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## Preferred Future of Filipino School Leadership

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### ABSTRACT

This research is based on the respondents' perceptions on the preferred future of Filipino School Leadership. Utilizing OECD's Improving School Leadership Module, graduate students of a teacher education institution in Manila were surveyed on their ideas on the characteristics of school leadership as they would like it to be. This study rests on the main problem: "What is the preferred future of Filipino school leadership?" Three policy levels (Re-defining School Leadership Responsibilities, Developing Skills for Effective Leadership, and Making School Leadership an Attractive Profession) from the module were used in this study which have assumed to have a link on student achievement. Identifying a brand new kind of school leadership contributes to sustainability and development efforts along with the following epitomic image of a Filipino school leader: mentor of mentors, decision-maker and strategist, innovative empiricist, stand-alone leader but open-minded learner, team recruiter, leader and learner, and made, not born.

**Keywords:** school leadership, preferred future, sustainability, development, schools

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## Introduction

In 2009, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) released a report assessing the status of leadership in schools among participating OECD nations. This organization included recommendations on enhancing the quality and sustainability of school leadership. Based on the report, there are policy levers which could eventually improve practices in school leadership, which include (re)defining its school leadership responsibilities, developing skills for effective school leadership, and making schools an attractive profession. Ng and Szeto (2017) asserted that new leaders should be provided with support in form of formal and informal back up from peers and mentors in the process of applying what they have learnt. In the school context, those surrounding school leaders also create an impact on the leadership performance. Bush (2017) regarded that training programs for new principals is important, following the leadership and learning outcomes connection. Hauserman et al. (2007) concluded that school leadership is crucial as it impacts teachers, staff, and ultimately student learning.

The dawn of Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) integration calls for greater attention on diversity in the context of schools and learning along with dynamic perspectives on school leadership landscape. Horng, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2009) recognized the role of school

leaders as the core of the contemporary education policy reforms. One aspect, which is authentic leadership, has been considered to be a new and emerging leadership practice in the education context during the ASEAN integration period (Leesamphandh, 2016).

The Philippine educational system upholds a continuous professional development of school principals which will eventually lead to the greater achievement of the student learning. This is realized in forms of service training, mentoring, seminars, and workshops with the end goal of enhancing the potentials and capabilities of school leaders. Whenever school leaders are constantly mentored, there is a more likelihood to lead effective schools (Msila, 2017). Teachers, school heads, and learners of the Department of Education are given support to enhance their competencies and be competitive (Elahe, 2016). The challenge, however, mainly remains because the school leaders' careers, qualifications, and experiences are not enough to prepare professionals for the demanding and very different roles of principal (Bush, 2016). In addition, some principals fail to identify the responsibility that they carry in making teachers more satisfied with their jobs, etc. (Costellow, 2011).

This study acknowledges the immense role of school leaders in eventually raising the bar of student achievement. In consideration for the work, training,

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and development of school leaders, it is vital to note leadership characteristics that shape favorable student outcomes. Thus, following contemporary beliefs, the values and practices, preferred by future of Filipino school leaders' characteristics are explored according to the following policy levers:

1.(Re) Defining School Leadership Responsibilities;

2.Developing Skills for Effective Leadership and

3.Making School Leadership an Attractive Profession

This study presents one main problem: What is the preferred future of Filipino school leadership? In terms of (re) defining school leadership responsibilities, what leadership traits could be identified? What specific areas are needed for skills development for effective leadership? Finally, how can school leadership be considered as an attractive profession? Policy levers employed in this study are recognized based on their clear impact on Filipino school system. Recent studies have affirmed how school leadership responsibilities have an impact on student achievement and the overall educational system.

It is imperative that these leadership responsibilities be re-defined with the ever-changing education landscape. As new innovations and policies are crafted, the agenda on the nature of school leadership responsibilities also need to be set.

When school leadership responsibilities are explicitly classified, strategies towards developing skills that impact effective leadership are essential. On the same token, school leadership as a profession requires consistent analysis and reflective scrutiny in the midst of emerging professions and expertise. The contemporary times have witnessed how new specializations and expertise related to school leadership have emerged, posing challenges to prospective school leaders to continue assuming leadership positions. To address this, there is a need to project school leadership as an attractive profession.

Hauserman (2007) revealed that teachers, aside from having a greater sense of self-efficacy, become more enthusiastic about teaching when they work with principals who practice high transformational behaviors. Transformational leadership in school also opens new opportunities to teachers (Al-Taneiji, 2006), as supported by a significant link between transformational leadership characteristics and collegial enquiry and mentoring. It was suggested that instructional and intellectual inspiration need to be provided for teachers to perform well.

Five sets of qualities are required to succeed in leading our schools: passion and vision, personal values, inner strength and courage, conflict resolution, and harnessing the will of others Bennet, (2000). Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

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(2015) has reported that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is a need for 21<sup>st</sup> century principals to feel supported in undertaking the ‘complex and highly responsible role. Series of activities are available at hand and these would embrace support from the profession, including experienced principals, coaches, and professional networks. Costellow (2011) in his study revealed that teachers gave a higher preference rating to transformational behaviors of principals as it produces a more satisfied, autonomous, and highly engaged employees.

School leadership in the Philippines has been studied by Oracion (2013), which according to her was mostly dependent on whether principals and leaders are ready to “*relinquish power and the extent to which teachers embrace the opportunity to lead.*”

### Method

#### Sample

Using a convenience sample of 46 Graduate students in the Educational Leadership and Practice Cluster of a Graduate Teacher Education institution in Manila, Philippines, the participants were asked to complete a survey about their ideas on the characteristics of school leadership as they would like it to be (preferred future). While the sample may be considered to be relatively small to actually come up with a strong and supportive

outcome, the researcher finds this inquiry as an effective attempt to capture the thoughts on the future of Filipino school leadership from future school leaders themselves.

#### Measures

A report released by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2009 entitled Improving School Leadership Module was adopted for use in measuring the graduate students’ perception on their preferred future direction of school leadership. The module entitled Improving School Leadership: The Toolkit, originally contains six parts but for the purpose of the present study, three main parts were utilized to substantially fit the context of the study. The OECD report involved 22 participating countries in order to come up with policy development support given various school leadership approaches.

#### Data Collection and Analysis

This research is based on the respondents’ perceptions on the preferred future of school leadership in the Philippines. They were asked to complete a survey about their perception on the characteristics of school leadership based on the following aspects: (Re) Defining School Leadership Responsibilities,

Developing Skills for Effective Leadership,

Making School Leadership an Attractive Profession.

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In standardizing the data set, a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all important to 5 = crucial) was used. From the scale, the respondents were instructed to choose the number that best reflects how important this is to improve school leadership. To come up with appropriate interpretation, data sets have been ranked in the discussion, from highest to lowest of the magnitude to determine the position relative to the policy lever. The adopted research instrument was delivered and collected online through the use of a web provider.

### Results and Discussion

**Table 1** (Re)Defining School Leadership Responsibilities

Policy Lever 1	Mean
School leaders have sufficient autonomy to lead the practices most likely to improve student learning.	4.56
School leaders are encouraged and supported in building collaborative cultures among teachers.	4.62
School leadership frameworks exist to provide coherence and guidance on the characteristics and responsibilities of school leaders.	4.50
School leaders have the capacities	4.62

Policy Lever 1	Mean
to carry out teacher monitoring and evaluation.	
School leaders are involved in teacher recruitment decisions.	4.31
School leaders take an active role in teachers' professional development.	4.65
School leaders have discretion over strategic direction setting.	4.65
School leaders have the knowledge and skills to use data effectively to improve practice.	4.65
School leaders have access to appropriate financial expertise to align resources with pedagogical priorities.	4.50
School leaders are encouraged and supported to collaborate with surrounding schools.	4.31

Out of all the given characteristics, three leadership traits stood out as the preferred redefinition of school leadership responsibilities. The respondents favored future leadership responsibilities in terms of 1) taking an active role in teachers' professional development, 2) having discretion over strategic direction setting, and 3) having the knowledge and skills to use data

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effectively to improve practice. These items were rated the highest at 4.65 on a 5-point scale.

The lowest among the statements under this criterion were (1) school leaders are encouraged and supported to collaborate with surrounding schools and (2) school leaders are involved in teacher recruitment decisions which pegged at 4.31.

Oracion (2013) expressed essential thoughts that a principal plays a crucial role in promoting the cultural conditions for teacher leadership to thrive especially in a hierarchical set-up. In this study, out of the data presented in Policy Lever 1, it is assumed that school leaders (SLs) are perceived to be agents who must spearhead the professional progress among their subjects for the benefit of their entire learning community (LC). Moreover, the respondents believe that SLs perform a vital role in decision making since the power in doing so is in them, leading the institution to its targets. Furthermore, it is noticeable that they are also expected to be good in working with the empirical data gathered from their day-to-day experiences. this will identify the academe's real strong and weak points, and use those to improve every aspect of the LC.

The preceding table (where is the table?) shows that following are given less significance. Based on the data gathered, it is perceived that SLs must also learn from other SLs from other LCs.

The respondents see the significance of learning from other people in similar context to learn, modify, and improve their own system. In addition, SLs are also considered to be primary participants in setting up the teaching and non-teaching team of the school. Though the respondents give less importance to these elements, they are perceived to be essential, too.

**Table 2** Developing Skills for Effective Leadership

Policy Lever 2	Mean
Leadership development provision is offered throughout all stages in school leaders' careers.	4.53
Leadership development provision includes the right balance of theoretical and practical knowledge and self-study	4.62
Leadership development strategies focus on skills for strategic, financial and human resource management.	4.65
Efforts are made to find the right candidates for initial leadership development	4.37
Networks (virtual or real) exist to provide leadership development opportunities for principals and	4.37

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Policy Lever 2	Mean
leadership teams.	
Leadership development strategies focus on skills for goal setting, assessment, and accountability	4.56
Leadership development provision addresses contextual factors that influence practice	4.28
Principals are given incentives to invest time in their development.	3.90
Leadership development provision is based on needs analysis.	4.25
Leadership development provision is designed to be coherent with a leadership development framework.	4.25

For the second policy lever, the respondents have agreed that effective school leadership strategies in the future should focus on strategic, financial, and human resource management skills which are most important (4.65). The item with the lowest rating were principals who were given incentives to invest time in their development (3.90).

Results showed that the major concern of the SLs is their improvement on decision making, budgeting, leading and honing the members of the academe. Furthermore, this reflects that the respondents give weight on the strategy executed by SLs to achieve the goals of the LC. It may be assumed that diverse

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planning uniquely to defeat the challenges of the context is expected of them. It is also shown in the table (where is the table?) that managing the finances of the institution properly is indispensable. Since generally, leaders of any institution are tasked to responsibly use their treasury to cultivate the monetary, academic, and other dealings of the school related to finances. In addition, leading the manpower of the campus is also prioritized. It may be assumed that, basically, the teaching and non-teaching staffs comprise the manpower and the SLs make the head of the system. Leithwood (2010) also concluded that succession planning for leadership also plays a great role in the professional development of principals.

On the other hand, the respondents give less importance on giving incentives to germinate and enhance the SLs' professional growth. It is reflected that professional growth is required of the SLs, but incentives are not seen as essential to ignite professional trainings. This challenges the views of Bantwini and Letseka (2016) who stated that a great return of investment is ensured in leadership.

**Table 3** Making School Leadership an Attractive Profession

Policy Lever 3	Mean
Potential leaders are identified and encouraged to develop their leadership practices.	4.62



Policy Lever 3	Mean	
School leadership salaries compare well with similar levels in the public and private sectors	4.15	According to a DuFour and Matos (2013), there remains a challenge for school leaders to venture into higher academic achievement, along with the task of developing and keeping teachers. School leadership is also perceived as a demanding profession, thus there is a need to project it as being attractive. In order to make school leadership an attractive profession, the respondents of the study agreed that it is very important that potential leaders are identified and encouraged to develop their leadership practices (4.62). The statement talent is considered as important as seniority in considering candidates for school leadership has been identified to be of least importance (3.93). It is imperative for leaders to reflect on the most appropriate styles of leadership that suit them and their organization and eventually be effective planners for the future of the institution they belong to. Coates (2010) noted that being 'future thinking' allows rooms for innovation and generation.
School leaders are actively involved through their representative organizations in developing and implementing reform.	4.37	
A wide range of tools and procedures is used to assess leadership candidates.	4.46	
Opportunities for diverse career pathways are available to school leaders.	4.06	
Recruitment panels receive guidance and training for assessing the knowledge, skills and competencies of leadership candidates	4.46	
Talent is considered as important as seniority in considering candidates for school leadership	3.93	The respondents perceive that the prospective leaders are expected to create a leader identity for themselves and be molded to be the best leaders they can be through trainings, seminars, advance courses, and other forms of leadership programs. Although, talent, though seen as significant, is given less importance in selecting the SLs of the academe. Truly, the respondents believe in trainings rather than in innate talents.
Renewable fixed-term contracts are available to school leaders.	3.65	
A principal's salary is sufficiently greater than a teacher's salary.	4.03	
Financial incentives are offered to school leaders in difficult areas	4.12	

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### Conclusions and Implications

This study shows that specific preferences can be identified in terms of future school leaders in the Philippines. From the three policy levers that served as the spring board in analyzing preferred leadership traits, the respondents were able to recognize which among the characteristics are of great and least importance. These policy levers are assumed to have a link on achieving student learning.

The respondents have identified a brand new kind of school leadership approach to be of most importance: those who lead the professional growth of teachers and those with the know-how of making use of data in improving leadership practices. Moreover, this study, can project an epitomic image of a Filipino School Leader.

### Mentors of Mentors

SLs are educators who should mentor the teaching and non-teaching staff of an institution. They are expected to edify their subordinates in any constructive and evaluative conference on a task done. Seminars, trainings, and the like maybe coordinated by SLs, but not necessarily the execution themselves. As responsibilities of school leadership have been (re)defined, school leaders have been identified to be advocates of teachers' professional development. They set the strategic directions based on evidence through available empirical data. The SLs take

charge to make the members of the team. They are keen to choose the teaching and non-teaching force that will effectively and efficiently do the task given to edify the learners.

### Decision Makers and Strategists

It is undeniable that the SLs hold the power in decision making. They decide the simplest to the most complicated matters of the academe although; they are expected to be keen and spontaneous. There is no such thing as exact phenomenon in institutions. Because Phenomenon may be similar, but not the same; precedents may be checked, but a spontaneous decision and/or strategy leading to an exact response to a challenge or achieving set targets in a unique context is required. Therefore, leaders must be excellent strategists. School leaders' mandate, particularly in terms of financial and human resource development impacts the overall achievement not just of individual student but also of the school system. Decisions made are anchored on crucial processes of the school system as school leaders are trained and equipped with necessary skills and capacity to arrive at sound and responsible decisions.

### Innovative Empiricist

In order to innovate and enhance the following body, SLs must be good to identifying the weak and

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good points of their subordinates. They must sort out the problems encountered by the subjects to address their needs to overcome those. They must also see the strengths of these people to invest on what they can do to build a better institution. Furthermore, this move must be done through observation and research if possible. As innovators, school leaders are expected to be proactive about their own personal development journey: continuous, efficient, and effective. Timely and periodic self-reflection regarding professional and personal matters is a crucial practice of innovative school leaders.

#### A Stand-Alone Leader but an Open - Minded Learner.

As an SL, one is expected to stand firmly in terms of decision making and task performance. Although, learning from other SLs or institutions is also inevitable. Others' experiences may be an epitome to adapt as a solution or response to any challenge or situation. Learning is life-long and even leaders must always re-invent themselves to cater to the needs of the demanding contemporary learners. It is already given that SLs must be responsible for their professional growth. Whatever they are equipped with must be passed on to subordinates. They are channels of development to their institutions. With or without incentives, that is their dharma.

Formal and informal trainings must be conducted to chisel the prospects of SLs to their fullest form. This image of Filipino School Leaders established through the

respondents' provided data, the preferred future of Filipino School Leadership is set because the leaders make the leadership.

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