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SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP AS A CONSTRUCT OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT SKILLS OF SCHOOL HEADS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF DAVAO ORIENTAL DIVISION

Elizabeth A. Felicilda
Master of Arts in Educational Management, Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc.

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the relationship between situational leadership and diversity management skills of school heads in public secondary schools of Davao Oriental Division. Also, it investigated the association of the involved variables and the domains of situational leadership of school heads that significantly influence their diversity management skills. With the use of probability sampling, 137 public secondary teachers were selected as the respondents. Utilizing the descriptive-correlational survey method, the data collated were analyzed through the use of Mean, Product-Moment correlation and Regression Analysis. Results revealed that there was a very extensive situational leadership and extensive diversity management skills of school heads as perceived by the respondents. Furthermore, there was a significant relationship between situational leadership and diversity management skills of school heads. Specifically, delegating has the greater impact on the diversity management skills of school heads. Moreover, all domains of situational leadership, namely, directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating were found to have significantly influence the diversity management skills. Based on the findings, it was further suggested that higher officials in the Department of Education may identify means on how to strengthen the situational leadership of school heads which would boost their diversity management skills. More so, future researchers may further explore the involved variables considering other factors and research methods.

KEYWORDS: *Situational Leadership; Diversity Management Skills; Davao Oriental Division, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Educational organizations are social systems that include diverse people or groups in schools. In school, people with different views work to serve the same purpose. Different people working at the school; they bring different cultures, personality traits and talents to school. The diversity that employees bring to school can cause disagreements, groupings, and conflicts in schools. Therefore, it is difficult to manage schools where differences are intense, as in other organizations. As a matter of fact, school heads face a myriad of problematic issues related to diversity within their educational environments. One significant challenge is resistance to change, as some staff, parents, and community members may oppose diversity initiatives or policy adjustments aimed at fostering inclusivity.

In USA, the principal workforce's lack of racial diversity has become a prominent issue. Low retention, diversity among school principals sparks need for long-term strategies (Symonds & Hansen, 2022). In India, marginalized students encounter learning issues due to several reasons, including lack of identification of learning needs, stereotypes against providing educational opportunities children belonging to certain sections, unavailability of local teachers, lack of context specific teaching-learning material in local language, infrastructural lags like labs, library, residential school facilities, and inaccessible support system (Iftikhar, 2023). In Pakistan, there is diversity but it is missing in the curriculum. There are some common problems in the improvement of education system and advancement of literacy. For instance, there is lack of proper planning in Pakistan, social limitations, gender gap, low cost of education, war on terror, funds for education in times of poverty, law and order situation, natural disasters, budgetary constraints, lack of access to education, poor quality, and issues of governance (Soumya & Arulsamy, 2020).

The Philippine educational system grapples with multifaceted challenges that impact educational leadership. Political instability, corruption, inadequate resources, and cultural dynamics pose significant barriers (Chua, 2022). In the Division of Cabuyao, school leaders face the challenges of forerunning the school in making it relevant to the needs of learners and the community. The diversity of the school's culture, the people and the environment has enabled the school leader to face a variety of demands and challenges they face. As revealed, teachers' diversity has been perceived as one of the challenges of being school principal (Morales & Sapin, 2020). Formoso (2022) also disclosed that principals have noticeably low in items pertaining to initiating activities and programs that promote awareness of diversity, showing respect for teachers'

religion, using gender neutral language, conflict resolution, and giving appreciations, rewards and punishments that do not result to showing favoritism.

In the local context, the diversity skills management of school heads have been tested because of the diverse nature in the school setting. A study conducted in the Northern Philippines found that multigrade teachers faced significant challenges in managing the diverse needs of their students, particularly in relation to their different ages and levels of development (Talla, 2018). Another study in the Visayas region found that multigrade teachers faced challenges in managing class size, as well as limited resources and support from school administrators (Avenido, 2020). In Davao City, a study conducted by Flores (2019) found that multigrade teachers faced challenges in managing the diverse needs of their students, particularly in relation to their different levels of ability and learning styles. All problems about diversity are not solely problems of the teachers but also the school principals. In Davao Oriental Division, as observed by the researcher, school heads need to be further trained for them to handle the individualities of the people around them.

The challenges outlined illustrated persistent difficulties concerning the diversity management skills of school heads. Clearly, researchers focused extensively on this variable, even within local contexts. However, current studies fell short of generalizing the diversity management skills of school heads in the Davao Oriental Division. This gap prompted the researcher to delve deeper into the state of these skills while taking situational leadership into account. Additionally, the study examined the connections between these variables and pinpointed essential elements of situational leadership that significantly influenced the diversity management capabilities of school heads.

This endeavor sought to provide valuable perspectives for policymakers, helping them develop policies, programs, interventions, and initiatives that strengthen the situational leadership and diversity management skills of school heads. Furthermore, this research was intended to benefit the broader school community. The researcher would present the findings at various levels, including school, division, regional, national, and international conferences, and to publish the results in a Scopus-indexed journal.

REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT LITERATURE

The related literature and studies of this study provided inputs about the situational leadership and diversity management skills among school heads. Also, it presents varied studies showcasing the association of the involved variables in this study. The independent variable is situational leadership of school heads. It has four indicators namely: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating (Al-Khamaiseh, 2020). Meanwhile, the dependent variable is diversity management skills. It has three indicators namely: diversity inclusion and integration, equity, and respect for diversity (Polat, Arslan, and Olcum, 2019).

Situational Leadership of School Leaders

Situational leadership is one of the latest contributions to the ideas, concepts and contents of educational administrative thought. It is an important element in the life of the human being, the worker and the employee. This type of leadership adapts to the situation facing the leader, who requires awareness, organization, accuracy and patience in meeting the situation imposed on him if he is to deal positively and to the benefit of the institution (Zohair et al., 2021; Atasoy, 2020). The situational leader must have several skills, humane and cognitive, in order to face, adopt, decide and be able to make decisions and solve problems positively in educational and other institutions (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2019). Solving problems requires conscious leadership through knowledge, follow-up and wise supervision. The principal of the school is the educational leader who has overall of his school. Leadership and attitude often affect the quality of the educational process, and may arise from the characteristics of an influential leader in the group's activity (Els, 2024).

Situational leadership is also defined as the result of the interaction between the attributes of the leader and the members, and the characteristics of the task or situation. It is an important type of leadership because of its implications for the institution through the use of available resources. Durrah et al. (2022) pointed out that it is a style of leadership which reacts to the quality of the situation. Similarly, leadership in a given institution varies from one situation to another in guiding individuals to achieve the institutional goal. Situational leadership is one of the modern trends in administration that calls for dealing with each situation as it arises, taking account of the environmental conditions and determining which administrative methods have the best chance of success.

The concept of educational situational leadership is based on applying a scientific approach to solving the problems of school education; realism and scientific accuracy are based on knowledge of the function required according to the nature of the situation (Khattak, Khan, & Karim, 2023). Situational leadership provides employees with objective methods to solve problems that are beyond their personal experience. It also contributes to the participation of teachers in solving problems that are particularly important in their classrooms and focuses on obtaining scientific information, with the opportunity for dialogue, collective participation, consultative development and exchange of views (Escobar, 2021; Alrajeh, 2022).

The situational leader is responsible for the effectiveness of the comprehensive evaluation of all aspects of educational work, whether in relation to teachers, workers, students, curriculum, educational level, school environment, schools'

relationship with society or the difficulties he faces. The situational leader acknowledges different leadership trends according to the maturity of members of the school community, including the directive and persuasive trends (Maisyaroh et al., 2019).

Principals who have internal motivations towards performance and even employees, who are risk-taking and tend to take on difficult tasks, are more creative, distinguished, determined and ambitious to achieve success, and have enthusiasm, self-confidence and a desire to learn, excel, and take responsibility. They work continuously, make additional efforts, are not afraid, insist on challenging threats and are flexible in dealing with situations, focusing on goal-setting and performance with internal determination and perseverance to accomplish their work. The administrator has to continue achieving excellence in work, and this may motivate him to continue following developments in the organization and develop distinct options to deal with them. When the employees feel their presence according to a distinct institution, this may be reflected in the level of their performance and motivation towards work (Sembiring, 2023).

Several researchers have indicated that the delegate and participative leadership patterns are the most significant, as practiced by a sample of the principals and agents of schools. The province's spending on each student was positively linked to adaptive patterns and situational leadership. It also indicated that the years of administrative experience influence the participative pattern, which is one mode of situational leadership. Lian and Fitria (2020) study was conducted as a result of teachers' perceptions of the leadership role played by their principals, using situational theory at an average of all levels. There are statistically significant differences in teachers' qualifications and years of experience.

Ayaz et al. (2021) showed that the responsibilities for introducing change and implementing different regulatory procedures are a consensus of shared responsibility towards an effective school environment. The study also tried to find an optimal solution by identifying the need for school principals to train in situational leadership, considering teachers' perceptions of the characteristics of situational leadership and leaders' orientations to benefit them in issuing standards in this regard, especially in a changing world that faces significant contemporary challenges in the field of educational administration. Women leaders and subordinates in universities agreed that the most-used pattern of situational leadership was delegate and the least-used directive.

Principals exercise situational leadership to a moderate degree. Most school principals prefer to employ situational leadership in their technical and administrative fields, and male school principals employ it more than females. However, it was also found that there is no statistically significant differences attributable to specialization or qualifications (Tremont & Templeton, 2019).

Situational leadership is better than educational leadership, and the former helps predict better levels of student achievement than the latter, noting that if assistant principals are trained in situational leadership skills, they can have a significant impact on student achievement, thereby bridging the achievement gap. Darawsheh et al. (2022) showed that the reporting method ranked first, followed by the participative, persuasive, and finally the delegation leadership styles. The participative method ranked first among the prevailing situational leadership methods, followed by the persuasive, then the directive, and finally the delegative. There were significant differences attributable to age and work experience, but none to qualification.

Delegative leadership is the dominant and most appropriate practice among the principals of high schools, followed by the consultative method, and then the directive and participative patterns. It found no statistically significant differences attributable to gender, experience or social status, but statistically significant differences attributable to age. Gyeltshen (2020) showed that the empowerment of employees is positively influenced by the situational leadership of the principal, although with differences among the members of the study sample.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study determined the relationship between the situational leadership and diversity management skills of school heads in public secondary schools in Davao Oriental Division. More specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the extent of situational leadership of school heads as perceived by public secondary teachers in terms of:
    - 1.1 Directing;
    - 1.2 Coaching;
    - 1.3 Supporting; And
    - 1.4 Delegating?
2. What is the extent of diversity management skills of school heads as perceived by public secondary teachers in terms of:
    - 2.1 diversity inclusion and integration;
    - 2.2 equity; and
    - 2.3 respect for diversity?
3. Is there a significant relationship between situational leadership and diversity management skills of school heads?

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4. Which domains of situational leadership significantly influence the diversity management skills of school heads?

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology for this study, encompassing the research design, research participants, research tools, data collection procedure, and data analysis to be utilized in this investigation.

Research Design

This research adopted a quantitative methodology, specifically employing the descriptive correlational method. Quantitative research centers on the collection and analysis of numerical data to describe, forecast, or manipulate particular variables. It is instrumental in investigating causal relationships, generating predictions, and generalizing results to broader populations. The goal is to assess a specific theory or hypothesis and establish its validity through the gathered data. This method allows for the examination of data trends over time and the identification of patterns (Sreekumar, 2023).

Meanwhile, descriptive-correlational research is vital for enabling researchers to make informed decisions within their disciplines. This methodology encompasses essential components of descriptive correlational studies. Descriptive research systematically observes and objectively documents characteristics to achieve a comprehensive understanding of phenomena or groups. On the other hand, correlational research investigates and predicts the natural relationships between variables without manipulating them, thereby refraining from establishing causation (Bhat, 2024).

This study was categorized as quantitative, utilizing numerical data for analysis and interpretation. It adopted a descriptive approach to evaluate the situational leadership and diversity management skills of school heads. Furthermore, it was identified as correlational, exploring the relationship between situational leadership and diversity management skills among school heads in public secondary schools within the Davao Oriental Division.

Research Respondents

This research targeted 137 public secondary teachers from the Mati Northwest District in the Davao Oriental Division. When determining sample sizes, factors such as resources and statistical requirements were taken into account. By applying the Slovin Formula with a margin of error of 0.05, the total population of 210 Grade 11 and Grade 12 teachers with at least three years of teaching experience had been narrowed down to 137. This sample size aligned with Akamn's (2023) assertion that, for larger populations, a minimum sample size of 100 is typically necessary. However, the methods of data analysis and anticipated response rates could also influence the required sample size. Most statisticians agreed that a sample size of 100 was crucial for obtaining significant results. Therefore, the 137 respondents were deemed adequate to fulfill the objectives of the study.

In this study, the researcher employed a probability sampling method called cluster random sampling. This technique enables researchers to investigate a large population by segmenting it into smaller, manageable groups, or clusters, without the necessity of surveying the entire population. It is cost-effective, efficient, simplifies data analysis, and is generally reliable. By randomly selecting clusters and subsequently sampling individuals within those clusters, this method ensures that the sample accurately reflects the larger population (Mahmutovic, 2021). Therefore, the researcher ensured that the selected schools provide well-represented samples in this study.

In the criteria for inclusion, exclusion, and withdrawal, the researcher will concentrate solely on Grade 11 and Grade 12 teachers with a minimum of three years of teaching experience, as this allowed for a more accurate evaluation of their school heads' situational leadership and diversity management skills. Teachers with this level of experience were more likely to have established relationships and familiarity with their school heads. Additionally, respondents had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without experiencing any negative repercussions or needing to provide a justification. This guaranteed that their participation was completely voluntary and honors their autonomy throughout the research process.

Research Instruments

To collect data, this study utilized an adapted survey questionnaire designed specifically for its research objectives. The questionnaire was divided into two separate sections: the first section focused on evaluating the situational leadership of school heads, while the second section assessed their diversity management skills.

Data Analysis

For more comprehensive interpretation and analysis of the data, the following statistical tools were utilized. These tools were used to answer the statement of the problem and the hypotheses of the study.

Mean

This was used to measure the level of situational leadership and diversity management skills of school heads. This answered the statement of the problem 1 and 2.

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Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient
This was utilized to determine the relationships between situational leadership and diversity management skills of school heads. This answered the statement of the problem 3 and the first hypothesis.

Regression Analysis
This was employed to assess the significant influence of situational leadership on diversity management skills of school head. This answered the statement of the problem 4 and the second hypothesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the results of the study. These are the findings of the problems raised in the previous chapter. They are presented both in the textual and tabular forms.

Extent of Situational Leadership of School Heads in terms of Directing

Table 1 reflects the situational level of leadership of school heads in terms of directing. It shows that the overall mean is 4.15, in an extensive level. This means that the level of situational leadership of school heads in terms of directing are oftentimes evident.

It can be gleaned from the data that all 6 statements reveal an extensive result. When arranged chronologically according to mean scores, the items are as follows: setting performance standards for each aspect of my teacher's job (4.19), making sure the teachers are aware of all schools' policies and procedures (4.18), and checking teachers' work on a regular basis to assess their progress (4.17). These items prove that the situational leadership of school heads in terms of directing is oftentimes evident.

The data presented demonstrates that school heads exhibit a high level of situational leadership, specifically in the directing dimension. This suggests that the practice of directing, characterized by giving clear instructions, setting expectations, and closely supervising tasks, is frequently observed in their leadership approach. Such findings imply that school heads are actively engaged in guiding and managing their teachers' performance, ensuring that school operations align with expected standards.

Further analysis of the individual items reveals that all six indicators of directing scored within the extensive range, highlighting a consistent pattern in leadership behavior. The highest-rated item, "setting performance standards for each aspect of my teacher's job" suggests a strong emphasis on establishing clear expectations. This is closely followed by "making sure the teachers are aware of all schools' policies and procedures" and "checking teachers' work on a regular basis to assess their progress". These results indicate that school heads are not only directive but also proactive in monitoring, supporting, and maintaining accountability among teachers, which are essential components of effective school leadership.

The prevalent use of the directing leadership style aligns with the perspective of Kapotwe and Bamata (2023), who emphasized that directing corresponds to a situational leadership approach characterized by high task orientation and low relational engagement. This style is particularly appropriate in leader–follower interactions where the follower requires substantial guidance, such as newly hired employees within an organization. At this stage, followers typically possess minimal or no knowledge of task expectations and thus rely heavily on the leader's direction to understand organizational structures. These individuals represent the lowest level of maturity in the situational leadership model.

Additionally, Shonk (2024) described directing as a high-directive, low-supportive leadership behavior. In this approach, the leader clearly defines the roles of subordinates, instructing them on what tasks to perform, how, when, and where to execute them. The leader takes a central role in problem-solving and decision-making, communicates the solutions and decisions to be followed, and closely monitors their implementation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Presented in this chapter are the findings based on the results of data gathered, the conclusions drawn from the findings and the recommendations for consideration.

The main focus of the study was to determine the significance of the relationship between situational leadership and diversity management skill of school heads in public secondary schools. The study was conducted in the selected public schools of Davao Oriental Division. There were one hundred thirty-seven (137) secondary teachers who participated in this study. Descriptive correlational method of research was used in this study utilizing adapted research instruments. The said instruments were validated by the panel of experts and subjected to pilot testing before it was made ready for administration. Mean, Pearson Product Correlation of Coefficient, and Regression Analysis were the statistical tools used in analyzing the data. The hypotheses raised in this study were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

The level of situational leadership of school heads is very extensive. This suggests that school heads have a strong capacity to adjust their leadership style based on the needs of their staff and the demands of different situations. This indicates that they are not rigid in their approach but are instead flexible and responsive, which is essential for addressing diverse challenges in the school setting. As a result, this high level of adaptability can contribute to a more supportive and effective teaching and learning environment.

Meanwhile, the level of diversity management skill of school heads is extensive. This indicates the strong ability of school heads to recognize, respect, and effectively manage differences within the school community. This suggests that they promote inclusive practices and create an environment where all individuals feel valued and supported. Such competence in managing diversity contributes to a more harmonious and equitable school culture, enhancing collaboration and mutual respect among stakeholders.

It was found out that there is a significant relationship between situational leadership and diversity management skill of school heads. All domains of situational leadership are related to the diversity management skill of school heads. The findings indicate a strong link between situational leadership and the diversity management skills of school heads, suggesting that leadership adaptability is essential in fostering inclusive practices.. This underscores the importance of equipping school heads with flexible leadership strategies to effectively address the needs of diverse school communities. Moreover, all domains of situational leadership significantly influence the diversity management skill of school heads. This implies that school heads who effectively adjust their leadership styles are also more capable of managing diverse school environments. Furthermore, the influence of all domains of situational leadership on diversity management suggests that flexibility, direction, support, and delegation each play a crucial role in fostering inclusivity within schools.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were offered: The extent of situational leadership of school heads is very extensive which means that it is always evident. Notably, coaching, supporting, and delegating are always evident while directing is oftentimes evident.

Meanwhile, the level of diversity management skill of school heads is extensive which means that it is oftentimes evident. Specifically, respect for diversity is always evident. On the other hand, diversity inclusion and integration and equity are oftentimes evident.

Based on the findings, situational leadership and diversity management skill are related. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

All domains of situational leadership are linked and significantly influenced the diversity management skill of school heads. Of which, delegating has the great impact to the diversity management skill of school heads. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

The significant influence of situational leadership on the diversity management skill of school heads supports the principles established in Situational Leadership Theory by Blanchard (1988 as cited in Tabrizi & Rideout, G. (2019). In the context of this study, Situational Leadership Theory is crucial for understanding the dynamics of situational leadership and diversity management skills among school heads, as it emphasizes the need for leaders to adapt their leadership styles based on the varying needs and readiness of their team members. This theory supports the notion that effective school heads must recognize the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and capabilities of their staff and students, allowing them to tailor their approaches to foster an inclusive environment.

Recommendations

The following suggestions were offered based on the conclusions of the study: Based on the findings, it is recommended that DepEd officials further strengthen professional development programs for school heads by institutionalizing continuous training focused on enhancing situational leadership strategies, particularly in the area of directing, and deepening their diversity management skills. Since coaching, supporting, and delegating are already well-practiced, leadership development may emphasize balanced application of all leadership styles based on situational needs. Additionally, training may incorporate modules on inclusive practices, diversity integration, and equity to ensure that school heads are fully equipped to lead diverse school communities effectively. These efforts will not only reinforce the strong relationship between situational leadership and diversity management but also contribute to more inclusive, equitable, and responsive school environments.

Moreover, school heads are encouraged to sustain their strong practice of situational leadership, particularly in coaching, supporting, and delegating, while making intentional efforts to strengthen the directing aspect to ensure balanced leadership responsiveness across all situations. Additionally, while respect for diversity is commendably well-practiced, school heads may enhance their focus on promoting diversity inclusion, integration, and equity through targeted initiatives, policy implementation, and inclusive school activities. Given the significant link between situational leadership and diversity

management skills, school heads may use their leadership styles strategically to foster a more inclusive and equitable school culture, ensuring that all students and staff feel valued and supported regardless of background.

Furthermore, teachers may actively engage with the situational leadership practices demonstrated by school heads, particularly the coaching, supporting, and delegating styles, to foster a more collaborative and supportive teaching environment. Teachers may take advantage of the guidance and mentorship provided by school heads to enhance their own teaching practices, while also contributing to the promotion of diversity, inclusion, and equity in the classroom. By aligning with the school head's efforts in managing diversity, teachers may support the development of a more inclusive and respectful learning environment, ensuring that all students' needs are met and valued.

Lastly, future researchers are encouraged to explore the specific impact of each domain of situational leadership, particularly directing, on the effectiveness of diversity management skills in school leadership. Longitudinal studies may provide deeper insights into how the relationship between situational leadership and diversity management evolves over time and in different school contexts. Additionally, researchers may investigate how teachers perceive and respond to these leadership styles, further examining how situational leadership and diversity management contribute to school culture, teacher performance, and student outcomes in diverse educational settings.

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