



Perceiving Teachers as Leaders: Perspectives of School Coordinators

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Abstract— This phenomenological inquiry unraveled the perspectives of teachers as school coordinators in Panabo City Division. I employed qualitative–phenomenological study in exploring the experiences of the ten (10) participants of which primary instrument of data gathering was through in- depth interview. Results indicated that from the perspectives of school coordinators, after analyzing their responses, the following were the emergent themes namely enhancement of teacher leadership, improvement of teacher efficacy, and promotion of decentralization. Additionally, when the participants were asked about their coping mechanisms from the challenges encountered as school coordinators, the following themes emerged namely adjusting to various circumstances, focusing on teacher competence, and asking support from school administrators. Lastly, the insights of school coordinators derived from the findings of the study were teacher empowerment, professional development of teachers, and effective delegation of tasks. Results imply that the school coordinator need to collaborate with the principal, other administrators, teachers, school staff, parents, the school-family council, community members, and students to develop and implement programs and services that meet the needs of students, their families, and the community. Clearly, delegation increases both efficiency and adaptability. It enables diverse individuals to complete tasks in various methods, thereby assuring a high level of success and objective attainment. This also results in a balanced distribution of tasks. Delegation facilitates efficient communication. Regularly delegating responsibilities accomplishes more than simply relieving the principal of some work. Effective delegation can increase the degree to which instructors and other members of the school community care about the school's success.

Index Terms— teacher-leaders, school coordinators, phenomenology, Panabo City.

1. Introduction

Subject Area Coordinators and other authorities have set tasks and responsibilities within a decentralized system. Subject coordinators are required to exhibit exemplary leadership in educational settings. They are tasked with carrying out activities and programs in order to effectively deliver the products to the clients who are the students. Given all of the current issues in the education industry, a very effective leadership style and management are essential.

Globally, teacher leadership is regarded as a viable solution to direct teacher learning in school improvement and policy change initiatives. Nonetheless, the subject of study on teacher

leadership in connection to post-compulsory educational growth has been and continues to be mostly theoretical. The idea states that leadership development is a repetitive and recursive process, as opposed to a linear one, centered on the concept of personal progress, but also including the overlapping concepts of growth as a teacher, researcher, and leader. Significant teacher development via different post-compulsory developmental activities supports and directs this progress. Development of teacher leadership is positioned within the classroom, school, and community. The interactions between instructor and setting provide feedback loops that either support the accomplishment of certain outcomes or challenge the teacher's further growth (Poekert, Alexandrou & Shannon, 2016).

In comparison to the well-being of students, the well-being of educators has received comparatively less attention. Harding et al. (2019) come to the conclusion that "evidence for this is presently missing," despite the fact that "teacher well-being and student well-being might be connected via complex and interdependent processes."

In a similar vein, educators at Catholic Higher Education in the Philippines report feeling respected, having opportunities for professional progress, being efficient and effective in the classroom, and having the ability to impact students and the culture of the institution. However, they do not have the opportunities to participate in the decision-making processes of the institution, nor do they have the ability to determine their own schedules or teaching loads (Tindowen, 2019).

Concerns of a similar kind have been voiced by teacher-leaders in the Division of Panabo City. They mentioned that they had to balance their time as classroom teachers and school coordinators. This was due to the fact that there were not enough teachers. In addition, they also felt having difficulty in managing time, lack of resources, and adjusting to the new school environment. As a result, teachers as school coordinators experienced burnout or stress and struggles that lead them to difficulty in handling classroom instructions as well as other school-related activities.

Several research studies have been conducted on teachers as leaders in schools. For example, Tannehill and MacPhail (2017) conducted research in which the findings highlighted the support these teachers provide one another, the empowerment these teachers developed to address issues posed by their

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challenging work situations (e.g., limited facilities, low economic conditions, students with challenging behavior), and the motivation that being a part of a community afforded them to persevere in teaching in challenging settings.

The researcher has not come across a study that dealt on the perspectives of teachers as leaders being the school coordinators in the locality. It is therefore in this context that the researcher is eager to explore the voices of teachers as school coordinators as they perform other duties aside from being classroom teachers in the Division of Panabo City.

The findings of the research will also be used to improve systems for allocating supplementary school activities to teachers who are responsible for both teaching in the classroom and coordinating extracurricular activities. In the Division of Panabo City, the outcomes of this research will give educational authorities information obtained from the participants' teachings and opinions.

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspectives of teachers as school coordinators in Panabo City Division. This also investigated the coping mechanisms adopted as well as the insights that are drawn from the findings of this study.

At this stage in the research, the perspectives of teachers were generally defined as their learning as well as challenging experiences as school coordinators in the performance of their tasks as classroom teachers and in venturing their journey doing other school-related activities.

3. Methods

This undertaking was conducted qualitatively, using a phenomenological method. I followed Creswell (2015) in this tradition, demonstrating how a phenomenological investigation may expose the lived experiences of several persons who shared a notion or phenomenon.

I followed some criteria in selecting the participants such as: (1) the participant must be holding a permanent teaching position as Teacher I in the secondary level; (2) the participants were assigned as school coordinators; and (3) these teachers had experienced various struggles or challenges as school coordinators. Further, they were composed of either male or female participants who are willing to participate in this study. Additionally, the participants were for in-depth interview and that this number was already enough to provide information with regards to the opportunity to identify and generate the themes characterized by narrative research.

Meanwhile, thematic analysis encompassed both developing content as a topic and established content as a category in data analysis; the content analyst must pick between the two before going to the next level of analysis. As a result, it enhanced the researcher's comprehensive comprehension of qualitative data interpretation (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2016).

In the context of this study, thematic analysis was done after the initial codes are identified. Then, categorizing and analyzing all the responses of the participants from general to

specific were followed. Responses with similar core ideas were extracted and grouped together to formulate comprehensive themes. Each theme should consist of at least three core ideas to make it valid. However, in my study, I assigned code names for each of the participants. Then, after the data was gathered, I used various sources like books, journals, documents, and other materials to validate participants' responses in the in-depth interview. Through this, reliability of the data gathered was established.

4. Results and Discussions

A. Perspectives of School Coordinators

When the participants were asked about their perspectives as school coordinators, after analyzing their responses, the following were the emergent themes namely enhancement of teacher leadership, improvement of teacher efficacy, and promotion of decentralization. The school coordinator is a crucial leader who meets with mentor teachers and welcomes and supports students and other educators. One of the responsibilities of the School Coordinator is to provide an innovative learning environment for students.

1) Enhancement of Teacher Leadership

Increasing teacher leadership may help with both retention and recruitment/attraction. A teacher leader is one who, in collaboration with other educators, may devise strategies for increasing the school's pool of qualified candidates for teaching positions. When it comes to implementing and sustaining school reform and development, teacher leaders may play a pivotal role as facilitators inside the school. Teachers' classroom leadership is crucial for educational progress at the instructional level. Teacher leaders are responsible for a variety of activities, including keeping tabs on reform initiatives, choosing lessons, and attending administration meetings.

Likewise, Wenner and Campbell (2017) note that when teachers attain middle-level leadership roles, their interactions with colleagues are often badly impacted due to the breakdown of the egalitarian norm normally seen in schools. There are several instances in the literature of peers expressing hostility and opposition by attempting to undermine the achievement of middle-level leaders (Lipscombe *et al.*, 2023).

Furthermore, Wenner and Campbell (2017) found that (a) teacher leadership, although rarely defined, focused on roles beyond the classroom, supporting the professional learning of peers, influencing policy/decisions, and ultimately focusing on student learning; (b) the research is not always theoretically grounded; (c) principals, school structures, and norms are significant in empowering or marginalizing teacher leaders; and (d) very little teacher leadership research has been conducted.

2) Improvement of Teacher Efficacy

When more conventional methods of instruction are not producing the desired results in the classroom, a teacher who has a high degree of effectiveness is more inclined to try new methods. It is possible that the new methods will be more difficult, that the pupils will have to put in more work, or that they may carry a certain risk.

Likewise, the results indicated that the average relationship

between teacher efficacy and academic achievement was significant, but the effect size was modest. In addition, the results revealed that the relationship was influenced by certain teacher efficacy measures and subfactors, as well as teaching experience. Kim and Seo (2018) found that the relationship between teacher efficacy and student academic achievement was not statistically significant in studies that used Gibson and Dembo's scale to assess classroom administration, and in the case of teachers with fewer than 11 years of teaching experience.

Policymakers, system and school leaders, and staff developers may be better served in their pursuit of successful education reforms if they consider how to foster collective efficacy throughout the conceptualization, design, delivery, and evaluation of change initiatives (Donohoo, 2018).

3) *Promotion of Decentralization*

They are able to settle all difficulties on their own and to nurture solutions for taking care of the various challenges that they experience. Decentralization aids the school leaders at the lower levels to carry that burden of choices, which are for the improvement of the association. The degree of work satisfaction as well as teacher morale are both improved thanks to decentralization, particularly among the middle and upper managers at the lower levels. In addition to this, it works hard to meet the many standards that pertain to independence, participation, and prestige. Decentralization has another benefit: it encourages a sense of group spirit and unity.

Recruitment, selection, assessment, and job duties of principals; appropriate leadership frameworks; and criteria for training or professional development are all described by Flessa *et al.* (2018) in their analysis of the school leadership policy environment in numerous nations. They made assumptions about whether factors like school system centralization, policy borrowing, stage of development, technocratic problem resolution, and neoliberal accountability would account for the variety of approaches to school leadership in the area.

B. *Coping Mechanisms of School Coordinators*

When the participants were asked about their coping mechanisms from the challenges encountered as school coordinators, the following themes emerged namely adjusting to various circumstances, focusing on teacher competence, and asking support from school administrators. It is worth noting that the school coordinators' responses to these obstacles provide important light on how they dealt with difficulties on their duties.

1) *Adjusting to Various Circumstances*

Just as life in general is full of varying, novel, and ambiguous circumstances, so are our working lives, particularly the working lives of instructors. For instance, they may encounter a variety of learners to whom they must respond appropriately, unexpected situations in the classroom or shifts in timetabling that they must navigate, new colleagues, students, and parents, and incorporate new and evolving knowledge from professional learning into their teaching practices.

One reaction to difficult working circumstances has been the identification of techniques for educators to become more

robust or buoyant. In the words of Day (2017), "for teachers to tackle the demands of classroom interaction, they must be resilient". Teachers may not be able to modify their circumstances, but they must be able to adjust their perceptions of them.

2) *Focusing on Teacher Competence*

When it comes to ensuring that students, particularly those who are enrolled in educational institutions, get excellent instruction, the level of competence possessed by their teachers is critical. The competence of teachers will have a beneficial impact on the intellectual growth and abilities of pupils, as well as assist teachers in developing their own instructional strategies. A competent educator is a leader who captures the students' hearts and minds. This teacher recognizes the importance of collaborating with others, including parents and coworkers, and actively pursues opportunities for professional collaboration within and beyond the school.

When developing successful learning environments in a classroom where several dependent and independent circumstances coexist, teacher competencies are crucial. In these crucial circumstances, the teacher with one of the most significant positions in the classroom is distinguished by his decision-making. Examining the conceptual framework of the components that influence the decision-making process, which can be defined as the sum of the physical and cognitive efforts in the selection and preference of various conditions, reveals that the variables that influence this process are quite diverse: teaching situations, goals, learning outcomes, experience, awareness, beliefs, and values (Aktas *et al.*, 2018).

The analysis of the study reveals a strong and positive correlation between teacher professional competence and 21st-century skills. The findings also suggest that personal characteristics, pedagogy, professional, information and communication technology (ICT), and school management and development are major contributors to 21st century skills. The findings also indicate that the dimensions of teacher competence have the potential to aid in the further development of teachers' potential in accordance with the concepts of 21st century learning (PAK-21). Teachers must enhance the quality of their instruction in accordance with current educational trends by emphasizing 21st century skills (Sulaiman & Ismail, 2020).

3) *Asking for Support from School Administrators*

The administration efficiently responds to demands from outside the school, such as those from the district and from parents, which might disrupt classroom instruction. The administration does an excellent job of acquiring resources for the school. The administration is objective in its assessment of the instructors' performance. The administration actively encourages instructors to try new approaches to instruction.

Administrators have also played a role in the empowerment of teachers by elevating their positions, making schools more interesting to students, cultivating relationships that are founded on trust, and promoting communication among teachers. It is not possible for administrators to adequately assist their professional development, self-sufficiency, autonomy, or management roles (Balyer, Ozcan & Yildiz,

2017).

Similarly, findings indicate school principals' dissatisfaction with their districts' low levels of support due to the lack of district support on provision of resources, lack of consultation in key decisions involving their schools, district officials' lack of visibility in schools and receptivity to change, and the lack of district support on provision of resources. It was concluded that the success of principals and their schools depends in part on the type of support they receive from their districts and argue for enhanced collaboration between schools and districts (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018).

C. Insights Derived from the Findings of the Study

This section presents the insights of school coordinators derived from the findings of the study, after analyzing the responses of the participants, the emergent themes were teacher empowerment, professional development of teachers, and effective delegation of tasks.

1) Teacher Empowerment

A teacher who is empowered has the resources and autonomy to provide every pupil with the education they deserve. The significance of empowerment is also demonstrated by its effect on teacher motivation, problem-solving skills, and the empowerment of students. The practices that motivate teachers, boost their confidence in their knowledge and expertise, and allow them to do what they deem appropriate and meaningful for a particular purpose.

Hirsh and Segolsson (2017) discovered that a new division of labor, in which middle-leaders were given challenging and time-consuming tasks in instructional analysis, was essential for integrating all teachers in the researched school in 'collaborative learning.'

When you empower teachers, you give them the opportunity to shape the mission and policies of the school based on their years of experience in the field. It's possible that empowering teachers may assist educators in identifying the limits of their own personal and professional growth. The question of how to better empower teachers is an important one (Balyer, Ozcan & Yildiz, 2017).

Likewise, Tannehill and MacPhail's (2017) research focuses on the empowerment of teachers. The data collection process spanned four years and included evaluations of in-service seminars/workshops, focus groups, and individual interviews. The findings highlight the teachers' mutual support, their ability to manage the challenges posed by their tough work contexts (e.g., limited facilities, low economic conditions, students with problematic conduct), and their resolve to remain in challenging situations. This project is ongoing as we continue to examine and assess how the same group of instructors may maintain the work of their community, reinvent themselves, and influence student learning.

2) Professional Development of Teachers

Training in professional development can help teachers become better at time management and organization. In the end, this makes teachers more efficient and provides them with additional time to focus on students rather than documentation. Regarding the growth and development of instructors, a

feedback system, team collaboration, and personal and professional growth objectives are required. Professional development for teachers promotes active learning, peer collaboration, and best practices in the field.

Djatkiko (2016) emphasized to teachers the importance of professional development and quality assurance in order to enhance the learning process or school quality. Teaching is now a recognized profession. Therefore, instructors must conduct themselves professionally. For teachers to be professional in their job, they must consistently improve their abilities and do quality control. Every educator requires professional development. Professional development for teachers is intended to improve the learning outcomes and attitudes of students. Teachers must also cooperate with one another to enhance the learning outcomes' quality. It provides quality assurance as the key to attaining and ensuring the school's effectiveness, which is required by stakeholders.

Diverse theories of how students learn and diverse theories of how teachers learn inform professional development programs. Visual patterns suggest that many popular design elements are unrelated to the effectiveness of a program. Moreover, distinct principal ideas are not differentially efficacious. However, the effectiveness of the pedagogies used to facilitate enactment varies. The review concludes by addressing the issue of research design for studies of professional development, suggesting that some widely favored research designs may negatively impact study outcomes (Kennedy, 2016).

3) Effective Delegation of Tasks

As a leader, it is essential to delegate because you cannot and should not perform every task yourself. Delegation empowers your team, fosters trust, and promotes professional growth. And for executives, it teaches you how to determine who is best adapted to undertake specific duties or initiatives. Delegation can also demonstrate that you have confidence in your subordinates' abilities and discretion. Teachers who believe they are trusted and respected are typically more dedicated to their work, their organization, and particularly their leaders.

Principals and management team members in elementary and secondary schools view distributed leadership primarily as the delegation of predetermined tasks, rather than the interaction between leaders, followers, and situations. The results strengthen the view of distributed leadership as a phenomenon that, in its rudimentary form, can be observed in the official structures of the school and as delegation based on a formal position. In the more advanced view, distributed leadership can be viewed as interaction among the management team and in situations within the official and unofficial structures of the school (Lahtero *et al.*, 2017).

In the administration of schools, one of the most significant activities is the delegation of responsibilities to lower-level employees. However, depending on how the procedure is carried out, it may have a detrimental impact on the employees who report to the principle since it helps the principal operate the institution more efficiently. It was determined, via analysis and interpretation, that training of workers on delegation offers employees the knowledge of how to do the exercise. This was

established as a result of the findings. In addition, it was discovered that attitude, incentives, and workload all play a role in determining how effectively jobs and responsibilities are delegated in the administration of schools (Aceke *et al.*, 2019).

5. Implications and Future Directions

A. Implications

Results imply that the school coordinator need to collaborate with the principal, other administrators, teachers, school staff, parents, the school-family council, community members, and students to develop and implement programs and services that meet the needs of students, their families, and the community.

It also signifies that it is essential for teacher leaders to have a loving and compassionate disposition if they are going to be successful in assisting their colleagues and communities in engaging in in-depth conversations on culture, social justice, culturally responsive teaching, and effective classroom discipline. They are able to serve as a model for personal development and introspection, which enables them to encourage progress in others.

It is further believed that the influence of a teacher on the academic achievement of a student in school is two to three times greater than the impact of any other aspect at the school, including services, facilities, and even leadership. Teachers that have a high sense of efficacy display traits such as enhanced excitement for the teaching profession.

Likewise, an essential condition for enhancing children's academic achievement is providing teachers with the autonomy and resources they need to provide each child with what they need to succeed. Teachers have agency to the degree that their chosen route helps their students acquire necessary knowledge and comprehension, form positive work habits and value judgments, and mature as individuals.

The research further implies that teachers may better contextualize and use their newfound knowledge in the classroom if they participate in continuous professional development activities that resemble real-world settings. It enables teachers to maintain a high level of expertise, efficiency, and creativity in the methods and tools they use in the classroom.

Clearly, delegation increases both efficiency and adaptability. It enables diverse individuals to complete tasks in various methods, thereby assuring a high level of success and objective attainment. This also results in a balanced distribution of tasks. Delegation facilitates efficient communication. Regularly delegating responsibilities accomplishes more than simply relieving the principal of some work. Effective delegation can increase the degree to which instructors and other members of the school community care about the school's success.

B. Future Directions of the Study

The subject's coordinator is in charge of a staff team that contributes to the health and education of the school's pupils under the direction of the subject coordinator. A Subject Coordinator is someone who, as part of their leadership of the

department, demonstrates to others how to have a profound understanding of the curriculum as well as great teaching practice.

School Coordinators play a crucial role in the success of school programs. They are responsible for steering the program and integrating it into the school's broader practices. School Coordinators will be accountable to the principal as members of the school's senior leadership team. They will influence the reasoning and behavior of colleagues and other school community members.

As a researcher, I would also suggest that school coordinators should assist school principals in developing a creative learning community across the school. School coordinators should have knowledge, understanding, and enthusiasm for creative teaching and learning as a key to raising achievement, aspiration, and motivation. School coordinators should also involve parents and other members of the community extensively in building a community of creative learning practice.

The researcher also suggests that this study may be conducted to school principals about their perspectives and experiences on how they support, assist, or guide the school coordinators in accomplishing their roles towards the success of all school programs, activities, and projects.

To get more precise and valid findings on the perspectives of school coordinators, a focus group discussion might be used as a data gathering tool. By engaging in focus group discussions (or FGDs), this can enhance data corroboration or triangulation in order to arrive at more comprehensive findings.

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