

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE A SCHOOL TRANSITION INTO THE PHILIPPINE K TO 12 BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM

ARNEL JOSEPH I. PASIA^{a,b}
University of the Philippines Diliman

^aMA Education student, UP College of Education, UP Campus, Diliman, Quezon City 1101, Philippines

^bCanvas Campus Administrator, FEU High School, FEU Manila, Nicanor Reyes St., Sampaloc, Manila 1015, Philippines

Corresponding Author:

Arnel Joseph I. Pasia

Email addresses: arneljosephpasia@gmail.com; ajpasia@feuhighschool.edu.ph; aipasias@outlook.up.edu.ph

Telephone number: (+632) 849-4000 loc. 800

Office Address: NB 404, FEU Manila, Nicanor Reyes St., Sampaloc, Manila 1015, Philippines

Abstract

Educational leadership practices on principal and school district leadership are well-studied, especially in the United States. In the Philippines, principal and teacher leadership practices are explored. This case study aims to add to the extensive literature on educational leadership strategies by providing an insight about how two Philippine private secondary schools transitioned into the new Philippine K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum and how a private school administrator practiced educational leadership strategies for such transitions. Findings show that the schools concentrated on providing in-house and external faculty trainings, upgrading school facilities, and changes in administration. The school administrator played multiple roles falling into different leadership models in approving, monitoring, and managing such transition efforts. It is recommended that future studies be directed to having school principals as respondents so that a greater detail of school transition efforts and more educational leadership practices be obtained.

Introduction

Educational leadership practices on different levels of the educational bureaucracy are well-studied. For example, in US school district levels, three districts were compared in terms of three roles: monitoring, procuring and distributing resources, and growth and development of people (Firestone & Martinez, 2007). After all, Waters and Marzano (2006) showed that there is a positive relationship between district leadership and student achievement. They also elaborated on the actions of an effective district leadership. Bredeson and Kose (2007) even argued that work realities subvert US district superintendents from effectively performing their roles as instructional leaders; nevertheless, state curriculum, testing mandates, and personal interest drive these superintendents' involvement in curriculum and instruction. A link on instructional leadership between district and school levels was established by Fink and Resnick (2001), where they discussed the various strategies used by the district leadership to develop principals as instructional leaders.

More widely studied than US district superintendents are the school principals. The series of studies conducted by Glanz, Shulman, & Sullivan (2005) highlighted the changes in instructional supervision practices of New York City public schools upon the adoption of new curricular standards. Further, they showed that principals performed more managerial roles while instructional coaches take care of instructional leadership (Glanz, Shulman, & Sullivan, 2006). Finally, they enumerated a number of instructional leadership practices carried out by the principal of a particular school which established a positive relationship between instructional leadership and student achievement (Glanz, Shulman, & Sullivan, 2007). Ylimaki (2007), on the other hand, showed that prior successful experiences and ability to share instructional leadership skills are the principals' key to lead high-poverty US schools towards improvement.

On the local level, studies on Philippine school principals' leadership include, among the many, their perceived capacity for instructional leadership and its relationship with perceived effectiveness (Sindhvad, 2009); principals' perspectives on different forces that influence educational agenda (Brooks & Sutherland, 2014); principal leadership practices in areas of ethno-religious conflict (Brooks & Brooks, 2018); and principal perceptions on teacher participation in decision-making (Kuku & Taylor, 2002).

On the lowest level of the educational bureaucracy, teacher leadership is also widely explored. York-Barr and Duke (2004) defines:

Teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, whether individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement. (p. 287-288)

Further, they found out that teacher leadership has three development foci: (1) individual development; (2) team development; and (3) organizational development. Katzenmeyer and Moller, as quoted in Harris (2003), illustrated teacher leadership in three ways: (1) as a facilitator, coach, mentor, trainer, etc.; (2) as a leader in operational tasks; and (3) as a leader in decision-making and partnership. Finally, Taylor and colleagues (2011) found out that initiating teacher professional development for senior teachers

supported growth in subject expertise and leadership capacity; it also proved useful for reinvigorating experienced teachers in the profession.

Considering the studies enumerated, it is clear that people from different levels of the educational system play different roles in leadership. However, studies on the roles of private school administrators who, as operationally defined in this study, serve as a higher official than a school principal, receive less attention.

Meanwhile, the Philippines has recently felt a dramatic shift in its basic education curriculum with the enactment of the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2012 (RA 10533). Under this law, basic education would now comprise of a mandatory kindergarten and 12 years of pre-university education, an additional of three years from the compulsory ten-year pre-university education of the previous Basic Education Curriculum.

With this dramatic shift in the history of the Philippine educational system, and with the lack of understanding of private school administrators' leadership, it is imperative to conduct a study identifying the changes that took place to a school during its transition to a new curriculum, as well as the roles played by private school administrators during the transition.

This paper presents a case study about how a private school administrator for two different schools with multiple campuses handled the transition of her schools into the new K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum. Specifically, this study answered the following questions:

1. What are the changes happening in a school during transition into the new K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum?
2. What roles does a school administrator play to facilitate the transition?

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the broadening literature on the newly-implemented K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum in the Philippines by providing insights about how a private school administrator handled the corresponding changes in the Junior and Senior High School levels upon the implementation of the new curriculum. This study aims to further highlight the multiple roles played by private school administrators as leaders on the Philippine educational system.

Methodology

This qualitative research is a case study about how a private school administrator handled the transition of two schools with multiple campuses towards the adoption of the new K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum, which started on Academic Year 2012-2013 and continued until Academic Year 2016-2017. For personal reasons of the participant, data gathering was conducted through a structured email interview. Some interview questions that required lengthy answers were conveniently divided into five areas: curriculum and instruction, school facilities and technology, faculty training and development, administration, and student services. These areas were inspired from the areas evaluated by PAASCU, an accrediting agency of Philippine education (Conchada & Tiongco, 2015). Follow-up email interviews were done for responses that needed clarifications.

During the period covered in this case study, the participant served as the Executive Director for Basic Education at Wisdom Memorial School (2014-2016) and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Scholars College (2016-2017). Before her service in Wisdom Memorial School, she worked outside the education sector.

*Wisdom Memorial School and Scholars College are pseudonyms

Results

The findings of this study can be outlined into three major themes: (1) changes in the schools; (2) challenges affecting the transition efforts; and (3) leadership practices carried out by the participant.

1. Changes in the schools

For both Wisdom Memorial School and Scholars College, external and in-house trainings were conducted. The external trainings were sponsored by the Department of Education (DepEd), Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC), and textbook publishers. This practice is consistent with the findings of Firestone and Martinez (2007) where professional development training on constructivist pedagogy, textbook implementation, and a hybrid of the two were conducted.

Scholars College experienced major upgrades in facilities and technology brought about by the pilot implementation of the Senior High School (SHS) Program on Academic Year 2016-2017, as well as by the change in ownership of the school. The participant provided:

[Scholars College's] facilities were quite run down. [The new owner] invested in upgrading facilities and technology. New classrooms for grade 11 and a covered gym in one campus, repairs in all campuses, 2nd-hand PCs, and subscriptions to more bandwidth marked the first year under the [new owner]. Construction of a new building for SHS also started on one campus and plans for buildings in 2-3 other campuses were done. By 2018, the new building was completed, bandwidths were further upgraded, construction on another building started, tablets were acquired, a new LMS was installed, and [Scholars College] was leading in using the [new owner's enrollment system] for basic education among the [new owner's] schools.

Inferring from the preceding paragraph, a change in ownership has major impacts in school operations. Aside from the major upgrades in facilities and technology, changes in administrative practices followed, including:

- "Change in the board, president, vice presidents (for academics and for finance), deans, principals, and other faculty and staff positions";
- Administration of standardized testing, Understanding by Design (UbD) program, and a new LMS;
- "Use of [an enrollment system used by the new owner] for enrollment and [a new LMS] for class records and class management."
- "Roles and responsibilities of administration and academics were constantly being reviewed and tested with change."

2. Challenges affecting the transition efforts

Both Wisdom Memorial and Scholars were faced with internal and external challenges during their transition efforts into the new K to 12 Curriculum. The challenges are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Internal and External Challenges Faced by the Schools During Transition.

Internal	External
New ownership ^b	State mandates ^{a,b}
Budget ^{a,b}	Enrollment rate ^{a,b}
School tradition ^b	
Student services ^b	

^aFor Wisdom Memorial School

^bFor Scholars College

Budget and enrollment rate played together in affecting the student services improvement efforts of both Wisdom Memorial and Scholars. The participant said, “For grades 7 to 10, there were no significant increases in enrollment and thus no additional sources of revenues to improve [student] services during the transition—at least in [Wisdom Memorial] and [Scholars].” However, in Grade 11, the participant regarded the addition of Grade 11 as a “benefit” in the sense that “it increased the overall number of students in all [Scholars College] campuses.” But the dramatic increase in enrollment made Scholars “struggle to hire qualified personnel in sufficient numbers for its libraries, clinics, guidance, registrar’s office, and other student services”. Clearly, unlike in public schools, the bloodline of private schools lies on student enrollment as it generates revenue for the school. This is supported by the participant’s response that goes, “...that both schools were acquired ([Scholars College]) or the owners partnered with investors ([Wisdom Memorial]) during this period may be related to tertiary schools looking for ways to expand into basic education while tertiary enrollment suffered.”

On the other hand, state mandates are another set of external challenges. The change from BEC to K to 12 is a state mandate itself, affecting the lineup of basic education grade levels and approaches to teaching and assessment. These state-mandated changes compelled principals, faculty and staff to undergo external trainings to align to the new curriculum, as discussed previously. The participant elaborated, “The 2 [Wisdom Memorial] campuses followed DepEd guidance on the schedule to shift to the new K-12 curriculum from the old BEC by grade level. They also followed DepEd’s recommended approaches to teaching and assessment”. For Scholars College, she replied, “As with any change of direction from DepEd, the publishers and other training providers or sponsors design training for school personnel aligned with the new DepEd strategies and curricula.”

The rest of the challenges are at play on Scholars College alone. Among these, the change in ownership posed the greatest challenge in the transition process. As the participant put it, “In addition to the new grade 11, [Scholars] had a new owner in [name of school] and many major changes were implemented immediately and simultaneously.”

Another challenge encountered by the participant was the school tradition of Scholars College. She stated:

They were using textbooks at all levels and were very traditional in their approach and strategies. Publishers did not yet have a complete set of textbooks for grade 11 and some teachers in the more advanced subjects without textbooks had difficulty with content. In some cases, this problem continued into the succeeding school years...The new K-12 curriculum was too literally interpreted in the textbooks and by many of the traditional teachers. These teachers were determined to stick to the sequence and content of the textbooks without using strategies that engaged students. Rote learning was common. Many of the more progressive elements and guidelines of the DepEd curriculum were ignored or not understood, and therefore not appreciated.

A consequence of Scholars College's traditional ways of teaching is the conflict it created with the participant's personal educational values, which is mainly progressive. She shared, "As [an] alumna of [Wisdom Memorial] and a close follower of the [Wisdom Memorial] way of learning (the founder was my grandmother), I was also deeply involved in trying to bring back the more progressive approach to teaching." She added that in Scholars, she "personally struggled to assert the primacy of academics in all operational decisions". This is consistent with the findings of Bredeson and Kose (2007) where they argued that aside from state curriculum and testing mandates, personal interest of the superintendent (in this case, the school administrator) plays a major role in his/her involvement in curriculum and instruction.

3. Leadership practices

The leadership practices exemplified by the participant can be classified into four categories, based on the six leadership models developed by Bush (2010) plus an additional model called instructional leadership.

3.1. Managerial leadership.

Her main challenge as an administrator in Scholars was "managing the pace and amount of change that occurred on many fronts". This statement suggests the practice of managerial leadership. Managerial leadership is a fit leadership model for a formal model of management, which looks at a school as a rational system with a formal organizational structure (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). The managerial leadership practices of the participant included: (1) existence of rules and regulations, hierarchy and authority, and accountability, all of which fall under Weber's Bureaucratic Model; and (2) staffing, which falls under Fayol's General Administrative Theory. Both theories look at a school in a formal model perspective. This claim is backed up in the succeeding paragraphs.

During her years as Executive Director for Basic Education at Wisdom Memorial School, she was responsible for "securing the permits for [Wisdom's] 2 campuses." She stated further:

Since this was my first year in administering basic education after a long shift to other industries, I read and studied all the requirements and curriculum guides and attended as many seminars, workshops, and conferences as I could. I prepared all

the required documents for the permits for all academic, tech-voc (ICT), arts, and sports. I was also liaison to DepEd to follow up the approval of our applications and the issuance of our permits and I made initial contact with resource persons and organizations to help us teach specialized tracks and strands.

The participant also shared one instance where she performed “troubleshooting” as a school head of Wisdom Memorial. In this instance, she convinced DepEd officials to authenticate the graduation of a batch of high school students after being found out by a university that these students skipped 1st Year High School under the Principal’s orders.

Lastly, she shared how the staffing of the newly-opened Senior High School was pulled off. She stated:

Senior HS teachers and those with post-grad degrees were asked to teach in SHS. Some teachers taught in both SHS and JHS. Some in tertiary and SHS. But there were still some subjects that were difficult to find teachers for such as the business subjects under ABM. Teachers with some entrepreneurial experience were assigned to these subjects.

3.2. Participative leadership.

Participative leadership calls for a leader who “consults with subordinates, obtains their ideas and opinions, and integrates their suggestions into the decisions about how the group or organization will proceed” (Northouse, 2010, p. 128). The participant practiced participative leadership through collaboration with principals and faculty and democratizing the school community. As a collaborator, she stated:

The principals and the consultant worked closely with teachers in small, weekly meetings or one-on-one dialogues on specific issues on classroom management and the like...Managing the transition involved continuous research and preparation, training, gathering references and resources, sharing and reviewing of experiences, team or one-on-one meetings to address issues that arise, networking with external groups ([new owner], PEAC, other schools, etc.) to find out what issues they face (usually common to ours) and ways they address them.

Establishing a collegial and collaborative culture in schools has taken its appeal in the literature. The participant’s practices are consistent with that of the findings of Fink & Resnick (2001), Glanz, Shulman, and Sullivan (2007), and Ylimaki (2007), where they highlighted the positive effects of collegial and collaborative culture in school improvement and student achievement.

The participant also talked about tapping both old and new faculty members as she worked on the transition plans. She has done this both for Wisdom Memorial and Scholars College. She stated:

...Outstanding faculty with leadership skills and mastery of their subjects were recognized by all. They were already assigned as lead teachers for core subjects and continued in this capacity. They supervised the transition of other faculty to the new K-12 curriculum, working closely with their respective principals. There were also younger faculty who stood out based on credentials and performance (articulate, praised by students and colleagues and supervisors) who were given more responsibilities during the transition and tapped to share their knowledge and practices with their colleagues.

This move illustrates appreciation of teacher leadership (Harris, 2003). Consistent with the literature, initiating a teacher professional leadership such as the one described above reinvigorates experienced teachers (Taylor et al., 2011); and it helps teachers grow in their understanding of instructional, professional, and organizational practices of the school (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). However, the case is different with the anomalous findings of Kuku and Taylor (2002) where bachelor's degree-only holders had greater involvement in operational decisions than those with post-graduate degrees.

The participant democratized the school community by allowing students and teachers to speak up. She responded:

I also initiated student surveys and encouraged students and faculty to speak up about what they want to see changed or improved and use this information as a basis for prioritizing our responses. I believe young people often (though not always) know what's good for them.

This is an application of the findings of Vieno and colleagues (2005)—that perception of a democratic school climate is a significant predictor of school sense of community at individual, classroom, and school levels.

3.3. Moral leadership.

The participant's actions such as helping the Grade 11 transferees of Scholars College (which comprised 90% of Grade 11) adjust to the school culture, as well as initiating reading programs and refreshing library collections for both Wisdom Memorial and Scholars College are illustrations of moral leadership. As described earlier, the participant is a progressive educator. Moral leadership, as defined by Bush (2010) is "based on the values, beliefs and attitudes of principals and other educational leaders" (p. 186). Helping students adjust to the culture is consistent with the literature presented by MacNeil, Prater, and Busch (2009) as they argued that goal focus and adaptation are crucial to the students' academic success while in school.

In contrast, her reading programs in Scholars had mixed success because it "depended on the support of the concerned principals and the openness of the teachers". This suggests a conflict between the culture she wants to introduce and the existing school culture.

3.4. Instructional leadership.

Instructional leadership is defined by Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2014) as "assistance for the enhancement of teaching and learning" (p. 9). For instructional leadership, the participant worked on the introduction of research-based teaching strategies and innovations. These efforts are consistent the imperative of Glatthorn, Boschee, and Whitehead (2009) in that "principals need to become aware and knowledgeable about new approaches to curriculum supervision" (p. 240), which includes innovating teaching strategies since curriculum and instruction are related. Also, Hoy and Hoy (2013) asserted that teaching and learning are the technical core of a school. Thus, it is the instructional leader who should be more knowledgeable about principles of student learning to become effective.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that the first step the private schools took as a response to the new state-mandated curriculum was to conduct external and in-house trainings. The objective of the external trainings, which were provided by the state and third-party providers, was to align the school's curriculum and instruction with that of the new state standards. In-house trainings were conducted so that the school's curriculum and instruction, while in process of being changed by external standards, remained intact with the private schools' respective educational philosophies. This double training is especially applicable for private schools, who are given by the state an academic freedom to a limited extent.

While the dynamics of school takeover is not a primary concern of this case study, the results showed that a change in ownership led to the adoption of the new owner's organizational structure, as well as its native administrative and academic operations.

Findings also show that school enrollment is the bloodline of these private schools' operations. Recalling from the results, the private school subjects of this study expanded into the basic education to make up for the losses incurred when tertiary enrollment suffered. For the case of Scholars College, the pilot implementation of Grade 11 led to construction of new buildings and facilities. This can be suggested as a long-term investment of the new owner as the mother institution invests in basic education.

The participant worked as a school administrator, where she is part of the school's top management, and not as a school principal. Thus, she can only see the overview rather than the details of the changes brought about by the transition. Further, the findings show that the school administrator played multiple roles falling into different leadership models in facilitating the transition efforts. Finally, the difference in educational values between Scholars College and the participant put a struggle on her part, especially in academic decisions. This is not the case for Wisdom Memorial School.

With these conclusions, the researcher leaves the following recommendations:

For policy, private schools should optimize their financial collection to facilitate unexpected transitions brought about by a new national curriculum.

For practice, continuous professional development trainings should be conducted to refresh the school's curriculum and instruction, making sure that these are aligned both with state standards and the school's educational philosophy. Practicing school administrators should be ready to manage the amount and pace of changes brought about by new ownership. Further, they should be ready to address conflicts between personal educational perspectives and the school's, especially when the school takes a new owner. Finally, during transitions into the new curriculum, the leader has to be ready to play multiple roles to effectively facilitate the transition efforts.

For future research, two recommendations for are put forth: (1) Take principals as respondents so that better details of the transition efforts can be obtained; and (2) extend

the period of studies to identify which among the transition efforts were successful and which failed.

References

- Bredeson, P. V. & Kose, B. W. (2007). Responding to the education reform agenda: A study of school superintendents' instructional leadership. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 15(5). Retrieved 1 April 2019 from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v15n5/>.
- Brooks, M. & Brooks, J. (2018). Culturally (ir)relevant school leadership: Ethno-religious conflict and school administration in the Philippines. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*. DOI: 10.1080/13603124.2018.1503819
- Brooks, J. E. & Sutherland, I. E. (2014). Educational Leadership in the Philippines: Principals' Perspectives on Problems and Possibilities for Change. *Planning and Changing*, 45(3/4): 339-355
- Bush, T. (2010). *Theories of Educational Leadership and Management* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Conchada, M. & Tiongco, M. (2015). A Review of the Accreditation System for Philippine Higher Education Institutions.
- Fink, E., & Resnick, L. B. (2001). Developing principals as instructional leaders. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82(8): 598-610.
- Firestone, W. A. & Martinez, M. C. (2007). Districts, Teacher Leaders, and Distributed Leadership: Changing Instructional Practice. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 6: 1-33. DOI: 10.1080/15700760601091234
- Glanz, J., Shulman, V., & Sullivan, S. (2005, April 14). High stakes testing, standards, and the demise of instructional supervision. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Conference SIG on Supervision and Instructional Leadership, Montreal.
- Glanz, J., Shulman, V. & Sullivan, S. (2006, April 10). Usurpation or Abdication of Instructional Supervision in the New York City Public Schools?. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), San Francisco.

- Glanz, J., Shulman, V. & Sullivan, S. (2007, April 13). Impact of Instructional Supervision on Student Achievement: Can We Make the Connection?. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Chicago.
- Glatthorn, A., Boschee, F., & Whitehead, B. (2009). *Curriculum Leadership: Strategies for Development and Implementation*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Glickman, C., Gordon, S., & Ross-Gordon, J. (2014). *SuperVision and Instructional Leadership: A Developmental Approach*. Pearson Education.
- Harris, A. (2003). Teacher Leadership as Distributed Leadership: Heresy, fantasy or possibility?. *School Leadership & Management*, 23(3): 313-324. DOI: 10.1080/1363243032000112801
- Hoy, A. W. & Hoy, W. K. (2013). *Instructional Leadership: A Research-Based Guide to Learning in Schools*. Pearson Education, Inc.
- Hoy, W. & Miskel, C. (2005). *Educational Administration: Theory, Research, and Practice* (7th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Kuku, S. M. & Taylor, J. W. V (2002). Teacher Participating in Decision Making: A Comparative Study of School Leader and Teacher Perceptions in North Philippine Academies. *International Forum*, 5(1): 19-46.
- MacNeil, A., Prater, D. & Busch, S. (2009). The effects of school culture and climate on student achievement. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 12(1): 73-84. DOI: 10.1080/13603120701576241
- Northouse, P. (2010). *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. SAGE.
- Sindhvad, S. P. (September 2009). School Principals as Instructional Leaders: An Investigation of School Leadership Capacity in the Philippines (Doctoral dissertation). University of Minnesota.
- Taylor, M., Yates, A., Meyer, L. H., & Kinsella, P. (2011). Teacher professional leadership in support of teacher professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(1), 85-94.
- Vieno, A., Perkins, D. D., Smith, T. M., & Santinello, M. (2005). Democratic school climate and sense of community in school: A multilevel analysis. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 36(3-4): 327-341.

- Waters, T. J., Marzano, R. J., & Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning, A. C. (2006). *School District Leadership That Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement*. A Working Paper. Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL).
- Ylimaki, R. M. (2007). Instructional Leadership in Challenging US Schools. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 35(3): 11-19.
- York-Barr, J., & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? Findings from two decades of scholarship. *Review of educational research*, 74(3): 255-316.