

COMPETENCY, PERFORMANCE AND TRAINING NEEDS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS: BASIS FOR MASTER PLAN FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

This study examined the competency, performance, and training needs of public-school administrators in the Schools Division of Bais City, Negros Oriental, Philippines. Using a quantitative descriptive-comparative and correlational research design, the study surveyed 271 teachers selected through stratified random sampling to assess the administrators' Core Behavioral and Leadership Competencies, performance across ten leadership domains, and training needs across five key standards. Results showed that school administrators were perceived as highly competent and extremely able, with strong ratings in professionalism, teamwork, and management functions. However, areas such as research engagement and mentoring received slightly lower performance scores. Significant positive correlations were found between competency and performance, and between competency and training needs, indicating that even high-performing administrators recognize the need for continuous development. No significant relationship was found between training budget utilization and administrator outcomes, suggesting a disconnect between expenditure and impact. The study recommends the development of a targeted, data-driven Master Plan for Professional Development to enhance school leadership capacity and sustain educational quality.

Keywords: *school leadership, administrator competency, training needs, educational performance, public-school administrators, professional development, DepEd Philippines*

Introduction:

Schools are central institutions in every society, tasked not only with educating children but also with fostering their holistic development in safe and supportive environments. Qaralleh (2020) underscores the role of schools in cultivating good health, life skills, and inclusive activities tailored to children's diverse needs. School administration, as an arm of the government, extends beyond policy implementation—it serves as a community pillar for educational progress and youth development (Badarna & Ashour, 2016). As expectations from educational institutions intensify, schools must function as learning organizations that consistently pursue quality improvement (Mulford, 2023).

Central to this transformation are school heads, who are mandated by Republic Act 9155 or the Governance of Basic Education Act to assume authority, accountability, and responsibility for improving learning outcomes (Republic of the Philippines, 2001). School administrators oversee curriculum implementation, personnel management, community engagement, and facilities maintenance (Ytem, 2023). However, as the nature of education evolves, so does the role of the principal. Wise (2015) emphasizes that principals must now manage complex human systems, exhibit leadership across diverse domains, and remain accountable for student academic success.

Competency—defined as the integration of knowledge, skills, behaviors, and values that lead to effective performance—is central to educational leadership. While the terms "competency" and "competence" have often been used interchangeably, recent literature distinguishes between the two, favoring a holistic and behavioral-based view of leadership competency (Trivellas & Reklitis, 2014; Robescu et al., 2021). The Department of Education (DepEd), through its Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS), evaluates school administrators based on Core Behavioral and Leadership Competencies (Lepardo & Caingcoy, 2020). These competencies include self-management, ethics, teamwork, people development, and leadership effectiveness, as aligned with DepEd's core values (Philippine National Research Center for Teacher Quality, 2017).

Research affirms that competent school heads foster instructional leadership, manage overlapping responsibilities, and build partnerships with communities (Bantolo & Arenga, 2021). They play a decisive role in setting policies, guiding instruction, and enhancing school culture (Sindhvad et al., 2020; Clark et al., 2009). Aquino et al. (2021) argue that principals serve as operational and academic anchors, while Galvez (2017) highlights their influence on teacher effectiveness and parent engagement. Ultimately, effective leadership contributes to improved student performance (Apacible, 2022).

However, competence alone is insufficient. Continuous professional development is essential to bridge gaps in performance expectations and actual capabilities. Liwanag et al. (2023) emphasize that training needs analysis

identifies these gaps, while Aydın et al. (2021) assert that upskilling leads to improved satisfaction and workplace functioning. Basuki et al. (2020) further highlight that leadership training enhances a school head's ability to drive institutional improvement.

This study responds to two knowledge gaps identified by Miles (2017): the underutilization of related theories within the field and the unpredictability of research outcomes in leadership development. It examines the relationship among competencies, performance, and training needs of public-school administrators in a schools division in Region VII (Central Visayas), comprising 57 schools led by principals, head teachers, and designated teacher-in-charge personnel. Notably, in 2024, the division allocated ₱2,573,550.00 for localized leadership development initiatives.

The study seeks to determine the administrators' current levels of Core Behavioral and Leadership Competencies, their performance across ten school leadership domains—including vision, instructional learning, ethics, and research—and their training needs in five key standards: strategic direction, leading teaching and learning, organizational management, and community involvement. Additionally, the study assesses whether the investments in professional development have resulted in improved performance, as perceived by teaching staff.

Findings from this study are intended to inform the development of a Master Plan for Professional Development, guiding the design of capacity-building programs for public-school administrators in the region.

Methodology:

This study utilized a quantitative, non-experimental research design combining both descriptive-comparative and correlational approaches. The descriptive-comparative method was employed to examine potential differences in the competency, performance, and training needs of public-school administrators when grouped by age, sex, and position. Simultaneously, the descriptive-correlational method was used to explore relationships among the variables of competency, performance, training needs, and the budget utilized for professional development interventions.

The study was conducted in the Schools Division of Bais City, Negros Oriental, a division under the Department of Education (DepEd) that oversees 57 public elementary and secondary schools. The school heads in this division include principals, head teachers, and teachers-in-charge who serve as public-school administrators. To assess the effectiveness of these administrators, the study surveyed teachers within their respective schools, as these individuals directly observe and are impacted by their leadership.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure balanced representation across different teaching positions. From a total population of 910 teachers, a sample of 271 respondents was determined using the Raosoft calculator at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. The sample included 91 Teacher I, 47 Teacher II, 112 Teacher III, and 21 Master Teachers. Within each stratum, random sampling was used to select participants, ensuring an equitable distribution across demographic categories.

Three structured survey instruments were used to gather data. The first tool, developed by the researcher, assessed the Core Behavioral and Leadership Competencies of school administrators based on the DepEd's Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS). This tool measured domains such as self-management, professionalism and ethics, teamwork, and people development using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Incompetent) to 5 (Highly Competent). The second instrument, adapted from Sindhvad et al. (2020), measured school administrators' performance across ten domains, including vision, instructional learning, community relations, ethics, and research. Responses were rated from 1 (Very Unable) to 5 (Highly Able). The third instrument, based on Board et al. (2014), identified the training needs of administrators across five standards: setting strategic direction, leading learning, leading teaching, managing the school as an organization, and community and parental involvement. Responses ranged from 1 (Extremely Not Needed) to 5 (Extremely Needed).

To ensure validity, the instruments underwent content validation using Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio (CVR), with 15 expert validators. A CVR threshold of 0.600 was applied to determine item acceptability. Reliability testing was performed through pilot testing with 30 non-sample respondents, and internal consistency was established using Cronbach's alpha. All instruments showed acceptable reliability, with coefficients above 0.70.

The data collection process was conducted face-to-face. The researcher secured formal permission from the Schools Division Superintendent before administering the surveys. During school visits and division events such as meetings or training, the researcher distributed and monitored the completion of the questionnaires. Confidentiality and voluntary participation were emphasized throughout the process.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, with means and standard deviations computed to determine levels of competencies, performance, and training needs. To interpret these levels, mean scores were categorized using five-point descriptors, such as Highly Competent, Very Able, and Highly Needed. For inferential analysis, non-parametric tests were applied due to data non-normality. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyze differences

based on sex, while the Kruskal–Wallis test was used for comparisons by age and position. Spearman's rank-order correlation was utilized to examine relationships among competencies, performance, training needs, and the amount of budget spent on administrator training.

Results:

The findings of the study revealed that public-school administrators were perceived by their teachers as highly competent in both Core Behavioral and Leadership Competencies. The overall mean for Core Behavioral Competencies was 4.33 (SD = 0.62), while the mean for Leadership Competencies was 4.32 (SD = 0.65), indicating a high level of competency across both dimensions. Among the core behavioral indicators, professionalism and ethics (M = 4.43) and teamwork (M = 4.42) received the highest ratings, while result-focus and innovation registered slightly lower means, though still within the "highly competent" range. Leadership competencies such as leading people (M = 4.34) and people performance management (M = 4.33) were also rated highly.

When analyzed by demographic profile, no significant differences were observed in competency ratings across age, sex, and teaching position. Teachers of all ranks perceived their school administrators as highly competent. However, slight variations were noted, with Teachers II giving marginally lower ratings in the core behavioral domain. This suggests consistent perceptions of administrator effectiveness across various teacher demographics.

In terms of performance, administrators were rated as "Extremely Able" overall, with a mean score of 4.34 (SD = 0.62). All ten performance domains scored above 4.20, including Vision, School Culture and Instructional Learning, Management and Operations, and Community Relations. Notably, the Research (M = 4.14) and Internship and Mentoring (M = 4.20) domains received slightly lower mean scores compared to others, suggesting areas for potential development.

No statistically significant differences were found in performance ratings when grouped according to age, sex, or position. Both male and female respondents, as well as teachers across all ranks, consistently viewed school administrators as highly effective in their roles. Although male respondents reported slightly higher means across performance indicators, the difference was not significant.

In terms of training needs, the overall result indicated that school administrators were perceived to be in "Highly Needed" status, with a mean score of 3.43 (SD = 1.22). Among the five training standards, Managing the School as an Organization received the highest mean (M = 3.44), followed closely by Leading Learning (M = 3.43) and Setting Strategic Direction (M = 3.43). Community and Parental Involvement registered the lowest score (M = 3.41), but still within the same interpretation. Despite the overall "highly needed" classification, standard deviations across the training needs items were relatively large, indicating variability in individual perceptions.

A significant difference in training needs was found when grouped by age ($p = 0.029$), with older respondents assigning higher training need scores than their younger counterparts. This suggests that more experienced teachers may perceive a greater need for continuous improvement in leadership. However, no significant differences in training needs were found based on sex or position, although Teachers I perceived a lower level of need compared to their more senior counterparts.

Correlation analyses showed statistically significant relationships among all three core variables. Competency and performance exhibited a strong positive correlation (Spearman's $\rho = 0.898$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that higher competency is associated with better administrator performance. A weaker but statistically significant relationship was also found between competency and training needs ($\rho = 0.128$, $p = 0.035$), and between training needs and performance ($\rho = 0.126$, $p = 0.037$), suggesting that administrators who perform well or are competent still recognize the need for further professional development.

On the other hand, no significant relationship was found between the amount of budget utilized for administrator training and their measured competencies, performance, or training needs. Spearman's correlation coefficients were weak and negative, with p-values exceeding the 0.05 threshold. This indicates that higher training expenditures did not necessarily correspond to improved competency or performance outcomes, emphasizing that the effectiveness of training programs may depend more on content and delivery rather than budget alone.

Discussion:

The findings of this study underscore the high levels of competency and performance demonstrated by public-school administrators in the Schools Division of Bais City, as perceived by their teaching staff. Both Core Behavioral and Leadership Competencies were rated "highly competent," affirming the effectiveness of school administrators in managing their professional and instructional roles. These results align with previous studies, such as those by Bantolo and Arenga (2021), which indicated that school heads consistently exhibit excellence in school leadership, particularly in managing instructional responsibilities, balancing multiple tasks, and fostering community

partnerships. Similarly, Cuisson (2024) reported that administrators possess strong self-management skills, reinforcing the positive ratings observed in this study.

Notably, the domains of professionalism and ethics, teamwork, and people management emerged as key strengths among school administrators. These competencies are essential for creating a collaborative school culture and for ensuring accountability and transparency in school governance. The findings affirm the importance of leadership behaviors grounded in integrity and interpersonal effectiveness, as emphasized in Boyatzis's (1982) Competency-Based Leadership Theory.

Although the performance of administrators was also rated as "extremely able" across all ten performance domains, the areas of Research and Internship & Mentoring received slightly lower ratings compared to others. This indicates potential gaps in facilitating research-based decision-making and formal mentoring programs—both of which are critical in fostering teacher development and school innovation. These findings echo the assertions of Bush and Glover (2014) and Sezgin et al. (2020), who emphasize the growing importance of evidence-based leadership and mentoring systems in improving organizational learning and teacher performance.

The significant positive relationship between competency and performance observed in this study is consistent with the premise of Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985), which posits that effective leaders inspire high levels of performance through demonstrated competence and strategic direction. This finding also supports the RPMS framework of DepEd, which connects competencies with key result areas in school administration (DepEd, 2015). The observed relationships further confirm previous research by Lepardo and Caingcoy (2020), who found that high competency levels among school leaders positively influence school outcomes.

While administrators were generally rated as competent and able, the study also revealed that their training needs were still perceived as "highly needed," particularly in areas such as leading teaching, strategic planning, and managing the school as an organization. This suggests a strong desire or recognition for continuous professional development, consistent with the Growth Mindset Theory of Dweck (2016), which emphasizes the importance of ongoing learning and adaptability in leadership. Even highly competent administrators may acknowledge the need to upgrade their skills to meet emerging challenges in education, especially in the context of the fast-evolving demands of Education 4.0 (Awodiji & Naicker, 2024).

Interestingly, a statistically significant difference in perceived training needs was found based on age, with older teachers identifying greater needs for leadership development among administrators. This may reflect their broader experience and deeper understanding of systemic gaps in leadership practices, as suggested by Sahlin (2023). However, perceptions of training needs were consistent across sex and teaching rank, pointing to a shared understanding among educators that ongoing training is essential for sustaining school improvement.

A particularly important finding of the study was the absence of a significant relationship between budget utilization for training and administrator competency or performance. This challenges the common assumption that higher spending directly translates to improved outcomes. As noted by Darling-Hammond et al. (2021) and Tuytens et al. (2022), the impact of professional development depends not merely on the financial investment but on the relevance, delivery, and alignment of training content to actual needs. The weak and negative correlations found in this study suggest that training programs may not be sufficiently targeted or may lack the practical application necessary to yield performance gains.

These findings highlight the need for a strategic review of professional development initiatives for school leaders. Rather than relying solely on budget allocations, education leaders must ensure that training is grounded in context-specific competencies, aligns with adult learning principles (Knowles, 1980), and responds to measurable gaps in practice. Moreover, incorporating feedback mechanisms, coaching, and performance-based assessments could enhance the effectiveness of leadership training and close the observed gaps in research engagement and mentorship practices.

In summary, while public-school administrators in the studied division demonstrate commendable competence and performance, opportunities remain for refining leadership capacity through targeted, evidence-based professional development programs. These efforts will be critical in strengthening school leadership and sustaining high-quality education delivery at the grassroots level.

Conclusion:

The results of this study affirm that public-school administrators in the Schools Division of Bais City are highly competent and perform their leadership functions effectively, as perceived by their teaching staff. Their strength lies in consistently demonstrating professional ethics, teamwork, and people leadership, which are crucial for fostering a positive school culture and enabling effective instructional and organizational management. A significant and strong

positive relationship was found between competency and performance, confirming that the quality of school leadership is a key determinant of institutional success.

Despite high ratings, teachers still perceived that administrators have substantial training needs, particularly in leading teaching and learning, strategic planning, and managing schools as complex organizations. This reflects a shared understanding of the evolving demands of educational leadership and a collective commitment to continuous professional development. However, the study also found no significant relationship between the amount of budget utilized for training and the actual improvements in competency, performance, or training needs. This underscores the need for better alignment between training investments and the specific developmental needs of school leaders. In light of these findings, it is recommended that the Department of Education, through its schools division offices, adopt a more targeted and competency-based approach to professional development. Training programs should be aligned with clearly defined gaps in practice, informed by regular performance reviews, and delivered using adult learning principles to ensure relevance and practical application. Attention should also be given to areas of relatively lower performance, such as research utilization and mentoring, which are essential for building a strong culture of innovation and teacher development.

Furthermore, the formulation of a Master Plan for Professional Development is recommended. This plan should detail specific learning interventions across leadership standards, set measurable outcomes, and include mechanisms for monitoring the effectiveness and impact of training. By doing so, schools can ensure that leadership development efforts translate into meaningful gains in school performance and student achievement.

In conclusion, sustaining the high competency and performance levels of school administrators requires more than routine training; it demands intentional, data-driven, and responsive professional development strategies that empower school leaders to meet present and future challenges in Philippine basic education.

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