A Retrospective Analysis of Award-Winning School Leaders: Unpacking Success Factors through the Lens of the Metrobank Foundation’s Outstanding Filipino Award Recipient

Ma. Kristina Angelica B. Agpaoaa\*,Philip R. Balderab

*aIsabelo delos Reyes Elementary School DepEd Manila, N. Zamora St. Tondo Manila, 1012*

*bGraduate Education and Professional Studies, Romblon State University, Liwanag Odiongan Romblon, 5505 Philippines*

*aEmail:tina.agpaoa@gmail.com,bEmail:philip.baldera001@deped.gov.ph*

**Abstract**

This study explores the distinctive attributes, strategies, and professional development practices of award-winning master teacher leaders who have been recognized by the Metrobank Foundation's Outstanding Filipino Award. Employing a qualitative, narrative research design, the study investigates the personal journeys, motivational factors, and leadership qualities that contribute to their success. Key findings reveal that empathy, adaptability, humility, dedication, and a commitment to continuous improvement are essential qualities for effective educational leadership. The study underscores the importance of integrating innovative teaching and learning strategies, fostering collaborative and supportive school environments, and prioritizing continuous professional development for educators. By examining how these leaders navigate challenges and leverage contextual factors to enhance their effectiveness, the research provides actionable insights for developing and supporting future educational leaders. The implications of this study are significant for informing policy and practice, enhancing leadership training programs, and ultimately improving educational outcomes for students and teachers alike.

***Keywords:*** educational leadership; master teacher leaders; professional development; empathy; adaptability; innovation in education; collaborative learning; continuous improvement.

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\* Corresponding author.

**1. Introduction**

This research sets out to understand what makes certain elementary school teachers good at their jobs and truly stand out as educational leaders. Teachers who lead well can make a big difference in how much their students learn and how schools develop new and better teaching methods. However, what needs to be clarified is what these teacher leaders do differently to be so successful. This study aims to determine what unique qualities and actions set these teachers apart.

This study aims to shed light on the personal attributes, skills and approaches that enable teacher leaders to excel. By doing so, it hopes to help develop better training for teachers who want to take on leadership roles and inform the policies that support them. This study is critical because it will help us understand what good teacher leaders do and how and why they do it, aiming to improve education for everyone.

**2. The Rationale of the Study**

The rationale for this study stems from its potential to make a significant and practical contribution to educational leadership. Focusing on what makes master teacher leaders effective, this research is a crucial resource for those looking to foster a culture of excellence and innovation in schools. The findings are expected to enrich the academic discourse on educational leadership and provide a solid foundation for developing programs and policies that support the growth and development of teacher leaders, ultimately benefiting students and the wider academic community.

**3. Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study delves deeply into how Distributed Leadership and Transformational Leadership theories directly impact the roles and effectiveness of master teacher leaders in elementary education. This refined framework links these leadership theories to tangible outcomes, specifically enhancing student learning, fostering teacher professional development, and encouraging school innovation.

Distributed leadership is a complex model where tasks are shared among various stakeholders. All emphasize the distributed nature of leadership, highlighting the transformative potential of distributed leadership in school environment. [1,2] It provide a comprehensive review of the literature, an explicitly exploring the relationship between distributed leadership and teacher leadership. The evidence indicates that distributed leadership may enhance school improvement and student learning outcomes however, additional research is required to validate this correlation [3].

On the other hand, Transformational Leadership is characterized by leaders who inspire and motivate their colleagues to achieve beyond expectations, fostering a culture of high performance and continuous improvement. This leadership style is particularly relevant to master teacher leaders who seek to influence their peers' pedagogical practices and professional mindsets.

By synthesizing these theories, the conceptual framework suggests that master teacher leaders, through their unique positioning, can significantly influence the school's culture and academic achievements.

A diagram of a leader

Description automatically generated

**Figure 1:** shows the Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1 shows the comprehensive summary of the framework for the study "Exploring Success Factors of Master Teacher Leaders in Elementary Education," which integrates both Distributed Leadership and Transformational Leadership theories to map a pathway toward developing a leadership framework for successful master teachers. This framework aims to uncover the nuanced attributes, skills, and strategies that effective leadership in elementary education relies on. Its goal is to enhance student learning outcomes, promote teacher professional development, and encourage innovation within schools.

The study presents a comprehensive approach to understanding and developing master teacher leadership within elementary education. It aims to contribute significantly to educational leadership discourse by bridging theoretical insights with practical applications, offering valuable implications for policy-making, leadership training programs, and on-the-ground educational practices.

**4. Research Questions**

This study aims to explore the following questions to deepen the understanding of successful leadership among master teacher leaders in elementary education:

1. What distinctive attributes and skills are essential for master teacher leaders to effectively perform and be recognized in their leadership roles within the elementary education context?

2. How do master teacher leaders perceive and navigate the challenges and opportunities accompanying their leadership roles in elementary schools?

3. How do contextual factors, such as school culture, administrative support, and policy environment, influence the effectiveness and success of master teacher leaders?

4. What professional development and support mechanisms are most effective in preparing and

sustaining master teachers for instructional leadership roles?

5. How do the attributes, strategies, and professional development activities of master teacher leaders influence student learning outcomes and teacher professional development?

**5. Review of Related Literature**

In the intricate landscape of elementary education, master teacher leaders emerge as pivotal architects, shaping educational experiences that significantly influence both teaching quality and student learning outcomes. Their multifaceted roles extend from exemplary classroom teaching to transformative leadership activities, including mentoring novices, spearheading professional development, and orchestrating curriculum innovations. Despite their recognized impact, a detailed understanding of the success factors enabling these educators to thrive in leadership roles must be more conspicuously absent from the current literature.

Recent studies underscore the crucial role of effective instructional leadership in enhancing student achievement and fostering pedagogical innovation. Nevertheless, the nuanced attributes, skills, and experiences that constitute the backbone of master teacher leaders' success in the elementary education context are not comprehensively explored. Recent studies have highlighted the critical role of effective instructional leadership in elementary education, focusing on the attributes, skills, and experiences of master teacher leaders which emphasize the positive impact of instructional leadership on school characteristics and student achievement. Further underscore the importance of leadership in motivating teachers and promoting professional growth [4]. It highlight successful principals' specific strategies and behaviors, such as creating safe learning environments and aligning curriculum with standards and provide a broader perspective, discussing the leadership capabilities and theories that underpin effective instructional leadership [5].

The study seeks to bridge this gap by delving into the lived experiences of master teacher leaders, aiming to distill the essence of their effectiveness. The literature review reveals a multifaceted framework of competencies encompassing deep pedagogical knowledge, robust leadership skills, and the capacity to foster a collaborative culture as foundational to their success. The literature on teacher leadership and the effectiveness of master teachers in elementary contexts is multifaceted. It emphasizes the need for deep pedagogical knowledge, robust leadership skills, and the ability to foster a collaborative [6,7] .Teacher leadership is critical to school improvement and student performance [8]. However, the specific success factors for master teachers in elementary contexts are not clearly defined in the existing literature.

The synthesis of literature underscores the transformative role of master teacher leaders in shaping educational outcomes and identifies a clear gap in understanding the underpinnings of their success. This gap forms the basis of the inquiry, guiding the exploration of the attributes, strategies, and contextual influences that enable master teacher leaders to impact their educational ecosystems positively. Through this lens, the study aims to contribute to developing targeted support mechanisms and leadership development programs that acknowledge and amplify the unique contributions of master teacher leaders in elementary education.

**6. Methodology**

***6.1. Research Design***

This study implemented a narrative qualitative research design to examine the experiences of master teacher leaders acknowledged by the Metrobank Foundation. Narrative research is particularly suitable for exploring the stories of individuals, understanding how they construct meaning from their experiences, and how those experiences shape their identity and actions as leaders. A range of studies have utilized narrative qualitative research to explore the experiences and identities of educators and found that past experiences and personal growth significantly shape the professional identities of leadership educators and teacher leaders[9,10].Further emphasized the role of narrative research in uncovering the professional identities and trajectories of teacher researchers, highlighting the importance of understanding the dynamics of these identities [11,12]. It discussed the use of narrative inquiy in educational leadership research, with the latter advocating for the combination of narrative and phenomenological inquiry to construct new understandings of teacher learning. The authors underscored the significance of context and the need to recognize the work of successful teachers in the broader field of educational leadership [6, 13].This narrative approach facilitated a deep exploration into the awarded educators' personal and professional growth trajectories.

***6.2. Research Method***

The research method for this study was a qualitative case study approach, focusing on multiple cases to allow for an in-depth exploration of the individual experiences of master teacher leaders recognized by the Metrobank Foundation. Following the methodological framework established, each case was analyzed within its real-life context, which enabled the capture of complexities and dynamics often missed by more quantitative approaches. A multiple-case study design was utilized to enhance the findings' robustness, advocated [14] .This approach allowed for the examination of each case separately, followed by a thematic synthesis across cases to identify common patterns and divergent themes. This cross-case analysis was essential in understanding the findings' broader implications and generating more powerful insights into the phenomenon of teacher leadership excellence.In alignment with recommendations for qualitative case study research, particular attention was paid to the contextual uniqueness of each teacher's story [15] .The analysis concerned the 'how' and the 'why' behind their success, thus providing a deeper understanding of the causal relationships within the given context.Triangulation was a vital component of the research methodology, combining in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document analysis to construct a comprehensive picture of each case. As suggested, triangulation enhances the credibility and validity of case study research by using multiple data sources [16].The rigor of the case study method was further ensured by adhering to the principles of trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as outlined [17].These principles guided the research process, ensuring that the study's findings were reliable and could be applicable in other similar settings.

***6.3. Research Locale and Time of the Study***

The research was situated within the Division of City Schools Manila, with data collection occurring over six months from January to June 2023. The selection of this locale was strategic, owing to its representation of a diverse urban education setting, which indicates both the challenges and triumphs encountered in metropolitan educational leadership.

The timing of the study was carefully considered to account for the academic calendar. This allowed for observations during active school sessions, ensuring that the leadership behaviors observed were representative and not influenced by atypical school activities such as summer breaks or examination periods. Constraints related to the timing, such as potential disruptions due to seasonal school events or public holidays, were mitigated by scheduling data collection well in advance and maintaining flexibility in the research timetable.

***6.4. Population and Samples of the Study***

The study's population comprised elementary school teachers within the Division of City Schools Manila who had received recognition from the Metrobank Foundation. A purposive sample of 15 master teacher leaders was selected, a number determined by the principle of saturation as recommended by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2022). Saturation in qualitative research is reached when additional data does not lead to new information or themes. Thus, the sample size 15 ensured a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon without redundancy.

The diversity within the sample was intentional, reflecting a range of experiences, backgrounds, and teaching disciplines. This diversity was considered essential to capture the varied facets of leadership excellence. Efforts to ensure a heterogeneous sample included stratified purposive sampling techniques, which ensured representation across different ages, genders, years of experience, subject expertise, and types of institutions within the urban setting of Manila.

***6.5. Sampling Procedure***

The selection of participants was guided by purposive sampling, focusing on teachers who demonstrated outstanding leadership qualities as defined by the Metrobank Foundation. This method facilitated the identification of participants whose experiences could provide deep insights into effective educational leadership [18].

***6.6. Data Gathering Procedure***

The data-gathering procedure for the study was carefully structured to ensure comprehensive coverage and depth. The tripartite approach involved interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Each method was designed to complement the others, providing a triangulated, multifaceted view of the leadership practices of the master teacher leaders.

***6.7. Data Analysis***

The data analysis was conducted meticulously and meticulously, employing a thematic analysis approach as outlined [19].This process was instrumental in identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data, providing a deep and nuanced understanding of the study's focal phenomena.

**7. Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout this study, ensuring the integrity of the research process and the protection of participants' rights and well-being. The following measures were diligently applied: Informed Consent, Confidentiality and Anonymity, Ethical Handling of Data, Dealing with Sensitive Topics.

**8. Results**

***8.1. Findings from the Research***

The study revealed significant insights into the journey, motivation, attributes, strategies, challenges, and leadership impacts among award-winning master teacher leaders. Through qualitative analysis of the interviews, several key themes emerged, highlighting the complexity and multifaceted nature of effective educational leadership:

***8.2. What distinctive attributes and skills are essential for master teacher leaders?***

The study's results highlight the essential qualities of master teacher leaders. These attributes directly align with the first research question by identifying the traits that distinguish successful master teacher leaders.

  Personal Journey and Motivation

 Respondents shared diverse paths to becoming master teacher leaders, emphasizing the importance of passion, commitment, and a positive attitude toward teaching and leadership. Motivation stems from the desire to inspire students and colleagues, contribute to educational excellence, and embrace opportunities for professional growth.

Passion and Commitment

At the heart of their narratives is a profound passion for teaching—a love for the profession that transcends the mere act of imparting knowledge. This passion is not static; it is dynamic, evolving with each success and challenge encountered along the way. It fuels their commitment to not just teach but to lead by example, to innovate within the classroom, and to advocate for excellence in education. This commitment is manifest in their willingness to go beyond the call of duty, invest in their personal and professional development, and support the development of their peers and students.

Positive Attitude Towards Teaching and Leadership

A positive attitude emerges as a significant enabler of their leadership journey. This optimism is not naive; it is grounded in reality—teaching and leading in education are fraught with challenges. However, this positive outlook allows them to see opportunities where others see obstacles, inspire hope when faced with cynicism, and instill a sense of possibility in their students and colleagues. Their leadership is characterized by believing in every student and teacher's potential, which drives their actions and decisions.

Motivation to Inspire and Contribute

The motivation driving these master teacher leaders is multifaceted, extending beyond personal achievement to encompass a broader educational vision. They are motivated to inspire their students to achieve their highest potential, inspire their colleagues to embrace continuous improvement and inspire the educational community to strive for excellence. This desire to inspire is matched by a commitment to contribute—to contribute to the body of educational excellence, to create learning environments that are nurturing, inclusive, and conducive to growth, and to contribute to shaping future generations.

Embracing Opportunities for Professional Growth

Central to their journey is an openness to opportunities for professional growth. These leaders view each moment in their career not just as a chance to lead but as an opportunity to learn, grow, and refine their craft. They actively seek professional development opportunities, engage in reflective practice, and are open to feedback. This perpetual learner mindset enhances their capabilities as educators and leaders and sets a powerful example for their peers and students.

Attributes of Success

Essential qualities contributing to their success included dedication, empathy, adaptability, creative enthusiasm, flexibility, humility, and perseverance. These attributes influenced their leadership style, positively impacting teaching and learning within their schools.

Dedication

The dedication of these leaders to their profession is profound. It is not merely about the hours they put in but the quality and intentionality behind their actions. This dedication is seen in their relentless pursuit of excellence for themselves and their students and colleagues. It drives them to constantly seek better ways to teach, learn, and lead. This unwavering commitment sets a high standard within their schools, fostering a culture of excellence and hard work.

Empathy

Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of another, stands out as a critical attribute of ineffective leadership. These master teacher leaders employ empathy to connect with their students and colleagues on a deeper level, understanding their challenges, motivations, and aspirations. This empathetic approach enables them to create supportive, inclusive, and understanding learning environments where everyone feels valued and heard.

Adaptability

The dynamic nature of education demands adaptability. The interviewed leaders exhibit this quality by embracing change, whether it involves new educational technologies, pedagogies, or changing student needs. Their ability to adapt ensures that their teaching methods and leadership practices remain relevant, effective, and responsive to the evolving educational landscape.

Creative Enthusiasm

Creative enthusiasm brings innovation and a zest for exploration into the classroom and the school community. This trait allows these leaders to design engaging, interactive, and innovative learning experiences that captivate and stimulate students and teachers alike. Their enthusiasm for creativity infects their schools, encouraging a culture of innovation and open-mindedness.

Flexibility

Flexibility in leadership style and decision-making enables these master teacher leaders to effectively respond to the unique needs of their students and the demands of the school environment. This flexibility is crucial in managing the diverse challenges in schools, from interpersonal conflicts to resource constraints, ensuring that the focus remains on providing the best educational experience.

Humility

Humility, the quality of having a modest view of one's importance, is pivotal in their leadership. It allows these leaders to remain learners, open to feedback and new ideas, regardless of their achievements. This humility fosters a collaborative culture within the school, where every voice is valued and learning is a shared journey.

Perseverance

Perseverance, the persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success, underpins their approach to leadership and teaching. These leaders face challenges head-on, with resilience and a clear focus on long-term goals. Their perseverance inspires students and colleagues to strive for their best, even in the face of obstacles.

**Q2 How do master teacher leaders perceive and navigate challenges and opportunities?**

The leaders faced challenges such as balancing instructional leadership with administrative responsibilities, managing diverse teacher capabilities, and navigating changes in educational trends. Solutions included effective time management, fostering a culture of collaboration, continuous learning, and adapting to new technologies and methodologies.

**Q3. How do contextual factors influence the effectiveness and success of master teacher leaders?**

The essence of effective education leadership, as gleaned from the interviews with master teacher leaders, is significantly anchored in staying abreast of the latest educational research and innovations. This constant quest for knowledge and the subsequent integration of new insights into educational practices underscore a dynamic approach to leadership that champions continuous learning and innovation. The following is the explanation of how these leaders maintain their informational edge and foster an environment that values learning and experimentation:

Staying Informed

Staying informed about the latest trends, research, and innovations in education equips leaders with the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions that can enhance teaching efficacy, student learning outcomes, and overall school performance. This continuous learning helps leaders anticipate changes, adapt strategies, and adopt evidence-based practices aligned with contemporary educational needs.

Integrating New Knowledge

Integrating new knowledge into educational practices ensures that teaching methodologies remain relevant, engaging, and effective. By adopting innovative approaches and tools, leaders can enhance the learning experience for students, making it more interactive, personalized, and conducive to deep learning. This boosts student engagement and achievement and provides teachers new tools and techniques to enrich their instructional repertoire.

Fostering a Culture of Learning and Experimentation

By fostering a culture of learning and experimentation, leaders instill a mindset of continuous improvement among teachers and students alike. This culture encourages risk-taking, reflective practice, and collective problem-solving, driving the educational community to seek ways to enhance teaching and learning continuously. It creates an environment where innovation is welcomed and seen as essential to the institution's growth and success.

**Q4. What professional development and support mechanisms are most effective?**

***8.2. Mentorship and Professional Development***

A comprehensive approach to mentorship and professional development was highlighted, including structured mentorship programs, personalized development plans, and leveraging technology to enhance learning opportunities for educators.

The interviews with master teacher leaders underscore the critical importance of mentorship and professional development in fostering educational excellence. A comprehensive approach, encapsulating structured mentorship programs, personalized development plans, and using technology to augment educators' learning opportunities, emerged as a cornerstone for nurturing a conducive environment for continuous growth and development. This section delves into each of these components, exploring their impacts and mechanisms for enhancing the professional journey of educators.

***8.3. Strategies for Enhancing Teaching and Learning***

Innovative practices introduced by the master teacher leaders included integrating technology, fostering creativity, encouraging collaborative learning, and prioritizing continuous professional development. Such strategies aimed to improve student engagement and achievement and foster a culture of continuous improvement among colleagues.

The interviews with award-winning master teacher leaders reveal a rich palette of strategies for enhancing teaching and learning. These strategies, deeply rooted in innovation, creativity, collaboration, and professional development, are theoretical ideals and practiced realities that significantly improve student engagement, achievement, and the overall educational environment. Let us explore these strategies in more detail, understanding how they have been implemented and the impact they have created.

**Q5. How do the attributes, strategies, and professional development activities of master teacher leaders influence student learning outcomes and teacher professional development?**

Impact on Educational Outcomes underscores the ultimate goal and relevance of examining the characteristics and practices of successful educational leaders: to understand their effect on the educational community's success, particularly in student and teacher development.

***8.4. Impact on Educational Outcomes***

The leadership practices of the respondents positively influenced student learning outcomes and teacher professional development. This was achieved through setting clear expectations, providing support and resources, promoting reflective practice, and offering professional development opportunities.

The leadership practices elucidated by the interviewed master teacher leaders have significantly impacted both student learning outcomes and the professional development of teachers. These impacts are primarily attributed to the leader's ability to set clear expectations, provide ample support and resources, encourage reflective practices, and facilitate access to professional development opportunities.

**9. Future Aspirations**

The aspirations of the master teacher leaders included creating more nurturing and innovative learning environments, fostering professional growth among colleagues, and facilitating excellence in student achievement. Achieving these goals involved promoting collaboration, mentorship, and continuous professional development.

The future aspirations articulated by the master teacher leaders paint a vivid picture of their commitment to advancing the educational landscape. Their goals extend beyond immediate achievements, focusing on the long-term enhancement of learning environments, educators' professional growth, and students' academic excellence. These aspirations are rooted in a deep understanding of the foundational elements contributing to a thriving educational ecosystem: nurturing and innovative learning spaces, collaborative professional communities, and a relentless pursuit of excellence. Let us explore these aspirations more comprehensively, understanding how the promotion of collaboration, mentorship, and continuous professional development play pivotal roles in realizing these future goals.

**10. Reflection on Recognition**

Receiving awards influenced their perspective on leadership and teaching, reinforcing the importance of continuous improvement, innovation, and the impact of exemplary leadership on educational outcomes.

The reflections on recognition provided by the master teacher leaders offer profound insights into how accolades and external validations have shaped their perspectives on leadership and teaching. This acknowledgment, far from merely a cause for personal celebration, catalyzes deeper introspection, motivating a sustained commitment to excellence, innovation, and impactful leadership. Let us delve into how receiving awards has transformed their approach to educational leadership and teaching practices.

**11. Advice for Aspiring Teacher Leaders**

Aspiring leaders were encouraged to prioritize continuous learning, foster meaningful relationships, lead by example, and promote collaboration and innovation. According to the respondents, the essence of leadership revolves around serving others and contributing to the broader educational community.

The advice provided by master teacher leaders to aspiring leaders encapsulates a wealth of wisdom gleaned from years of experience in educational leadership. It frames leadership not just as a position of authority but as an opportunity to serve, influence, and innovate for the betterment of the educational community.

**12. Discussion**

The research unveiled several key findings about effective educational leadership through interviews with master teacher leaders. These findings include the identification of critical leadership qualities such as empathy, adaptability, and humility; the importance of innovative teaching and learning strategies; the role of mentorship and professional development; and the value of fostering a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration. These components are integral to enhancing teaching quality, student learning outcomes, and the overall educational environment.

The emphasis on core leadership qualities aligns with the broader literature on educational leadership, which consistently highlights the importance of teacher leadership in improving school performance and student outcomes [13,20,21,22].Critical qualities for effective educational leadership, as identified through interviews with master teacher leaders, include empathy, adaptability, and humility [13] . Innovative teaching and learning strategies, mentorship, and professional development are also crucial [13,23]. The role of instructional leadership in promoting shared responsibility and professional learning communities has been emphasized (García-Martínez, 2018). However, there is a need for more empirical research on teacher leadership [13,21].

Moreover, the findings underscore the role of collaborative leadership in professional development and mentorship. Highlight the importance of collaborative professional learning and the impact of leadership on the effectiveness of professional learning communities [24,25] .Further emphasize the need for ongoing leadership development and a regional approach to leadership training[26,27] .The role of mentorship in professional development is also underscored and advocate for peer observation and mentoring programs [28,29].These studies collectively underscore the significance of collaborative leadership and mentorship in professional learning systems.

This study illuminates the complex yet rewarding nature of educational leadership. It underscores the importance of foundational leadership qualities, the necessity of embracing innovation and collaboration, and the critical role of professional development and mentorship in fostering educational excellence. Ultimately, the findings affirm that effective education leadership is characterized by a service-oriented, innovative, and collaborative approach that prioritizes the well-being and success of students and educators alike.

**13. Conclusions**

Based on the comprehensive insights and findings from the study, the following conclusions can be derived:

1.The study underscores the importance of core leadership qualities such as empathy, adaptability, dedication, humility, and commitment to continuous improvement. These qualities define the essence of effective educational leadership and significantly impact the teaching and learning environment, fostering a culture of excellence, innovation, and inclusivity.

2. The findings highlight the transformative role of innovation and creativity in enhancing educational outcomes. Award-winning leaders actively integrate technology, promote collaborative learning, and encourage creative problem-solving, thereby creating dynamic and engaging learning experiences that cater to the diverse needs of students.

3. A critical aspect of the success of these leaders is their focus on professional development and mentorship. Structured mentorship programs, personalized development plans, and leveraging technology for learning opportunities are pivotal strategies that contribute to the professional growth of educators, ensuring that they remain at the forefront of pedagogical innovation.

4. The study reveals how award-winning leaders adeptly navigate challenges such as balancing instructional leadership with administrative duties and managing diverse teacher capabilities. Solutions such as effective time management, fostering a culture of collaboration, and embracing continuous learning and adaptability are crucial to overcoming these obstacles.

5**.** The leadership practices of the respondents have a profound positive influence on student learning outcomes and teacher professional development. This is achieved through setting clear expectations, providing necessary support and resources, promoting reflective practice, and offering ample professional development opportunities.

6. The aspirations of these leaders toward creating more nurturing and innovative learning environments, fostering professional growth among colleagues, and facilitating excellence in student achievement underscore their commitment to maintaining the status quo and continually advancing the educational landscape.

7. Reflections on receiving awards have significantly influenced these leaders' perspectives on their roles, reinforcing the importance of striving for continuous improvement, embracing innovation, and understanding the impactful role of exemplary leadership in shaping educational outcomes.

8**.** The study offers invaluable advice for aspiring teacher leaders, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning, building meaningful relationships, leading by example, and promoting collaboration and innovation. The essence of leadership is portrayed as a service-oriented endeavor focused on contributing to the broader educational community.

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