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RESEARCH ARTICLE

School Performance, Leadership and Core Behavioral Competencies of School Heads: Does Higher Degree Matter?

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Abstract

This paper finds out whether a higher degree matters in school performance, and in demonstrating leadership and core behavioral competencies among school heads. This was conducted to support the existing and future policies of the Department of Education and interested funders for the scholarship and advanced studies of school heads. Using a cross-sectional method, it involved 192 randomly selected participants. Data on school performance was obtained at the office of Surigao del Sur Division, while data on competencies were gathered through the self-administered assessment tools developed by the Department of Education. These data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and analysis of variance. Results revealed that there was no significant difference in the school performance of school heads. This implies that the highest degree obtained is not a guarantee for better school performance. As found, those with doctorate degrees had a very high and consistent demonstration in all dimensions of leadership and core behavioral competencies. As unveiled, there were significant differences in the demonstrated competencies based on the highest educational qualifications. These imply that obtaining the highest degrees can allow school heads to acquire, develop, and demonstrate the competencies consistently better than their counterparts. Results have implications for DepEd officials, funders, and policy-makers.

Keywords: : Results-based Performance Management System, Highest Educational Qualifications

1 | INTRODUCTION

Highly equipped school heads are those who acquired the optimum level of the necessary competencies needed for the work they are expected to do. However, competencies would vary across contexts based on legal requirements, job demands, and factors related to organizational culture. It is not known yet in any country whether the highest degree obtained is needed for the work of a school head. But because of high expectations from people, for promotion purposes, and the evolving and pivotal roles (Ferrari, 2018), school heads tend to get the highest degree before or when they are into the

work. The question is, does obtaining a higher degree matter in school performance and in demonstrating the leadership and core behavioral competencies? Is it not enough to finish a bachelor's or a master's degree to play leadership roles in school? Can the policy and decision-makers and department of education officials, expect much from school heads who had advanced studies? Is there enough reason for the funders to continuously support current and future school administrators by sending them to continuing education? These questions may have contradicting answers.

There have been studies linking leadership and school performance. However, the performance they mean was limited to learning, academic achievement, or grades of students. A few have tried to link degrees obtained with performance and leadership. For example, a study found that principals' leadership styles have no significant correlation with qualification (Sawati, Anwar & Majoka, 2013). Furthermore, the level of education cannot vary the perceptions of school leaders towards leadership competencies. These competencies include organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy, and professionalism (Bechel, 2010). As claimed, principals who are not well-equipped with the knowledge and skills in management and leadership would not be able to improve school performance significantly (Tilahun, 2014). Again, much in literature are referring to school performance to student grades or academic achievement. A study, like the current, is deemed relevant to contribute to the discussion on this topic.

For the present study, school performance refers to the ratings of school heads in-office performance commitment and review (OPCR) in the different key results areas. The KRAs are broad categories of general outputs and outcomes in which school heads are expected to focus on annually (DepEd, 2015). This performance-based on KRAs includes teaching, learning, leading, and school operations. With the implementation of the Results-based Performance Management System, it allows Department of Education to assess and evaluate the school heads' performance using a set of criteria. First, the quality and effectiveness which refers to the extent of actual performance compared against the target. In short, effectiveness relates to getting the right things done. Second, efficiency has something to do with the extent to which time and resources are used for the target in every KRA. Thus, it is about doing things right. Lastly, the timeliness which measures whether the deliverable was done on time according to the requirements, rules, and regulations (DepEd, 2012).

Generally, school performance is an over-all and collective effort between teachers and principals. Tilahun (2014) argued that it encompasses the full range of activities that would characterize a school as being successful. This furthermore includes the well-motivated and committed teachers, learner satisfaction and involvement, parental involvement, a clean orderly school environment, and strong principal leadership. As reported, principals' performance has a very weak relationship with teachers' influence (Nathanaili, 2016). To ensure high performance, it requires the effective use of organizational resources through the leadership functions of planning, organizing, leading, and monitoring (Lunenburg, 2012). Besides, the principal performance was found at a good level and it was influenced by the atmosphere of school organization and work motivation (Wahab, 2012).

Annually, school heads assess themselves using the tools on leadership and core behavioral competencies. This is for their annual performance management and review. At the performance planning phase, district supervisors put together the results of their assessment which serve as bases in determining professional development of school heads and in searching for potentials resource persons for training, especially those who had manifested as role models.

Simply, "leadership competency is one of the major qualities of the principal to ensure the performance

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of school" (Thapa, 2016, p. 111). "School leadership competencies in all types of schools were not satisfactory and adequate to address the growing quality expectations of learners and parents of schools in Nepal" (Thapa, 2016, p. 120). Generally, competencies refer to the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that school heads need to demonstrate to achieve results. In the present study, leadership competencies are limited to leading people, people performance management, and people development. These are the competencies intended for managerial positions that apply to third-level officials, chiefs and assistant chiefs, and school heads and department heads (DepEd, 2015).

Stipulated in the Department of Education's (2015) order no. 2, that the core behavior competencies cut across the organizations that include self-management, professionalism, and ethics, results in focus, teamwork, service orientation, and innovation.

The highest educational qualification is the obtained bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees of school heads at the time the study was conducted. Bechel's (2010) study clustered it as high school, 2-year college, 4-year college, masters, and doctorate levels. This paper finds out if obtaining a higher degree can make a significant difference in the school performance and in demonstrating leadership and the core behavioral competencies among school heads. It tested the hypothesis that those school heads with doctorate degrees can perform an outstanding and extraordinary level of achievement and commitment than their counterparts (Ho_1). It also tested that school heads with doctorate degrees can demonstrate more consistently higher the leadership and core behavior competencies over those with master's and bachelor's degrees (Ho_2).

2 | METHODS

The study employed a cross-sectional method to find answers to the stated questions and hypotheses. Two sets of adopted assessment tools on leadership and core behavioral competencies developed by the Department of Education were administered to 191 randomly chosen school heads from Surigao del Sur Division. Participants were clustered using their highest educational qualifications: bachelor's degrees (57), master's degrees (111), and doctorate degrees (24) for the comparative analysis. The data on school performance was obtained from the archived records of the annual Office Performance Commitment Rating (OPCR) of the school heads in 2018-2019. This performance covered all key result areas mandated by the agency for school heads. These data were requested from the division office. All these data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to provide preliminary information before comparison. To compare the groups' school performance, demonstrated leadership and core behavior competencies, ANOVA, and post hoc tests using Tukey were performed. These statistics allowed the proponents to test the hypotheses.

3 | RESULTS

The descriptive results are shown in Table 1. These are on school performance, leadership, and core behavior competences of school heads. Based on Office Performance Commitment and Review Rating in 2018-2019, school heads have performed very closely. Whether they have the bachelor's, master's, or doctorate degrees, results show it does matter and show an advantage since all school heads had very satisfactory ratings. Thus, all school heads have exceeded the expectations set in their annual plans. Regardless of their qualifications, school heads had demonstrated a *high* self-management, results focus, and innovation. This means they all demonstrated these competencies consistently. However, those school heads with doctorate degrees appeared to have a *very high* demonstration in professionalism and ethics, teamwork, and service orientation. This indicates that these individuals are *role models* in these aspects of core behaviors. This is supported in the over-all results of demonstration in core behavior competences where they also had a *very high* demonstration. In leadership competencies, school heads had a *high demonstration* in leading people and on people's development. Thus, these competencies were consistently demonstrated by them. However,only the school heads with doctorate degrees had a very high demonstration of people performance management.

This means these individuals are *role models* on this aspect of leadership. These descrip-tive comparisons may be confirmed in tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 in which one-way ANOVA and Post Hoc Tests results are presented. In table 2, it is confirmed that there is no significant difference in the school performance of school heads. Therefore, having the highest educational qualifications does not matter in performing the key results areas of school-based management. On leading people, the significant dif-ference occurred between those with bachelor's de-grees and doctorate degrees. In the descriptive results shown in table 1, both groups had a high demonstra-tion of this competency where they had a consistent demonstration and thus, they exceeded the expec-tations. ANOVA results ($F=4.731$, $p<0.05$) show that this difference is statistically significant. Using Tukey, Post Hoc Test revealed further that the Mean Difference (MD= -14.404*, $p<0.05$) is also statically significant. And so, those with doctorate degrees are of advantage in demonstrating the competency of leading people. Therefore, a doctorate degree does matter in leading people. This implies that school heads with a doctorate can better lead their con-stituents in their respective schools than their coun-terparts. For the people performance management competence, the ANOVA results ($F=7.660$, $p<0.05$) presented a significant difference in the level of demonstration. The significant difference is between school heads with bachelor's degree and with doc-torate degrees (MD=-56.535* $p<0.05$), and between school heads with master's degrees and doctorate degrees (MD= -.33851* $p<0.05$). Consistently, the highest educational qualification turned to be of ad-vantage in demonstrating the said competency. Thus, school heads who are full-pledged doctorate holders have acquired considerable knowledge and skills on people performance management better than those school head with master's and bachelor's degrees, respectively. This may imply that their studies or any other experiences have allowed them to demon-strate the said competency at work. These results confirm the descriptive results above where those with doctorate degrees have become role models in demonstrating the people performance management competence.

Table 1: Descrip ve Sta s cs on School Performance and the Level of Demonstrated Leadership and Core Behavior Competencies among School Heads

Variables	Groups	N=192	Mean	SD	QD/ and Adjectival Rating	Interpretation
School Performance	Bachelor's Degree	57	4.36	.26	VS	EE
	Master's Degree	111	4.41	.26	VS	EE
	Doctorate Degree	24	4.48	.18	VS	EE
Self-ManagementBachelor's Degree		57	3.70	.63	High	CD
	Master's Degree	111	3.85	.56	High	CD
	Doctorate Degree	24	4.12	.49	High	CD
Professionalism	Bachelor's Degree	57	3.89	.65	High	CD
and Ethics	Master's Degree	111	4.10	.54	High	CD
	Doctorate Degree	24	4.36	.37	Very High	RM
Results Focus	Bachelor's Degree	57	3.59	.61	High	CD
	Master's Degree	111	3.81	.51	High	CD
	Doctorate Degree	24	4.03	.45	High	CD
Teamwork	Bachelor's Degree	57	3.88	.64	High	CD
	Master's Degree	111	4.02	.55	High	CD
	Doctorate Degree	24	4.35	.53	Very High	RM
Service Orientation	Bachelor's Degree	57	3.72	.66	High	CD
	Master's Degree	111	3.90	.56	High	CD
	Doctorate Degree	24	4.23	.63	Very High	RM
Innovation	Bachelor's Degree	57	3.67	.68	High	CD
	Master's Degree	111	3.81	.55	High	CD
	Doctorate Degree	24	4.15	.55	High	CD
Over-all Core	Bachelor's Degree	57	3.74	.61	High	CD
Behavior Competences	Master's Degree	111	3.92	.50	High	CD
	Doctorate degree	24	4.21	.56	Very High	RM
Leading People	Bachelor's Degree	57	3.71	.65	High	CD
	Master's Degree	111	3.89	.52	High	CD
	Doctorate Degree	24	4.13	.50	High	CD
People Performance	Bachelor's Degree	57	3.65	.67	High	CD
Management	Master's Degree	111	3.88	.57	High	CD
	Doctorate Degree	24	4.22	.55	Very High	RM
People Development	Bachelor's Degree	57	3.68	.64	High	CD
	Master's Degree	111	3.83	.59	High	CD
	Doctorate Degree	24	4.12	.53	High	CD
Over-all Leadership	Bachelor's Degree	57	3.68	.63	High	CD
Competences	Master's Degree	111	3.87	.54	High	CD
	Doctorate Degree	24	4.16	.50	High	CD

Notes: OLC- Over-all Leadership Competencies, OCBC- Over-all Core Behavior Competences;
For School Performance: ELAC- Extraordinary Level of Achievement and Commitment; EE- Exceeded Expectations; ME- Met Expectations; FME- Failed to Meet the Expectations; and CBE- Consistently Below Expectations. For Competencies: RM- Role Model; CD- Consistently Demonstrated; MD- Most of the Time Demonstrated; SD- Sometimes Demonstrated; and RD- Rarely Demonstrated.

Table 2. ANOVA Results Comparing School Performance and Leadership Competencies of School Heads Using their Highest Educational Qualifications

Variables	Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
School Performance	Between Groups	.244	2	.122	1.848	.160
	Within Groups	12.467	189	.066		
	Total	12.711	191			
Leading People	Between Groups	3.029	2	1.515	4.731	.010
	Within Groups	60.510	189	.320		
	Total	63.539	191			
People Performance Management	Between Groups	5.563	2	2.781	7.660	.001
	Within Groups	68.632	189	.363		
	Total	74.195	191			
People Development	Between Groups	3.238	2	1.619	4.463	.013
	Within Groups	68.562	189	.363		
	Total	71.800	191			
Over-all Leadership Competencies	Between Groups	3.849	2	1.924	5.959	.003
	Within Groups	61.036	189	.323		
	Total	64.885	191			

Table 3. Post Hoc Tests of Multiple Comparison on Leadership Competencies of School Heads

Variables	Groups Compared		Mean Difference	SE	Sig.
Leading People	Bachelor's Degree vs.	Master's Degree	-.17620	.092	.138
		Doctorate Degree	-41.404*	.137	.008
	Master's Degree vs.	Doctorate Degree	-23.784	.127	.151
People Performance Management	Bachelor's Degree vs.	Master's Degree	-22.684	.098	.057
		Doctorate Degree	-56.535*	.146	.000
	Master's Degree vs.	Doctorate Degree	-.33851*	.135	.036
People Development	Bachelor's Degree vs.	Master's Degree	-.14291	.098	.314
		Doctorate Degree	-.43728*	.146	.009
	Master's Degree vs.	Doctorate Degree	-.29437	.135	.079
Over-all Leadership Competencies	Bachelor's Degree vs.	Master's Degree	-.18198	.092	.124
		Doctorate Degree	-.47222*	.138	.002
	Master's Degree vs.	Doctorate Degree	-.29024	.127	.063

*Mean Difference is a significant at the 0.05 level of significance.

Moreover, ANOVA results (F=4.463, p< 0.05) un-veiled a statistically significant difference in the demonstration of people development competence. The Post Hoc Test using Tukey confirms that the significant difference is between school heads with bachelor's degrees and doctorate degrees (MD =- .43728*, p<0.05). These results have similar impli-cations with the two competencies on leadership. This means that school heads with doctorate degrees have acquired and can demonstrate people devel-opment competency better than their counterparts, especially over with those with bachelor's degrees. Specifically, they can improve the skills and effec-tiveness of individuals in school through employing a range of development strategies; facilitate work-force effectiveness through coaching and motivating them and develop people within a work environment that promotes mutual trust and respect; conceptu-alize and implement learning environment to meet identified training needs; do long-term coaching and training by arranging appropriate and helpful assignments , formal training or other experiences; and cancultivate a learning environment by structuring interactive experiences (DepEd, 2015). The ANOVA results (F=5.959, p<.05) revealed a significant difference in the over-all demonstration of leadership competencies. This significant difference is between those school heads with bachelor's and doctorate degrees (Mean Difference =-.47222, p <.05). Thus, the highest educational qualification matters in demonstrating people performance management, people development, and leading people. Those with doctorate degrees have the advantage over those with bache-lor's degrees in demonstrating these competencies.

Table 4. ANOVA Results Comparing Core Behavior Competencies of School Heads using their Highest Educational Qualifications

Variables	Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Square Mean	F	Sig.
Self-Management	Between Groups	3.017	2	1.509	4.474	.013
	Within Groups	63.721	189	.337		
	Total	66.738	191			
Professionalism & Ethics	Between Groups	4.027	2	2.014	6.322	.002
	Within Groups	60.201	189	.319		
	Total	64.228	191			
Results Focus	Between Groups	3.591	2	1.795	6.128	.003
	Within Groups	55.377	189	.293		
	Total	58.967	191			
Teamwork	Between Groups	3.723	2	1.862	5.540	.005
	Within Groups	63.517	189	.336		
	Total	67.240	191			
Service Orientation	Between Groups	4.388	2	2.194	6.020	.003
	Within Groups	68.887	189	.364		
	Total	73.275	191			
Innovation	Between Groups	3.905	2	1.953	5.475	.005
	Within Groups	67.406	189	.357		
	Total	71.311	191			
Over-all Core Behavior Competence	Between Groups	3.706	2	1.853	6.408	.002
	Within Groups	54.650	189	.289		
	Total	58.355	191			

F stat is significant if the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance.

Table 5. Post Hoc Tests of Multiple Comparison on Leadership Competences of School Heads

Variables	Groups Compared		Mean Difference	SE	Sig.
Self-Management	Bachelor's Degree vs.	Master's Degree	-.15420	.094	.236
		Doctorate Degree	-.41974*	.141	.009
	Master's Degree vs.	Doctorate Degree	-.26554	.130	.107
Professionalism & Ethics	Bachelor's Degree vs.	Master's Degree	-.21517	.091	.053
		Doctorate Degree	-.47193*	.137	.002
	Master's Degree vs.	Doctorate Degree	-.25676	.127	.110
Results Focus	Bachelor's Degree vs.	Master's Degree	-.22108*	.088	.035
		Doctorate Degree	-.43476*	.131	.003
	Master's Degree vs.	Doctorate Degree	-.21368	.121	.188
Teamwork	Bachelor's Degree vs.	Master's Degree	-.14813	.094	.262
		Doctorate Degree	-.46930*	.141	.003
	Master's Degree vs.	Doctorate Degree	-.32117*	.130	.039
Service Orientation	Bachelor's Degree vs.	Master's Degree	-.18179	.098	.157
		Doctorate Degree	-.50702*	.146	.002
	Master's Degree vs.	Doctorate degree	-.32523*	.135	.046
Innovation	Bachelor's Degree vs.	Master's Degree	-.13762	.097	.336
		Doctorate Degree	-.48081*	.145	.003
	Master's Degree vs.	Doctorate Degree	-.34319*	.134	.031
Over-all Core Behavior Competences	Bachelor's Degree vs.	Master's Degree	-.17633	.087	.112
		Doctorate Degree	-.46393*	.130	.001
	Master's Degree vs.	Doctorate Degree	-.28759*	.121	.048

*Mean Difference is a significant at the 0.05 level of significance.

Table 4 displays ANOVA results on compared core behavior competencies of school heads in terms of highest educational attainment. As can be seen, all components of core behavioral competencies revealed significant differences. These findings are supported by the post hoc test results in table 5. Post hoc test revealed further that there are significant differences in the acquired and demonstrated self-management (MD=-.41974*,p<0.05), profession-alism and ethics (MD=-.47193*,p<0.05), results focus (MD=-.43476*,p<0.05), teamwork (MD=- .46930*,p<0.05), service orientation behaviors(MD=-.50702*, p<0.05), and the overall core behav-ior competencies (MD=-.46393*, p<0.05) of those who have bachelors and doctorate degrees. These indicate that the latter group is more advanced over the former group when it comes to demonstrating these core behavior competencies. Limitedly, the significant difference between those with bachelors and masters' degrees is only true in results focus behaviors (MD=-.22108*,p<0.05). In consequence, those school heads with masters' degrees are also ahead to those school heads who have bachelors' degrees only. The former group is more results-focused than the latter. Still, there are significant differences in teamwork (MD=-.32117*, p<0.05), service orientation (MD=-.32523*, p<0.05), and innovation behaviors (MD=-.34319*, p<0.05), and in overall core behaviors (MD=-.28759*, p<0.05) between those with doctorate and masters' degrees. These imply that school heads with doctorate degrees are again more advanced in demonstrating these core behavior over those with masters' degrees.

4 | DISCUSSION

High school performance requires the effective use of organizational resources through the leadership functions of planning, organizing, leading, and monitoring (Lunenburg, 2012). The results contradicted the earlier claims that "School leadership competencies in all types of schools were not satisfactory and adequate to address the growing quality expectations of learners and parents of schools in Nepal" (Thapa, 2016, p.120).The results show that regardless of educational attainment, school performances were very satisfactory across groups. Therefore, it is true that the principal performance was at a good level (Wahab, 2012).

Ross et al. (2016) reported that among 13 core competencies, professionalism turn out to be the most prevailing core behaviors of school principals. In the case of the present study, all core behaviors considered were demonstrated with at least a high level but very high in the case of those with doctorate degrees.

Among the two tested hypotheses, Ho2 was rejected since there is evidence that school heads with doctorate degrees can demonstrate significantly higher in leadership and core behavior competencies over those with bachelor's and masters' degrees. Therefore, it does matter in acquiring and demonstrating both the leadership and core behavior competencies. The study of Piaw et al. (2014) was confirmed that academic qualifications are significant factors of leadership skills. However, the present study does not find support in the report that claimed that the level of education cannot vary the perceptions of school leaders towards leadership competencies (Bechel, 2010).

5 | CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the highest educational qualification cannot ensure an optimal level of school performance. All groups (degrees) of participants had very satisfactory ratings in-office performance commitment and review (OPCR) which implies that they all had exceeded the expectations. School heads do not need to have a doctorate to be able to exceed all expectations for school performance. Thus, the highest educational qualification does not matter in school performance. On the other hand, the study further concluded that the highest educational qualification enables school heads to demonstrate the leadership and core behavioral competencies at the role model level over their counter-parts. Therefore, engaging in advanced studies until getting the highest (doctorate) degree is priceless. It matters in acquiring and practicing people performance management, peopledevelopment, and in leading people as well. It also matters in acquiring and demonstrating self-management, professional-ism and ethics, results focus behaviors, teamwork, service orientation, and

innovation. The study sug-gested to policy and decision-makers, funders, and education officials to continue sending current and future school leaders to take advantage of allowing them to acquire an optimal level of these competen-cies. Thus, this is a good reason to sustain efforts and support educational advancement. This would encourage concerned officials to revisit current poli-cies relevant to scholarships so that there would more prospective school leaders who could avail the same privileges. This study joined the previous recommen-dation that school principals should be provided with more opportunities for professional development to eventually improve their leadership qualities (Piaw et al., 2014).

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