

Research Article

CORE COMPONENTS AND KEY PROCESSES OF EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN BASIC EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the core components and key processes of effective leadership in basic education. The study utilized a case-study method to look for the core components and key processes for effective educational leadership in basic education among the private schools in Carcar City Division, Cebu, Philippines, for the school year 2021-2022. A qualitative method that employed a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informant interviews (KII) with Thematic Content Analysis was used. The findings revealed that the core components needed for effective educational leadership were contextualized leadership styles, affective qualities, and leadership competence. Likewise, the key processes needed to become effective education leaders were setting a clear vision, transforming vision to action, committing to realization, achieving quality outcomes, and sustaining quality for excellence. The perceived reasons for the need for effective leadership were the absence of clear vision, poor leadership competence, and lack of commitment. These core components and key processes likely serve as the foundations for building the atmosphere school leaders wanted to attain. With the demanding and challenging responsibility of school leaders around the globe, these core values and key processes of effective leadership in basic education should be put into practice. Thus, a school leader has to have a strong personality to perform his or her functions to achieve the desired goals in basic education.

Keywords: Effective leadership, core components, key processes, thematic content analysis, basic education.

INTRODUCTION

The role of school administrators and leaders in a school as an institution is very vital and indispensable. However, the leadership role of school administrators nowadays is deteriorating as some leaders fail to focus on supporting, evaluating, and developing teacher quality which is widely recognized as a core component of effective leadership (Swanson, 2022). One of the issues in the area of effective leadership among private schools in the Philippines is weak leadership of school leaders and administrators regarding vision, holder of values, intellectual drive, and knowledge. Another emerging challenge that has never been seen in the educational system is the increasing pressure on teachers and students on academic performance, school achievements, community breakdown, and the lack of financial resources. In Carcar City Division, Cebu, Philippines, private school administrators encountered challenges that adversely affected how the schools are run. As observed lately, most of these challenges are partially attributed to the local government's lack of sufficient aid and support. However, most of these challenges arise within the schools' management and leadership system. These problems originate in the professional and social interaction between various stakeholders at the institutional and community level. If not appropriately addressed, these kinds of problems in school will lead to poor performance. On the other hand, effective school management, expressed by effective leadership, is emphasized as the vital underpinning factor for improving schools' performance, primarily when implemented within a decentralization framework.

In line with these prevailing thoughts, this research is conducted to determine the core values and key processes of the schools' administrators which are significant for developing an effective leader in basic education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study examined the core components and key processes of effective leadership in basic education among the private school leader in Carcar City, Cebu, Philippines. Explicitly, this study was guided by the following objectives:

1. What are the core components needed for effective educational leadership?
2. How are these core components for effective educational leadership achieved?
3. Why do these respondents perceive these needs for effective educational leadership?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section presents concepts according to various authors and other studies related to this work, which serve as the springboard of the study.

Effective Leadership

May, Huff, & Goldring (2019) stated that effective head teachers provide a clear vision and sense of direction for the school. They prioritize and focus the staff's attention on what is important and do not let them get diverted and sidetracked with initiatives that will have little impact on the students' work. According to Wooll (2021), a school leadership must have a shape with the core values that are underlying beliefs that guide decisions and actions for the

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improvement and development of school programs and undertaking. He added that these leadership values positively influence one's ability to lead effectively in the school. In the book of Kapur (2020) effective leadership begins with the fundamental ability to believe in oneself bounded the core values. It incorporates a leadership style that transforms into determination and direction. Leaders focus on acquiring an efficient understanding in terms of environmental conditions (Stark, 2022).

Leadership Core Components

Moller, *et al.*, (2019) postulated that one's values constitute one of the key core components of a leader. Accordingly, leaders as chief executives must always examine their core values as reasonable servants for school effectiveness. Popper (2015) argued that school leaders' core values help transpire the school's desired vision. In fact, Polat (2018) contended that having the core value in educational leadership is essential in developing and increasing each person's lifelong in many ways. Other core values needed to be an effective leader are commitment and passion. Rouse (2020) claimed that commitment obligates leaders to do something to improve the school. One's responsibility is intertwined with passion, which is having strong emotions reflecting an intense desire or boundless enthusiasm. Hence, in performing well in one's jobs and achieving educational goals and objectives, school leaders need to be committed and passionate about implementing responsibilities and duties. In the same manner, Wallace (2019) found that the core values of school leaders positively contribute to an organization or school institution in terms of providing the best student outcome. Polat (2018) agreed that these principles are also becoming more important in identifying and preventing conflict within the school leadership and organization. Spiro (2018) mentioned in his study that school leaders should always anchor on the core values such as dependability, reliability, consistency, and efficiency in shaping academic success. An effective vision is crafted from the solicited inputs from all school stakeholders about the dreams and hopes of the students the school serves. This idea is supported by Anastacio (2019) by claiming that values, hopes, and dreams are the strong foundation for building the school's vision. He added that the vision statement has hope and inspiration to attain academic success. Moreover, Holiday (2019; Cutillas, 2019) proved that school leaders and administrators must have educational leadership skills to create a hospitable climate for all stakeholders. These educational leadership skills become effective if scaffolded in building the best organizational institution, especially in the educational system.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative case-study method. This method is appropriate since the researcher explored and described the core values and key processes needed by school leaders for effective school leadership in basic education.

Respondents of the Study

The research study covered all private schools in Carcar City, Cebu, Philippines. The participants of this study were the schools' administrators, principals, school leaders, overall in-charge, stakeholders, parents, teachers, non-teaching staff, and students from the 12 private schools in Carcar City Division.

Research Instrument

This study used an interview guide for core components and key processes of effective educational leadership in basic education. The

tool was subjected to content validity to measure what was supposed to measure before administering to the participants. A group of experts validated the interview guide.

Method of Data Analysis

The study made use of thematic analysis. This method of analyzing qualitative data entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns (Braun and Clarke 2006). It is a method for describing data but also involves interpretation in selecting codes and constructing themes. Likewise, thematic analysis is an approach to analyzing qualitative data to answer broad or narrow research questions about people's experiences, views, and perceptions of a given phenomenon. Braun & Clarke (2006) provide a six-phase guide, which is a very useful framework for conducting this kind of analysis. *First*, familiar with the data through reading and re-reading the transcript. *Second*, generate initial codes by systematically organizing the gathered data, and by this, it reduces many data into small chunks of meaning. *Third*, search for appropriate themes that capture something significant or interesting about the data and/or research question. *Fourth*, review themes that is relevant. *Fifth*, define themes and identify the 'essence' of each theme. *Lastly*, write all themes for the report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the analysis and discussions of the gathered data. Hence, the qualitative part of the study was developed by analyzing the core components needed for effective leadership in basic education.

Core Components for Effective Educational Leadership in Basic Education

Table 1 presents the core components needed for effective educational leadership in basic education among private school administrators.

Table 1 Core Components for Effective Educational Leadership in Basic Education

THEMES	CATEGORIES
Contextualized Leadership Styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inspirational ▪ Results-oriented ▪ Servant -leader ▪ Collaborative
Affective Qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Passionate ▪ Futuristic ▪ Goal-oriented ▪ Capacitating leader ▪ Transparent ▪ Role model
Leadership Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agent of change ▪ Outcome-based ▪ Knowledge -developer ▪ Teacher-leader ▪ Cultivator of excellence

As gleaned in Table 1, the core components of effective leadership are *contextualized leadership style*, *affective qualities*, and *leadership competence*. These are the emerging themes from the data gathered. These identified categories are the key answers to achieving an effective leader. Based on the study's findings, the core components needed by school leaders have corresponding categories explained in the preceding paragraphs.

Contextualized Leadership styles

Based on the findings of the study, contextualized leadership styles are identified as one of the core components needed for effective leadership. This leadership style is categorized as follows:

Process-focused and inspirational. This type of leadership is crucial for a leader for him to become an effective leader. According to Bass & Avolio (2018) other leaders, inspiring teachers and students can motivate them to develop a strength of character and achieve goals in the workplace.

As the following participants shared:

"Naasiyaypaglantawsaunahanngaunsaonngamahimongpekti bo ang pagpanudlongadtosamgakauban ... naasiyay tin-aw, ug mgapanan-awon ug good planner siya" [He has vision ahead on how his teaching with the colleagues becomes effective]... he has clear vision and good planner and be an inspiration to others. Anne

"I think that the key components needed for one to become an effective education leader are ahhh.. she or he has a good vision and mission to become an inspiration for effective leadership". Paul

Results-oriented and inspiring a shared vision. This type of leadership plays a significant role in becoming an effective school leader. Kruse (2019) elaborated in his study that results-oriented leaders are driven by their end goal and vision. This means that school leaders must be visionaries and clearly articulate the vision, mission, and goals for better school outcomes. As the following participants shared:

"Well, being a leader in the academe requires toughness of mind and with genuine spirit to serve, a leader with vision, mission, result-oriented, goal-driven, capable to lead, inner-self attribute to lead". Paul.

"A leader must be innovative and goal driven and look for the results to provide what best for the school, then most importantly the trust to his colleagues". Xela.

Servant-leader. To Schroeder (2018), servant leaders are one of the most effective leadership models. As Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson, & Jinks (2017) also contend, school leadership must be embodied with the core values such as being a servant of others that is based on the principle of authority in most cases. This is affirmed by a participant when he said:

"I believed a person can be an effective educational leader as long as number 1, she/he has the passion to lead, be a servant of other and then he/she has inclusive or understand the value of the community working together for the school". Pastor.

Shows respect and empathy, valuing collaborative approaches.

This type of leadership means that a leader must show respect to colleagues, have empathy, and value collaborative approaches in interacting with the teachers, students, parents, and others. As Nelson (2018) contends, the collaborative approach in educational leadership provides a role-modeling for teachers as they develop good classroom practice. A participant uttered:

"I can say that these components are needed to have an effective educational leader because these qualities passion, collaborative approach, and inclusiveness tell us that a leader is competent, and if a leader is competent then

he can transform the school into an institution that produces competent individuals too". Paul

Demonstrates a true spirit of passion in the work environment.

This type of leadership means that a school leader must show passion for serving the school. A leader who is genuinely passionate about the work environment creates greater productivity throughout the school environment (Herit, 2020, Cutillas et al., 2022). Education leaders must demonstrate a true spirit of passion in the work environment to achieve educational goals. Some participants shared that:

"In order to ensure stability and sustainability of the institutional programs, a school leader must exhaust the passion to lead, thus academic goals will be realized". Ken.

"As a leader, she or he must look for the students. A leader who can inspire the community with passion the very least he or she could". Almyra

Affective Qualities

Another core component of an effective school leader has affective qualities. As suggested, school leaders must focus on helping colleagues improve their capacity to reflect and apply their learning not only to their work with students but also to their work with each other. This core component is categorized as follows:

A powerful process for thinking about the ideal future. This type of attribute means that an empowering leader is someone who values the presence of everyone in the school learning environment and organization. According to Fischer (2018), a school leader must be futuristic and ideal in leading a team and doing the work, enthusiastic in monitoring the progress of the task, and always prepared to provide inputs and feedback once needed. So as a participant uttered:

"You have to focus goal and strong thinking in your idea so that you have to achieve it in a good and simultaneously process in the future". Pastor.

Goal-oriented. This type of affective quality plays a crucial part in becoming an effective school leader. Briggs (2022) stated that a goal-oriented leader is grounded in knowledge and a realistic outlook, being aware of the context in which the school dynamics and organization operates. This remark is affirmed by a participant when she shared:

"By giving constant monitoring, evaluation, feedback giving, consultation, and actual practice as part of goal-oriented school leaders". Angie.

"By constant training, FGD, implementation of every program, make them a part of daily life-working routines and have clearly defined and meaningful goals". Anne

Capacity building for the growth and development of teachers.

This type of affective quality of a leader is an essential value for effective leadership. Bass (2017) supported the idea that part of a capacitating leader is someone who offers support and encouragement to have a healthy workplace environment and takes the time to understand the needs of others for them to develop and progress. To develop and sustain effective leadership is to conduct capacity building for the growth and development of teachers. As mentioned by some participants:

"I can say that workshops and seminars for aspiring educational leaders can refresh their ideas and build their skills in order to be effective leaders". Grace

'Para nakogikihanglandunalangsiyaykakayahan to collaborate educators and kaya niyamo provide ug curriculum ogsaktongdireksyon, guidance para mahimo effective ang iyangpagka educational leadership'. [For me, he only needs to have the ability to collaborate with educators and be able to provide a curriculum with the right direction, and guidance so that his educational leadership can be effective.]. Paul

Transparent in bringing colleagues together. This type of affective quality of a leader means that to promote authentic relationships among colleagues, a school leader must be fair, real, and transparent in all they do. Rashida (2017) claimed that a transparent school leader must provide accurate details about finances, academics, and programs to provide a solid answer if any questions arise. For Perruci (2020), transparency in educational leadership means keeping your people on the right track, sharing the ups and downs, and acknowledging honest feedback from the members of the school learning environment. Just like what other participants have mentioned:

"By being a leader in thoughts, in words, and in actions. By being a leader whose head, heart, and hand are to serve and lead with meaning and purpose. Fair in decision making, shared responsibility, equitability, and transparency". Grace

"To come up with a sustainable leadership momentum, there must also be loyalty, transparency, honesty and harmonious relationship among all members of the academe". Anthon

Be a role model in managing people. This leadership quality means that a school leader must be a good example and be aware of his actions and the people surrounding them. According to Barzallo (2019), a school leader can be a role model through reflective practices, continuous learning, showing progress monitoring, and being open with colleagues and other people. Homer (2020) added by saying that a good role model is being able to motivate his team in the school rather than criticize them. As other participants remarked:

"To come up with a good institutional system, he or she must be a role model to other". Leo

"By being a role model leader in thoughts, in words and in actions". Ken.

Leadership Competence

Another core component of an effective school leader has leadership competence. A school leader's leadership competence is essential to support the vision, shaping the foundation of school dynamics, and reflecting what the school values. This core component is categorized as follows:

Promotes positive change in the school environment. This type of excellence and quality of a leader is essential for effective school leadership. Acton (2020) declared that transformational leadership as an agent of change impacts school leadership styles. Fulla (2014) also believes that a school leader is a change agent that requires specific skills and knowledge and has an effective leadership mechanism. As a participant uttered:

"A very effective and dynamic leader in basic education is someone that is an agent of change to achieve school improvement, if a leader is service-oriented and motivated to perform well and that surely results in a magnificent

performance of the students and performs effective leadership mechanism skills". Zinner

Achieves quality outcomes-based education. This type of quality of a leader means that school leaders must elevate school performance in terms of quality outcomes. Cross (2019) mentioned that effective school leaders apply their educational expertise and management skills in order to focus on improving the quality of student learning outcomes. As Leithwood, Jantzi, & McElheron-Hopkins (2016) remarked, in achieving effective leadership, school principals and administrators must have identified the possible outcomes and share the school vision, leading and inspiring others by example. In connection with this, a participant shared:

"Outcomes are important in order to sustain and create an impact on the academic world". Anne.

Developing knowledge and skills through school programs. This type of excellence and quality of a leader implies that school leaders must strategize school programs that promote school improvement. According to Mathibe (2017), a school leader should be a knowledge developer and skilled in change management and create structures for service delivery. As the following participants have mentioned:

"In order to achieve the earnest desire of the Department of Education which is to provide quality. Equitable and sustainable education for all leaders as knowledge developer". Xela.

"In order to realize the vision, mission, and goal of the school which is anchored on the goal of the Department of Education for quality learning". Anne

Cultivating a culture of excellence and a quality system of support. This means that a school leader must look for excellence in teaching and learning and is always resilient to varying challenges (Cutillas et al., 2022). Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe (2018) claimed that an effective leader must be a teacher-leader that focuses on excellent teaching and learning, rather than just on other administrative and management tasks. Gualtieri (2019) also claimed that cultivating the culture of excellence of a leader is caring about even the small things that relate to school programs. With that, some participants uttered:

"In order to keep the passion for learning and teaching alive, a school leader must be a teacher-leader thus excellent education be made possible". Marjorie

"Having an effective educational leadership, cultivating excellence among school leaders will be the assurance of having a good future". Mar.

Key Processes for Effective Educational Leadership in Basic Education

Table 2 spells out the key processes for effective educational leadership in basic education among the private schools' leaders and administrators. A school leader can provide leadership that affects every teacher and student. Therefore, the key process that effective school leaders should practice is that effective school leaders focus on a clear vision, mission, and goals to achieve quality outcomes.

Table 2 Key Processes for Effective Educational Leadership in Basic Education

THEMES	CATEGORIES
Setting a Clear Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Futuristic school leaders • Focus on the goals

Transforming Vision to Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformational leaders • Leaders with encouragement along with colleagues
Committing to Realization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to collaborate with others • Look after the good of the school
Achieving Quality Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowered leaders • Look for the achievement of quality output
Sustaining Quality for Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant monitoring and feed backing • Meet the expectation of the outcomes

As seen in Table 2, the key processes of becoming school leaders in order to achieve effective leadership in basic education were the following:

Shaping a Clear Vision. The clear vision in school leadership and management may make or break if the school head is effective or not. Anastacio (2019) made mention that effective leadership begins with one’s vision toward the work environment. As the following participants uttered:

“Naasiyaylig-on ug klarongangapanglantaw para sa future ogsakaayuhansaeskwelahan” Joy [He has a clear vision for the good future of the school]

“One must have a good vision a head to become an effective school leader” Lanni.

Transforming Vision to Actions. A vision is built as one of the key processes need for effective school leadership. As Sylvia (2019) mentioned, leadership transformation needs to establish and pursue a vision as it increases motivation. A leader must provide communication with colleague. As Nelson (2022) disputed, school leaders, teachers, staff, and all people in the school must work together to transform school’s vision into reality. With this, a participant commented:

“For me, a school leader should have transformational leadership skills in order to come up with positive results. Grace

Commitment to Realization. A committed school leader should focus on effective educational programs within the school. Hunt (2020) claims that a school leader must be a leader who not only possesses a vision but also enables others to realize the school’s vision into a reality. As uttered by a participant:

“Ang school leader, dapatnaaciya goal driven, committed ug nag lantawsamaayong result para sakaayuhansaeskwelahan”. [A school must be a goal-driven the good results of the school]. Al

Plan for Excellence and Quality. School leadership should have a strong focus on continued growth and development. According to Kirp *et al.*, (2022), school leaders should demonstrate the ability to perform their duties of what is expected from them to achieve excellence. With this, a participant uttered:

“Kinahanglan focus langgyudsiyasaiyangge set ngaplano para makuhaniya ang nindot , quality results” [He has need to be focused on the set plan to achieve the quality output] Anggie

Perceived Reasons for The Need for Effective Educational Leadership

Having core components and key processes would help the school leaders to communicate the school's vision, mission, goals, standards, and desired outcomes. However, the study pointed out

some reasons behind ineffective leadership. Table 3 presents these the perceived reasons for the need for effective educational leadership.

Table 3 Perceived Reasons for the Need for Effective Educational Leadership

THEMES	CATEGORIES
Absence of Clear Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not transparent in decision making • Lack of feed backing
Poor Leadership Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little vision for the future • Poor mentoring skills
Lack of Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of understanding of the organizational goals

As reflected in Table 3, the perceived reasons for ineffective leadership are as follows: *absence of clear vision, poor leadership competence, and lack of commitment.* These are the emerging themes from the data gathered.

Absence of Clear Vision

Not Transparent in Decision Making and Lacks Feedback. A leader is ineffective because of the absence of a clear vision. This happens when a leader is not transparent in decision-making and lacks feedback mechanisms. Rabie (2018) argues that if the decision-making is not clear and transparent for everybody, it results in confusion and dissatisfaction among colleagues. As one of the respondents uttered:

“Mahimonggubot ang pagdumalasausa ka school leader if wlasiyayklarongadesisyonsaiyangpagdumala” [He would be messy as a school leader if he didn't have a clear ruling] Pastor

Poor Leadership Competence

Little Vision for The Future and Poor Mentoring Skills. Other reasons a leader is ineffective are having little vision and poor mentoring skills. Namus (2018) articulated that the vision or foreseeing the future perspective provides scaffolding and direction for the school leaders, staff, teachers, students, and administration. Meanwhile, the lack of interest and understanding of the mentoring process are also factors of poor mentoring (Ehrich, *et al.*, 2014). Some participants agreed on this point when they said:

“Kung mubokaayuimongpanglantaw as school leaders, walasactongapadulgan ang imongpagka school leader” [If your perspective as school leaders is too short, you will not be able to be a school leader]Mancia

“Usahay subjective ra kaayo ang gihatagnga mentoring, that is why walayklaronga mentoring nganahitabo” [Sometimes the mentoring given is very subjective, that is why there is no clear mentoring happening]Zinner

Lack of Commitment

Lack of understanding of the organizational goals. Another reason a leader is ineffective is the lack of knowledge of the organizational goals. Mourot (2019) maintained that the lack of planning would fail the school’s mission and vision since poor planning can result to poor outcomes (Alida, 2017). A few of the participants articulated:

“Understanding the VMG (vision, mission and goals) of the school can result in positive outcomes,” Xela

"Understanding is the key to school success; the lack of understanding can result to poor school performance." Zinner

Committed and effective school leaders who remain effective educational leaders in their schools are associated with the core values and key processes which can be shown in the performance and achievement of the school. An effective leader empowers others to be their best, see the strengths in the people around them, and create opportunities for those strengths to flourish and achieve the goals for quality school dynamics. The school leaders must be embodied with the core components and key processes to become effective in their roles and functions in education. Core values and key processes help communicate the school's mission, standards, and desired outcomes. This study determines that when education leaders had these core components and successfully carried out the key processes, they would likely become effective and excellent leaders in the field of education.

CONCLUSION

Effective school leadership is built on a clear vision and sense of direction for the school despite the challenges encountered. The study concludes, on the one hand, that contextualized leadership styles, affective qualities, and competence constitute the core components of effective leadership. On the other hand, setting a clear vision, transforming the vision into action, committing to realization, achieving quality outcomes, and sustaining quality for excellence are the key processes for effective leadership. Identifying and working on the core components and key processes for effective leadership provides the foundation for building the type of leadership that every institution wants to attain. A school leader will likely achieve quality school performance by embracing the core components and key processes for effective leadership, taking into consideration those reasons identified that also caused why leaders were ineffective in their careers. Further studies on the core components and key processes needed for institutional and other related fields are recommended to be conducted to enhance the findings of this study.

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