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Empowering Academic Stakeholders through Distributive Leadership

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ABSTRACT

The Philippine educational system has engaged into an intensive strategic collaborative pedagogical setting in which education is not only mobilized by educators and school administrators; but more so with the participation of all concerned sectors of society. Everyone is an academic stakeholder par excellence – family, community, local government units, religious sectors, and private industry partners. Moreover, the focus of this present paper is to put forward a discursive analysis among various academic stakeholders into a strategic leadership framework as contextualized into local academic school setup. The primary argument of this paper is that constructivist education at least in the Philippine context is interpretatively structured into a distributive type of academic leadership wherein leadership is primarily decentralized yet collaboratively distributed among primary and secondary stakeholders. Hence, this study is advancing a principle of “distributive leadership through stakeholder mobilization”.

PROBLEM CONTEXT

The venture of the Philippine educational system has engaged into an intensive strategic collaborative pedagogical setting in which education is not only mobilized by educators and school administrators; but more so, by all concerned sectors of society. Everyone is an academic stakeholder par excellence – family, community, local government units, religious sectors, and private industry partners. With these regard, the role of the academic stakeholders are not clear as to what extent could they be part of the success of the programs, and projects of schools in connection to the academic welfare of the students. Likewise, the equal opportunity for every educator to be future leaders lies in the proper and equal tapping of talents and skills for the success of every program and projects.

GOAL / AIM

The main purpose of this study is to develop a distributive leadership framework contextualized to the current Philippine K-12 Educational System in the setting of Dr. Juan A. Pastor Memorial National High School. Specifically, in the course of developing the framework, the present study will analyze the current leadership setting of DJAPMNHS to identify gaps for improving the leadership mechanism of the school, to provide certain principles and insights for its improvement.

BACKGROUND

The fundamental argument of this paper is that constructivist education at least in the Philippine context is interpretatively structured into a distributive type of academic leadership – that is, leadership is primarily decentralized yet collaboratively distributed among primary and secondary stakeholders.

Hence, this study is advancing a principle of “distributive leadership through stakeholder mobilization”.

As lifted from the work of “How leadership influences student learning” by Kenneth Leithwood, et.al; states that at the core of most definitions of leadership are two functions which is providing direction and by exercising influence, these functions can be achieved and several representations of leadership can be determined by their differences. Yukl noted key factors that leadership influences, he emphasized the following factors such as a.) the interpretation of events for followers b.) the choice of objectives for the group or organization, c.) the organization of work activities to accomplish objectives, d.) the motivation of followers to achieve the objectives, e.) the maintenance of cooperative relationships and f.) teamwork and the utilization of support and cooperation from people within and outside the group or organization” (1994, p. 3).

It is notable that leadership is a distributive effort to increase the collaboration and teamwork of every stakeholder’s and other individuals in a particular program, project, or activity. Moreover it is not only the cooperative effort of the primary proponents that is important likewise it is important to acquire the cooperation of the external stakeholders for more collaborative effort and success of the program, project or activity is possible.

One of the most similar findings from studies of effective leadership in schools is that power to lead need not be located in the person of the leader but can be disseminated within the school in between and among people. (MacBeath 1998; Day et al, 2000) Furthermore, there is a growing understanding that leadership is embedded in various organizational contexts within school communities, not centrally vested in a person or an office. In the recent study of McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) in USA by that examined principals’ effects on teachers’ community, instructional practices, and careers found no instances of leaders who shaped unusual contexts for teaching by good point of their own exceptional ideas; nor did the study reveal any common patterns of strong school heads’ characteristics. Successful school heads turned out to be both men and women with diverse professional backgrounds who worked in association with teacher leaders and exhibited respect for the teaching culture. “The leadership of these principals was not superhuman; rather, it grew from a strong and simple commitment to make schools work for their students and to build teachers’ determination and capacity to pursue this collective goal.” (Copland, 2001)

In the work of David Quinn (2008) “Distributed for Leadership for Learning” emphasized the following *Leading for Learning: Five Areas of Action*

Establishing a focus on learning – by persistently and publicly focusing their own attention and that of others on learning and teaching.

Building professional communities that prioritize the importance learning – by fostering work cultures that gives importance and support their colleagues’ learning.

Providing appealing external environments which will affect learning – by establishing relationships and acquiring resources from outside groups that can nurture students’ or teachers’ learning,

Performing strategically and sharing governance – by organizing effort along several pathways that directs to student, professional, or process of learning, and by dispensing leadership in all levels and among individuals in different positions.

Fostering Unity – by directing student, professional, and process learning with learning objectives.

ANALYSIS OF GAPS FOR LEADERSHIP MECHANISM IMPROVEMENT

Delay of Communication

In most cases important communications (memorandum, letters, etc.) are being over-looked due to unclear duties and responsibilities of key personnel identified to provide this communications or information to academic stakeholders that need to be informed. Relevant issues are not addressed properly as to what is in the communications. Performance of duties and responsibilities of academic stakeholders are affected as well as the performance of the school in terms of documents submission or compliance to a certain memorandum.

Misinterpretation of Information

Information dissemination is another key factor in improving and developing a harmonious relationship within the academic stakeholders and superiors. The information being disseminated are sometimes misleading because there is no specific protocol of whom will be the proper authority to do the dissemination that leads to misinterpretation or mislead the stakeholders of what to follow and whom to follow. If there will be a specific protocol on the dissemination of information academic stakeholders will be able to properly do their duties and responsibilities assigned to them that will also lead to a more worry free and stress free environment.

Empowerment System for Potential Leaders

People come and go, leaders come and go. Leaders must be effective and efficient in every way he can so as to achieve and meet the desired performance or achievement. But how can a leader achieve his goals when his duties and responsibilities just became part of his daily routine and never improve. Leaders should be given a specific time frame for a specific leadership role and be given a new leadership role to assume if he was proven to be an effective and efficient leader. Rotation of duties and responsibilities as leaders will not only develop and improve the leadership skills and styles of the leaders but likewise will mean improvement and development for the entire academic system. In this way it will not only benefit the main clientele – the students, but more so the entire community they serve. The proponent had identified key factors and had come up with this distributive leadership framework to address the above stated gaps.

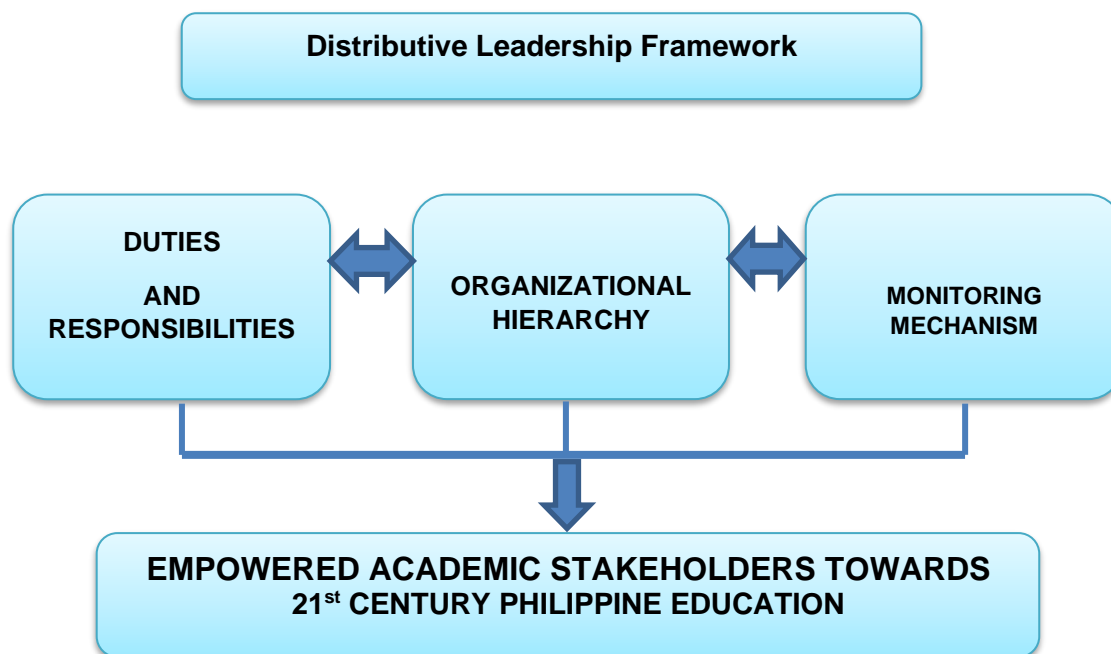


Figure 1. Distributive Leadership Framework.

A distributive leadership model includes leadership roles, how they will work together using a monitoring mechanism to verify success of the programs, projects and activities. We need to determine and define the duties and responsibilities intended for a prepared leader. Likewise, we need to define how those leaders are deployed support teams of teachers. And lastly, we need to design a monitoring mechanism to verify and check the success of the implementation of the programs, projects and activities. Duties and Responsibilities must be determined and defined to be able to identify a candidate or an individual ready to assume such responsibility or obligation. This will be done by preparing a checklist of possible characteristics and skills of a proposed leader to be able to pick the right person for a specific program or project and that will result to success. If all duties and responsibilities are well explained everything will go smoothly and as planned.

Define how these leaders are deployed to support teams of teachers. Defining the specific roles of the future leaders to support their teams is very significant to make skills and talents be part of the learning and progress of the teammates and at the same time pass these skills and talents to them in order for them to be future leaders also.

Designing a monitoring mechanism is a vital part of how to verify and check the success of every programs and projects to be implemented. In this manner SWOT analysis can be integrated in the process. This will be the check and balance of the leadership style of every leader so as to make them aware of their needs to be more competitive, effective and efficient leaders.

INSIGHTS

Leadership coaching

Not all leaders are born having all the qualities of a good leader some are made. Leadership Preparation is a cooperative, individualised rapport between a leader and the coach — the leader could be an individual or an executive, a manager, a

supervisor, a team leader or a business owner. One can be a good leader if he will be given the proper and thorough training and coaching. If an institution intends to be successful they most invest on training and developing the leadership styles of their employees or teachers. This will enable the institution to create and develop future leaders and will make each program and project be manned by a leader who fits the job.

Monitoring & evaluating scheme

Monitoring is defined as observing and checking the progress or quality of (something) over a period of time; keep under systematic review, while evaluating is defined as to assess, these two important words will play a vital role in the distributive leadership style of every leader. If the project or program is properly monitored by the leader in-charge or the program or monitored and evaluated thru specific guidelines by the M&E Team improvements could be done to minimize faults or solve problems that may arise from such implementation of the program or project.

Equal opportunity to be leaders

Opportunity only knocks once. So if given the opportunity grab it and make the most out of it. But not all are given the opportunity or chance to show their abilities, skills and talents as good leaders. All members of the team or the group should be given the opportunity to grow as future leaders so as not to focus or stay on one leadership style of a person whom is being tasks to do all the manning of all the programs and projects or just because he/she is the apple of the eye of the leaders.

More so, the following are key factors in ensuring that distributive responsibility is practiced and achieved by leaders and future leaders.

Learn and share

Everyone can learn something, and everyone is capable of contributing something. This should be clear to all on the group in order to remind them of this reality. We all know every one of us have something that we can contribute and likewise we can learn from what we observed and experienced. We can't attain something doing it just alone and without consulting others or requesting for the help of others. Always remember that two heads are better than one.

Share the vision

If people know where they are going, how they get there is not important anymore. Allow your teachers to create their own leadership plans, but make sure often that you know and they know where they're landing! In our school, we spend over a week talking about our plans and programs; we then spend another week and a half trying to figure out what should be really part of this plans and programs. People can plan their own path once they are sure about where they are headed. Giving them a clearer vision of what they must be in the future will enable them to plan for their own specific growth that will also be part of the success and growth of others and the same time the whole institution itself.

Let your subordinates speak up

Democracy does not mean decision is affected by the "voices" of our subordinates, but it does mean that everyone gives input and all input is valuable. "Have I consulted from everyone?" have you asked yourself with this question? If not, find a way to get more voices—or find out why your subordinates aren't talking. If you have set the goals clearly, then people will chose whatever path is best for them and for students. Trust them to do so and check in to find out what they need. Make sure you hear all voices when you consult people. Remember consultation means hearing all sides and in the end the final decision lies on the proper judgment of what could be better for all and not only for chosen ones.

Allow autonomy

You must have systems in place that support self-direction in order to build autonomy and empower your team. Autonomy done well is properly and thoroughly thought out, planned and continued by the structured and processes you create. Leadership responsibilities must be distributed evenly, like assisting a general faculty meeting, so every employee or faculty gets a chance to plan the agenda and take accountability for the conversation about the school and its priorities, likewise report achievements of the school and future programs and projects. You must trust your staff that they know what the organization or school needs to empower them and to build autonomy and distribute the leadership in the school. This will engage everyone to check on their leadership style and be able to learn and improve as professionals and become future leaders for complicated duties and responsibilities.

Entrust decision making to subordinates

Teachers are tasked to look over the lives of children every day—a duty none of considers lightly. Educators and teachers are anticipated to protect, to teach, and to care for our students, so why is it so puzzling to trust them with serious decision-making responsibilities. As leaders, we must let our teachers step up and grow, take control, make mistakes and manage their classroom

accordingly. We trust them to look over children; wherein other things are small as compared to their duties of taking care of students. They know which is better what is best for their students because they are the ones having direct control over the well-being of their students. So why are puzzled if we entrust them with some decision making that will brand them to be more confident of their role as teachers and increase their confidence as individuals and as professionals.

Check and assess feedbacks

A big part of distributing leadership means checking in, assessing, and evaluating. As part of the learning process we do this naturally with students, but often forget to do so with adults. Reflecting on strengths and finding opportunities to growth can happen often and with a kind-but-discerning eye on school vision and student success. We need to have self-assessment, evaluations and feedback cycles which are all part of assuring that people are doing what they can and are receiving the support they need. In this manner, managers and leaders can work hand in hand on what to improve and what to do with existing and approaching problems that may be face in the future concerning the major clientele of the school system.

Develop and improve skill, talent & willingness

Teachers are privilege to have unique skills and talents. Support people on your team and find their passion and be able to make their own mark. Give training and opportunities, make individualized professional development plans and make plenty of instances for stakeholders to share their knowledge. Building a team of passionate experts is an intentional and on-going project. If teachers are given the chance to hone and improve their special skills and talents surely they will be worthy of helping the institution to be able to achieve its vision. Furthermore, you will transform them to become effective and efficient assets of the institution.

Recognize achievements

Make success—big and small—visible and irresistible. People want to be acknowledged for their countless work. All of us want to be recognized even for every deed that we have done which boost our morale to do better and to continue doing more. Thru celebrating countless work publicly, you will entice people to the success of the teacher and the school also. Everyone wants to be on a winning team, we want to do what is best for students and for our school, so do all of the great things. With this you will be able to attract stakeholders to intentionally extend their help in every aspect possible.

And finally these are important concerns in distributing Leadership within the School. These things will help the effective and efficient management of the personnel and successful implementation of the programs and projects of the school with the distributive leadership style of the teachers, department heads, and school head.

1. Create and empower Leadership Team, School Improvement Planning Team
2. Provide Data Analysis Team to do the job.
3. Empower the Monitoring and Evaluation Team.
4. Tap future leaders such as Grade Level Lead Teachers, Coordinators and Chairpersons.
5. Tap teachers to be part of the Professional Development Team.
6. Allow and intensify Peer coaching.
7. Identify Mentors / Facilitators for new teachers and instructional coaches.

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