

Creating a School Leadership Competency Framework: Setting the Standards for Exemplary Performance

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Abstract—An organization is as good as its people. Successful ones align its employee competency development to the attainment of organizational goals. De La Salle Santiago Zobel School (DLSZ) embarked on a competency mapping initiative where all human resource development programs will be anchored on. The major purpose of this study was to validate the leadership domains and behavioral statements that have been culled from document review and identified as essential for exemplary performance. The DLSZ top and middle-level administrators (N=78) from different departments and offices were the research participants. Descriptive research design using the mixed method approach was utilized in this study. Quantitative data were extracted from survey questionnaire while qualitative data were gathered from the focus group discussion. Findings revealed that all the behavioral statements are perceived important and relevant for exemplary leadership by the respondents. Content validity was employed in enhancing the leadership domains and behavioral statements. Construct reliability and validity were measured using confirmatory factor analysis. Based on this study, a school leadership competency framework which lays the foundation for the effective selection and development of leaders was created.

Index Terms—school leadership competencies, leadership competency framework, K to 12, Philippines

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizational success is defined by the quality of its employees. Leaders must be able to clearly communicate people's worth and potential so that they are inspired to see it in themselves. Reference [1] asserts that identifying, developing, and empowering the right people must be a priority since the greatest strength of an

organization is its people's ability to excel and maximize their potential while helping realize the company's vision and goals. Reference [2] states that learning institutions resonate with the United Nations that every child must be provided inclusive and equitable quality education.

Reference [3] affirms that there has been a heightened global interest in identifying and operationalizing the competencies that relate to leadership in education. Competencies are knowledge, skills, and attitudes that individuals demonstrate that lead to desired performance.

Reference [4] avers that competency identification and definition are foundational to effective human resource development and work behavior. Understanding what constitutes effective performance is key. Reference [5] adds that this will give focus on what people need in order to evolve and positively impact the success of the organization. Reference [6] holds the view that leaders need to equip themselves with competencies so as to transform the school effectively.

Literature show that having a competency-based human resource management and development is the means towards exemplary performance. Reference [7] maintains that competency frameworks can increase clarity around performance expectations and establish a clear link between individual and organizational performance.

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Research Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH) developed the Competency Framework for Southeast Asian School Heads in 2003. This has been used as basis for its program offerings for school heads. Reference [8] describes how the international organization initiated the multi-sectoral review that resulted to the updated version of the Competency Framework.

Meanwhile, Salee-on and Langkasa (2017) conducted a study about the development of a model of administrators' leadership competencies for effective job performance in private higher education institutions. The data of Reference [9] revealed desirable leadership competencies related to teaching and learning, research, academic services and preservation of Thai arts and culture among university lecturers from Bangkok, Thailand.

While some leadership competencies are essential to all organizations, attributes that are distinctive to stay faithful to its identity and purpose must be identified. DLSZ embarked on a leadership competency mapping initiative. It started with the formation of an internal multi-sectoral competency framework committee that conducted a review of pertinent Lasallian documents. These included the Philippine Lasallian Family Guiding Principles, the Pilgrims' Handbook, the DLSZ Vision-Mission, Educational Philosophy, Curriculum Framework, Administrators, Faculty, and Staff Manuals. Reference [10] describes the five leadership domains, with ten behavioral statements each, that have been initially identified from these and other related materials. The domains are Espousal of Lasallian Values, Leadership Promise, Career Growth Potential, Mastery of Complexity, and Developmental Orientation.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The focus of this study is to validate the leadership domains and behavioral statements that have been initially identified as essential for exemplary performance. This study intends to answer the following research questions: (1) How do the administrators rate the leadership behavioral statements in terms of importance and relevance? (2) What are the competencies that administrators perceive they need for exemplary performance? Results will be used as bases in creating the school's Leadership Competency Framework that lays the foundation for the effective selection, development, evaluation, and promotion of leaders.

Reference [11] describes the descriptive mixed method approach that has been employed in this research. To expand the quantitative findings, the researchers had an open-ended question about the respondents' perceptions on the essential leadership attributes in the survey and through a focus group discussion anchored on the appreciative inquiry model. Reference [12] illustrates how this model works.

A. Participants

All 78 school administrators voluntarily involved themselves in this study. Of these, 28 (36%) are males and 50 (64%) are females. Fifty-five (71%) fall within the 31-50 age range, while the remaining 23 (29%) are either below 30 years old or are nearing the retirement age of 60. Although 17 (22%) have been administrators for 11 years and more, 61 (78%) of them have been serving as leaders for 10 years or less.

B. Data Collection

Academic and administrative leaders from DLSZ, a private basic educational institution that has two campuses in the Cities of Muntinlupa and Imus in the Philippines, voluntarily participated. The researchers personally sought the approval of the school administration to conduct the study, and the consent of the personnel to answer the survey questionnaire. Eight of them who have served for at least five years participated in the focus group discussion. The data gathering took place in Academic Year 2019-2020.

To address the objectives of the study, the researchers sought the perceptions of participants on school leadership competencies. Three experts examined the items in terms of relevance and appropriateness. The first part of the questionnaire sought to establish the demographic profile of the administrators. In the second part, they identified essential leadership competencies. Lastly, behavioral statements drawn from the themes on school leadership were rated in terms of importance and relevance using a four-point Likert scale ranging from: (1) Not important and relevant; (2) Low importance and relevance; (3) Important and relevant; and (4) High importance and relevance. The internal consistency and reliability were computed at 0.942.

C. Data Analysis

Statistical analysis of the participants' responses to the questionnaire was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Qualitative data were subjected to simple thematic analysis that is described in Reference [13]. The leadership domains and behavioral statements were further reviewed. The competency framework committee's re-examination resulted to the renaming of the five leadership domains and the addition of three more. The behavioral statements were also subjected to either reclassification or merging. References 14 and 15 how construct reliability and validity were measured through confirmatory factor analysis, respectively.

III. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

A. Participants' Perceptions of the Behavioral Statements

Based on their perceptions, the participants were asked to rate the importance and relevance of behavioral statements per domain. The results are shown in Tables I to V.

The first table is about Espousal of Lasallian Values. This is about demonstrating a deep desire to serve in the light of the Lasallian tradition of faith, zeal for service, and communion in mission. Table I shows that all the behavioral statements are perceived important and relevant. The overall mean score is 3.93 and the standard deviation is 0.27. These suggest that the respondents value integrating a faith perspective in all aspects of leadership, considering this as a way to maintain fidelity to the Lasallian Mission. Service is viewed as a condition in the quest for excellence and self-improvement. These

indicate that administrators believe in using logical and virtue-based approach in doing their roles.

TABLE I. IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE OF BEHAVIORAL STATEMENTS ON ESPOUSAL OF LASALLIAN VALUES

Behavioral Statements	Quantitative	
	Mean	SD
An in-depth understanding of the Lasallian Culture	3.94	0.25
Alignment of personal values with Lasallian Core Values	3.90	0.35
The desire to be of greater service to others	3.97	0.16
The ability to inspire people towards a common goal	3.94	0.25
The ability to set priorities, goals and timetables that support the Lasallian Mission effectively	3.96	0.19
A passion for achieving or surpassing results	3.94	0.25
Knowledge of the Lasallian Guiding Principles	3.87	0.38
The ability to develop plans that address current needs and anticipate newly emerging opportunities and barriers	3.97	0.16
Encouraging others to come up with new ideas or ways of working	3.91	0.33
Empowering and developing the talent of others	3.91	0.33
	3.93	0.27

4 – High importance and relevance; 3 – Important and relevant; 2 – Low importance and relevance; & 1 – Not important and relevant

The second table is about Leadership Promise. This is about embodying leadership competencies and having high influence on people. Table II shows that all the ten behavioral statements are perceived to be important and relevant. The overall mean score is 3.86 and the standard deviation is 0.35. These results suggest that the respondents value the importance of sharing their expertise while handling responsibilities. They also see that the institutional vision must be communicated effectively to move people into action. They view respecting individual differences and forging meaningful working relationships as essential.

TABLE II. IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE OF BEHAVIORAL STATEMENTS ON LEADERSHIP PROMISE

Behavioral Statements	Quantitative	
	Mean	SD
Seeking new learning proactively	3.86	0.35
Eliciting formal and informal feedback from others	3.77	0.45
Providing formal and informal feedback to others	3.79	0.44
Enabling others to reach their full potential	3.87	0.37
Service-orientation to society and environment	3.88	0.36
Conservation and efficient usage of resources	3.90	0.31
Respect for individual differences	3.92	0.27
Building collaborative, inclusive working relationships	3.96	0.19
Adaptability to different protocols and working styles of others	3.87	0.34
Management of expectations	3.79	0.41
	3.86	0.35

4 – High importance and relevance; 3 – Important and relevant; 2 – Low importance and relevance; & 1 – Not important and relevant

Career Growth Potential is next. This is about exhibiting competencies beyond current roles and responsibilities. Table III shows that all the behavioral

statements are perceived important and relevant. The overall mean score is 3.92 and the standard deviation is 0.26. These suggest that the respondents value job competency learning and mastery while contributing to policy development and implementation. They put premium on working towards gaining personal and professional credibility.

TABLE III. IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE OF BEHAVIORAL STATEMENTS ON CAREER GROWTH POTENTIAL

Behavioral Statements	Quantitative	
	Mean	SD
Mindfulness for small details	3.74	0.44
Adherence to policies, procedures, and standards	3.92	0.31
Implementation of policies, procedures, and standards	3.94	0.25
Development of policies, procedures, and standards	3.92	0.27
Personal credibility	3.96	0.19
Professional credibility	3.94	0.25
Sees new possibilities to take the institution to a higher level	3.90	0.31
Creating and communicating a compelling vision or direction	3.94	0.25
Taking ownership of assigned responsibilities	3.95	0.22
Delivering results on commitment	3.99	0.11
	3.92	0.26

4 – High importance and relevance; 3 – Important and relevant; 2 – Low importance and relevance; & 1 – Not important and relevant

The fourth table is about Mastery of Complexity. This is characterized by adapting and navigating through ambiguity and difficulty. Table IV shows that all the behavioral statements are perceived important and relevant. The overall mean score is 3.92 and the standard deviation is 0.30. Respondents believe that they need to master integrative thinking in solving operational problems and challenges. Exuding composure and thriving in complexity are competencies they likewise need to develop as these will put them in an advantageous position.

TABLE IV. IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE OF BEHAVIORAL STATEMENTS ON MASTERY OF COMPLEXITY

Behavioral Statements	Quantitative	
	Mean	SD
Setting parameters for continuous improvement	3.82	0.42
The ability to make appropriate decisions in uncertain and ambiguous situations	3.92	0.31
The ability to negotiate and resolve conflict	3.94	0.29
Emotional resilience	3.86	0.42
Grasping problems quickly and “thinking on one’s feet”	3.88	0.39
Awareness of one’s own beliefs, goals, values, thoughts, feelings, and behavior and their effects in influencing one’s actions	3.90	0.35
The ability to state one’s opinion firmly and positively	3.94	0.34
Interacting with fairness, honesty and truthfulness	4.00	0.00
Working consistently with quality awareness	3.95	0.22
The ability to present ideas, concepts, plans, and procedures clearly to target audience	3.95	0.27
	3.92	0.30

4 – High importance and relevance; 3 – Important and relevant; 2 – Low importance and relevance; & 1 – Not important and relevant

Being coachable, seeking, and acting on feedback encompass developmental orientation. Table V shows that all the behavioral statements are perceived important and relevant. The overall mean score is 3.90 and the standard deviation is 0.31. Results reflect that having a high level of self-awareness is desired by the respondents. This inspires them to commit to lifelong experiential learning to maximize their potential, and contribute to what the organization aspires to achieve.

TABLE V. IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE OF BEHAVIORAL STATEMENTS ON DEVELOPMENTAL ORIENTATION

Behavioral Statements	Quantitative	
	Mean	SD
Discussing and sharing opinions to arrive at a constructive agreement	3.87	0.37
Listening to others' views with patience and understanding	3.88	0.36
Expressing oneself with clarity and precision	3.92	0.31
The ability to move others in getting things done	3.92	0.31
Awareness of what is going on in the workplace and responding in a suitable manner to situations as they arise	3.95	0.22
A Growth Mindset i.e., Embraces challenges, Accepts criticism and negative feedback as constructive, Persists in the face of setbacks, Learns from failure	3.96	0.19
Demonstrates a calculated risk-taking attitude	3.81	0.40
Displays genuine love for students and for learning	3.92	0.27
The ability to manage financial resources	3.83	0.38
The ability to see the work as both a profession and a mission	3.96	0.25
	3.90	0.31

4 – High importance and relevance; 3 – Important and relevant; 2 – Low importance and relevance; & 1 – Not important and relevant

Instructional leadership, managerial leadership, strategic thinking and innovation, personal excellence and stakeholder involvement make up the domains in the study done for Southeast Asian School Heads.

A. Essential Leadership Competencies

Respondents identified what they perceived as essential leadership attributes for an exemplary performance. Majority comments are parallel to the behavioral statements in the questionnaire. For the personal attributes, they consider ability to relate with different people, being compassionate, empowering, and service-oriented as essential. On the professional level, area expertise, decision making and organizational skills are perceived important.

The study of Raksanakorn et al. (2020) looked at the necessary attributes that primary school administrators believe they must possess. Reference 16 lists these as follows: (1) creativity/ innovation; (2) having a vision; (3) being a desired leader; (4) interpersonal relations; and (5) relation with work.

B. Leadership Domains and Behavioral Statements

The proposed Lasallian Leadership Competency Framework has eight leadership domains, namely: (1) Lasallian Leadership; (2) Bias for Action; (3) Change and Innovation; (4) Lifelong Learning; (5) Collaborative Leadership and Community Building; (6) Office

Management and Daily Operations; (7) Communications; and (8) Professional Attributes.

The sixth table is about the construct reliability and validity of the leadership domains. It shows that Collaborative Leadership and Community Building has insufficient reliability estimate among all the constructs. Alternatively, composite reliability estimates show that all the constructs show reliability.

TABLE VI. CONSTRUCT RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE LEADERSHIP DOMAINS

Leadership Domain	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Lasallian Leadership (LL)	0.720	0.806
Bias for Action (BA)	0.814	0.871
Change and Innovation (CI)	0.658	0.793
Lifelong Learning (LLL)	0.786	0.848
Collaborative Leadership and Community Building (CLCB)	0.517	0.757
Office Management & Daily Operations (OMDO)	0.728	0.820
Communications (C)	0.892	0.917
Professional Attributes (PA)	0.674	0.806

Reference [17] characterizes factor loadings as part of the outcome from factor analysis which serves as a data reduction method designed to explain the correlations between observed variables using a small number of factors. Results in Table VII show the variables have high large positive loadings on the corresponding factors. Based on the factor loadings from the confirmatory factor analysis, 39 behavioral statements across the eight leadership domains will be retained.

TABLE VII. FACTOR LOADINGS FOR CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

Matrix	Outer Loadings	Matrix	Outer Loadings
LL Statement 2	0.657	CLCB Statement 1	0.882
LL Statement 4	0.565	CLCB Statement 2	0.697
LL Statement 5	0.610	CLCB Statement 4	0.541
LL Statement 6	0.737	OMDO Statement 2	0.734
LL Statement 7	0.789	OMDO Statement 3	0.836
BA Statement 2	0.564	OMDO Statement 4	0.887
BA Statement 4	0.852	OMDO Statement 5	0.478
BA Statement 6	0.694	OMDO Statement 6	0.632
BA Statement 7	0.846	C Statement 1	0.735
BA Statement 8	0.815	C Statement 2	0.703
CI Statement 1	0.741	C Statement 3	0.623
CI Statement 2	0.683	C Statement 4	0.769
CI Statement 3	0.634	C Statement 5	0.882
CI Statement 4	0.727	C Statement 6	0.870
LLL Statement 1	0.709	C Statement 7	0.867
LLL Statement 2	0.628	PA Statement 1	0.570
LLL Statement 3	0.660	PA Statement 2	0.596
LLL Statement 5	0.808	PA Statement 3	0.828
LLL Statement 6	0.677	PA Statement 4	0.839
LLL Statement 7	0.678		

IV. CONCLUSION

Administrators who take the lead in realizing the school's vision and mission are expected to exhibit a high level of competence and expertise. In this time of worldwide pandemic, the educative demands related to the wholistic formation of learners are characterized with complexity.

Creating a leadership competency framework that is aligned with the organization's identity, purpose and values should be viewed as a priority agenda. It outlines what makes effective leaders, and how their roles relate to the goals and success of their organization. A competency framework is an effective way to monitor the knowledge, skills, and attributes of the leaders. This information will be vital in the efficient planning of leadership development initiatives. Having a framework enables the organization to measure the current competency levels of the leaders to ensure that they have the expertise to run the organization. The ultimate goal is to set the standards for exemplary performance through a leadership competency framework.

Specifically, the Lasallian Leadership Competency Framework will be a model for growth with emphasis on the Lasallian Context. As seen in Reference [18], the domains, key elements, and behavioral indicators provide details to describe good leadership but broad enough to be applicable in the various contexts in which school leaders function throughout their careers. The participants consider the leadership domains and behavioral statements as important and relevant. This may be because they see the interrelatedness among the constructs. Ultimately, the school community deserves exemplary performance from their leaders.

V. RECOMMENDATION

Reference [19] emphasizes that enhancing competencies based on a framework created specifically for leaders of an organization is a human resource initiative that must be consciously prioritized by the leadership team. In addition, gathering competency information from the persons themselves who perform the function is a vital step in this standardized approach to ensuring exemplary performance. This way, they take ownership of the process and the outcome.

After the finalization and the approval of the Lasallian Leadership Competency Framework, it is recommended that an application guidebook be prepared as reference in the effective selection and development of leaders.

Notwithstanding that the results are specific to the school involved in this study, the proposed leadership competency framework has the potential to articulate and advance the unique discipline of educational leadership in general. The creation of consensus-based set of competencies can focus efforts to the formation of school leaders and develop evidence-based practices in creating development activities for them. Additionally, similar future studies may benefit from having a bigger respondent size, and additional criterion and construct validity measures. Correlation with performance

evaluation scores, correlation with personality inventory scores, and other indicators of leadership or associated variables may be explored. Needless to say, it is incumbent upon schools to have leaders who can meet the demands of educating the future generations.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Ramos and Bersamin conducted the research and analyzed the data. Prudente and Aguja provided the expert guidance regarding the research design and statistical treatments. Ramos wrote the paper. All authors had approved the final version.

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Her involvement in research was recognized in 2015 when she was awarded the Lasallian Pillar of Excellence in Research by De La Salle University-Manila. In the same year, Dr. Prudente was the recipient of the 2015 Lifetime National Achievement Award of the National Research Council of the Philippines (NRCP). Moreover, Prof. Prudente was recently recognized as the 2018 Outstanding Filipino JSPS Fellow in the field of Education by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS).



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