Status and Educational Attainment as Predictors of School Principals' Competencies in the Philippine Public Schools

GEMMA N. KINTANAR
http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8281-3827
gemmakintanar@gmail.com
Central Mindanao Colleges
Philippines

ABSTRACT

Principals play the role as leaders of school management and are responsible for the outcome of the school. The essential focus of this study is to assess the level of the core competencies of principals in public elementary and secondary schools in Kidapawan City Division, Philippines, for the academic year 2015-2016. A descriptive correlation design was used and treated the level of significance using regression analysis. Findings showed that the level of principal's competencies as perceived by themselves and teachers was PROFICIENT. The assessment on the level of principals' core competencies does not differ significantly between self and that of the teachers according to the context of the principal/school, technical and managerial capability, strategic management, inter and intrapersonal relationship and as the link to the community. The combined contribution of the principal's socio-demographics does not significantly influence their level of core competencies. Status stood out as a significant predictor of technical and managerial ability. Results revealed that the best predictor of the competency on academic leadership and coaching is educational attainment. The study concludes that the level of core competence of principals could contribute to underperforming schools. It is alarming to note that the principals lack a continuing professional development.

INTRODUCTION

The present society demands the best expectation from our schools on their effort to become globally competitive and transformative. In the context of schools, a quest for an effective school has been regarded as crucial to the efforts of upgrading students' achievements (Knoeppel & Rinehart, 2009). To improve school and classroom conditions, the role of the school head is very significant in supervising teachers and keeping in track with the student learning outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 1998, Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Given that scenario, the school heads' role of setting its direction is important, but an issue on the best ways to prepare and develop highly qualified candidates is sparse (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005).

De Vita (2005) stated that principals should be visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations experts, budget analysts, facility managers, official program administrators, and expert overseer of legal, contractual message and policy mandates and initiatives. Given the important role of principals in school effectiveness and innovation, studies on competencies of school principals are needed (Cisneros-Cohernour, Lopez-Avila & Barrera-Bustillos, 2007). Effective principals improve student achievement and learning (Steiner, Hassel, Hassel & Valsing, 2008: Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Therefore, the competencies and actions of the turnaround principal to assist in the decision-making should be enhanced (Copeland & Neeley, 2013).

Consistent with Article XIV, Section 2(1) of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, "the State shall establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and the society." This effectiveness would be achievable if leaders possess competencies and skills essential to the demands of the country.

FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on the management theory as introduced by Prahalad and Hamel (1990). Core competency is defined as "a harmonized combination

of multiple resources and skills that distinguish a firm in the marketplace."

Prahalad and Hamel added that in competing for the future, executives should develop a point of view on which core competencies can be built for the future to revitalize the process of new business creation. With this concept, tomorrow's opportunities and building capabilities are the keys to future leadership.

For an organization to be competitive, it needs not only definite evidence but intangible resources like core competencies that are difficult and challenging to achieve. It is critical to manage and enhance the ability to do something well in response to industry changes in the future.

Core competencies are the collective learning in the organization, especially how to coordinate the production of skills and integrate multiple streams of technologies. Collective learning is possible through communication, involvement and a deep commitment to working across organizational boundaries. It involves many levels of people and all functions. Unlike physical assets which deteriorate, competencies are enhanced by application and sharing. It has to be nurtured and protected; knowledge fades, if it is not applied. Competencies are the glue that binds existing business. They are also the engine for new business development.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study assessed the level of the core competencies of principals in the public elementary and secondary schools in Kidapawan City, Philippines for the school year 2015-2016.

Specifically, the study aimed to: 1) describe the demographic profile in terms of age, gender, educational attainment, the length of service as principal, the number of related training attended, household size and number of years a principal in public elementary and secondary schools; 2) determine the level of core competencies as perceived by themselves in terms of context of the principal/school, technical and managerial capability, strategic management, interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship, academic leadership and coaching, and as link to the community; 3) determine the level of principals' core competencies as perceived by the teachers in terms of context of the principal/school, technical and managerial capability, strategic management, interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship, academic leadership and coaching, and as link to the community; 4) compare the level of principal's core competencies in terms of principals' and teachers' assessment; and 5) determine whether the socio-demographic characteristics significantly influence their level of competencies.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design
The study used a descriptive-correlation research design. A survey questionnaire was used to assess the level of principals' effectiveness on the core competencies and to determine whether the socio-demographic characteristics of the principals significantly influence their level of capabilities.

Research Site
The study was conducted by the researcher in 50 public schools in the Kidapawan City Division, Philippines. There were 15 secondary public schools and 35 elementary public schools included in the survey.

Participants
The target population of the study comprised the elementary and public secondary school principals and teachers of Kidapawan City Division, the Philippines for the academic year 2015-2016. Fifty public school principals and 225 teachers were the respondents in the study using stratified random sampling.

Instrumentation
The Structured Questionnaire was used by the researcher as a School Principal's Core Competency Assessment Instrument adopted from the Fund Assistance for Private Education (FAPE, 2008). The tool consists of six categories. Two sets of evaluation were answered by the respondents. The first set of the evaluation was the self-assessment. This allowed the respondents to assess themselves. The second set of evaluation was the assessment of the teachers to their principal. The overall evaluation is the average of the assessment of the principals for themselves and the assessment of the teachers for their principals.

Ethics Protocol
The study used informed consent from the respondents and applied confidentiality of information. There were letters of permission personally handed to superiors/leaders in the gathering of data. Respondents' consent involved in the research was considered adequate.

Data Collection

The researcher identified the research respondents. The target population was 35 elementary principals, 15 secondary principals and five teachers from each of the 50 schools.

A letter seeking permission to conduct the study was then presented by the researcher to the Schools Division Superintendent. In the same manner, a formal letter was given to the school principals of Kidapawan City Division. Having been granted the permission, the researcher conducted the assessment instrument. The retrieval of the survey tool took three weeks after its distribution.

Statistical Techniques

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics like mean, frequency count and percentage to summarize the information. F-test was used to test the hypothesis at .05 level of significance by using the Multiple Regression Analysis. T-test was used by the researcher to compare the ratings of the principal themselves and their corresponding teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. The demographic profile of the principals in public elementary and secondary schools in Kidapawan City, the school year 2015-2016

CHARACTERISTICS	FREQUENCY (n=50)	PERCENTAGE
Age		
27-32yr	1	2.0
33-38	1	2.0
39-44	12	24.0
45-50	11	22.0
51-56	21	42.0
57-63	4	8.0
Gender		
Male	15	30.0
Female	35	70.0
Educational Attainment		
BS Degree	1	2.0
BS with Master's Units	17	34.0

MS/MA	23	46.0
MS/MA with PhD/EdD Units	6	12.0
PhD/EdD	3	6.0
Number of Years as Principal		
Less than 1 yr	3	6.0
1-6	19	38.0
7-12	23	46.0
13-18	3	6.0
19-24	1	2.0
25 above	1	2.0
Number of Related Training Attended		
1-2	11	22.0
3-4	37	74.0
5-6	2	4.0
Household Size		
1-2	8	16.0
3-4	30	60.0
5-6	10	20.0
7-8	2	4.0
Status as Principal		
Designated	5	10.0
Plantilla	45	90.0

Level of Competencies as Perceived by the Principals Themselves

The respondents assessed themselves proficient in interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship (Mean =3.24). This competency includes relationship building and maintenance, leadership skills, communication, self-concept and self-worth, emotional quotient, spirituality and honesty and fairness.

The principals were proficient as link to the community (mean = 3.22). This competency includes managing public relations and school promotion, client and stakeholder orientation and representation and advocacy.

Further, they were assessed by the respondents as proficient regarding academic leadership and coaching (mean = 3.20). This competency includes professional vision and reflection, knowledge and pedagogy, instructional leadership and supervision and management of educational achievement.

In both Context of the Principal and School and Strategic Management, they were proficient (mean = 3.17). These competencies include knowledge and understanding context of Principal as educational leader and manager in the 21st century, knowledge and understanding of and valuing education for sustainable development, lifelong education and education for sustainable development practices, gathering, retrieving and managing information, problem analysis/ solving and decision making, strategic thinking, delivering, resilience and adaptability and managing and transforming crisis/conflict.

The principals were proficient in technical and managerial capability (mean =3.13). These competencies include planning and organizing, resource, assets and financial management, staff management, promoting and managing change and administrative skills.

The data imply that principals are all proficient in the six core competencies. The majority of them are proficient in relationship-building and maintenance, leadership skills, communication, self- concept and self- worth, emotional quotient, spirituality and honesty, and fairness. Results from emerging research manifested that intrapersonal competencies could, in some contexts, predict long-term academic and economic outcomes (Dweck, 2012; Walton & Cohen 2011).

Research findings in professional standards and ethical behavior revealed a positive effect for principals who are honest and fair, possess a high degree of integrity, and hold themselves to a high standard of ethics (Marzano *et al.,* 2005). Gross and Guerrero (2000) and Tschannen-Moran (2014) stated that effective principals balance responsibilities associated with educating young people with the needs of teachers.

Level of principal's core competencies as perceived by their teachers

The majority of the principals are proficient in relationship building and maintenance, leadership skills, communication, self-concept, and self- worth, emotional quotient, spirituality and honesty and fairness as assessed by the teachers.

Studies revealed that effective principals communicate and model core values through their interactions with students and teachers (Cotton, 2003). Leithwood, *et al.* (2004) added that effective principals increase the efficacy of staff by modeling. Blasé (1993) explained that principals who model positive characteristics contribute to the improvement of teachers. Fullan (2006) commented that change agents do not live more peacefully, but they can handle

more uncertainty and conflict and are better at working through complex issues in ways that energize rather than deplete the commitment of the organizational members. D. C. Clark and S. N. Clark (2000) elaborated that seeing successful school improvement which underwent problematic issues is helpful for a sustained reform.

The level of principal's competencies as perceived by their teachers

The assessment on the level of principal's core competencies does not differ significantly between self and that of the teachers in terms of the context of the principal/school (t-value = 0.986/ p= 0.326), technical and managerial capability (t-value = 1.329, p = 0.187) strategic management (t-value=1.600, p = 0.113), inter and intrapersonal relationship (t-value = 1.008,p=0.316) and principal as link to the community (t-value = 1.692, p=0.094).

The assessments between groups differ significantly in the academic leadership core competency (t-value=2.817, p=0.006) where the respondents assessed themselves higher compared to the teachers' assessment. This significance implies that respondents believed that they had equipped their teachers better in academic leadership and coaching.

Thus, the null hypothesis of the study which states that there is no significant difference between the perception of principals and teachers on the level of principal's core competencies like concept of the principal/school, technical and managerial capability, strategic management, interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship and principal as link to the community" is accepted.

Significant difference is observed regarding academic leadership and coaching. The role of the instructional resource requires the subject of the study to be knowledgeable about teaching. Lipham (1981) suggested that the improvement of teaching and learning is the primary function of the school leader. Cotton (2003) explained that one of the biggest challenges facing school-level administrator is directly addressing performance issues, both positively and negatively.

Comparison of the level of the principal's core competencies between principal's self-assessment

The combined contribution of the principal's characteristics such as age, gender, educational attainment, the length of service as principal, a number of related training attended, household size and status as principal does not significantly influence their level of core competency in terms of the context of

the principal/school (F -value=0.546,p=0.795). None of these variables, taken singly, significantly influenced the said core competency.

The coefficient of determination (R^2 = 8.3 %) reveals that 8.3 % of the variability in the principal's core competency regarding the context of the principal/school is accounted for their variability of their socio-demographic characteristics.

Thus, the null hypothesis of the study which states that the socio-demographic characteristics of the principals do not significantly influence the level of competency regarding the context of the principal/school is accepted.

Regression Analysis on the influence of the principal's socio-demographic characteristics and the context of the principal and school. The School year 2015-2016.

The combined contribution of the principal's socio-demographic characteristics does not significantly influence their core competency regarding technical and managerial capability (F-value = 1.523, p= 0.186).

Thus, the null hypothesis of the study which states that the socio-demographic characteristics such as a status of the principals do not significantly influence the level of competency regarding technical and managerial capability is rejected by the study.

Taken singly, status as principal was found out a significant predictor of the said competency. The result further reveals that those principals who are in plantilla positions have higher technical and managerial capability than those who are designated (t – value = 2.364, p= 0.023). The coefficient of determination (20.2%) connotes that 20.2% of the variability in the principal's technical and managerial capability is accounted by the variability of their socio-demographic characteristics.

In consonance to DepEd Order No.97, s.2011, school head positions shall be according to education, experience, training and performance rating. The study revealed a higher mean score of 17.52 in favor of seasoned school leaders. This implies that experienced principals are more competent in the management of school record due to long term experience gained from management procedures and functions like supervision, leading, controlling, planning, organizing and administering activities of the school.

Regression Analysis on the influence of the principals' socio-demographic characteristics and the technical and managerial capability

The combined contribution of the principal's characteristics such as age, gender, educational attainment, the length of service as principal ,a number of related training attended, household size and status as principal does not significantly influence their level of core competency in terms of strategic management(F- value = 0.794 , p= 0.0597). Taken singly, none of these variables significantly influenced the said core competency. The coefficient of determination (R2= 1.17%) reveals that 1.17% of the variability in the principal's competency regarding strategic management is accounted by their socio-demographic characteristics.

Thus, the null hypothesis of the study which states that the socio-demographic characteristics of the heads do not significantly influence the level of competency regarding strategic management is accepted.

Farrell (2008) in his study showed that there was no significant difference between male and female principals' administrative effectiveness in the secondary schools. He concluded that both male and female should be given equal opportunity as principal of secondary schools as long as they meet the required criteria.

Regarding principal education, both Eberts and Stone (1998), Ballou (2000) found a negative correlation between school performance and principal education, as measured by advanced degrees and graduate training.

Regression Analysis on the influence of the principals' socio-demographic characteristics and the strategic management

The combined contribution of the principal's characteristics such as age, gender, educational attainment, length of service as principal, number of related trainings attended, household size and status as principal does not significantly influence their level of core competency regarding interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship (F- -value = 0.758, p= 0.625). Taken singly, none of these variables significantly influenced the said core competency.

The coefficient of determination (R^2=1.12%) reveals that 1.12% of the variability in the principal's competency regarding interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship is accounted by their socio-demographic characteristics.

Thus, the null hypothesis of the study which states that the socio-demographic characteristics of the principals do not significantly influence the level of competency in terms of inter- and intrapersonal relationship is accepted.

Valentine and Prater (2011) asserted that building principals can do little to directly affect student achievement. Consequently, an effective culture is the primary tool with which a leader fosters change. It is an acknowledged aspect of effective principals to protect teachers from undue distractions. Elmore (2004) discerned that school leaders are hired and retained based largely on their capacity to buffer teachers from outside interference.

Regression Analysis on the influence of the principals' socio-demographic characteristics and the inter- and intrapersonal relationship

The results indicate that the combined contribution of the socio-demographic characteristics of the principals does not significantly influence their level of academic leadership and coaching competency (F-value= 1.063, p= 0.403).

Taken singly, the principals' educational attainment was observed as the best predictor of the said competency (t-value= 2.025, p=0.049). This result implies that the higher is the principals' educational attainment, the higher is their level of competency regarding academic leadership and coaching.

The finding conformed to the study of Campos (2006) who investigated secondary principals' educational attainment, teaching experience and professional development. Secondary principals who have been active in attaining advanced academic degrees (e.g. masters, doctorate) and who have increased their years of teaching experience before their designation as principal, have a stronger background in instructional leadership and have been striving to enhance their professional skills and knowledge based. The more academically- equipped the principals are, the better is their leadership and coaching style.

It is important to note that 15.1 % of the variability of the level of competency in terms of academic leadership and coaching is accounted by their socio-demographic characteristics.

Thus, the null hypothesis of the study which states that the socio-demographic characteristics such as educational attainment of the principals do not significantly influence the level of competency regarding academic leadership and coaching is rejected.

Regression Analysis on the influence of the principals' socio-demographic characteristics and the academic leadership and coaching

The combined contribution of the socio-demographic characteristics of the principals does not significantly influence their level of core competency regarding principal as link to the community (F=1.274, p= 0.286). Individually, gender

(t-value= 2.056, p=0.046) and educational attainment (t-value=2.434, p= 0.019) were best significant predictors of the level competency. These findings further indicate that female principals are better than males in managing public relations and school promotion, ability to achieve client and stakeholder satisfaction, and representation and advocacy. Further, the higher is the principal's educational attainment, the higher is the level of competency.

Thus, the null hypothesis of the study which states that the socio-demographic characteristics of the principals such as gender and educational attainment do not significantly influence the level of competency regarding principal as link to the community is rejected.

The findings confirmed the study of Orphanos (2010) which revealed that female principals appear to significantly outperform male principals in establishing and improving a school's environment. Data analysis (t-tests and multiple regression) showed that parents believe that female principals are better than male principals in several dimensions of a principal's job.

Moreover, recent studies found out that a principal who has sufficient knowledge of the curriculum understands the tenets of quality instruction, planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching (Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008) and providing instructional support can have an impact in the school community.

Table 2. Regression Analysis on the influence of the principals' socio demographic characteristics and the principal as link to the community. School year 2015-2016.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	DEPENDENT VARIABLES		
	Coefficient β	t-value	p-value
Model 6	*Principal as Link to Community*		
Constant	3.342	9.642	0.000
Age	0.002	0.288	0.774
Gender	0.209	2.056	0.046
Educational Attainment	0.131	2.434	0.019
Length of Service as Principal	0.008	0.976	0.335
Number of Related Trainings Attended	0.001	0.028	0.978
Household Size	0.009	0.318	0.752
Status as Principal	0.022	0.161	0.873
Model statistics	*(R-Square = 0.175,*	*F-Value=1.274[ns],*	*p-value=0.286)*

CONCLUSION

The principals in public schools are proficient in their core competencies. The level of assessment on the academic leadership and coaching of principals and teachers differ. Gender, educational attainment and status significantly influence principal's competence in technical and managerial capability, academic leadership and coaching and link to the community.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The findings of the study may be best translated to various media communication for information dissemination if not, further awareness campaign. Indigenous materials such as wall newspaper, one-act play, among others may be designed for stakeholders from the remote areas, and social media, mass media (TV, newspaper, and radio) may be used in the information dissemination.

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