
ADAPTABILITY OF THE NOVICE SCHOOL HEADS ON THE DIMENSIONS OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN SDO CITY OF MALOLOS: BASIS FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

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ABSTRACT

This research study employed the mixed-method approach. Quantitative data were tabulated and treated using the SPSS. Meanwhile, the qualitative data were subjected to Thematic Analysis. Results revealed that on the general dimensions of leadership practices, the novice school heads showed total adaptability. However, after dissecting the answers of the participants, it showed that under each sub-dimension of the leadership practices, most of the novice school heads found research and innovation very challenging that they could not really adopt at present. Another sub-dimension includes updating of school files, policy reviews, managing resources and leading strategically. As to the experiences, some novice school heads gained understanding, became confident, and acknowledged the huge responsibilities of school leaders. Others also experienced the opposite such as the struggle to craft the School Improvement Plan, BED 1, 2, 3, Annual Improvement Plan, and liquidation of funds. It has been recommended by the researchers to conduct a division-wide leadership capacity training and provide re-calibration of technical assistance to the novice school heads so that they could adopt and function normally as responsible school leaders.

Keywords: adaptability, dimensions, leadership, novice, school heads, basic education

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INTRODUCTION

A successful entrepreneur, and leadership expert Orrin Woodward once said that excellent leaders are those that are hesitant enough to assume the duties and responsibilities because no one is willing to step up (Woodward, n.d.). This line speaks about the absolute truth of taking leadership roles. There are some members of the organization, even the senior faculty members in the school would challenge and doubt the capabilities of the leader especially if the person is considered a novice in the field. It takes careful analysis and reflection to decide whether to accept a leadership role because of the challenges that lie ahead. The leadership practices of the school heads are considered a catalyst to bringing a successful and great school. Being the school leaders, they are anticipated to execute the overall vision of the school aligned with the Department of Education. Hence, they are also expected to guide instructions to the teachers and learners, utilize and manage the resources properly, and impact and unite the team or people within the school organization. Another challenging role of being the head of the school is leading dynamically to sustain teamwork and collaboration and enhance the passion and the drive for better outcomes for the school organization (*Department of Education, 2021*).

Truly, the duties and responsibilities of the school heads are tough and challenging in governing the basic education sector of the country (*Department of Education, 2021*) as presented in the Republic Act 9155, otherwise known as the Governance of Basic Education Act (GBEA) of 2001 (Villar et al., 2020, 156-170) It is stipulated that the school head shall be the school manager and instructional leader. As the head of the school, he or she is expected to perform his or academic and leadership responsibilities (*Department of Education, 2021*) The Republic Act 10533 simply referring to the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2001, encouraged the school heads to cultivate their innate skills and expertise for them to utilize and play their designated roles and responsibilities to various aspects like academic experts, administrative leaders, and community planners. These are the roles of the school heads which are included in the Department of Education policies. DepEd Memorandum No. 50, s. 2020, entitled DepEd Professional Development (PD) Priorities of Teachers and School Leaders for SY 2020-2023, it was highlighted that the school heads must be capacitated with the various professional development training and capacity building in support of the smooth operation of the school knowing the multitude of problems and challenges that the department of education is facing right now (Villar et al., 2020, 156-170).

Here are the domains of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads: Number 1 is all about leading strategically. Second, managing school operations and resources. The third is all about focusing on teaching and learning. Fourth is developing self and others. Lastly, the fifth domain is about building connections (Villar et al., 2020, 156-170; *DepEd Order S2020 024-Philippine-Professional-Standard-For-School-Heads - DepEd Order No., S., n.d.*). The cited memorandum above is essential and vital in this study. The researchers focused on measuring the adaptability of novice school heads in terms of the leadership practices mentioned above. The findings of this study would serve as the basis to provide technical assistance to them so that they can adapt professionally, and could provide accurate and substantial results for the entire school.

Domain 1: Leading Strategically. As indicated in the Philippine Professional Standard for School Heads (PPSSH), this first domain focuses on the school heads' capabilities to identify and understand important and substantial sources of information. These are the passed laws, policies of the department, proven research, feedback from the society, and other contexts to be able to establish their connections and alignment (*DepEd PPSSH Domain 1 Leading Strategically - DepEd PPSSH, n.d.*). School heads should completely understand schools' current and desired states. School heads should brace the implementation of many conjoint strategies with the members of the community to take part and respond positively to the fast-changing evolution of schools (*DepEd PPSSH Domain 1 Leading Strategically - DepEd PPSSH, n.d.*) In a study conducted by (Allison, 2012, 79-82), understanding laws, policies, feedback, and context are key elements to running a successful school. They served as guiding principles in making decisions. They should be in accordance with the existing guidelines and policies stipulated by the Department of Education.

Additionally, the study by (Beam et al., 2016, 145-161), proved that when a school head fully understood the laws and regulations, the more that he or she could manage the school successfully.

Domain 2: Managing School Operations and Resources. The focus of domain number 2 is to highlight the designated role of the school heads in governing the entire school system and all relevant processes within the schools. It shows the sense of passion of the school head for maximizing fairness and equality in the course of performing the roles and responsibilities of a strengthened organization. It is a must that school heads are well-versed to comprehend and understand the rules and regulations, policies of the government, substantial guidelines, and orders that are relevant to the management of the entire school system, like human forces, financial status, learners, resources, environment, facilities, and etc. Moreover, as school heads, they should inculcate the essence of transparency and accountability in the performance of duty, relative to the delivery of the basic education services for the learners (*DepEd Order S2020 024-Philippine-Professional-Standard-For-School-Heads - DepEd O R D E R No., S., n.d.*). This definition is clearly explained upon reviewing the study of Edwards (2020). The results of the study revealed that being transparent about the financial expenses of the school attracted a strong commitment from the members of the school organization. Furthermore, fairness in the procurement of material resources strengthened the commitment of the faculty and stakeholders to believe in the capability of the school leader to govern a school.

Domain 3: Focusing on Teaching and Learning. This domain highlights the concentration of the school heads on promoting quality teaching and learning. It shows the eager determination to give a rational instructional leadership leading to a more improved competence among faculty members and results of the students. Moreover, it is also expected to provide technical assistance on instructions that relate to curriculum, practice, and performance (*Home, 2011*). Tahir et al., (2016), explained the duty of the school in providing a strong commitment to instructional leadership has proven to be very effective in bringing excellence among the learners. Capacity building and other substantial forums enriched the skills of the teachers to give high standard lessons and discussions to the learners (*New Hanover High School Reviews, n.d.*). Moreover, according to Arrieta & Ancho, 2020, instructional leadership also developed the capacity of the school heads to lead. The learnings and knowledge of the school heads imbibed positive results to make a successful school.

Domain 4: Developing Self and Others. Domain number 4 explains the liability of the school heads to make sure the people and the entire system achieved success. School heads must develop their areas of expertise and be able to transpire these ideas to the teachers and to the members of the community. Leaders should keep themselves updated with the trends in education so that they could influence others too. This way, they could reflect on their actions, and at the same time grow professionally (*Home, 2011*). Upon checking on the study (Yaw, 2017, 68-78) leadership is all about self-reflection. A good leader knows how to accept failure and defeat in terms of decision-making. The essence of self-reflection is a manifestation of good leadership. Furthermore, the researcher also emphasized that when a good leader values the opinion of others, a successful school is evident. In a study conducted by (Morales & Sapin, 2020, 6297-6306) results showed that opening opportunities for the teachers create avenues for exploration not just to strategies in teaching but also for self-discovery. Hence, when the school head supports the professional development of the teachers, a positive learning environment is possible.

Domain 5: Building Connections. This domain underscores the importance of the connection between the school heads and stakeholders. It points out the commitment of the school heads to be responsible and accountable for inculcating deeper meaning through the vision and mission and core values of the school. In addition, building relationships with people and communities anchored with mutual trust, respect, and understanding is given so much emphasis on this domain (Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads, 2020). As emphasized by the Department of Education secretary, Dr. Leonor M. Briones highlighted the importance of stakeholders as partners in education. In fact, the roles of stakeholders are included in the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) as the battle cry of the DepEd. The efforts of the stakeholders as agents in bringing harmonious relationships between school and community

are given so much emphasis. The Department of Education undersecretary Allain Pascua affirmed the commitment to bringing the education possible despite the circumstances of the pandemic. It was strengthened by the mandate to utilize the stakeholders and tapped them to continue with the learning process (*Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan in the Time of Covid-19, 2020*).

Although the modalities of learning played a major impact on the lives of the learners, the partners who are the stakeholders commit themselves to helping the school distribute the modules and even retrieve them just to make everyone safe. Moreover, in many aspects, the role of the stakeholders in the improvement of the schools is also substantial. For instance, in a study conducted by Arrieta & Ancho (2020), the role of stakeholders in the development of the school in terms of donations is an agent for successful leadership. The reflection of how many donations a school receives is a manifestation of strong leadership and commitment between the school head and the community.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Type

This study employed a mixed-method approach wherein respondents were given questionnaires to answer the descriptive type of questions and also, and they would also respond to the interview questions prepared to the participants in a one-on-one scheme interview depending on the availability of the school heads.

Respondents

The respondents of the study covered the novice school heads from the SDO City of Malolos. Being a novice is anchored in the Philippine Professional Standard for School Heads manual ranging from one month to three years in service (Deped - Aklan)

Table 1: Respondents of the Study

Schools in District 10	Number of Respondents		
	Male	Female	Total
District 1	1	1	2
District 2	0	0	0
District 3	0	2	2
District 4	0	3	3
District 5	0	1	1
District 6	0	0	0
District 7	4	2	6
District 8	1	1	2
District 9	0	1	1
District 10			
TOTAL	6	11	17

Sampling Method

The researcher included the total population of all the novice school heads of the district school within the Division of Malolos. The reason for the inclusion is to evaluate and know the adaptability skills of these school heads so that proper technical assistance would be provided for them.

Instrument

Questionnaire. The survey questionnaire utilized by the researchers was modified and adapted from the domains of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads. It uses a five-point Likert Scale to know the level of adaptability of novice school heads in terms of the dimensions of leadership practices. Moreover, the one-on-one interview was conducted with the participants to answer the qualitative questions stated in the statement of the problem.

Data Collection Procedure

In the collection of data, the researchers draft a letter to the Division Schools Superintendent informing her of the research conducted. After the approval letter was released, corresponding letters were also sent to the respective Public Schools District Supervisors (PSDS) within the district informing them about the involvement of their respective school heads. Afterward, questionnaires in Google Forms were given to the school heads followed by an interview via Zoom and Google Meet platforms.

Ethical Considerations

During the entire research process, the researchers valued the privacy of the participants and ensured the Data Privacy Act of 2012 was exercised. The gathered information and relevant data were treated with utmost respect and confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were treated utilizing the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) software from IBM for easier and faster calculation. However, the qualitative data were subjected to coding and arranging through themes. Thematic Analysis was used to present the data qualitatively and responses from the participants are presented verbatim.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

This section highlights the results and discussion of the study. This comprises two types of data interpretation. First, the quantitative part of the questionnaire, and the second part are the data from the qualitative aspect or from the interview which are arranged according to themes. Thematic analysis was used and transcripts from the interview are included verbatim.

Quantitative Results

The table below shows the summary means of the adaptability of novice school heads on the five domains as dimensions of leadership practices.

Table 1. Summary Mean of the Adaptability of the Novice School Heads on the Dimensions of Leadership Practices

Domain	Mean	Interpretation
1	4.22	Highly Adapted
2	4.23	Highly Adapted
3	4.48	Extremely Adapted
4	4.42	Extremely Adapted
5	4.34	Extremely Adapted

As reflected in the above table, domain number 1 which is leading strategically has a summary mean of 4.22 which is interpreted as highly adapted. This result signifies that the novice school heads evidently adapted to the extreme manner in the first domain. All of them have already embraced and adapted the vision, mission, and core values of the Department of Education. In addition, school planning and implementation, policy review, program design and implementation, learners' voices, and monitoring and evaluation process have been extremely adapted even if these school heads are considered novices in the field. However, it was noted that research and innovation gained only a summary of 4.00. Although it is interpreted as highly implemented, some respondents managed to check the 1 and 2 scales respectively. Therefore, it is being analyzed as they are struggling with this component.

Domain number 2 talks about managing school operations and resources. This domain receives 4.23 which is interpreted as highly adapted. Although it is quite significant in terms of numerical value, still there is room for improvement. In the context of emerging opportunities and challenges as well as records management, these two have received low values which are 4.00 and 4.12 respectively. These connote that novice school heads are not thoroughly adaptive in terms of these two subdomains. However, other aspects like financial management, school facilities, and equipment, management staff, school safety for disaster preparedness, and mitigation and resiliency are highly adapted.

Domain number 3 which is focusing on teaching and learning, a summary mean result of 4.48 is interpreted as extremely adapted. In this domain, the school heads are extremely adapted to teaching standards and pedagogies, performance, and feedback. Meanwhile, learner achievement, learning assessment, school-based review, contextualization, and implementation of learning standards are all extremely adapted also.

For domain number 4, a summary means 4.42 gives an interpretation of extremely adapted. This domain focuses on developing self and others. It has been very evident how novice school heads have managed to fully adapt to the context of personal and professional development, professional reflection and learning, professional networks, and performance management. Along with these, professional development of school personnel, leadership, and development in individuals and teams as well as the general welfare of human resources and mechanisms on rewards and recognition are all extremely adapted by the novice school heads. These results indeed show the determination of these leaders to cope and put themselves really in the adaptive mode because the success of their school greatly depends on them.

Finally, building connections as domain 5 indicated has a final mean of 4.34 interpreted as extremely adapted. This focuses on managing diverse relationships, management of the organization, inclusive practice, communication, and community engagement. The relationships built between the school heads and their community are indeed showcased in this result. To end up, question number one was answered as to how the novice school heads' adaptability to the dimensions of leadership practices in the SDO City of Malolos, Bulacan.

Qualitative Results

Table 3. The Theme on Adapted Leadership Practices

Adapted Leadership Practices	Frequency
Adapted to all the dimensions but still a lot for improvement	3
Research and innovation	1
Teaching and learning process	1

“On the other hand, I am fully adapted to each dimension of leadership practices in PPSSH but there is still room for improvement that requires a lot of experiences such as community engagement and extensive tapping of school partners, extensive development of leadership skills of teachers, records management and many more.” -Participant 3

“I think all dimensions adapted in leadership such as expertise, experiences, problem-solving ability and awareness of self and others that all are extremely adapted because as a leader those all above are being practiced”. -Participant 5

“I would like to say I am well adapted to research and innovation and consider it my expertise. I have loved doing research ever since. It is a passion of mine that I would like to share with others.” -Participant 6

“Extremely adapted in focusing on teaching and learning process to improve and increase the learning outcome of learners, especially during a pandemic.” -Participant 7

“Developing self and others and building connections are dimensions that I have extremely adapted to. To become self-sufficient as a school head, I enrolled myself in Graduate School and participated ng

various training related to the enhancement of leadership skills to further enhance my skills, knowledge, and attitudes towards effective and efficient school leaders.” -Participant 8

Table 4. The theme on not Adapted Leadership Practices

Leadership Practices (Not adapted)	Frequency
Research and Innovation	4
Keeping and updating school files	2
Policy review	1
Managing resources	2
Leading strategically	1

“I have difficulties adapting to the research and innovation dimension, especially how to conduct action research. More so, literature search, presentation, and publication of results, data collection”. - Participant 1

“Of the aforementioned dimensions, research and innovation are one of those that have not been done yet because there is not enough time due to overlapping tasks. The strategy or management is ensured to be anchored in the DepEd Mission, vision, and core values”. -Participant 2

“In managing school operations and resources, I need to improve the record-keeping and updating of school files such as following up of ACRs to be done by the teachers after conducted activities.”- Participant 3

“I think the options I am not much adapted to our policy review, research and innovation, and part of school planning and implementation. The reason is that I am just a new school head in this division and still have much more to learn and do. With research and innovation, I need more time and practice to be able to implement and transfer it to other teachers and fellow leaders.”-Participant 4

“Since I am a neophyte in the field, I say I am not yet adapting the process of financial management and resources. Things that involve the process of procurement and liquidation. I can adapt for sure slowly, taking one step at a time. Learning from the experts.”-Participant 6

“Leading Strategically due to some lack of extra time to improve and put in some research and innovation even though it is already implemented and used in the school’s improvement and development of learning process, we did not put it into proper documentation and writing due to time lock of time.”- Participant 7

“In the aspect of research and innovation, I find it encouraging to my fellow teachers to conduct school-based action research/ innovation. They do not have enough time to do so due to classroom workload and accomplishment of other teaching-related tasks.”-Participant 8

“In managing school operations and resources, I need to improve the record-keeping of school files to be updated such as the following-up of ACRs to be done by the teachers after conducted activities. On the other hand, I am fully adapted to each of the dimensions of leadership practices in PPSSH but there is still a lot of room for improvement that requires a lot of experiences such as community engagement and partnership.” -Participant 9

“That would be on Domain 2: Managing of Resources, particularly on Strand 2.3. School facilities and equipment and 2.4. school safety for disaster preparedness, mitigation, and resiliency. These indicators involved construction and maintenance of school facilities which were not my interest before and were very technical for me.” -Participant 10

Table 5. Experiences on Dimensions of Leadership Practices

Experiences	Frequency
Gained comprehensive understanding	1
Became confident	2
Huge roles and responsibilities	1
Struggles in budget and management along with crafting of SIP, AIP, BED1-3	1

Extend the research culture of the school	2
Created a budget track system	1
Rewarding and challenging	1

“I am now certain of the things that I should know, be able to do, and value in order to succeed in my work. I became more confident that I can do my job well because I am guided by the school heads’ standards. Even during this time of pandemic when there are many challenges we face in school. I am able to lead and manage the school with grace since I know what to do and how to do it. In fact, of the 5 domains of PPSSH, Domain 5 which is “Building Connection” guided me in the implementation of Brigada Eskwela 2021 in our school amidst the threat of the Covid-19 virus. Our school has been recently adjudged as first place in Brigada Eskwela best Implementer (Small School Category Elementary Level) in our division.” - Participant 1

“As an OIC-school head and novice in managing a school, I have seen the huge roles and responsibilities that rest on the shoulders of a school leader. There are so many things to consider. Every step and plan require careful decision-making, which must always be in accordance with applicable policies, standards, and applicable law. As a beginner, I saw in myself that I still had a lot to learn, I needed people with experience in this type of field. I want to strengthen my ability to communicate with stakeholders and what steps I should take to find a private or public organization or club that will become a partner of the school so that they can help in the successful implementation of school programs and projects. And another thing I would like to learn is good budget management. From the creation of SIP, AIP, BED1-3, budget modification, and liquidation process.” -Participant 2

“The school conducted various activities to extend the research culture of the school (Project CHRiS-Collaborative and Heterogenous Research in School). The school also created a budget track system that serves as a pathway to monitoring and successful disbursement of financial matters of the school. Finally, aside from regular conduct of classroom formal and informal management and observations, technical assistance, and career opportunities were given to teachers and encouraged them to study post-grad and now five of them are about to become Teacher III waiting for NOSCA.” -Participant 3

“Being a leader is both rewarding and challenging. Rewarding because you could do decision-making with the help of the stakeholders for management of school operation and also you could become a part of professional growth of teachers and fellow leaders. It is also where we learned much about the different key result areas for school improvement. Rewarding because it is where inspirations and aspirations will be established in the near future both in teaching and learning. Challenging because this time could be devoted for all concerns of the school, also you have to consider all areas of concern for improvement, building a good rapport with colleagues and teachers.”-Participant 4

“Being a school head and an instructional leader, it is very important in leading people that I should possess an expertise, good experiences and learned how I may able to resolve conflict that arises every now and then, I should be aware of myself and also to others so that I may become a success in all aspect.” - Participant 5

“My experience that I could share in the dimensions of leadership practices is my knowledge on research and innovation. It is very fulfilling that as a newbie in the field, I was entrusted to give technical assistance to my fellow school heads within the district to come up with innovative research proposals. I would love to expand this gift so that others would also see and appreciate the beauty of innovation and research.” -Participant 6

“As a new school head, I found most likely difficult on liquidations of funds monthly due to limited knowledge learned when I’m was a teacher, new experienced on different documents to prepare on and having poor internet connectivity in the station which turned to be a big problem, especially updating memos, submitting reports online and attending meetings and webinars.” -Participant 7

“True servant leaders bring out the potential of the people they handle and should serve and lead with good Management. Leadership is found not just at work but all around us. In any situation, leaders

take a step forward and take charge of the situation. In education, school heads should have credibility and dignity so that people around them would love to follow them. My experiences for the past 3 years as school head helped me to grow and learn various aspects, especially communicating with other people.

I became aware of all the legal bases, policies, issues, and qualities that a leader should know and possess. It is an eye-opener that everything operating in and out of the school should be aware and sensitive to addressing the emerging issues and challenges of the school community. It is my task to lead with a HEART (Honesty, Empowerment, Accountability, Responsibility, and Transparency) applying the 3S (Steward, Shepherd, and Servant) of leadership. With this, I am aiming to make a difference to the people and community I am serving with.” -Participant 8

“Various SLACs and capacity building webinars for teachers were conducted, and recently a capacity building webinar on professional development particularly in becoming a master teacher was conducted for the teachers.” -Participant 9

CONCLUSION

On the general dimensions of leadership practices, the novice school heads showed total adaptability. However, after dissecting the answers of the participants, it revealed that under each sub-dimension of the leadership practices, most novice school heads found research and innovation as very challenging that they could not really adopt at present. Another sub-dimension includes updating school files, policy reviews, managing resources, and leading strategically. As to the experiences, some novice school heads gained understanding, became confident, and acknowledged the huge responsibilities of school leaders. Others also experienced the opposite such as the struggle to craft the School Improvement Plan, BED 1,2, 3, Annual Improvement Plan, and liquidation of funds.

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