



Navigating Educational Leadership in the Philippines: Integrating Historical Legacies, Policy Frameworks, and Cultural Dynamics

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Abstract:

This study examines the intricate landscape of school leadership in the Philippines through an integrative literature review, encompassing historical, policy, and cultural dimensions. Drawing on a range of scholarly sources, the study elucidates the enduring influence of colonial legacies, the implications of contemporary policy frameworks such as Republic Act 9155, and the profound impact of Filipino cultural values and kinship systems on leadership practices within educational institutions. Despite challenges such as corruption and ethical leadership deficits, opportunities exist for fostering transformative leadership approaches that harness the strengths of Filipino cultural values to promote educational equity and excellence. By embracing inclusivity, participatory decision-making, and grassroots engagement, school leaders can navigate the complexities of the Filipino educational landscape and play a pivotal role in advancing the quality and accessibility of education for all students. This study underscores the importance of culturally responsive leadership development initiatives tailored to the unique socio-cultural context of the Philippines.

Keywords: School leadership, Philippines, Integrative literature review, Colonial legacy, Policy framework, Cultural dynamics

Introduction:

In the complex landscape of educational leadership, understanding the intricate interplay between historical, policy, and cultural dimensions is crucial for comprehensively addressing the challenges and opportunities faced by school leaders. This research endeavors to delve into the multifaceted realm of school leadership in the Philippines, focusing on the historical legacies, contemporary policy frameworks, and cultural dynamics that shape the preparation and development of educational leaders.

Historically, the evolution of Philippine education unfolds across four distinct eras: Pre-Colonial, Spanish Colonization, United States Colonization, and Independence. Each era has left an indelible mark on the educational landscape, influencing not only the structure of schooling but also the roles and responsibilities of school leaders (Arcilla, 1999; Shukla & Tinsman, 2007). The legacy of these historical epochs continues to resonate in contemporary educational practices, underscoring the importance of tracing their impact on the trajectory of school leadership development.

Moreover, the enactment of educational policies serves as a guiding framework for the role of school principals in the Philippines. Republic Act 9155 stands as a seminal document shaping the governance and accountability structures within the educational system (Republic of the Philippines, 2011). Understanding the provisions of this



act and its implications for school leadership is essential for contextualizing the expectations and responsibilities placed upon educational leaders in the country.

Furthermore, cultural dynamics play a pivotal role in shaping leadership practices within Filipino educational institutions. The collectivist nature of Filipino culture, characterized by values of *kapwa* and *pakikisama*, permeates the social fabric of schools, influencing interpersonal relationships and decision-making processes (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Jocano, 2001). Additionally, kinship systems, encompassing biological, ritual, and fictive ties, form the bedrock of social organization, exerting a profound influence on power dynamics and leadership structures (Mackey, et al., 2017).

By unraveling the intricate tapestry of historical, policy, and cultural influences, this research seeks to provide insights into the complexities of school leadership in the Philippines. Through a nuanced understanding of these dimensions, stakeholders in education can better navigate the challenges and leverage the opportunities inherent in educational leadership, ultimately fostering the development of effective and culturally responsive school leaders.

In the subsequent sections, this research will delve deeper into each dimension, exploring historical epochs, dissecting policy frameworks, and examining cultural dynamics to illuminate the landscape of school leadership in the Philippines.

Literature Review:

The literature on school leadership in the Philippines encompasses a diverse array of historical, policy, and cultural perspectives, shedding light on the complex dynamics shaping the development and practice of educational leaders in the country. This literature review synthesizes key findings from scholarly works, highlighting the evolution of school leadership in the Philippines within the context of historical legacies, policy frameworks, and cultural dynamics.

The historical trajectory of Philippine education unfolds across four distinct eras, each leaving a lasting imprint on the landscape of school leadership. Pre-Colonial education in the Philippines was characterized by diverse educational experiences shaped by social hierarchies and familial structures (Gripaldo, 2005). Leadership during this era was often embodied by tribal chiefs or *Datu*, who wielded political authority and wisdom within their communities (Gripaldo, 2005).

Spanish colonization introduced a formal system of schooling aimed at indoctrinating Filipinos into the Catholic faith and replicating Spanish educational practices (Watras, 2007). The Catholic Church emerged as a dominant force in education, with priests assuming leadership roles in schools (Schwartz, 1971). However, Spanish colonial policies also laid the groundwork for secular education and the establishment of educational institutions that would later influence leadership practices in the Philippines (Watras, 2007).

United States colonization brought about significant changes in Philippine education, including the expansion of the school system and the shift to English as the medium of instruction (Bernardo & Garcia, 2006). Educational leadership during this era was characterized by a centralized and bureaucratic approach, emphasizing efficiency and adherence to curriculum standards (Bernardo & Garcia, 2006).

Independence marked a period of transition in Philippine education, with the government assuming greater control over educational policies and practices. Decentralization efforts led to increased autonomy for school leaders, who were tasked with implementing national curriculum standards while adapting to local needs (Symaco, 2013).

Policy Frameworks and the Principalship

The enactment of Republic Act 9155, also known as the Governance of Basic Education Act, serves as a cornerstone of educational policy in the Philippines (Republic of the Philippines, 2011). This legislation outlines the roles and responsibilities of school principals, emphasizing their dual function as instructional leaders and administrative managers (Symaco, 2017).

Despite the alignment of policy frameworks with global trends in educational leadership, challenges persist in the implementation of these policies. The Anglo-Western perspective embedded in Republic Act 9155 may not fully resonate with the cultural realities of the Philippines, where principals often ascend to leadership positions through political intervention rather than formal preparation (Symaco, 2017).

Moreover, the increasing demands placed on school principals, such as fostering a caring school community and exercising effective instructional leadership, highlight the need for ongoing professional development (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Management Communication (MANCOM) meetings at the School Division Level provide avenues for professional growth, yet the quality and content of these meetings vary, underscoring the need for targeted support for school leaders (Northouse, 2012).



Cultural Dynamics in Educational Leadership

Cultural dynamics play a significant role in shaping leadership practices within Filipino educational institutions. Filipino culture is characterized by collectivist values such as *kapwa* and *pakikisama*, which emphasize interpersonal relationships and community cohesion (Hofstede et al., 2010). These cultural norms influence leadership styles, decision-making processes, and the overall school climate (Jocano, 2001).

Kinship systems, encompassing biological, ritual, and fictive ties, serve as the foundation of Filipino social organization (Mackey, et al., 2017). School principals often function as patriarchs or matriarchs within these kinship structures, exerting influence over school communities through patron-client relationships (Brillante & Perante-Calina, 2018).

While kinship systems can facilitate positive expressions of influence, such as *bayanihan* and *pakikiramay*, they also present challenges related to corruption and favoritism (Magno, 2004). The *padrino* system, characterized by reciprocal obligations and debts of gratitude, can perpetuate unethical leadership practices and hinder merit-based decision-making (Brillantes & Perante-Calina, 2018).

The literature on school leadership in the Philippines provides valuable insights into the historical, policy, and cultural dimensions shaping educational leadership practices. Understanding the complexities of this landscape is essential for developing effective strategies to support school leaders and promote positive educational outcomes. By addressing historical legacies, navigating policy frameworks, and engaging with cultural dynamics, stakeholders in education can work towards fostering ethically grounded and culturally responsive leadership in Filipino schools.

Methodology:

The research methodology employed for this study involved conducting an integrative literature review to comprehensively explore the historical, policy, and cultural dimensions shaping school leadership in the Philippines. An integrative literature review is a systematic approach that synthesizes existing research findings from diverse sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of a particular topic (Torraco, 2005).

The data collection process commenced with identifying relevant scholarly articles, books, policy documents, and reports related to the development of school leaders in the Philippines. Multiple academic databases, including but not limited to ERIC, JSTOR, PubMed, and Google Scholar, were systematically searched using keywords such as "school leadership," "educational policy," "cultural dynamics," and "Philippines." Additionally, government websites and repositories were consulted to access policy documents and official reports pertaining to education in the Philippines.

The inclusion criteria for selecting literature encompassed publications that focused on historical analyses of Philippine education, examinations of educational policies and their implications for school leadership, discussions on cultural dynamics influencing leadership practices, and empirical studies exploring the role of school leaders within the Filipino educational context. Only peer-reviewed sources and official policy documents were considered for inclusion to ensure the reliability and credibility of the synthesized information.

Following the identification of relevant literature, a systematic process of data synthesis was undertaken. The literature was organized thematically into three main categories: historical perspectives, policy frameworks, and cultural dynamics. Each category was further divided into sub-themes to facilitate a detailed analysis of the literature. The synthesized information was then critically examined to identify key themes, trends, and gaps in the existing literature pertaining to school leadership in the Philippines. To ensure the rigor and validity of the integrative literature review, quality appraisal of the selected literature was conducted. Each source was critically evaluated based on criteria such as methodological rigor, relevance to the research topic, and the credibility of the author(s). Only studies and documents meeting the predetermined quality criteria were included in the final synthesis.

The synthesized data were subjected to thematic analysis to identify patterns, contradictions, and emerging themes across the selected literature. Themes were iteratively refined and organized to develop a coherent narrative that elucidates the historical, policy, and cultural dimensions shaping school leadership in the Philippines. The analysis also involved comparing and contrasting findings from different sources to gain a nuanced understanding of the research topic.

Findings and Discussion:

Historical Legacy Shapes Leadership Practices

The historical trajectory of Philippine education, spanning pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence periods, plays a pivotal role in shaping contemporary leadership practices within educational institutions. The colonial



legacies of Spanish and American colonization have left indelible imprints on the educational landscape, influencing policies, administrative structures, and leadership roles (Arcilla, 1999; Bernardo & Garcia, 2006).

During the Spanish colonial era, hierarchical systems were established, reflecting the authoritarian structures inherent in Spanish governance. The introduction of centralized administrative systems and the appointment of Catholic priests as educational leaders underscored the hierarchical nature of educational institutions, with power centralized at the top (Schwartz, 1971). This legacy of centralized authority continues to shape power dynamics and decision-making processes within schools, impacting the roles and responsibilities of school leaders (Uy, et al., 2023).

Similarly, American colonization brought about significant changes in educational policies and leadership practices. The institutionalization of a centralized and bureaucratic education system reflected American ideals of efficiency and standardization (Bernardo & Garcia, 2006). The emphasis on uniformity in curriculum and administration instilled a culture of adherence to rules and regulations among educational leaders, further perpetuating hierarchical structures within schools (Atasoy, 2020).

Post-independence, the Philippines witnessed a shift towards decentralization, reflecting efforts to assert national sovereignty and promote local autonomy. However, the legacy of hierarchical leadership persists, with power often concentrated in the hands of a few individuals at the upper echelons of educational administration (Symaco, 2017). Despite the move towards decentralization, remnants of colonial-era administrative practices continue to influence leadership practices, highlighting the enduring impact of historical legacies on contemporary educational leadership (Atasoy, 2020).

The historical evolution of Philippine education, characterized by periods of colonization and post-independence reforms, has left a profound imprint on contemporary leadership practices within educational institutions. Acknowledging and understanding these historical legacies is essential for comprehensively addressing the challenges and opportunities faced by school leaders in the Philippines (Martinez, et al., 2023). By contextualizing leadership practices within their historical framework, stakeholders in education can work towards fostering more effective and culturally responsive leadership within Filipino schools.

Policy Frameworks Reflect Global Trends and Local Realities:

Educational policies, exemplified by Republic Act 9155, are instrumental in delineating the functions and obligations of school leaders in the Philippines. Such policies frequently mirror international trends in educational governance and responsibility, yet they demand contextualization within the socio-cultural and economic milieu of the Philippines. This tension between global standards and local exigencies underscores the necessity for a nuanced comprehension of policy execution and its ramifications for school leadership (Symaco, 2017; Republic of the Philippines, 2011).

Republic Act 9155, also known as the "Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001," serves as a primary legislative framework governing education in the Philippines. It outlines the roles and duties of school principals as instructional leaders and administrative managers tasked with ensuring the delivery of quality education. However, while the Act espouses leadership roles aligned with international norms, its implementation must grapple with the unique socio-cultural dynamics of the Philippine educational landscape (Republic of the Philippines, 2011).

The tension between global trends and local realities is palpable in the Philippine context. While policies like Republic Act 9155 advocate for leadership models informed by Western educational paradigms, the socio-cultural fabric of the Philippines demands a more nuanced approach. Factors such as collectivist values, kinship structures, and hierarchical societal norms significantly influence the practice of school leadership (Symaco, 2017).

Hence, effective leadership in Filipino schools necessitates a delicate balance between adherence to global standards and responsiveness to local contexts. School leaders must navigate this dynamic landscape adeptly, drawing upon both international best practices and indigenous wisdom to foster educational excellence in the Philippine setting. By recognizing and reconciling the tension between global frameworks and local realities, policymakers and educational stakeholders can cultivate leadership practices that are both effective and culturally relevant.

Cultural Dynamics Shape Leadership Practices:

Filipino cultural values, encapsulated by concepts like *kapwa* (unity), *pakikisama* (harmony), and intricate kinship systems, wield a significant sway over leadership practices within the educational realm. The collectivist ethos ingrained in Filipino culture nurtures robust interpersonal bonds and underscores the importance of collaborative decision-making and consensus-building within educational institutions. Moreover, the pervasive influence of kinship dynamics, spanning biological, ritual, and fictive affiliations, plays a pivotal role in shaping power dynamics and fostering patron-client relationships within school communities, thereby impacting the efficacy of leadership endeavors (Hofstede et al., 2010; Groenewald, et al., 2023).



Kapwa, a cornerstone of Filipino identity, underscores the interconnectedness and shared humanity among individuals. This concept permeates educational leadership, emphasizing the importance of fostering inclusive environments and promoting collective well-being within schools. Leaders who embody the spirit of kapwa prioritize collaboration, empathy, and mutual respect, thereby nurturing a sense of belonging and camaraderie among stakeholders (Jocano, 2001).

Similarly, pakikisama emphasizes the value of maintaining harmonious relations and avoiding conflict within social settings. In the educational context, this translates to leaders prioritizing teamwork, open communication, and conflict resolution strategies that prioritize consensus and mutual understanding. By fostering an atmosphere of trust and cooperation, leaders can cultivate a conducive learning environment that empowers both students and educators (Vasquez et al., 2001).

Furthermore, the intricate web of kinship ties, encompassing biological bonds, ritual affiliations, and fictive relationships, shapes the distribution of power and influence within school communities. Leaders often navigate patron-client relationships, leveraging social connections and obligations to garner support and navigate bureaucratic processes (Brillantes & Perante-Calina, 2018). Understanding and navigating these kinship dynamics are essential for effective leadership in the Filipino educational context, as they inform decision-making, resource allocation, and community engagement strategies.

Filipino cultural dynamics profoundly influence leadership practices within educational institutions, shaping interpersonal relationships, decision-making processes, and power dynamics. By embracing and leveraging these cultural values, educational leaders can cultivate inclusive, collaborative, and effective leadership practices that resonate with the unique socio-cultural context of the Philippines.

Challenges and Opportunities for Leadership Development:

The integrative literature review underscores a spectrum of challenges and opportunities pertinent to the development of school leaders in the Philippines. Challenges encompass navigating the intricate interplay among historical legacies, policy frameworks, and cultural dynamics, alongside addressing pervasive issues such as corruption and ethical leadership deficits. Nonetheless, amidst these challenges lie opportunities for cultivating culturally responsive leadership practices that harness the inherent strengths of Filipino cultural values and community networks to advance educational equity and excellence (Torraco, 2005; Andrin, et al., 2023).

Foremost among the challenges is the complex legacy inherited from historical epochs, particularly colonial periods, which continue to exert a profound influence on contemporary educational systems and leadership paradigms. Colonial legacies, characterized by hierarchical power structures and centralized governance, pose formidable obstacles to the implementation of inclusive and participatory leadership approaches (Bernardo & Garcia, 2006).

Moreover, navigating policy frameworks, such as Republic Act 9155, presents a dual challenge of aligning with global educational standards while remaining attuned to local contexts and cultural nuances. This tension necessitates a delicate balance between adherence to universal principles of educational governance and responsiveness to the diverse needs and values of Filipino communities (Republic of the Philippines, 2011).

Additionally, combating corruption and promoting ethical leadership poses a formidable challenge to leadership development efforts in the Philippines. Instances of malfeasance and nepotism undermine trust in educational institutions and impede efforts to foster a culture of accountability and transparency (Magno, 2004).

Nevertheless, amidst these challenges lie opportunities for transformative leadership development. By embracing Filipino cultural values such as kapwa and pakikisama, school leaders can cultivate inclusive and participatory decision-making processes that empower stakeholders and foster a sense of belonging within educational communities (Jocano, 2001; Cordova Jr, et al., 2024).

Furthermore, leveraging community networks and kinship ties can enhance the effectiveness of leadership initiatives, facilitating grassroots engagement and mobilizing resources to address pressing educational needs (Brillantes & Perante-Calina, 2018).

While the landscape of leadership development in the Philippines is fraught with challenges, there exist significant opportunities for cultivating culturally responsive and ethically grounded leadership practices. By acknowledging and addressing these challenges while harnessing the strengths of Filipino cultural values, school leaders can play a transformative role in advancing educational equity and excellence in the Philippines.

Conclusion:

This study provides a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted landscape of school leadership in the Philippines, shedding light on the intricate interplay of historical legacies, policy frameworks, and cultural dynamics.



Through an integrative literature review, key findings have emerged, illuminating both the challenges and opportunities inherent in the development of school leaders in the Filipino context.

The historical legacy of colonialism has left a lasting imprint on educational systems and leadership practices, shaping hierarchical power structures and centralized governance models. Furthermore, policy frameworks such as Republic Act 9155 reflect global trends in educational governance while necessitating contextualization within the unique socio-cultural milieu of the Philippines.

Cultural dynamics, including Filipino values of *kapwa* and *pakikisama*, alongside intricate kinship systems, significantly influence leadership practices, fostering collaborative decision-making and community engagement (Abella, et al., 2024). However, challenges such as corruption and ethical leadership deficits pose formidable obstacles to leadership development efforts, undermining trust and accountability within educational institutions.

Despite these challenges, there are notable opportunities for fostering transformative leadership practices that leverage the strengths of Filipino cultural values and community networks. By embracing inclusivity, participatory decision-making, and grassroots engagement, school leaders can play a pivotal role in advancing educational equity and excellence in the Philippines.

It is imperative for policymakers, educational stakeholders, and leadership development programs to recognize and address the complexities inherent in the Filipino educational landscape. By cultivating culturally responsive leadership practices and promoting ethical governance, we can strive towards a future where all students have access to quality education and opportunities for success. In doing so, we honor the rich tapestry of Filipino culture and empower future generations to realize their full potential.

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