STRATEGIC PROPOSAL FOR BEST PRACTICES OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: Concern for quality improvement has brought into focus the importance of effective school management in general and the role of the school principal as a school manager, in particular. Consequently, the school management framework in many countries is undergoing significant transformation with direct implications for school management processes, community school linkages, and the role of the head teacher as well as external support and accountability mechanisms. While some measures to improve school management could be initiated through system-wide reforms, several others require a focus on the school site. Though the nature of changes will vary among different countries, the move to redefine the roles of different stakeholders in the management of schools is easily discernible both in developed as well as developing countries. In the last two decades, more interest has been focused on school effectiveness and successful schools. Even though much is known about the major characteristics of successful schools, there is much less clarity about what school leaders or managers do to achieve success.

In other words, there is a limited understanding about dynamics of the process and ways and means adopted in managing successful schools.

Keywords: Best Practices, School Management, Academic Performance

RESEARCH RATIONALE

Becoming a high-performing, successful and established school takes many years of hard work among its stakeholders. Researchers have found out that successful schools share common characteristics, and one of these is good management practices. Management consists of the interlocking functions of creating institutional goals and then setting policies, organizing, planning, staffing, controlling, and directing an organization's resources to achieve those goals. In the case of education, broad institutional goals are defined through a school's educational vision, mission, and objectives. In most institutions, the board of directors defines these goals, which are then carried out by a chief executive officer, such as the president or chancellor of a university, or the principal or president of a college. In working toward the agreed objectives, school leaders—such as deans, directors, and department heads—serve as managers who are charged with making decisions that affect the organization on every level. The practices and decisions made by an institution's management team may include hiring new teaching faculty, developing a new academic program, and deciding how many new students to enrol. These decisions should align with the goals set out in a school's strategic plan and be supported by other key management activities such as operational planning, marketing, income generation, procurement of materials and equipment, recruitment of personnel, infrastructure planning, and monitoring and evaluation (Schloss and Cragg 2013).

A manager's primary challenge is to solve problems creatively. While drawing from a variety of academic disciplines, and to help managers respond to the challenge of creative problem solving, principles of management have long been categorized into the four major functions of planning, organizing, leading, staffing, and controlling (the P-O-L-C-S framework). The four functions are actually highly integrated when carried out in the day-to-day realities of running an organization. Planning is the function of management that involves setting objectives and determining a course of action for achieving those objectives. Planning requires that managers be aware of environmental conditions facing their organization and forecast future conditions. It also requires that managers be good decision makers .Organizing is the function of management that involves developing an organizational structure and allocating human resources to ensure the accomplishment of objectives. The structure of the

organization is the framework within which effort is coordinated. Leading involves the social and informal sources of influence that you use to inspire action taken by others. If managers are effective leaders, their subordinates will be enthusiastic about exerting effort to attain organizational objectives.

Managerial function of staffing involves manning the organization structure through proper and effective selection; appraisal and development of personnel to fill the roles designed un the structure". Staffing involves: 1) manpower planning (estimating man power in terms of searching, choose the person and giving the right place); 2) recruitment, selection and placement; 3) training and development; 4) remuneration; 5) performance appraisal; and 6) promotions and transfer. Controlling involves ensuring that performance does not deviate from standards. Controlling consists of three steps, which include (1) establishing performance standards, (2) comparing actual performance against standards, and (3) taking corrective action when necessary.

In basic education, generally, the school principal plays the role of a school manager. He is in a most strategic position to lead and manage the direction of the educational system. As a school manager and instructional leader, he has the greatest responsibilities to render the best educational services and successful school operation in the pursuit of quality education for development. However, today, the demands upon the school managers are quite different from than those years ago. The difference is caused by the inevitable outcome of the ever-changing pattern of life of the society in this modern technology (Paloma, 2011).

In the Philippines, the full implementation of R.A. 9155 otherwise known as Governance of Basic Education Act recognizes the vital role of the school head in a clear and unequivocal manner as instructional leader and manager of the school. The law explicitly defines the tasks of a school head over school's affairs that extend to fiscal management which involves the control over financial budgets giving him a more meaningful role in decision making that affects the existence and progress of the school. Autonomy in decision making is one of the important features of R.A. 9155. It is a shift of authority from a highly centralized educational system which has been in place for many decades. With this shift of authority, the school heads becomes directly responsible and accountable to teachers' and pupils performance (Alcantara, 2014).

Another important feature as stipulated in principal empowerment is the provision of shared authority which implies delegation of responsibilities. The school head,though empowered by law, cannot accomplish alone the manifold tasks in the educational setting. Involvement and participation of teachers and community stakeholders is paramount towards the realization of school objectives. Thus empowerment peruse cannot be constructed as a mechanism to monopolize decision making, but serves as a conduit to increasing the involvement of school and community people in running the school and enhancing its performance. In the outset, school management is not an easy task for the school head. It requires commitment and determination on the part of the school head to improve education system that extends to his teachers, learners and community. Finally, there is a necessity to improve his craft and refine his abilties to address and respond to multifaceted, change-based environment (Bueno, 2015).

The pursuit of excellence demands that schools look beyond what they know or what they have accustomed to. To be able to pick up the best among all the practices in schools, educators should have first determine which of these practices in terms of the functions of management are effective in their respective schools. Aside from being effective, best practices are proven efficient, sustainable or replicable in helping schools meet their goals. Identification of management practices facilitates comparison and selection of best management practices. Schools should always be on the hunt for best practices, try them out, keep track of the results, and compare their experience with those of other schools. It is in this light that the researcher would like to pursue this study which is to determine the best school management practices of selected private schools in the Division of Cavite. Results will provide feedback to the school as to what practices should they continue and can even be replicable by other private schools or what practices should they improve?

RESEARCH INQUIRY AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This study primarily focused on creating a framework that will serve as the best practice paradigm for certain schools within the locale under study.

The study is anchored on Capital Theory of School Effectiveness and Improvement. Hargreaves (2001) developed a theory of school effectiveness and improvement based on: outcomes, both cognitive and moral; leverage: the relationship between human resource input and education output; intellectual capital: the sum of the school's knowledge, practices and experience; and social capital: the networks of trust and collaboration. In this theory, Hargreaves (2001) argues that the conventional model of measuring school effectiveness and improvement is an adequate tool for the analysis of school success and failure. The concept of school 'ethos' and practices helped to make sense of the correlation between a numbers of school processes.

Hargreaves (2001) uses this model to present definitions of effective and improving schools stating that; an effective school mobilizes its intellectual capital and its social capital (especially its capacity to generate trust and sustained networks) to achieve the desired educational outcomes of intellectual and moral excellences, through the successful use of high leverage strategies and practices grounded in evidence-informed and innovative professional practice. An improving school increases its intellectual capital especially its capacity to transfer knowledge to achieve the educational outcomes of intellectual and moral excellences, by learning to use higher leverage strategies based on evidence of 'what works' and innovative professional practice.

In education, school management is the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling the activities of an institution by utilizing human and material resources so as to effectively and efficiently accomplish functions of teaching, extension work and research. And the objectives of school management are:1) achievement of the institutions objectives;

2) improves planning, organizing and implementing of the institution's activities and processes; 3) creating, maintaining and enhancing a good public image of the institution; 4) appropriate utilization of human; 5) enhances efficiency of institute; 6) facilitates optimum utilization of infrastructural facilities; 7) prevents duplication of work; 8) enhances job satisfaction; 9) create and maintain a congenial school climate; 10) Manage interpersonal conflicts, manage stress and use time effectively; and 11) Interpersonal communication improvement (Khedakar (ND), cited in Farah, 2013).

Moreover, school management has the following scope: 1) history and theories of management science, roles and responsibilities of educational manager as well as managerial skills; 2) study of educational planning at macro level, its goals principles, approaches and procedures and the micro level institutional planning and educational administration; 3) helps in decision making and solving problems, communication and managing information and building effective teams; 4) Providing human equipment is supervisor, teachers, non teaching staff, office workers and providing material equipment such as building, furniture, labs, library, museum etc; 5) Co-curricular planning, preparing timetable; 6) Motivating staff and students; 7) Conducting staff meetings and Managing conflicts and stress; 8) Developing healthy and conducive school climate; 9) Organization of counseling and guidance; 10) Organization of health and physical education, Organization of exhibitions and fairs; 12) Maintenance of school records, Evaluating students achievement; 12) Financing and budgeting; and 13) Community service (Ndirangu (2016), cited in Farah, 2013).

While Education is the provision of a series of learning experiences to students in order to impart knowledge, values, attitudes and skills with the ultimate aim of making them productive members of society, Educational Management is the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling the activities of an institution by utilizing human and material resources so as to effectively and efficiently accomplish functions of teaching, extension work and research. Bush (2006), cited in Ndirangu (2016) opines that the concept of management overlaps with two similar terms, leadership and administration. Management is widely used in Britain, Europe, and Africa, for example, while administration is preferred in the United States, Canada, and Australia. Management answers the question 'How are the rules applied?' and is concerned with the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of services provided for internal and external stakeholders. Despite the distinction between governance with its emphasis on the process of setting policies and long-term goals as well as the strategies for reaching these goals, and management that is action-oriented, the various links between the two cannot be overlooked.

School leaders experience tensions between competing elements of leadership, management and administration. Irrespective of how these terms are defined, school leaders experience difficulty in deciding the balance between higher order tasks designed to improve staff student and school performance (leadership), routine maintenance of present operations (management) and lower order duties (administration). He differentiates the two terms by

arguing that by leadership, it means influencing other's actions in order to achieve desirable ends. Managing, he argues is about maintaining the effectiveness and efficiency of current organizational arrangements (Ndirangu, 2016).

The functions of a school manager are to manage the school and formulate policies that best suit the needs of the school as well as the overall interests of the students. A manager is also responsible for school planning with a view to creating an ideal learning environment for their students and nurturing talents. Hence, aside from the time and energy spent in school management, a school manager should have a good understanding of the school itself as well as the trend of education development. He should also possess relevant management skills to enable him to perform the role of a school manager effectively (Education and Manpower Bureau [EMB], Hong Kong, 2005).

In addition, being one of the focal persons in school, the school manager's roles and responsibilities in school management are very extensive. First, is in Personnel Management, which includes: staff appointment, promotion and succession planning; disciplinary action and termination of service; performance management; professional development; and communication channels. Next is in the area of Financial Management and this includes financial plans, reports and reviews and deployment of resources.

The Cambridge Education, cited in Hanover Research (2014), conceptualized a comprehensive needs assessment model, used by Charlotte- Mecklenburg Schools, among other districts, comprises five overarching categories, called "dimensions." In total, these dimensions include fourteen separate components of school performance. The Cambridge Needs Assessment Model has dimensions and sub-dimensions which is shown below:

Dimension	Sub-dimension
Instructional Excellence and Alignment (Part I Teaching and Learning)	1. High expectations are communicated to all teachers and students 2. Curriculum and instructional alignment
(Part II: Support for Student Achievement)	3. Data analysis and instructional planning 4. Student support services
Leadership Capacity	5. Strategic planning, mission, and vision 6. Distributed leadership and collaboration 7. Monitoring instruction in school
Professional Capacity	8. Teacher quality experience 9. Quality of professional development 10. Talent recruitment and retention
Planning and Operational Effectiveness	11. Resource Allocation 12. Facilities and Technology
Families and Communities	13. Family engagement 14. Community Engagement

Lastly, is in Curriculum Reform which covers some of the following: getting a basic understanding of the curriculum development; Setting the direction for the development of a school-based curriculum; meeting the overall aims of education and the objectives of the school curriculum on the other; monitoring the progress of school curriculum development and assessing its effectiveness; examining the existing projects and their outcomes, and making proper use of financial and manpower resources to improve learning effectiveness; reviewing school policies (including school timetable and assessment policy) to ensure that they are in line with the broad direction of curriculum development; securing outside resources and support for implementing life-wide learning to enrich students' learning experiences; and creating an environment conducive to the promotion of a learning culture in schools ((Education and Manpower Bureau [EMB], Hong Kong, 2005).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study created a framework for the best management practices of selected schools in the Division of Cavite. These schools belonged to the North Unit which includes Noveleta, Rosario and Kawit. The selected private schools are those with complete basic education and with Government Recognition. The respondents were the academic heads who are educationally qualified. The teachers must have at least two-three years in the school to

ensure that they have enough knowledge about the management practices of the school managers.

The study utilized mixed method of research. Mixed methods is a research approach, popular in the social, behavioural, and health sciences, in which researchers collect, analyze, and integrate both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in a sustained long-term program of inquiry to address their research questions (Creswell, 2013).

The researchers believed that method is the most appropriate to use because it involved comparisons and analysis on data gathered. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches will be used in determining the best management practices of the school.

The sites and participants were identified from the records of the Department of Education in the Division of Cavite, Private Schools. These will be the schools from North Unit- Rosario, Kawit and Noveleta, together with General Trias City.

The respondents of this study are the principals and teachers of the selected private school from the North Unit and General Trias, which are described in the scope and delimitation of the study.

SIGNIFICANT RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study employed capital theory of school effectiveness and improvement to analyze the practices school managers employ to operate successfully and effectively. The theory is applicable in this study because all the theoretical concepts: outcomes; leverage; intellectual capital; and social capital have a bearing on performance and quality of education. Using the theory, this study seeks to determine and analyze management practices of school managers.

In addition, this study is also guided by the Stufflebeam's CIPP Model (Context, Input, Process, Product). These components are or can be viewed as separate forms of evaluation, but they can also be viewed as steps or stages in a comprehensive evaluation.

The CIPP Model for evaluation is a comprehensive framework for guiding formative and summative evaluations of programs, projects, personnel, products, institutions, and systems. This model was introduced by Daniel Stufflebeam in 1966 to guide mandated evaluations of U.S. federally funded projects because these emergent projects could not meet requirements for controlled, variable-manipulating experiments, which then were considered the gold standard for program evaluations. Since then, the model has been widely applied and further developed. Those applying or contracting others to apply the model have included government officials, foundation officers, program and project staffs, international assistance personnel, school administrators, physicians, military leaders, and evaluators. The model is configured for use in internal evaluations conducted by an organization's evaluators, in self-evaluations conducted by project teams or individual service providers, and in contracted external evaluations.

Process evaluation includes examining how a program is being implemented, monitoring how the program is performing, auditing the program to make sure that it is following the required legal and ethical guidelines, identifying defects in the design or in the implementation of program.

Product evaluation includes determining and examining the general and specific outcomes of the program (i.e., which requires using impact or outcome assessment techniques) measuring anticipated outcomes assessing the merit of the program conducting a retrospective benefit/cost assessment (to establish the actual worth or value of the program).
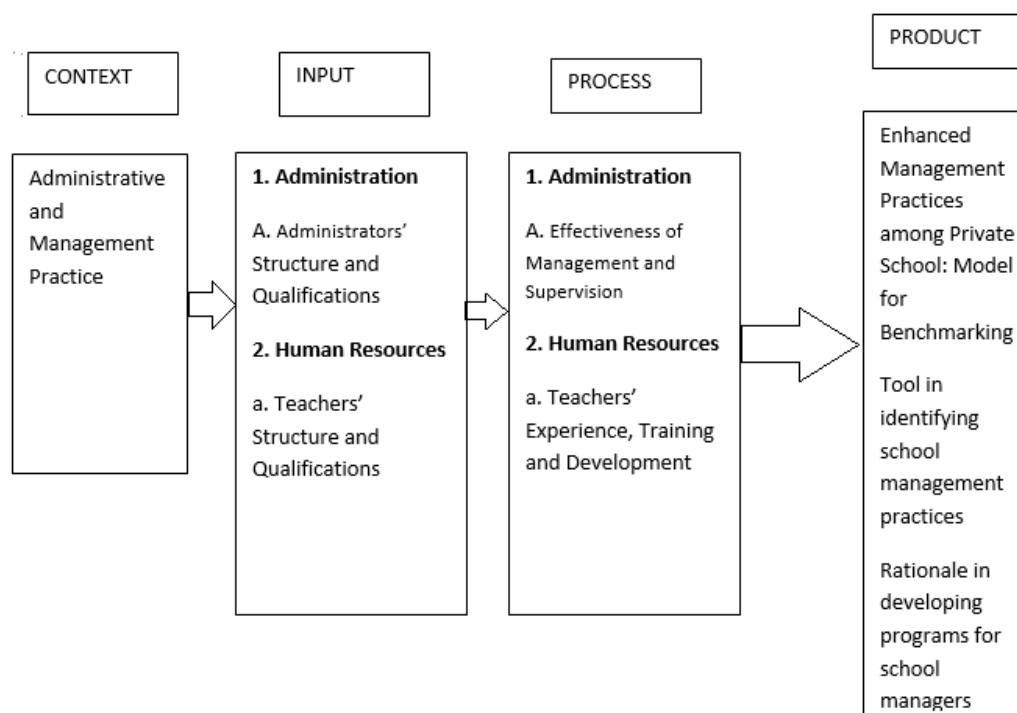
CIPP for the assessment of Best Practices of School Management among the Selected Private Schools of the Division of Cavite.

Ergo, the above-mentioned model serves as the primary recommendation for the schools under study.

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