



The Practice and Challenges in Teacher Leadership of Academic Managers: The Philippine Public-School Experience

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Introduction

Educational management and practices especially in the academe are ideas to comprehend and is essential in understanding educational institutions. It arranges the management of education and procedures in order to examine roles and duties within the system. The framework for assuming accountability for behavior, kind, and state (Mallillin, & Mallillin, 2019).

The act of goals in the educational setting is influenced by the leadership in education. Setting goals for the accomplishment action in the area of educational management authority and responsibility delegation is necessary. Management of education and being a responsible leader means influencing and practicing responsibly. They hold a significant position in the institutions and/or educational organizations. Organization, comprehension of purpose, and values are all facilitated by the notion of educational leadership and practices.

Concepts and foundations that allow organizations to emerge and provide clarity in characterizing scholars and practitioners are educational management and educational leadership. The development and description of the school system is preferred by educational leadership and management. It sets the educational organization's management and leadership apart. Effective leadership and management in education involves gathering information and delving into concepts, pertinent problems, and current system policies. (Shaturaev and Bekimbetova, 2021)

Teachers are the main resource of any education system and require specific management. Teacher management falls under the umbrella of human resources management, which is the process of determining how best to fit an organization's demands in terms of both quantity and quality of human resources. Recruitment, staff training and motivation, deployment and staffing norms, wage negotiations and pay organization, performance monitoring and evaluation, planning for future needs, communication system development, or again providing opportunities for professional and personal growth are all examples of teacher management functions (UNESCO, 2009; Halliday, 1995).

Teacher leadership is a set of abilities exhibited by educators who not only stay in the classrooms but also have a ripple effect on other people in the school and outside of it. It entails inspiring and motivating people in order to improve how well the school fulfills its essential duties, which may include instruction, student learning, or even policymaking. It extends beyond doing as you are told by a principal or other authority figure. Because they are persuasive and well-informed, teachers have the ability to influence others. As such, a teacher leader ought to have fundamental qualities like knowledge and ability to involve others in their particular work settings. It necessitates an unwavering passion for the school's core goals and objectives (Danielson, 2006).

Over time, teaching has changed, bringing with it new difficulties. Teachers have a lot on their plates, including managing the classroom, developing interesting lesson plans, managing their time, and catering to different learning styles. The epidemic brought with it new difficulties for students' wellbeing and academic performance. In a recent study conducted among several hundred teachers in the US, more than 60% of instructors expressed concern about pupils falling behind and not achieving at their current grade level (Shannon, 2023).

According to Meador (2019) teachers in all kinds of schools have to cope with a wide range of student demands, but public schools might have the most difficulty in this area. Public schools in the US are compelled to accept every student, whereas private schools are free to choose their students based on an application and an evaluation of who would be the best fit for the school and community. While the majority of educators would never wish to alter this fact, some are forced to deal with issues like overcrowding or disruptive pupils who provide a serious challenge to the class.

According to Oracion (2014), teacher leadership highlights the critical role that educators play in improving schools while also elevating the stature of exceptional educators who have simultaneously shown that they are capable of serving as leaders. In this research, Oracion investigated teacher leadership in the Philippine public schools by modifying York-Barr and Duke's (2004) framework, which connected teacher leadership to student learning. By examining the contextual factors that either facilitated or restricted teacher leadership practice, the significance of context in the formation and application of teacher leadership was taken into consideration. Semi-structured individual interviews with principals and focus groups involving teacher leaders and other educators from seven public schools in the Philippines were utilized to gather data.

As such, this paper will answer the following questions;

1. How is the teacher leadership practiced by academic managers in Philippine Public Schools?
2. What are the observed challenges in the practice of teacher leadership by academic managers in the Philippine public-school setting? and finally;
3. How can teacher leadership be improved by academic managers in the Philippine public school system?

This paper shall use gathered literatures and studies with the aim to establish the status-quo of teacher leadership as experienced by academic managers. This study therefore is significant to policy makers, implementers and teachers for this study can serve as a reference for future curriculum mapping, revision or in redefining the roles of leadership within the educational setting.

Methodology.

This paper shall make use of the literature approach in research. A literature review is a survey of everything that has been written about a particular topic, theory, or research question. A literature review entails a thorough examination of books, articles, and other materials that are relevant to the problem as defined. A literature review helps the researcher learn what has already been written about a subject and how the different contributions relate to one another. This will make it possible for the researcher to ascertain how much each source—books, articles, etc.—contributes to the subject. Through literature reviews, a researcher can also determine research gaps and/or unanswered questions, as well as identify and, if possible, resolve contradictions. (Tournier & Chimier (2009). Specifically, this paper shall make use of articles from professional journals which are available online.

Discussion.

“On the practice of teacher leadership by academic managers”

Numerous academics have observed that leadership can have a positive impact on schools. Indeed, among all the school-related factors that influence what students learn in school, classroom instruction comes in second place to leadership, according to Leithwood et al. (2004). Particularly in the last few decades, teacher leadership has gained prominence as a crucial component of school leadership. According to Mangin and Stoelinga (2008), instructors are in a unique position to encourage change in schools because they are knowledgeable about the intricacies of teaching. Additionally, scholars have determined that teacher leaders possess the ability to guide the school through enhancing teacher cooperation, disseminating best practices, promoting teacher professional development, providing support for differentiation, and concentrating on issues specific to a particular subject (Curtis, 2013; Muijs & Harris, 2003, 2006).

There is still much debate and disagreement surrounding the definition of teacher leadership, with various scholars offering their own interpretations or methods. Evers (2014) expanded the definition of teacher leadership to include exerting influence over others in contexts related to teaching and learning. Many researchers appear to use and emphasize this Evers definition. For instance, Danielson (2006) describes teacher leadership as a collection of abilities exhibited by educators who not only instruct students but also exert influence on people both inside and outside of their own school. In order to improve the school's performance of its essential duties related to teaching and student learning, it entails influencing others by energizing and mobilizing. It extends beyond doing as you are told by a principal or other authority figure.

A teacher's persuasiveness and depth of knowledge make them influencers. As such, a teacher leader ought to have fundamental qualities like knowledge and ability to involve others in their particular work settings. It necessitates an unwavering passion for the school's core goals and objectives. It also gives one the bravery to face challenges in the way of realizing such. If educators are given equal priority in these missions and visions, a different strategy might be required to improve schools. This may entail implementing various measures as a component of the process of change (ibid).

Cezmi and Toprak (2014) defines teacher management and leadership as an endeavor that guides organizational activities toward a shared objective. According to them, in order to guide the school organization toward a shared objective and a well-directed vision, school heads need to integrate a variety of leadership and management skills and styles, given the constantly evolving nature of the educational landscape. The complex leadership style used by the school administrator is crucial in shaping the school's culture within a school (Smith, 2016). It speaks of the unique actions taken by leaders to inspire a team of workers to achieve a portion of the overall objective of the company.

According to Buckridge and Guest (2007), as cited by Shonubi (2012), effective school heads seem to be defined by the execution of leadership and management tasks that are positively correlated with student accomplishments. These tasks include placing a strong emphasis on fundamental subjects, creating a safe and supportive learning environment, establishing instructional strategies, coordinating instructional programs, supervising and assisting teachers, and being mission-oriented and focused on promoting the school's vision while emphasizing student support, assessment, and academic reports. Valentine and Prater (2011) noted that as society, political expectations, and schools as organizations have evolved, so too has the role of the principal become more complex.

Wenner and Campbell (2017) looked at teacher leadership research that has been done since York-Barr and Duke's 2004 publication of the landmark review on the topic. The goal of the review was to look at the definition of teacher leadership, the preparation of teacher leaders, the effects of teacher leaders, and the things that help or hinder teacher leaders in their work. In addition, the review examined the theories that guide teacher leadership, the roles that teacher leaders play in social justice and equity issues, and teacher leadership in disciplinary contexts. Principals, school structures, and norms

play a significant role in either empowering or marginalizing teacher leaders. Teacher leadership is rarely defined, but when it does, it focuses on roles beyond the classroom, supporting peers' professional learning, influencing policy and decision-making, and ultimately focusing on student learning. Other noteworthy findings include (b) the research is not always theoretically grounded.

Mallillin and Atendido (2023), researched on the perspectives on educational leadership management practices in relation to educational transformation. Findings indicate that the usefulness of instructional leadership, management, and practices in an effective style respondents include democratic leaders who provide a high-spirited environment in which to inspire and generate innovative solutions for an effective leadership style within the school organization; they demonstrate how instructional leadership involves planning, coordinating, evaluating, and teaching improvement; they demonstrate how authoritative leaders maintain order and promptness in decision-making processes and maintain control over the organization; they demonstrate how coaching leadership involves behavior, attitude, work performance, evaluation, work process, and policies within the school organization; and they demonstrate how transformational leadership is a crucial component of the organization that must be implemented for the good, better, and best of all school personnel in the organization.

Nonetheless, Oracion (2014) discovered in her study that even though the term "teacher leadership" has not been formally introduced, it is a meaningful concept in Philippine public schools. Teachers who take positive action in response to opportunities to enhance teaching and learning are exhibiting teacher leadership. These educators have the necessary leadership and pedagogical skills in addition to a strong sense of moral purpose. Working with colleagues and the school's leadership, they support the establishment of conditions that facilitate teaching and learning, frequently in difficult situations. Further, the findings of the research include acknowledging teacher leadership in the nation's agenda for educational reform, pushing teacher leaders to take on leadership roles, and focusing on principal and teacher leader development initiatives.

Moreover, results indicate that the usefulness of instructional leadership, management, and practices in an effective style. Thus, the educational transformation perspective of the respondents' educational management practices examines careers, advocacy, and policies in the pursuit of educational equity; it makes a significant contribution to the organization's school system; it reveals important information about the positive and negative effects of the transformational leadership process; it upholds the school's culture and identity for the challenging and diverse conditions that make it strong; it encourages innovation in learning within the school organization and advances flexible learning technology (ibid).

“On the observed challenges in the practice of teacher leadership”

Management has both benefits and incentives. Generally speaking, managers are better suited to drive and influence change. Being a manager typically entails receiving a larger salary and getting to work outside of a cubicle. Above all, there is no greater feeling of fulfillment than assisting a person or group in realizing their potential and achieving their objectives (McCarthy, 2019).

Any organization's management is a challenging undertaking. It calls for a variety of abilities and expertise. However, management motivates people by planning and supervising them to complete tasks that will help the company reach its goals (Memisoglu, 2015). According to Jayne and Dipboye (2004), in order to attract and retain a diverse workforce, an organization needs to invest a substantial number of resources in a number of other diversity-related initiatives. These initiatives include hiring dedicated diversity management staff, workplace programs, and benefits like flexible work schedules, domestic partner benefits, corporate-sponsored employee affinity groups, and other initiatives.

A school's ability to succeed depends on how well its principal handles both their own workload and personnel administration; as a result, they are essential to providing high-quality education. But given that they frequently school principals are under a great deal of stress in their newly defined roles, where personal conflict with priorities in the workplace. It is now acknowledged that school principals' stress is a global barrier to providing high-quality education. While leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing educational opportunities for every student, ensuring that educational strategies support active learning for all students was not entirely fulfilled, especially for those with specific learning needs. Progressively longer workdays, changing responsibilities, growing responsibilities and financial hardships foster a culture of anxiety, which presents the chance for undermining the use of teaching-learning mediation and homeroom perceptions to inform high-quality education ignored.

There is ongoing debate about the definition and application of teacher leadership, with various scholars coming up with differing interpretations or methods (Cosenza, 2015; Lowery-Moore, Latimer & Villate, 2016; Jackson, Burras, Basset, & Roberts, 2010; Warren, 2015). Teacher leadership can be defined as the "exercise of influence" on others in teaching and learning contexts (Evers, 2007). But Danielson (2006) has more elegantly captured subtleties and distinctions in his teacher leadership conceptualization.

In the Philippines, the principal is expected to be both an instructional leader and administrative manager. The principal of the school, with the help of the assistant principal, serves as both an instructional leader and an manager of administration. He or she is in charge of overseeing instruction and administration in the school or group of schools. This outlines the duties that principals have in their capacities as administrative and instructional leaders' supervisors: establishing a teaching and learning-friendly atmosphere in the classroom; putting the curriculum in schools and taking responsibility for better learning results; presenting fresh and creative models of encouraging staff development and providing instruction to attain higher learning outcomes (Republic Act 9155, 2001).

Songcayawon and Prieto et.al (2022) evaluated the connection between teacher performance and the administrative abilities of the Division of Antique, Philippines school heads. The 140 elementary and high school teachers who were randomly selected as respondents were part of the descriptive research design used in the study. As can be seen from the results, teachers evaluated the managerial skills of school leaders as "always"; this means that the leaders showed good managerial skills. The study also found a strong link between teachers' performance and the managerial abilities of school

administrators. In order to improve school heads' managerial competence with support that fits within their standards and the caliber of training delivery, researchers advise that school heads' managerial skills be upheld by the key result areas listed in the Performance Standards for School Heads.

In the study of Alejo (2018), he used a qualitative methodology that included critical analysis of the nation's educational reform in addition to focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews with teachers from various Philippine public schools. The results show that teacher leadership is still not widely accepted in educational institutions. The traditional, "principal-oriented" nature of leadership that is deeply ingrained in its system, as well as the teachers' lack of leadership training and classification, are the two phenomena that this paper has highlighted as obstacles to the growth of teacher leadership. Accordingly, the role that educators play in the classroom is severely constrained by these circumstances. This paper argued that the implementation of teacher leadership in the local context can potentially make a significant contribution in shaping the culture of their schools, advancing student learning, and influencing practice among their peers in light of the recent educational reform that included the adoption of K–12 curriculum.

According to Hilotin (2022), currently, administration and supervision in schools are regarded as competent technical facilities whose main focus is on researching, developing, and assessing teaching-learning scenarios and the variables that influence them. Supervisors and critical administrators recognize that issues in education are social issues that will never be resolved in schools. They already know that decision-making involves more than just them; it also involves the relationships between schools and other stakeholders who work to create an educational system that will impact society, as opposed to the notion that the administrator will rule and control the institution.

In addition, these other stakeholders converse freely because everyone in the society is seen as an equal who shares the same goals and ideals. Workers should be the first to make organizational decisions in the administration of the schools; although administrators still have a say in matters, workers are the ones who originate most initiatives and hold the majority of the authority. Administrators and supervisors now have the ability to empower not only the teachers but also the learning process overall, because the critical perspective offers a perspective on organizations as collections of individuals with shared goals.

Hence, today's academic management places a greater emphasis on improving all aspects of the learning process, including the curriculum and teaching strategies that will help students prepare for the future and become globally competitive, rather than just the physical spaces and learning environments of the students. To continue the learning process in the most practical way, administrators and supervisors share interventions with their subordinates and students and to the dynamic administration's interventions in education, education is becoming more and more accessible to all due to the development of democratic leadership. These interventions center on enhancing the process of teaching and learning through equitable administration direction and guidance (Hilotin, 2022).

“On improving teacher leadership of academic managers”

Basically, the challenges of teacher leadership of academic managers in the Philippine public school setting can be a result of two occasions, first is the introduction of the 12-year Basic Education program under Republic Act No. 10533 which extended Philippine Basic Education for 10-years to 12-years, an undertaking that is believed by the Philippine government to solve the long-standing crisis in the global competitiveness of basic education in the Philippines, and secondly, is the integration or digitalization of the delivery of education, fast-tracked and mandatorily implemented immediately in the middle of the pandemic, which required the schools to innovate their teaching and implement an immediate change of teaching modality, either via modular or online.

Indeed, over the past decade, the Philippine Basic Education program went through a lot of shifts and innovation, and that effective teacher leadership of academic managers have been more crucial in the implementation of these changes. Nonetheless, yet to be resolved is the performance of the students, who should be the primary reasons for these introduced changes and adjustments. According to Tagupa (2019), in 2018, few years after the introduction of the Kto12 program, the Philippine learners, among 79 countries, ranked the lowest in Math and Science according to the Programme for International Student Assessment. Similarly, this result is reflected in the National Achievement Test (NAT) for 2018, where Grade-6 students from all across the country registered the lowest mean score of 37.44, Grade-10 scores also reflected a low mean score of 44.59 percent. This low performance of the Philippines in both the PISA and NAT over the previous years, have cause people to clamor for a genuine, effective and genuine change in education, raising the idea of an education crisis in the Philippines.

In 2023, the Department of Education, ordered for a review of the implementation of the K-to-12 Program and launched the ‘Matatag Curriculum’, which aims to “*make the curriculum relevant and to produce job-ready, active and responsible citizens*”. The curriculum aims to provide good care for students by promoting student well-being, inclusive learning, and a positive learning environment. It also steps to expedite the delivery of basic education services and facilities. Finally, it provides support for teachers to improve their instruction. Escudero (2023). Hence, this is status-quo teacher leadership among academic managers in Philippine public schools. The challenge, is directed to school leaders, to use the new directive, and implement these changes with the objective of directly increasing performance of students as reflected in the succeeding national and international assessments for learning.

According to Prof. Evers (Alegado (2018), traditionally, a universal pattern exists across countries regarding leadership roles in schools. Every school is typically run by a single person known as the principal, or head teacher in some cases. He is in charge of running the school, which is governed by the national government structures, usually the Department or Ministry of Education. School administrators have typically been characterized as head teachers with greater accountability than their peers. The emergence of educators who were both skilled teachers and exhibited leadership qualities has led to the development of the idea of "teacher leadership," which is seen as being just as important to changes in educational practices.

Australia, Canada, and the US have demonstrated a higher level of development in teacher leadership (Teacher Leadership Seminar on October 4th, 2017). In the Philippines, however, the traditional understanding of leadership is still principal-centered. This is caused in part by the way principals are hired and the candidates' pool is "privatized." That is to say, the opportunity to become a principal is limited to former educators with a significant amount of classroom experience. From now on, the primary position is not a distinct profession but rather the pinnacle of a teaching career. The principal is typically the only official leader at the elementary school level. Smaller jurisdictions or schools also tend to assign a principal to handle both management and leadership responsibilities.

This state is also a result of numerous political and institutional missteps. Principals are frequently rotated to various regions. They may spend as little as six months or a year as temporary students in a school. Luistro (2014) proposed that the institution's inability to properly execute and assess collaborative efforts and changes was caused by the frequent and quick turnover of principals and school heads. From now on, no matter how excellent the principals are, they cannot be trusted to handle school improvement alone. According to Spillane (2006), a single leader lacks the time and experience necessary to oversee educational reform, even in the case that principals were required to remain longer. Hence, Alegado (2018), states, *"If a project is solely dependent on one person, even the most promising ones—in this case, K-12 curriculum—are likely to fail"*.

Sutherland & Brooks (2013) also recognized that the position of principal in the Philippines comes with a complex and interwoven historical, political, and cultural environment. One example of this kind of unpredictability is the turnover of principals. Throughout the academic year, they are eligible for promotions to higher positions at any point, and upon receiving such a promotion, they must quit their jobs right away. In high school, I personally experienced it when we had three principals in a single year. Additionally, the principal's rotation or promotion may be impacted by politics in the district or region. Hence, the system's "principal-oriented" structure and the way teachers are classified restrict their ability to function within the institution. These two are connected because the principal is essential in creating the cultural environment necessary for teacher leadership to flourish, particularly in settings where a clear hierarchical structure exists. Teachers' leadership can be enabled or hindered by the principal's disposition and attitude. According to Greenlee's 2007 research, the teacher-principal relationship has a major impact on how well teachers connect in leadership roles. Additionally, the system discourages teachers from taking on leadership roles by providing them with insufficient rewards and motivation.

Therefore, it is essential to establish learning environments in schools where teachers become influential role models and each student has the opportunity to reach their full potential and lead better lives. While the K-12 reform is a good place to start, the teachers and teacher leaders we support along the way will have a major impact on how well students perform in the end. In the Philippines, acknowledging teachers' significant contributions to school improvement is preferable to holding them accountable. Based on the students' results from the yearly National Achievement Test (NAT), teacher preparation has long been the standard response to low student performance in public schools.

Summary.

To summarize, the best approach to teacher leadership given the current status of education in the Philippines, is to redefine and upgrade the role of academic managers, the dynamics and challenges running a school system nowadays have already evolved as an effect of changing times, and that these roles academic managers perform should likewise be re-evaluated overtime, to check weather these functions are still relevant, and can still cope up the needs of time. The culture of diverse individuals within the organization and educational setting determines the appropriate style, which calls for leadership and management.

To help team leaders, teacher leaders, and instructional leaders all need to possess leadership qualities, regardless of their position within the educational institution. Although the position requires leadership abilities, the style of approach will vary depending on the situation and culture. In the educational sector, where the principal or supervisor holds the authority and voice, there is a distinct style of leadership.

Thus, the best leadership tactics are those that are effective in managing and leading teachers. This is accurate given their significant impact on the atmosphere and culture of the school. Effective leaders receive training and support. The ultimate objective and hierarchy are the same for a school leader, regardless of their style of leadership. It gives teachers and students the support they need to change and realize their full potential.

In the context of leadership education, management, and position practice, it is an intended result. A key factor in the positive school system and culture is educational leadership. It affects how well students learn things. The success of the school system is largely dependent on the leadership style and approach.

Hence, to sum, when developing models for implementation, the effectiveness of teacher leadership style should be acknowledged among academic managers with respect to the effectiveness of a teacher leadership that works in the educational setting. This explains how effective leadership styles work well in school models and practices. It is an approach system designed to represent and embrace the ongoing cycle of school administration and procedure. It changes a management organization's efficient process. The process of transforming into an effective teacher leader involves taking organizational action in schools that incorporates leadership feedback and academic results. It is interwoven with the ways that educational institutions are impacted by effective leadership styles in systems. The concept that teacher leadership is exclusive only to one person in the school, which is the principal must be revisited.

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