

Secondary school principal leadership: An integrative paper

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Abstract

This Integrative Paper reviews literature related to the leadership of the school principal. It is organized into content based on the categories identified in reviewing the body of research on the topic. These categories include the evolution of principalship, leadership theories relevant to the principalship, school leadership complexity, effective principalship and standards for school principals, and principals' continuous growth as leaders. Research indicates that much work has been done on leadership theory and its relationship with principals, effective leadership qualities and characteristics, as well as the significance of effective leadership in student achievement. Although studies on how to develop as a leader have just been beginning to advance in the last decade, rarely have any of these studies considered perspectives of practicing secondary school principals.

Keywords: integrative paper, school principal, principal leadership, leadership theories, effective principalship, principal standards of practice, leadership qualities, leadership perspectives

Secondary school principal leadership: An integrative paper

1. Introduction

This Integrative Paper reviews literature related to the leadership of the school principal. It is organized into content based on the categories identified in reviewing the body of research on the topic. These categories include the evolution of principalship, leadership theories relevant to the principalship, school leadership complexity, effective principalship and standards for school principals, and principals' continuous growth as leaders. Leadership development for school principals is a complicated topic that warrants academic research and scrutiny beyond what has already been explored in several leadership research and studies. Research indicates that much work has been done on theory and its relationship with principals, effective leadership qualities and characteristics, as well as the significance of effective leadership in student achievement. Although studies on how to develop as a leader have just been beginning to advance in the last decade, rarely have any of these studies considered perspectives of practicing secondary school principals.

1.1 The Evolution of the School Principal

Research and theory introduced in the field have reshaped school principals' roles over several decades. In the United States of America, studies focused primarily on personality traits or character traits in the 1950s. Upon determining that it was insufficient, specific leadership behaviors were studied, emphasizing the influence of leadership styles on various situations. More research was conducted between the 1970s and mid-1980s on the relationship between leaders and followers. By the 1980s, approaches began to focus on integrating variables that explained leaders' effectiveness in their organizations or structures (Abu-Hussain, 2014). Murphy (1994) theorized that these educational leadership reform movements caused a dramatic transformation of the principal's role in schools and gained popularity by claiming to represent a deviation from the status quo. Dinh et al. (2014) stated that as organizations evolve, leaders must be able to respond to changing events as a result of their embeddedness in such organizations. Therefore, it is imperative that this embeddedness propels leaders to willingly address the complex realities at hand and to stay on top of changing circumstances, even when they seem overwhelming (Murphy, 1994).

Principals were generally overwhelmed by the expectations brought about by reforms in school principalship, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s (Murphy, 1994). Looking at the leadership field over the last few decades, Dinh et al. (2014) found that new perspectives have developed that have enriched our understanding of leadership in the 21st century. In the past, current, and future research on leadership, integrative perspectives are being developed to understand how theories on leadership are interrelated to influence leadership phenomena's eventual unfolding and development (Dinh et al., 2014). As we gain a greater understanding of the extensive topic of leadership, we can surmise that reforms will be made in the practices of principals.

As early as the 1990s, the Philippines already ranked as one of the countries with the largest school systems and to this day, it strives to educate as many students as possible (Sutherland & Brooks, 2013). To wit, the Congressional Commission on Education Study in 1991 revealed that there were 16.5 million students enrolled at all levels (De Guzman, 2006). According to statistics provided by the Department of Education (DepEd), there were 19,252,557 students enrolled in basic education in Curriculum Year 2003-2004, indicating a rocketing need for education throughout the archipelago (Sutherland & Brooks, 2013). Public education in the Philippines is based on a six-year elementary school system followed by four years of secondary school until 2011. The school system is divided into seventeen school Regions, each consisting of various districts. According to the Department of Education, this organizational structure allows for better supervision and regulation of all its public and private schools. In response to the growing demand for public education and in consonance with the

international community, the government recently approved adding two grade levels effectively transforming the educational system into a Kindergarten - Grade 12 system (Government of the Philippines, 2012). However, scholars noted that this resulted in further burdening the system with limited educational and human resources (Sutherland & Brooks, 2013).

Philippine education policy stipulates how individuals become school principals and outlines their duties and responsibilities in the context of the educational system (Sutherland & Brooks, 2013). Republic Act 9155, entitled "An Act Establishing a Framework of Governance for Basic Education, Establishing Authority and Accountability, Renaming the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports As The Department Of Education, And For Other Purposes," constitutes the most relevant policy document related to becoming a principal (Government of the Philippines, 2011; Sutherland & Brooks, 2013). Based on Republic Act 9155 (RA 9155), De Guzman and Guillermo (2007) explained the fundamental duties and responsibilities of school principals as follows (Sutherland & Brooks, 2013):

"Schools are either state-run or privately owned stock or non-stock institutions. In the case of public elementary and secondary schools, the following provisions govern the selection of a school principal, to wit: The school shall be the focal point and center of formal education. The class is where the teaching learning process shall take place and should be managed efficiently and effectively. For the purpose, the schools division superintendent shall appoint a school principal for every complete public elementary and public high school or a cluster thereof, in accordance with existing Civil Service rules and regulations. The school principal shall function both as an instructional leader and administrative manager to ensure that goals for quality education are met and shall be assisted by an office staff for administrative and fiscal services" (De Guzman and Guillermo, 2007; Sutherland & Brooks, 2013).

RA 9155 aligns national law with current global trends related to principalship by emphasizing that it should be viewed as a leadership role rather than one focused solely on administration or management (Sutherland & Brooks, 2013). Scholars noted that the policy (RA 9155) views the school principal's job in a distinctly Anglo-Western context. Due to numerous cultural and logistical considerations, this is problematic. Philippine policies are based on idealized notions of education that are, in fact, largely different from those of developing countries. There is no requirement that principals have prior teaching experience, and there is no rational-linear path to the position, thereby limiting their ability to serve as instructional leaders (English, 1994, 2002). Many of these educators have never taught in a classroom, and their appointment results from political interference (de Guzman & Guillermo, 2007). As a result, the Department of Education (DepEd) implemented the Philippine Standards for Teachers and the Philippine Professional Standards for Supervisors promulgated through DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017 (Government of the Philippines, Department of Education, 2017). Furthermore, DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2020 issued an order titled National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (Government of the Philippines, Department of Education, 2020) in line with its commitment to "support school heads so they can better perform their roles in schools, including the improvement of teacher quality, and, through this, learner achievement" (Apilada, 2020).

1.2 Leadership Theories and the School Principal

Literature on leadership contains theoretical trends and a long history of research. It is estimated that there are 66 different leadership theories identified in this millennium, according to Dinh et al. (2014). Leadership is increasingly considered a collaborative process between a team and its followers rather than a hierarchical, top-down process. As a result of understanding how processes change and evolve and knowing that leadership occurs from multiple sources within an organization, leadership theory can be more useful in understanding the phenomenon (Dinh et al., 2014). Currently, however, there is no available uniform theory of leadership (Dinh et al., 2014; Polincic, 2016). The evolution of leadership theory has shown that several concepts and approaches have been welcomed, thereby contributing to creating a vital, relevant, and growing discipline (Dinh et al.,

2014).

Leadership theory has a direct relationship with the school principal's position due to the nature of the job. Principals display specific behaviors and interactions in the conduct of their duties. Their approach to directing individuals or groups to accomplish tasks for the common good and/or to realize their vision is their leadership style (Cooper, 2012). Schools continue to face evolving challenges, and so must principals' leadership styles and actions.

2. The review

In this section, leadership theories within the realm of effective school leadership will be reviewed.

Transformational leadership. Considered as one of the prevailing theories in educational leadership is transformational leadership theory. Research reveals that it has been found to have been explored in relation to school principals. Transformational leadership occurs when the followers manifest behaviors that increase a leader's consciousness of the significance of their missions and elevates their aspirations, motivation, and maturity (Abu-Hussain, 2014). Additionally, they emphasize the importance of achieving, realizing oneself, fostering social welfare, maintaining the organization's success, and caring about its social environment (Abu-Hussain, 2014).

Downton (1973) introduced the term transformational leadership in the modern era. But Burns' seminal work, published in 1978, officially introduced the concept of transformational leadership. His study compared transformational and transactional leadership, viewing them as opposite ends of a continuum (Mullins, 2004). Bass' research (1985) led to further development of transformational leadership theory, which was then reinforced by Kouzes and Posner (2012), and Bennis and Nanus (1985). Research has shown that transformational leaders motivate and inspire their subordinates to achieve performance levels that exceed the norm (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Through idealized influence (charisma), inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and/or individualized consideration, transformational leadership assists his/her subordinates in moving beyond immediate self-interests (Bass, 1999).

Research indicates that in transformational leadership, leaders and followers create a shared interest between them (Abu-Hussain, 2014). McCleskey (2014) identified four components in transformational leadership, namely: individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence or charisma, and inspirational motivation. Individual consideration refers to leaders expressing genuine interests in the professional or personal aspirations of his or her followers (Cooper, 2012). Transformational leaders can undertake problems using new and clever strategies, stimulating and inspiring others to be risk-takers and to espouse creativity, consequently resulting in getting them intellectually stimulated (Cooper, 2012). Idealized influence or charisma has two components as follows: first, followers credit certain qualities to leaders they want to imitate and second, leaders' behaviors influence that of their followers (McCleskey, 2014). In inspirational motivation, optimism and enthusiasm are two essential characteristics (McCleskey, 2014).

Generally, leaders imbued with transformational qualities practice envisioning the organization's future, effectively communicating the vision to others within the organization, conveying the significance of the vision to followers, and inspiring followers to engage collaboratively towards the attainment of the vision (Cooper, 2012). Research reveals that teachers have strong preference for behaviors aligned with those identified to be transformational leaders (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). Indeed, a principal's actions have significant impacts on teachers' attitudes and behaviors (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). It was found that in high-functioning schools, transformational principals shape the organization's visions and processes that results in a culture that values positive learning (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). Transformational principals encourage reflection among staff, assist them when needs arise, develop the leadership potentials, emphasize collegiality and teamwork, and inspire creative thinking (Hauserman & Stick, 2013).

Servant leadership. Robert Greenleaf (1977) coined the concept of servant leadership, a topic that continues to be discussed today. Using the phrase "paradoxical approach to leadership," Northouse (2010) points out that leaders must be concerned for their followers by nurturing and caring for them. Ethical and generally caring behavior forms the basis for servant leadership theory, where the highest priority is given to the well-being of employees (van Dierendonck, 2011). Researchers have increasingly focused on ethical, people-centered management rather than transformational leadership (van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leaders are distinguishable from other people of goodwill by acting according to their beliefs (Greenleaf, 2007). Thus, they acquire knowledge by experimenting, and a sustaining spirit prevails when they take chances and venture. A servant leader may appear naive to those outside the organization and may find it difficult to adapt to the prevailing institutional structure (Greenleaf, 2007).

In a qualitative study of servant leaders, researchers identified several themes in the interviews they conducted, including problem-solving, interpersonal, character, work habits, self-assurance, and inspired leadership (Hamilton & Knoche, 2007). Their ability to solve problems is one of the critical characteristics of these leaders. There was an emphasis on encouraging diversity of opinion, debate, and open communication. In addition to their strong interpersonal skills, servant leaders possessed strong emotional intelligence. Their interactions were marked by compassion and respect. Rather than being motivated by status, their sense of contribution to the continuous development and advancement of followers serves as a motivator. Participants pursued goals with tenacity. These leaders display humility, authenticity, likeability, and a sensible style. There was an emotional bond between the leaders and their employees due to their strong commitment to loyalty. The participants exhibited greater self-awareness and understanding including those around them and the situations they were in no matter how complex they seemed to be (Hamilton & Knoche, 2007).

Invitational leadership. Invitational leadership is a theory that utilizes an optimistic and uplifting structure to assist leaders through complex problems. This theory was developed by William Purkey and Betty Siegel in 2002 (Burns & Martin, 2010). Optimism, respect, trust, and intentionality are the four components of the invitational leadership theory. More recently, a study (Purkey & Novak, 2015) emphasized the importance of hope in educational institutions. Having respect for others is a basic human need that affirms their value. An organization's success depends on trust. Leadership with an invitational approach is intentional and purposeful. Efficacious teams are built through processes that involve people in cooperative activities and positive results (Burns & Martin, 2010). Additionally, Burns & Martin (2010) posits that invitational leadership theory has five powerful factors such as processes, programs, policies, places, and people (Polincic, 2016). Burns and Martin (2010) explained that invitational leaders had more positive and affirmative perceptions than those of school leaders whose organizations were deemed less effective. Researchers discovered that, regardless of whether teachers or principals came from effective or ineffective schools, they firmly believed that the most persuasive and impactful facet in an organization are people (Burns & Martin, 2010).

Followership theory. Literature in research reveals that leadership theory has been extensively researched and studied upon, whereas followership theory is less studied. In 2014, Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, and Carsten explored followership theory. "Leadership cannot occur without followership and following behaviors" (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014; Nixon, 2017). Followership Theory's importance in the field of leadership cannot be overstated. In studying leadership for deeper understanding, we cannot ignore the importance of studying followership. Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) define followership theory as the study of how followers and followers impact leadership. Most theory research focuses on leaders, but a few studies emphasize followers.

Additionally, research has recognized that there is a mutual influence between leaders and followers. According to Uhl-Bien et al. (2014), to understand the role of followers in leadership entails taking into consideration their role in the process itself. Considering the importance of this theory in education, we must study elements of principal-teacher interactions and what they mean in terms of understanding effective principal leadership (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014; Nixon, 2017).

2.1 Leadership: Learned Skill or Innate?

A persistent debate about leadership centers on whether leadership is an innate or a learned skill. McCleskey (2014) posited that leadership studies stemmed from the concept of leadership being a characteristic of extraordinary individuals. Many believe leadership can be both innate and learned - a skill is learned while a behavior demonstrates that skill. Doh (2003) suggested that this dualism added fuel to the fire on discussions about the nature of leadership - whether it can be taught in schools. Learning about leadership does not imply it is teachable (Doh, 2003). To cultivate the skill of strategic thinking, one must be able to think analytically and conceptually. Some elements of a behavior that manifest a skill are dispositional characteristics. Alternatively, gaining commitments to a vision involves teachable skills like employing processes and tactics (Greer, 2011). In addition to being able to express a vision and motivate others, a leader's impact is demonstrated through the behavior they intend to systematize. By being open to receiving input from their followers, leaders elicit trust from them (Ba Banutu-Gomez, 2004). Managing this process entails both learned and innate abilities.

2.2 Complexity and Elusiveness

In defining effective leaders, Green, Chirichello, Mallory, Melton, & Lindahl, (2011) asked whether scholars must focus more on their skills and experience, or on more abstract qualities such as trust and character. Although research does not usually touch on the affective sphere of leadership, the majority of researchers agree that these evasive characteristics are extremely necessary to the complexity of leadership. Research has shown that effective leaders are ethical, have good moral standards, trustworthy and trustful, show conviction, purposeful, good listeners, self-regulated, caring, seek innovation, show creativity, and think strategically (Doh, 2003; Green et al., 2011; Greer, 2011). The skills listed above are not necessarily measurable but would likely manifest in an environment where leaders institute healthy environments. Sun-Keung Pang & Pisapia (2012) contend that leaders who possess a linear thinking mindset will encounter chaotic situations in complex environments because they lack the ability to cope with ambiguous and complex situations. A study by Huber (2013) revealed 30 dimensions contributing to school effectiveness in the study of school leader profiles. Among the 30 dimensions were general skills, engagement, self-efficacy, empathy, ambiguity, tolerance, and enthusiasm. Using these dimensions as a guide to self-reflection promotes contemplation and inspires a desire to thoroughly understand their behavior in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities (Huber, 2013).

Literature reveals the complicated nature of leadership. For example, complexities can be found in institutions that humans created - family units and structures, corporate organizations, schools and other learning institutions, and governmental systems. These institutions provide avenues for people to show bravery or weakness, industry or laziness, loyalty or treachery, and to be deacons and demons (Reeves, 2006). In Dinham's (2011) words, the leadership of school principals is a more controversial, intricate, situated and evolving subject matter than formerly thought. Managing schools combines technical and adaptive work (Fullan, 2005). We understand that issues do not confront principals in a straightforward way, but some know how to approach them. Due to their complexity and dimension, adaptive challenges are often difficult to address (Fullan, 2005). Sidhu & Fook (2009) were on point when they said that as well as acting as the school's CEO, principals are the primary source of motivation for followers while acting as instructional leaders.

School environments in recent years are undoubtedly becoming more complicated, placing high demands on educational leaders. Even more compelling was the COVID-19 global pandemic. Principals were confronted with problems and issues they never handled before. In a short span of time, schools moved to remote instructions. Asynchronous and synchronous classes became the trend. The preparation of school leaders once focused primarily on school management, finance, legal issues, and state mandates. However, in light of the global pandemic, leadership education reform must be centered in developing leadership skills needed in facilitating highly effective and efficient teaching and learning environments. In addition, principals and supervisors have a shared responsibility to ensure that students develop not only intellectually and academically but socially, emotionally, and physically as well (Sidhu & Fook, 2009).

The literature on leadership identified trust as one of the most elusive characteristics. An individual's moral compass may be the most reliable guide at the disposal of the principal (Larsen & Derrington, 2012). Ethics play a crucial role in school administration. Larsen & Derrington (2012) highlighted the role of ethics when they conjectured that ethics is essential to our survival and not a mere luxury. The concept of trust is related to the concept of ethics. Trust is an essential aspect of a follower's relationship with their leader. During challenging periods, the way a leader behaves and communicates with followers establishes the fundamental element of future trust (Norman, Avolio, & Luthans, 2010). In what ways does a leader gain the trust of his or her followers? A leader must be transparent in his/her actions to gain followers' trust (Norman et al., 201). In the end, actions speak louder than words. Papaku Malasa (2007) deduced that not only should an effective school leader demonstrate, establish, and espouse a set of values and beliefs, they must also convey these to their constituents and stakeholders.

2.3 School Leadership and Its Importance

Do principals really drive academic achievement? While classroom instruction sits at the top of the list of school-related factors impacting students' success, leadership comes at its heels (Seashore et al., 2004; Polincic, 2016). Student outcomes are indirectly impacted by school principals as the lead instructional leader, organizational manager, and chief relations officer. Student achievement is deeply affected by the quality of instruction and the leadership qualities exhibited by educational leaders outside and inside the classroom (Suber, 2011). A principal has a better chance at success if he/she can devote energy in being an instructional leader whilst carrying out his/her duties as an organizational manager (Grissom & Loeb, 2011).

Research reveals that principals' leadership affects teacher performance. Student achievement is also linked to a principal's support and teacher collaboration (Gordon, 2006). Hudson, Graham, & Willis (2014) found that leadership can affect a teacher's job satisfaction and commitment to work. In Gordon's (2006) book, *Building Engaged Schools*, he focuses on cultivating employee engagement through fundamental conditions. Among the fundamental conditions a principal must meet in order to maintain a healthy workplace are the following: providing basic needs necessary to accomplish their tasks, managerial support that allows subordinates' peak performance, recognition, showing care and concern; development of a culture where opinions matter, the job matters, and colleagues are work in collaboration with others; inspiring advancement through regular progress monitoring and providing avenues for continuous learning and growing (Gordon, 2006). Moreover, according to Gordon (2006), highly effective principals are critical to retention since most people leave organizations, not their leaders.

2.4 Effective Principalship

Researchers have investigated characteristic traits and skills that describe effective and successful school leaders. According to Grissom & Loeb (2011), a mere recognition of the fact that principals affect school success is significantly different from identifying qualities and skills that impact those results. This research indicates that effective instructional leadership is equally important to the organization's management, including budgeting and maintaining facilities (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). As a result, principals should spend a considerable amount of energy on these initiatives by conducting needs analysis in relation to instruction and allocate resources to address identified needs, enlist the best personnel for the job, and maintain a smooth operation (Grissom & Loeb, 2011).

It has been found by Costellow (2011) that "the ideal school leader that individuals imagine is influenced by their individual beliefs, experiences, and needs." (Costellow, 2011). For example, a superintendent may prefer an instructional-oriented teacher, but parents may want quality instruction and safety. Teachers may seek out the principal to make them feel better about their jobs, while students may want someone who addresses their social-emotional needs and needs (Costellow, 2011). In conclusion, Costellow (2011) found that teachers and principals had high regard for communicating openly, creating a shared culture, focusing on what is important,

instilling discipline among students and staff, and being visible to the school community.

Clabo (2010) summarized the findings of his research into high school principals as instructional leaders and found that teachers were aware of the principals' roles in hiring effective teachers. Furthermore, it was found that appropriate matching of classes and students to teachers' qualifications were observed. Principals also expressed both the quandary and the need to remove teachers found to be ineffective in carrying out their duties (Clabo, 2010). In the study, teachers also stressed that principals should provide teachers with resources and professional development to improve the quality of instruction and achieve academic success (Clabo, 2010).

In a similar study by Sammons, Gu, Day, and Ko (2010), the relationship between instructional leadership and school performance was examined. The study identified actions that school leaders take that deeply impacted school success. The following five major categories of leadership practices were found in schools selected for their academic achievement: improvement of teaching methodologies and practices, emphasizing academic activities, restructuring of the organization, vision and goal setting, and empowering constituents (Sammons et al., 2010). The researchers provided new evidence demonstrating the existence of the interconnectedness of several leadership aspects and the educational institution based on their study of academically effective and improved schools in England (Sammons et al., 2010).

A review of the research literature concerning effective school leadership was conducted by authors that summarized key findings found in the literature. Leithwood et al. (2006) reviewed academic papers and were able to point out seven strong claims pertaining to successful school leadership (Polincic, 2016). Firstly, they claimed that school leadership ranks second only to classroom teaching when it comes to what directly affects student learning (Leithwood et al., 2006). Secondly, most effective leaders follow a uniform set of basic leadership practices which include visioning and setting directions, appreciating and advancing subordinates, organizational restructuring, and management of the teaching-learning process (Leithwood et al., 2006). As for the third claim, Leithwood et al. (2006) claim that leaders exemplify receptivity to the environment they are in by applying these leadership practices. To achieve a shared vision and set direction, the leader needs to involve the staff in planning, drafting, and revising a school's direction (Leithwood et al., 2006). According to claim four, "school leaders are most powerful in influencing staff motivation by virtue of their ascendancy on commitment in the workplace (Leithwood et al., 2006). This claim relates to how school leaders affect teacher practices which could determine the quality of learning and academic success for students. Emphasis was given to the development of teacher capabilities as they influence student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2006). The fifth claim deals with the concept that distributed leadership has a greater influence on the organization as a whole and the students in particular. Leithwood et al. (2006) highlighted the importance of a diverse leadership team that includes representatives from various stakeholders. The sixth claim suggested that some distribution patterns were found to be more powerful than others, that is, principals do not lose their power and influence when they build capacity (Leithwood et al., 2006). Finally, variation in leadership effectiveness is influenced by a smaller number of traits such as open-mindedness, willingness to learn from others, flexibility, persistence, resilience, and optimism (Becton, 2017). This constitutes the seventh and final claim of Leithwood et. al (2006).

A combination of more than 70 academic papers and published journal articles on topics related to principal leadership were analyzed by the Wallace Foundation (Wallace Foundation, 2012). The contents of these papers led to the summarization of what effective principals do based on their findings. According to them, school leaders carry out tasks exceptionally well in areas pertaining to the development of vision for academic success of all pupils, the creation of classroom environment conducive to learning, professional development of leaders, improvement of instructional standards, people management, and effective use of data and techniques to improve schools (Wallace Foundation, 2012). Standards for Professional Practice for school principals can contribute significantly to the development of reflection and self-awareness, the formulation of appropriate professional learning opportunities, the selection and attraction of qualified applicants to vacancies, and evaluating principal's effectiveness. These standards further communicate school leaders' principles, expertise, and practices to the academic institution they serve (Dinham, 2011).

2.5 Professional Standards

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) recognizes the importance of supervisors in improving the quality of basic education (Government of the Philippines, Department of Education, 2020). According to it, quality student learning is contingent upon quality teachers who are supported by quality school leaders (Government of the Philippines, Department of Education, 2020). On the basis of career-long learning, it also recognizes the importance of professional standards in supervisory development and advancement (Government of the Philippines, Department of Education, 2020; Llego, M. A., and Gallares, R., 2022).

DepEd Order No. 25, s. 2020 entitled National Adoption and Implementation of the *Philippine Professional Standards for Supervisors Philippine Professional Standards for Supervisors (PPSS)* provides the professional standards that supervisors must adhere to through as expressed in the following domains (Government of the Philippines, Department of Education, 2020; Apilada, 2020):

Domain 1: Supporting Curriculum Management and Implementation - supervisors are expected to provide assistance for effective management and implementation of curricular reforms, learning resources, and assessment of learning outcomes.

Domain 2: Strengthening Shared Accountability - In this domain, supervisors are expected to provide harmonized needs-based support to division personnel/school heads and other field implementers to inform forward planning and decision-making.

Domain 3: Fostering a Culture of Continuous Improvement - In this domain, supervisors are expected to provide support in creating an environment to ensure efficient and effective delivery of basic education services.

Domain 4: Developing Self and Others - In this domain, supervisors are expected to commit to ensuring people and team effectiveness. (Government of the Philippines, Department of Education, 2020; Apilada, 2020)

Moreover, the Department of Education (DepEd) through DepEd Memo Order No. 24, s. 2020 through its adaptation of the *Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads* (Government of the Philippines, Department of Education, 2020). The following are the five domains that constitute a broad conceptual sphere of leadership practices for all school heads (Government of the Philippines, Department of Education, 2020; Apilada, 2020):

Domain 1: Leading Strategically - This domain emphasizes that the principal plays a major role in setting the direction, goals and objectives of the school, and in ensuring that these are understood and embraced by all stakeholders.

Domain 2: Managing School Operations and Resources - This domain highlights the principal's commitment in ensuring efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness in discharging functions towards maximizing organizational health. It also centers on the role of Principals in managing systems and processes in schools.

Domain 3: Focusing on Teaching and Learning - This domain concentrates on the work of Principals in

promoting quality teaching and learning.

Domain 4. Developing Self and Others - This domain recognizes the role of Principals in nurturing themselves and others. Principals are expected to reflect on their personal and professional development to enhance their practice in leading and developing people.

Domain 5: Building Connections - This domain underscores the principal's competence in engaging stakeholders in initiatives towards the improvement of school communities. (DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2020; Apilada, 2020)

2.6 Continuous Learning: A Personal Pursuit

Leadership and management of a school are often portrayed as solely individual endeavors (Spillane & Hunt, 2010, p. 296). A school principal spends much of his or her time on administration-related activities as revealed in a study that shows that school leaders devote a staggering amount of time performing administrative functions - over fifty percent of their valuable time to be precise (Spillane & Hunt, 2010, p. 303). However, it was also revealed that principals led, co-led, and participated in instructional activities and curriculum development (Spillane & Hunt, 2010). The principal spends barely time for his or her continuous learning of leadership. Fulan (2003) suggested that a school principal's professional development is necessary, and the academic community needs a broader understanding of the essence of school leadership. The success of a school principal's hinges on many factors, including personal perspectives as well as performance, thinking, and doing (Doh, 2003).

Purposeful leaders can link their knowledge gleaned from experience with new challenges they will face in the future. Participating in a series of programs, workshops, or seminars will not suffice to enable an individual to develop fully as a leader (Abrego, 2009). It has been noted that leaders start to develop in 'white spaces' in the middle of those events (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Strum, & McKee, 2014).

It is becoming more and more common for educational leaders to engage in professional learning communities and networks that allows for the expansion of their understanding of leadership (Huber, 2013). Mentoring accounts for the most common learning method where a mentor models appropriate professional behaviors and actions to the student (Green et al., 2011). "The crux of leadership development lies in day-to-day practice" (Day et al., 2014). When leaders have the opportunity to experience these day-to-day experiences with a coach, they can utilize the coach's feedback to help in the development of important skills and abilities. Voluntary engagement in coaching sessions will likely impact school principal's practices (Goff, Guthrie, Goldring, & Bickman, 2014).

Leadership improvement is a passion that a leader must hold. Greer (2011) considered leadership as a process and not as a position as (Polincic, 2016). Taking the time to examine how their experiences help influence, shape, and hone their sense of purpose contribute to their success (Greer, 2011). Green, et al. (2011) suggested that leaders who work on their dispositions engage in self-assessment and reflection. The use of a 360-degree assessment for assessing leadership capacity is an example of this. There are four assumptions underlying this process: (1) feedbacking plays a vital role in professional and personal improvement; (2) majority of organizations provide low level feedback; (3) when we look in the mirror, we see ourselves better than we truly are; and (4) research has demonstrated that a 360-degree feedback positively impacts the areas under scrutiny (Green et al., 2011).

Self-knowledge is the first step toward developing leadership capabilities. In the case of a school principal, it is a way of developing the necessary skills and abilities needed in managing oneself and the school (Cardno & Youngs, 2013). As reported by Green et al. (2011), leadership requires self-awareness of values, attitudes, beliefs,

and worldviews on a personal and professional level. In leadership, self-authenticity is critical because individuals would try to emulate a cookie-cutter leadership approach provided to them. The result would be principals changing themselves into personas and others can easily and immediately see through them (George et al., 2007). In a separate study involving Stanford Graduate School of Business's Advisory Council members, it was found that the Advisory Council unanimously recommended self-awareness as the most important ability leaders should develop (George et al., 2007). Another concept that came up is withitness. Withitness can also be described as self-awareness. Hogan (2013) described school leaders exhibiting withitness as people with remarkable talents in interpreting phenomena, conducting research, speaking with key constituents, and promulgating decisions for the general welfare. No matter how you define it, developing oneself is a well-researched concept that can have significant impact. Day et al. (2014) and Abrego (2009) both stated that "this self-perception shapes one's recognition of their own capabilities and vulnerabilities, thereby impacting their behavior and decision-making abilities."

3. Implications for Teachers, Students and District Leaders

The body of research reveals the impact of effective school principalship on teachers and students. Effective school principals inspire teachers to perform better at their job. Teachers who experience excellent leadership may engage collaboratively with colleagues. They may also seek opportunities for professional development to improve their skills and abilities. When teachers grow professionally, the positive gains will trickle down to students because it is highly likely that teachers will apply learned strategies and practices in their classrooms.

Student achievement is greatly impacted by effective school leadership. Studies have shown the link between academic achievement and effective principalship. Students perform better in their classes and local and national achievement tests. Effective school leadership can also decrease behavior referrals because influential leaders use positive behavioral interventions and support. Therefore, principals must be given the proper support to build their capacity as leaders. The school district leaders should mentor principals about instructional leadership, fostering collaboration, and strategic management through professional development learning opportunities. Empowering principals is an excellent strategy for improving schools within the district.

4. Conclusion

Based on the literature review, we found a great deal of research on leadership and, more specifically, on principal leadership. The researchers analyzed several areas pertaining to school principal leadership and found that much of the studies and research focused on leaders' effective practices and on the definition of leadership but only a few considered active school principals' perspectives on how to cultivate their most elusive leadership traits. Concerning this topic, this literature is significant because it enables us to capture the essence of the principals' lived experiences through a phenomenological study that we would conduct in the future so that the principal can reflect on the research and add their own lived experiences to the body of research that was just reviewed.

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