On Characterizing School Leaders: Evidence from Hindang District, Leyte Division, Philippines

Leomarich F. Casinillo[1*], Michael G. Suarez[2]

[1] Visayas State University, Visca, Baybay City, Leyte, Philippines
[2] Doos Sur Elementary School, Hindang Leyte, Philippines
*e-mail: leomarich_casinillo@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study was conducted to characterize school leaders at Hindang District, Leyte Division, Philippines. By complete enumeration, the study considered all active elementary teachers at Hindang District. Primary data was collected through a developed structured questionnaire in regards to the various characteristics of a school leader which serves as an independent variable of the study. On the other hand, secondary data was collected at Department of Education regarding the elementary school classifications at Hindang District as follows: good, better and outstanding. With the aid of ordered logit models, the study highlighted some influencing factors of school classification governed by school leaders. Results showed that on the average, elementary schools in Hindang District are considered to be "better" based on the DepEd classification. This implies that these schools have a room for improvement with the help of an effective school leaders. Based on the constructed ordered logit models, it is shown that a personal attribute of a school leader has an inverse effect in outstanding school classification. In addition, it is revealed that result-focus, teamwork and people development were significant factors in achieving an outstanding performance in school. Hence, a leader must be a results driven that has the ability to create momentum based on their ultimate goal. Furthermore, school leaders must set clear directions, establish expectations since they are in a position to shape the goals, direction and structure of schools.

Keywords: School Leaders, Ordered Logit Models

1. Introduction

School leaders are important components of a school system because as managers, leaders make decisions about their school (Blau & Shamir-Inbal, 2017; Hungi, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2020). Leaders also formulate school development strategies to attain the school vision and education goals and to enhance learning effectiveness which promotes education that leads to strive for excellence and continuous improvement. But finding enough outstanding school leaders has proved difficult, even after decades of recruitment and training efforts (Ceri-Booms et al., 2017). School leaders have been characterized as change agents who work with a limited and constantly evolving sphere of influence. Leaders are at once administrators and middle managers who mediate tensions between policy-as-designed and policies-as-implemented (Brooks & Sutherland, 2014). School leaders also face challenges of increasing complexity and frequency as they fulfill their functions and provide direction and support while seeking to influence conditions related to teaching and learning.

The critical functions of a school head have remained unchanged over the years, instead however, has shifted dramatically (Hull, 2012). "They can no longer function simply as building managers, tasked with adhering to district rules, carrying out regulations and avoiding mistakes. Principals today must be instructional leaders capable of developing a team of teachers who deliver effective instruction to every student" (Ceri-Booms et al., 2017). Effective school managers influence a variety of school outcomes, including student achievement, through their recruitment and motivation of quality teachers; ability to identify and articulate school vision and goals; effective allocation of resources; and development of

*Corresponding author.

organizational structures to support instruction and learning. Teachers need strong leadership and organizational management (Kouzes & Posner, 2006) found leaders who are at their personal best "challenge the process, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, model the way, and encourage the heart". When principals have effective interactions with teachers with regard to instruction, "processes such as inquiry, reflection, exploration, and experimentation result; teachers build repertoires of flexible alternatives rather than collecting rigid teaching procedures and methods" (Blase & Blase, 2019).

It is worth noting that a low performance of schools is a result of bad and naive leadership and management (Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2017). Perhaps, an inexperience leadership can cause problems in any school which resulted to shortcomings and bad performances in relation to teaching-learning process. In the case of Hindang District, Leyte Division, Philippines, some schools are low performing schools and does not satisfies the quality set by Department of Education (DepEd) in the country. This something to do with the school leaders governing the faculty and staff in achieving goals. Perhaps, school leaders are facing the critical task of achieving equity-based educational excellence. In addition, school leaders are struggling to manage their faculty in terms of paper works and instructions. Teachers are facing challenges to balance instruction that prepares students for national achievement tests and teaches a curriculum that is comprehensive and more encompassing while doing some paper works as a requirement for their respective schools. Most school leaders are expected to lead their schools to excellence with the leadership training that was received at the educational leadership preparation program (Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2017). However, refining and updating leadership skills is essential to meeting the demands of school standards and accountability. Therefore, if students are expected to excel academically, school leaders must "sharpen the saw" professionally and either possess, or acquire the requisite leadership characteristics to meet the ever-increasing demands of teachers and needs of students (Gavrilyuk et al., 2019). Leadership as the "cohesion that makes the other elements and components" of a program work together to create positive change. Note that students' achievement and success in school are central to any vision of school leaders and educational system (Goldenberg & Sullivan, 1994).

Hence, this study is conducted to characterize school leaders to improve educational system and addressed the challenges and strategies for low performing schools in Hindang District. Generally, by the aid of ordered logit modeling, the study aimed to evaluate and investigate the different characteristics of a school leaders at Hindang District, Leyte Division, Philippines. Specifically, this study sought the following objectives: 1) to evaluate the level of different characteristics of a school leader; and 2) to determine the significant characteristics influencing a good school leader. The research hoped to provide vital information for school heads to help categorize school leaders who have unique characteristics. The focused was to gather a detailed information of the reality of the work of school leaders and what they actually do in relation to improving learners' outcomes. This is important because there seems to be limited knowledge about what has been shown to be significant in terms of leadership and management variables in relation to improved student outcome (Mogren et al., 2019). There are inadequate studies in rural areas as to identify unique characteristics of school leaders to be called outstanding. Department of Education in Leyte Division has crafted division memorandum number 116, series of 2018 on "Pasidungog" Revised 2017 Guidelines and Criteria for Most Outstanding School Heads which is not anchored and prescribed in the theories used by the researcher. The findings of this study will be useful to teachers, School Governing Bodies (SGB) and School Management Teams (SMT) with reference to their role in learners' achievement, and also to the education circuits and district managers with an interest contributing to learners' achievement. Furthermore, the findings could be useful to school leaders in improving their leadership styles and management to teachers and students.

2. Method

This research study utilized the design which deals with econometric models to determine the influencing independent variables to the dependent variable (L. F. Casinillo & Casinillo, 2020). Secondary data was collected at the office of Department of Education (DepEd), Leyte Division, Philippines regarding the school classification of the elementary schools in Hindang District. Primary data was collected on the perception scores from different characteristics of a good quality school leader using a developed structured questionnaire. In describing the data, descriptive measures were used such as frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation. Ordered logit modelling was constructed to determine the significant determinants of a good quality school leader. The population of interest in this study were all currently active elementary school teachers in Hindang District, Leyte Division. In order to obtain a richer information, this study considered a complete enumeration in order to lessen possible errors from the implementation of the research survey. Hence, all elementary teachers in Hindang District was considered for the primary data gathering. Table 1 shows the distribution of participants.

Table 1. Distribution of elementary school teachers in Hindang District.

Elementary Schools at Hindang District	Number of Teachers
Mabagon Elementary School	6
Himacugo Elementary School	3
Mahilum Elementary School	3
Ma-asin Elementary School	8
Canha-ayon Elementary School	5
Himokilan Elementary School	3
Tabok Elementary School	8
Doos Sur Elementary School	10
Tagbibi Elementary School	8
Doos Elementary School	11
Hindang Central Elementary School	29
Anahaw Elementary School	5
Baldoza Elementary School	2
Bontoc Elementary School	9
Bulacan Elementary School	5
Capudlosan Elementary School	4
Katipunan Elementary School	2
Total	**121**

This study considers ethical procedure, hence, participation of the said survey was voluntary. Prior to the conduct of the study, teachers were assured that all data gathered were treated with high confidentiality and solely used for the research purposes. Furthermore, teachers who participated this study was protected by not disclosing names and sensitive information that could potentially recognize any of them. In classifying the performance of the schools in Hindang District, data information from DepEd Leyte Division was asked. Hence, elementary schools in Hindang District was categorized into three such as good, better and outstanding. The manner on data gathering was survey using a developed and adopted DepEd Leyte Division questionnaires. The questionnaire contains items that solicits data on the various characterizing variables of an outstanding school leaders. Elementary teachers were asked to answer all 11 items in the questionnaire. Each item used a 5-point rating scale and followed a uniform coding to yield a meaningful response, namely: 1 – Poor, 2 – Unsatisfactory, 3 – Satisfactory, and 4 – Very Satisfactory, and 5 – Outstanding. Table 2 shows the possible mean perception score interval and its corresponding description.

For the data analysis, first, descriptive measures such as frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation was computed in describing the dependent and independent

variables with the aid of Microsoft Excel v.2013. Note that the schools in Hindang District are categorized into three classifications such as good, better and outstanding. Hence, in determining the significant determinants of the school classifications, an ordered logit models were constructed as inferential analysis using the software STATA v.14. In order to ensure a valid result for interpretation, some diagnostic test for the models were performed such as homoscedasticity test, omitted variables test, multicollinearity test and normality test for residuals (Greene, 2008).

Table 2. Weighted mean perception score interval and its description.

Mean perception score	Description
1.00 – 1.80	Poor
1.81 – 2.60	Unsatisfactory
2.61 – 3.40	Satisfactory
3.41 – 4.20	Very Satisfactory
4.21 – 5.00	Outstanding

3. Result and Discussion

Results

Figure 1 shows the percentages of different classifications of elementary school in Hindang District, Leyte Division. The different schools are categorized as good, better and outstanding. In Table 3, it presents the descriptive statistics of the different characteristics of a school leader. It also shows the standard deviation and mean perception scores of teachers towards the different characteristics of their respective school leader as well as the corresponding description.
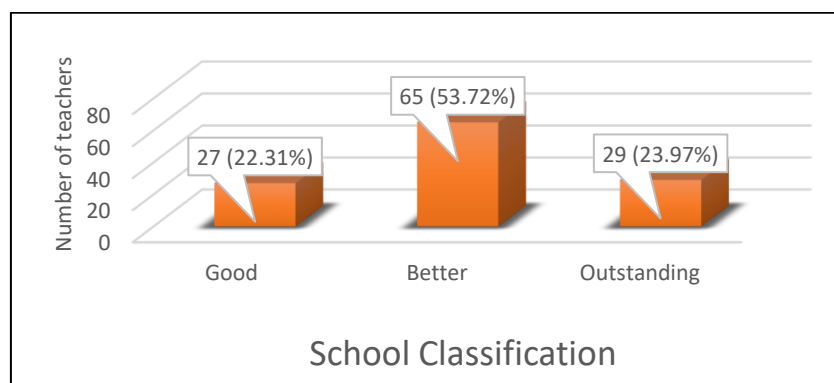

Figure 1. Number of Teachers in Different School Classification

Table 3. Descriptive measures for independent variables.

VARIABLES	Std Dev	Mean	Description
Personal Attributes	0.8578	4.1433	Very Satisfactory
Personality Trait	0.9266	4.0628	Very Satisfactory
Self-Management	0.9358	4.2149	Outstanding
Professionalism and Ethics	0.9048	4.2831	Outstanding
Result-Focus	0.8604	4.1405	Very Satisfactory
Teamwork	0.9653	4.2521	Outstanding
Self-Orientation	0.9132	4.0193	Very Satisfactory
Innovations	0.8216	4.1382	Very Satisfactory
Leading People	0.9870	4.1339	Very Satisfactory
People Performance and Management	0.9083	4.1752	Very Satisfactory
People Development	0.9695	4.1934	Very Satisfactory
Overall Rating	**0.9034**	**4.1597**	**Very Satisfactory**

Table 4 highlights the 3 ordered logit models that explained the statistically significant determinants of happiness in teaching. The 3 models are developed through the interactions between variables and based on the random heterogeneity of the sample. Diagnostic tests are employed for the 3 models to determine whether the necessary assumptions were valid before performing inference to the parameters of interest (O'Connell & Liu, 2011). The Breusch-Pagan test indicated that the first model is heteroskedastic (χ^2=25.84, p-value<0.001) and the model has omitted variables bias (F=1.53, p-value<0.001) by Ramsey RESET test (Table 4). Thus, the first model was corrected and adjusted to account for heteroscedasticity and omitted variable bias until the model does need more variables. For the multicollinearity test in the model, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was computed which estimates how much the variance of a coefficient is inflated because of linear dependence with other predictors (Allison 2012). Then, as a rule of thumb, mean VIF value should be lesser than 10 to safely ignore a multicollinearity problem in the model. Hence, there is no multicollinearity problem in the first model since the mean VIF is equal to 1.76. The residuals are not normal by Shapiro-Wilk test (Z=4.18, p-value=0.035) which rejects the null hypothesis that the residuals are normal. However, the Kernel density estimate graph shows that the residuals are almost normal. The model (χ^2=73.26) is also significant since p-value is less than 0.001 which implies that all coefficients taken together is not equal to zero.

Table 4. Ordered logit models for classifications of school and its influencing factors.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	MODEL 1	MODEL 2	MODEL 3
Personal Attributes	-1.7276** (0.5257)		
Personality Trait		-0.1946^{ns} (0.5236)	
Self-Management	0.1238^{ns} (0.4883)		
Professionalism and Ethics			-0.4911^{ns} (0.6149)
Result-Focus	1.1651* (0.5295)		1.3315* (0.6016)
Teamwork	1.3343** (0.4984)		1.1332* (0.5714)
Self-Orientation		-0.5862^{ns} (0.4563)	
Innovations			-0.8712^{ns} (0.6274)
Leading People		0.2414^{ns} (0.5729)	
People Performance and Management			-0.1661^{ns} (0.6733)
People Development		1.3437* (0.6830)	
Number of Observation	**121**	**121**	**121**
χ^2 computed	**36.05**	**23.01**	**27.41**
p-value	**<0.001**	**<0.001**	**<0.001**
Pseudo R-squared	**0.1474**	**0.0748**	**0.0522**
Log likelihood	**-104.28**	**-110.81**	**-108.61**

Note: Standard errors are in parenthesis; a - scale 1 to 10
ns – not significant
*p<0.05
**p<0.01

Discussions

In Figure 1, it shows that there are 22.31% and 53.72% of the elementary schools are classified as good and better, respectively. These are schools that needs improvement to attain an outstanding performance in quality education. This findings is consistent in several studies that deals with improvement of schools and education (Azorín & Ainscow, 2020; Demir et al., 2019; Henry, 2019; Mogren et al., 2019; Schildkamp, 2019). Perhaps, these categories of schools have a lot more room for improvement. With the right quality of leadership of their school heads, schools can achieve success and provide a world class education for their learners (Veelen et al., 2017). After all, there is always the chance that things will get better and better until one can reach an outstanding goal. There is great interest in educational leadership because of the belief that the quality of leadership makes a significant difference to school and student outcomes (Bush, 2019). Figure 1 also reveals that there are 23.97% of elementary schools classified as outstanding. This goes to infer that through a good leadership, the schools had achieved an outstanding performance. It includes zero drop outs within a school year, achieve good performance evaluation in teaching observation, good performance in National Achievement Test (NAT) and etc. Schools of outstanding category is already established and well governed by right leadership (DeMatthews et al., 2020; DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020). Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives (Ceri-Booms et al., 2017).

Table 3 shows that the *Personal Attributes* of school leaders are rated as very satisfactory. This implies that school leaders are more attractive, psychologically stable, mature, sympathetic/kindness, socially competent and well-groomed in their respective schools (Eryilmaz & Kara, 2017). Same goes with their *Personality Traits* which characterized as openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism was rated as very satisfactory (Matthews et al., 2003). Elementary teachers rated *Self-management, Teamwork*, and *Professionalism and Ethics* of school leaders as outstanding. Teachers believe that their respective leaders are outstanding on the following characteristics: sets personal goals and direction, needs and development, undertakes personal actions and behaviors that are clear and purposive, and takes into account personal goals and values congruent to that of the organization (Armour et al., 2019; Lean et al., 2019). Leaders also promotes collaboration and removes barrier to teamwork and global accomplishment across the organization, derives consensus and team ownership decision (Bravo et al., 2019; Lumpkin, 2008; Malone & Gallagher, 2010). Furthermore, leader demonstrates the values and behavior enshrined in the norms and conduct and ethical standards for public officials and employee, maintains a professional image; being trustworthy, regularity of attendance and punctuality, good grooming and communication (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). In addition, Table 3 reveals that the teachers rated the following characteristics as very satisfactory: *Result-Focus, Self-Orientations, Innovations,* and *Leading People.* This means that school leaders achieves results with the optimal use of time and resources most of the time, avoids rework, mistakes and wastage through effective work methods by placing organizational needs before personal needs (Ceri-Booms et al., 2017). Leaders explain and articulate organizational directions, issues and problems; takes personal responsibility for dealing with or correcting customer service issues and concerns; develops and adopts service improvement programs through simplified procedures that will further enhance service delivery (Gavrilyuk et al., 2019; Illeris, 2003). Additionally, leaders examine the root cause of problems and suggests effective solutions. Fosters new ideas, processes and suggests better ways to do cost or operational efficiency, demonstrates an ability to think "beyond the box". Continuously focusses on improving personal productivity to create higher values or solutions (Admiraal et al., 2017; Scull et al., 2020). Furthermore, good leaders persuade, convinces or influences others in order to have specific impact or effect. Additionally, the *People Performance and Management* and *People Development* in their respective schools are rated as very satisfactory. And as a whole, school leaders in Hindang District, Leyte Division, were rated as very satisfactory (Table 3). Hence, this goes to infer

that school leaders in respective schools' sets performance standards and measures progress of employees based on office and department targets; provides feedback and technical assistance such as coaching for performance improvement and action planning and performs all the stages of result-based performance management system supported by evidence and required documents/forms (Dong et al., 2018; Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2017). School leaders also improves the skill and effectiveness through employing a range of development strategies and motivating or developing teachers within a work environment that promotes mutual trust and respect (L. Casinillo & Guarte, 2018; Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2017). Developing teachers' quality is the center of school leader's policy where they monitor their teachers as prepared, set clear and fair expectations, have a positive attitude, are patient with students, and assess their teaching on a regular basis for quality performance.

Table 4 reveals that a *Personal attribute of a school leader* is highly significant but it has an inverse effect to the leadership. This implies that the current leaders in Hindang District, Leyte Division are not that attractive in nature but strong and influential persons. Personal attributes like beautiful, charming, funny, or intelligent are not important in leadership but integrity and willingness is more appreciated. Perhaps, nowadays, people need a leader that has a firm decision making and does not falter (Eryilmaz & Kara, 2017; Tschannen-Moran, 2009). *Result-focus* is significant at 5% level (Table 4). This implies that a leader who is a results driven is a person who has the ability to create momentum based on their ultimate goal and arriving at a deadline line which takes a lot of and hard work (Ceri-Booms et al., 2017; Pratoom, 2018). It is shown in Table 4 that *Teamwork* is highly significant determinant in order to achieve an outstanding performance. Hence, to attain a good teamwork in schools, school leaders must set clear directions, establish expectations, and evaluate their effectiveness as well as the performance of those around them. Outstanding and successful schools' leaders encourage staff members and students – providing them with the support and training they need to succeed (Bravo et al., 2019; Leithwood et al., 2004; Malone & Gallagher, 2010). Furthermore, Table 4 shows that *People Development* is a significant factor of an outstanding schools in Hindang District. This implies that School leaders are an integral part of the success of schools and student learning. As school leaders, they are in a position to shape the goals, direction and structure of schools. Consequently, their decisions and actions influence various school policies, procedures and practices that ultimately impact student outcomes (Brooks & Sutherland, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2020). Leadership is important in any organization. It sets the conditions and expectations for excellent instruction and the building of a culture of ongoing learning for educators and for the learners in a school (Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2017). It is worth noting that an outstanding school are pillar of its community and students feel safe and supported, and where different families are proud to send their children since they trusted its quality.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

Elementary schools in Hindang District are considered to be "better" as school classification. Conclusively, these schools have a room for improvement with the help of an effective school leaders. Effective school leaders appear to be characterized by the performance of leadership tasks which are positively connected to student achievements such as, emphasis on basic subjects, provision of an orderly atmosphere and a learning climate, setting instructional strategies, coordination of instructional programs, supervising and supporting teachers, orientation towards educational development and innovation. Results revealed that the various characterizing variables of an outstanding school leaders had a very satisfactory rating. Hence, school leaders can still be improved their leadership traits and style that is highly valued by their teachers in order to increase instructional effectiveness as well as the performance of their schools. It is revealed that personal attributes of a school leader have an inverse effect on school classification. So, school leaders must improve the school climate and a sense of optimism and commitment must

prevail always to attain the school visions. In addition, result-focus, teamwork and people development were significant factors in an outstanding school classification. It is highly recommended that school leaders must establish and nurture human relationships among teachers, administrators, and students.

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