collaborative practices, and staff involvement in decision-making. These elements contribute to a dynamic and inclusive educational environment. However, the data also highlights areas where further development can ensure consistent implementation of these distributed leadership practices, enhancing the school’s overall effectiveness and responsiveness to its educational mission.

4.10. Parental and Community Involvement

The findings on agreement on influential parental roles and the clarity in communication of the “chain of contact” provide insights into how the school en-

gages with and involves parents, an essential aspect of distributed leadership.

The data showing that 40.8% of respondents believe school professionals and parents continually agree on the most influential roles parents can play in their child's education, with an additional 34.7% stating this happens "frequently", suggests a relatively strong consensus on the roles of parents in the educational process. This agreement is crucial in a distributed leadership framework, as effective parental involvement enhances the holistic approach to education. Parental engagement in children's education has positively impacted student achievement and school improvement (Epstein, 2018). The fact that many respondents perceive a firm agreement on parental roles indicates a proactive approach to involving parents, which can substantially support the school's distributed leadership practices. However, 16.3% reported this agreement occurs only "sometimes", and 8.1% indicated "rarely/never" or "insufficient information", highlighting areas where further efforts could be made to strengthen the understanding and consensus on the role of parents in the educational process.

Equally, most respondents (59.2%) reporting that the school "continually" communicates the "chain of contact" between home and school clearly, with 28.6% indicating this happens "frequently", reflects positively on the school's communication strategies. Clear communication channels are fundamental for fostering effective parental involvement and building a solid school community. This clarity in communication indicates a school environment that values and actively facilitates parental engagement, an essential component of distributed leadership (Harris & Goodall, 2008). It ensures that parents understand how and whom to contact within the school for various issues, enhancing the partnership between the school and families.

The data suggests that schools are making significant efforts to engage parents effectively and maintain clear communication channels. These aspects are crucial in a distributed leadership model, as they create a supportive and collaborative educational environment. Strengthening these areas can further enhance the school's distributed leadership practices, ensuring that all stakeholders, including parents, are actively involved and engaged in the educational process.

4.11. Data-Driven Decision Making

The responses regarding the availability of data for teachers to use for improving student achievement provide valuable insights into the school's approach to data-driven decision-making, a critical component of distributed leadership.

The finding that most respondents (55.1%) indicate that the school "continually" makes a variety of data available for teachers, with an additional 26.5% stating this happens "frequently", suggests that the school strongly emphasizes data accessibility for its educators. This focus on data availability is crucial in a distributed leadership framework, where decision-making is not only shared but is also expected to be grounded in evidence and informed by factual insights (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016). Providing teachers access to relevant data enables

them to make informed decisions about instructional strategies and interventions to improve student achievement (Heck & Hallinger, 2009).

In distributed leadership, data enables informed, evidence-based actions and strategies. It supports a culture of continuous improvement and allows for more targeted and effective teaching practices. Data availability empowers teachers to analyze student performance, identify improvement areas, and tailor their instructional approaches accordingly. However, the 18.3% reporting that data is made available less frequently or “rarely/never” indicates a potential area for improvement. Ensuring consistent and widespread access to data across all teaching staff is essential for maximizing the benefits of data-driven decision-making. Enhancing this aspect could further support the school’s commitment to distributed leadership by fostering a more data-informed teaching and learning environment.

In summary, the general trend towards making data readily available to teachers in the school aligns well with the principles of distributed leadership. This approach facilitates informed decision-making and supports a culture of evidence-based practice. Strengthening this aspect can enhance the effectiveness of distributed leadership practices in the school, leading to improved educational outcomes.

4.12. Professional Development and Growth

The data on formal structures for instructional decision-making, the principal’s encouragement for participation, and the alignment of professional development with the school’s mission and goals provide critical insights into how distributed leadership is operationalized within the school.

The finding that 36.7% of respondents indicate the presence of formal structures (like a curriculum committee) for decision-making “continually”, with 20.4% stating this happens “frequently”, suggests a commitment to shared decision-making. In a distributed leadership model, formal structures for participation are essential as they provide clear channels for teachers and staff to contribute to decision-making processes (García Torres, 2019; Harris, 2009). However, the 26.5% reporting that this occurs only “sometimes” or “rarely/never”, coupled with 16.3% having “insufficient information”, points to potential gaps. It indicates that while structures for shared decision-making exist, their use may need to be more consistent and universally understood across the school. Addressing these inconsistencies is critical to strengthening distributed leadership practices.

The principal’s role in encouraging teacher and staff participation in decision-making is critical in distributed leadership. The data shows that about half of the respondents (49.0%) report that the principal encourages participation “continually”, with 26.5% indicating “frequently”, reflecting positively on the principal’s leadership style. The principal’s active encouragement fostered a culture of inclusivity and shared responsibility, essential for distributed leadership (Leithwood, 2007). However, the 20.4% reporting less frequent encouragement

suggests areas for further leadership development to ensure a more uniformly participative environment.

A majority (59.2%) stating that the school “continually” provides professional development aligned with its mission and goals, with an additional 16.3% saying this happens “frequently”, indicates strategic alignment in staff development initiatives. Aligning professional development with the school’s mission and goals ensures that staff growth and development support the overall direction and objectives of the school, an essential aspect of distributed leadership (Spillane et al., 2004). The 22.4% indicating less frequent alignment highlights the need for ongoing efforts to ensure that all professional development activities are closely connected to the school’s core objectives.

In summary, the data suggests that there are structures and practices in place that support the implementation of distributed leadership within the school, such as formal decision-making structures, principal’s encouragement of staff participation, and alignment of professional development with school goals. However, the variability in responses indicates opportunities for further strengthening these practices to enhance the effectiveness and consistency of distributed leadership throughout the school.

5. Implications for Private School Administrators, Teachers, and Education Policy Makers

The findings from the survey on various aspects of distributed leadership have several implications for private school administrators and policymakers. Understanding these implications can help enhance the effectiveness of leadership and educational practices in private schools.

The existence of established frameworks for decision-making and the promotion of active involvement by school administrators are favourable indications. Administrators should strengthen these structures to ensure consistency and effectiveness (Spillane et al., 2004). This includes providing clear guidelines on how teachers and staff can contribute to decision-making and ensuring these opportunities are equally accessible. Policymakers should consider implementing guidelines or rules that incentivize or mandate the creation of such frameworks in private educational institutions.

With a majority indicating that professional development is aligned with the school’s mission and goals, administrators should continue to invest in relevant training programs. This alignment ensures that the professional growth of teachers and staff directly supports the school’s strategic objectives (Harris & Jones, 2010). Policymakers can play a role by providing funding, resources, or frameworks that support professional development initiatives aligned with school missions.

The strong support for new instructional ideas and the provision of time for collaborative work is crucial for a dynamic educational environment. Administrators should continue to foster this culture by encouraging innovative teaching practices and facilitating collaboration among staff (Darling-Hammond et al.,

2019; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). Policymakers could consider initiatives that recognize and reward actions that demonstrate innovation and collaborative practices.

The emphasis on data availability for improving student achievement suggests the importance of a data-driven culture in schools. Administrators should ensure teachers have the necessary skills and tools to analyze and use data effectively. Policymakers might investigate supporting schools through resources for data management systems and training in data analysis.

Given the mixed responses regarding parental involvement and understanding the school's mission, administrators should focus on enhancing communication and engagement with parents. This could involve regular meetings, workshops, or using digital platforms for communication. Policymakers could encourage parental involvement through policies that facilitate parent-school collaboration (Epstein, 2018).

Shared accountability for student performance and high expectations for student achievement indicates a commitment to high educational standards. Administrators should maintain and reinforce these expectations while ensuring accountability is not solely focused on teachers but shared across the school leadership (Leithwood, 2007). Policymakers could develop accountability frameworks that recognize the collective efforts of schools.

The variability in responses regarding resource allocation to areas of need suggests room for improvement. Administrators should work towards a more equitable and strategic distribution of resources, ensuring that they are directed towards areas that will most effectively improve student outcomes. Policymakers can assist by providing guidelines or support for effective school resource management (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016).

In conclusion, the implications for private school administrators and policymakers from these findings revolve around strengthening distributed leadership structures, enhancing professional development, fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration, emphasizing data-driven decision-making, improving parental engagement, maintaining high expectations and shared accountability, and addressing gaps in resource allocation. These actions can significantly contribute to the effectiveness and success of private schools.

6. Recommendations

Fostering a culture where leadership is a shared endeavour is essential to enhance the adoption of distributed leadership in private schools. This culture encourages teachers and staff to assume leadership roles within their areas of expertise, such as leading professional development workshops or participating in decision-making committees. To support this, schools should provide training and professional development focused on leadership skills, including effective communication and strategic planning. Additionally, establishing committees that draw members from diverse school community segments can ensure varied perspectives are included in decision-making, fostering a sense of ownership and

influence across the school.

A collaborative environment is crucial for distributed leadership to thrive. This involves creating open idea exchange and feedback platforms, such as regular meetings, suggestion boxes, and open-door policies. School leaders should work with all stakeholders to forge a shared vision and set common goals, aligning the school community towards unified objectives. Celebrating contributions through formal recognition or informal acknowledgements can further reinforce the value of leadership roles. Moreover, cultivating student leadership is equally important, as it equips students with leadership skills and incorporates their perspectives into the school's fabric.

The transition to a distributed leadership model necessitates a commitment to collective growth and learning, which includes nurturing a mindset of continuous improvement among staff and students. Leaders should exemplify this approach by delegating responsibilities and fostering team trust. Engaging parents and the community in school activities and decisions strengthens the connection between the school and its broader context, enhancing the support network and broadening the leadership base. This transition may require a cultural shift within the school, and it's vital to manage this change thoughtfully, allowing time for all members to adjust to new roles and collaborative processes.

Implementing these strategies requires a commitment to a collaborative approach and may involve a shift in school culture. It's essential to approach this transition thoughtfully and be prepared for a period of adjustment as everyone adapts to new roles and ways of working.

7. Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the current state and potential for implementing distributed leadership in Guyana's private education sector. The findings suggest a balanced distribution of formal and informal leadership roles within the schools, indicative of a conducive environment for distributed leadership. Additionally, there is a significant recognition of the importance of clear and shared vision and mission statements, alignment of school goals with the mission statement, and adherence to academic standards. However, the study also highlights areas for improvement, such as increasing parental understanding and involvement, enhancing the use of data in decision-making, fostering higher expectations and shared accountability for student performance, and focusing more strategically on resource allocation. These areas are crucial for effective distributed leadership implementation and ensuring the leadership approach is inclusive, responsive, and effective.

The study also underscores the importance of professional development, innovation, collaborative practices, and decision-making involvement as critical elements of distributed leadership. These factors contribute significantly to creating a dynamic and inclusive educational environment that is responsive to the changing needs of the educational landscape.

Overall, the findings from this study offer a roadmap for private schools in

Guyana to develop and enhance their distributed leadership practices. Private schools can create a more collaborative, efficient, and effective leadership environment by addressing the identified areas for improvement and strengthening the existing positive aspects. This, in turn, can lead to better educational outcomes and a more satisfying and empowering experience for all school community members.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix

Descriptive Statistics

Theme	Sub-Themes	Question	Responses
Formal and Informal Leadership Roles	Formal leadership roles	Do you serve in a specific, assigned leadership role in the school where you currently work?	Yes: 53.1% No: 46.9%
	Perceived leadership roles	Acknowledging that leadership is not always a formal role within a school, to what extent do you believe that other educators in the school view you as a leader?	To a great extent: 34.7% To a moderate extent: 51.0% To a minimal extent: 14.3%
Mission and Vision Alignment	Existence of written vision and mission statements	The school has clearly written vision and mission statements.	Continually: 75.5% Frequently: 14.3% Sometimes: 6.1% Insufficient information: 4.1%
	Understanding and support of the mission by teachers and administrators	Teachers and administrators understand and support a common mission for the school and can describe it clearly.	Continually: 53.1% Frequently: 28.6% Sometimes: 18.4%
	Parental understanding of the school's mission	If parents are asked to describe the school's mission, most would be able to describe the mission clearly	Continually: 16.3% Frequently: 22.4% Sometimes: 42.9% Rare/never: 14.3% Insufficient information: 4.1%
	Student understanding of the school's mission	If students are asked to describe the school's mission, most would be able to describe the mission generally	Continually: 18.4% Frequently: 30.6% Sometimes: 36.7% Rare/never: 12.2% Insufficient information: 2.0%
Strategic Planning and Goal Alignment	Alignment of school goals with its mission statement	School goals are aligned with its mission statement	Continually: 55.1% Frequently: 34.7% Sometimes: 6.1% Insufficient information: 4.1%
	Use of a school improvement plan	The school uses a school improvement plan as a basis to evaluate the progress it is making in attaining its goals	Continually: 49.0% Frequently: 32.7% Sometimes: 8.2% Rare/never: 2.0% Insufficient information: 8.2%
	Collective establishment and revision of school goals	Teachers and administrators collectively establish school goals and revise goals annually	Continually: 44.9% Frequently: 32.7% Sometimes: 10.2% Rare/never: 6.1% Insufficient information: 6.1%

Continued

	Curriculum alignment with state academic standards	The school's curriculum is aligned with the country's academic standards	Continually: 63.3% Frequently: 28.6% Sometimes: 4.1% Rare/never: 2.0% Insufficient information: 2.0%
Curriculum Development and Alignment	Input on curriculum and instruction	The school administrator(s) welcome professional staff members input on issues related to curriculum, instruction, and improving student performance	Continually: 57.1% Frequently: 26.5% Sometimes: 12.2% Rare/never: 4.1%
	Decisions based on assessment data	Decisions to change curriculum and instructional programs are based on assessment data	Continually: 38.8% Frequently: 26.5% Sometimes: 16.3% Rare/never: 8.2% Insufficient information: 10.2%
	Expectations for student academic performance	Teachers and administrators have high expectations for students' academic performance	Continually: 75.5% Frequently: 16.3% Sometimes: 6.1% Rare/never: 2.0%
Expectations and Accountability	Shared accountability for student performance	Teachers and administrators share accountability for students' academic performance	Continually: 43.8% Frequently: 33.3% Sometimes: 12.5% Rare/never: 6.3% Insufficient information: 4.2%
	Resource Management and Focus	Allocation of resources for student learning needs	School and district resources are directed to those areas in which student learning needs to improve most
	School as a learning community	The school is a learning community that continually improves its effectiveness, learning from both successes and failures	Continually: 55.1% Frequently: 34.7% Sometimes: 8.2% Insufficient information: 2.0%
Organizational Learning and Community	Mutual respect and trust among teachers and staff	There is a high level of mutual respect and trust among the teachers and other professional staff in the school	Continually: 46.9% Frequently: 30.6% Sometimes: 18.4% Rare/never: 2.0% Insufficient information: 2.0%
	Respect and trust between administration and staff	There is mutual respect and trust between the school administration and the professional staff	Continually: 49.0% Frequently: 36.7% Sometimes: 12.2% Rare/never: 2.0%

Continued

	Support for new instructional ideas	The school supports using new instructional ideas and innovations	Continually: 55.1% Frequently: 30.6% Sometimes: 14.3%
Innovation and Instructional Support	Scheduling for collaborative instructional work	The school's daily and weekly schedules provide time for teachers to collaborate on instructional issues	Continually: 28.6% Frequently: 36.7% Sometimes: 24.5% Rare/never: 10.2%
	Responsibility of staff in decision-making affecting school goals	Professional staff members in the school have the responsibility to make decisions that affect meeting school goals	Continually: 30.6% Frequently: 32.7% Sometimes: 14.3% Rare/never: 8.2% Insufficient information: 14.3%
	Agreement on parental roles in education	School professionals and parents agree on the most effective roles parents can play as partners in their child's education	Continually: 40.8% Frequently: 34.7% Sometimes: 16.3% Rare/never: 2.0% Insufficient information: 6.1%
Parental and Community Involvement	Communication of the "chain of contact" between home and school	The school clearly communicates the "chain of contact" between home and school so parents know who to contact when they have questions and concerns	Continually: 59.2% Frequently: 28.6% Sometimes: 8.2% Rare/never: 2.0% Insufficient information: 2.0%
	Availability and use of data for improving student achievement	The school makes available a variety of data (e.g., student performance) for teachers to use to improve student achievement	Continually: 55.1% Frequently: 26.5% Sometimes: 12.2% Rare/never: 6.1%
Data-Driven Decision-Making	Formal structures for participation in instructional decision-making	There is a formal structure in place in the school (e.g., a curriculum committee) to provide teachers and professional staff with opportunities to participate in school-level instructional decision-making	Continually: 36.7% Frequently: 20.4% Sometimes: 16.3% Rare/never: 10.2% Insufficient information: 16.3%
Professional Development and Growth	Encouragement for participation in decision-making	The principal actively encourages teachers and other staff members to participate in instructional decision-making	Continually: 49.0% Frequently: 26.5% Sometimes: 14.3% Rare/never: 6.1% Insufficient information: 4.1%
	Professional development aligned with school's mission and goals	The school provides teachers with professional development aligned with the school's mission and goals	Continually: 59.2% Frequently: 16.3% Sometimes: 20.4% Rare/never: 2.0% Insufficient information: 2.0%