READINESS TO LEAD: PERSPECTIVES OF DOCTORATE STUDENTS IN ANSWERING THE CALL TO LEAD IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how Bulacan State University doctorate students in Malolos City, Philippines aimed to capacitate themselves with the necessary skills, knowledge and values on how to be school administrators. Specifically, this study examined the perspectives of the graduate program students in answering the call to lead in schools based on their educational characteristics; their perceived work readiness ideas in answering the call to lead as measured by responses to selected items on Educational Qualification, Knowledge on Effective Leadership Styles/ Approaches, Exposure to Related Administrative Tasks and Real- Life Experience, Repertoire of Skills as a Leader, Engagement in leadership-oriented conversation with other graduate students, Presence of mentor/s to facilitate leadership growth, Depth of formal discussions in the Ph. D. program classes and Attendance to seminars/conferences.

Twenty-one doctorate students were subjected to the study. Respondents were employed in the private sector as college dean, lecturers and a pre-school owner. Three of the respondents which is 14% of the total population worked in the private sector, while 86% came from all public schools in the secondary and elementary. All of the respondents were working while pursuing their doctorate.

Based on the results of the study, the majority of the respondents which comprised 86%, graduated in their Masters' Degree Program at Bulacan State University. The remaining 14%, came from other universities in the region. Respondents were employed in the private sector as college dean, lecturers and a pre-school owner. Three of the respondents which is 14% of the total population worked in the private sector, while 86% came from all public schools in the secondary and elementary.

For the present study, self-perceived readiness to lead was defined and situated in the context of the self-rater survey of the 8 indicators the researcher believed to have helped the respondents become ready to lead in schools. Eight (8) indicators were enumerated to measure their readiness to lead schools. Respondents in general are ready to accept administrative positions, particularly of being school principals. This finding was supported by the computed general mean of 3.66 respectively. Among all the eight (8) indicators, 6 revealed a "ready" answer, while the remaining 2 indicators marked "almost ready". In a nutshell, students who are enrolled in the PhD program specifically those who are majoring in Educational Management were ready to enter the field of administration.

Based on the significant findings of the study, these recommendations were aired: The graduate program curriculum should offer a leadership program, incorporation of working in the field to

expose students to related tasks and real-life experiences should be included as part of the requirement. Aside from classroom-based discussions, seminars and trainings focusing on leadership management can be initiated to further enrich students' knowledge in different fields. Lastly, mentoring schemes should be enhanced by creating a pool of mentors within and outside the classrooms.

Keywords: Leadership And Management, Work Readiness, Administrator, Administrative Tasks, Real-life Experience, Skills, Leadership Growth, Graduate Students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Successful school heads' leadership and management can be developed and expanded over time, and this can be possible through enrolment in a graduate program, knowledge of leadership styles and approaches, exposure to related administrative tasks, presence of mentors in leadership and administration are just few among the different preparations to become a soon-to-be school administrator. School leaders' ability to reflect on their actions, their own perceptions and the perceptions of others are necessary to complete the challenges of their endeavor to be effective and efficient.

What schools need now is not just putting the right person in the position, but assessing their level of readiness on competencies and preparation they went through that will enhance and sustain an environment of efficient and effective leadership and management. It is then necessary to assess the level of readiness of the soon-to-be school principals to challenge for policy makers, graduate programs and for practitioners to find the right balance between what really make a school principal learning effective.

A school organization, like any other organization, needs a strong leadership and management. Both set the way the school organization goes. The application of different management and leadership principles and practices in school setting complement each other. The school organization is continually changing and the need for both leadership and management today is more important, serious, and challenging. It is grappled by different problems and pressures to address the needs of the education system. Schools are expected to immediately cope and adapt with the continuous changing environment to survive. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2000) cited Senge's assertion that a school is a learning organization that must be studied as a whole which includes its relationship with its parts and the external environment. Aquino (2000) stressed that management of school is a complex function that requires sophistication in practice

Doctorate students in Bulacan State University aim at capacitating themselves with the necessary skills, knowledge and values on how to be school administrators in the near future. The goal of a quality education in higher education like Bulacan State University is to sharpen the skills of students, unleash them to be seekers of new knowledge and to ultimately gain employment or use these skills to solve problems. This vision was anchored on the intention of the state to create citizen as the backbone for the economy. Even so, a skilled and educated workforce that is ready to solve future problems is celebrated. Although education in particular does not have a single purpose, education prepares students to be good citizens, skilled workforce, culturally literate, critical thinkers and to compete in the global marketplace (Jones, 2012).

2. METHODOLOGY
Statement of the Problem

The general problem of the study was: What are the perspectives of the graduate program students in answering the call to lead in schools?

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How may the profile of the graduate program students specifically those who were taking up Doctor in Philosophy major in Educational Management at Bulacan State University be described on the following academic characteristics:
   a. College or University Graduated from?
   b. Sector Connected with?
   c. Years in the Academe?
   d. Number of Years in the Ph. D program?
2. What are the perceived work readiness ideas among Ph. D students in answering the call to lead as measured by responses to selected items on:
   a. Educational Qualification?
   b. Knowledge on Effective Leadership Styles/ Approaches?
   c. Exposure to Related Administrative Tasks and Real- Life Experience?
   d. Repertoire of Skills as a Leader?
   e. Engagement in leadership-oriented conversation with other graduate students?
   f. Presence of mentor/s to facilitate leadership growth?
   g. Depth of formal discussions in the Ph. D. program classes? and
   h. Attendance to seminars/conferences
3. What are the other factors that they considered to be influencing their readiness to lead?

This research used quantitative research method which used the purposive technique in determining the respondents since the researcher belonged to the same class were the respondents were her classmates. The study made use of quantitative data to answer the general and specific objectives of the study. Responses were gathered through a survey questionnaire which was self-made by the researcher, this was used to describe and determine the readiness level in answering the call to lead by the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: academic profile and their perspectives on their readiness to lead a school in the near future. The questionnaire was administered through a face-to face encounter to the respondents and by sending it through an electronic mail or messenger application over the internet.

In addition, data were tabulated and analyzed using the SPSS software 2.0. Frequency counts, percentage and weighted mean were used to analyze the results of the study.

Finally, the quantitative data were coded to fully get the gist of the answers. Verbatim responses were likewise presented in the discussion to perfectly capture the ideas of the respondents.

3. RESULTS
Profile of the Respondents in Term of their Academic Characteristics

Table 1. College or University Graduated from
Finishing a masters' degree is a prerequisite for students to pursue further studies such as

Name of School Graduated from	Population
Bulacan State University	18
Other University/ College	3
Total	21

doctorate programs. Bulacan State University offered both programs which catered students from different nearby areas like Pampanga, Manila, Valenzuela, and as far as Nueva Ecija.

The table showed that majority of the respondent which comprised 86%, graduated in their Masters' Degree Program at Bulacan State University. The remaining 14%, came from other universities in the region. In can be inferred then that students who finished their Masters Degree in Bulacan State University, appeared to pursue their Ph. D program at the same university.

Table 2. Sector Associated with

Sector Associated with	Population
Public	18
Private	3
Total	21

Respondents were employed in the private sector as college dean, lecturer and a pre-school owner. Three among the respondents which is 14% of the total population worked in the private sector, while 86% came from all public schools in the secondary and elementary. Based from the given data, all of the respondents were working while pursuing their doctorate degree.

Table 3. Years in the Academe

Years in the Academe	Population
1-5 years	0
5-10 years	6
10-15 years	13
15 years and above	2
Total	21

As educators, exposure to the field can somehow influence readiness to lead. The table showed the number of years the respondents spent in the education field. Two among the respondents indicated to have 15 years and above duration of stay in the academe which is 10% of the total population. On the other hand, majority of the respondents were 10-15 years already which is 62%. The remaining 28% recorded to have spent 5-10 years in the academe.

Respondents' years of service refer to being a teacher or either holding any administrative position as the case maybe. Given the importance of exposure to the education arena, this will help them hone their knowledge, skills and values necessary of becoming a leader in the future. A significant percentage of respondents have more than 10 years in this field of experience. Almost all of the respondents are regular teachers, only few hold administrative positions.

Table 4. Years in the Ph. D. program

Years in the Ph. D program	Population
1year	10
2 years	10
3 years	1
4 years and above	0
Total	21

Bulacan State University mandated its students to finish graduate studies within a given period of time. For Masters Degree, the school mandated 5 years to finish it, while the Ph. D program, allowed students to have 7 years to finish.

Finishing a Ph. D degree entails time and dedication. Twenty (20) respondents answered to have at least 1-2 years as they take their subjects. The data showed a generalization that they enroll in so many consecutive semesters just to finish the degree. As showed in the table, only 1 respondent reflected 3 years in pursuing the program. It can be then inferred that these breeds of Ph. D students set priorities on their educational qualification as soon-to- be school leaders.

Table 4. Profile of Respondents

Profile	Mean	Standard Deviation
Col/ Univ. Graduated	1.14	.358
Sector connected	1.14	.358
Years in the Academe	2.8	.601
Years in the Ph. D. program	1.6	.597

Profiling was done by the researcher to establish common grounds like college or university graduated, sector connected with, years in the academe, and years in the Ph. D program. As showed, respondents were homogeneous in distribution as reflected by the standard deviation from the variable 1 until variable 4.

Variable 1 showed the university the respondents graduated from which gained a computed mean of 1.14 respectively. This concluded that respondents were Bulacan State University graduates and pursued their doctorate degrees in the same institution. The same computed mean of 1.14 was registered on variable 2 which showed as to what sector they were all part of. Moreover, respondents' years of service revealed a 2.8 mean; thus showed that 10-15 years in the

academe was their exposure to the field. Variable 4, which is the number of years in the program, revealed a computed mean of 1.5. It is very noteworthy that the Ph. D students pursued the program maybe just after finishing masters' degree or they continuously enrolled each semester religiously without any idea of stopping it for the meantime.

The next discussion focused on the perceived readiness to lead by the respondents. Self-perceived readiness is the point at which an individual's understanding of what is expected of him/her coincides with his/her belief in his/her ability to perform the task competently. For the present study, self-perceived readiness to lead was defined and situated in the context of the self-rater survey of the 8 indicators the researcher believed to have helped the respondents become ready to lead in schools.

**Table 5. Perspective of the Respondents Regarding their Readiness to Lead Schools**

Statements	Computed Mean	Interpretation
Educational Qualification	**3.86**	**Ready**
Knowledge on Effective Leadership Styles/ Approaches	**3.67**	**Ready**
Exposure to Related Administrative Tasks and Real- Life Experiences	**3.14**	**Almost Ready**
Repertoire of Skills as a Leader	**3.67**	**Ready**
Engagement in leadership-oriented conversation with other graduate students	**4.19**	**Ready**
Presence of mentor/s to facilitate leadership growth	**3.52**	**Ready**
Depth of formal discussions in the Ph. D. program classes	**4.14**	**Ready**
Attendance to seminars/conferences	**3.12**	**Almost Ready**
Total Mean	**3.66**	**Ready**

Legend: 5- Fully Ready   4- Ready 3- Almost Ready 2- Partially Ready 1- Not Ready

Table 5, showed the perspectives of the respondents based from given indicators. Eight (8) indicators were enumerated to measure their readiness to lead schools. It can be deduced that respondents in general are ready in accepting administrative positions particularly of being a school principal. This finding was supported by the computed general mean of 3.66 respectively.

Among all the eight (8) indicators, 6 revealed a "ready" answer, while the remaining 2 indicators marked " almost ready". It can be safe to conclude then, that students who are enrolled in the Ph.D program specifically those who are majoring in Educational Management were ready to enter the field of administration.

To have a clearer understanding of the findings, below is a graphical presentation of the data collected.
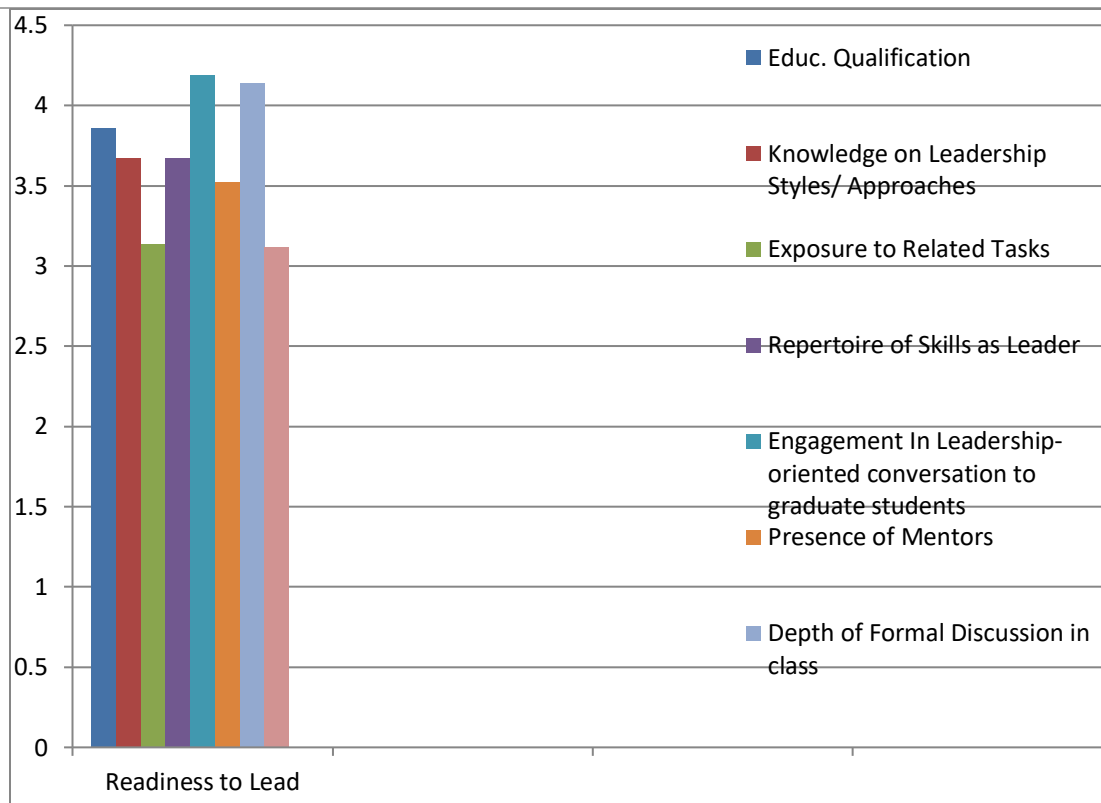
Illustration 1. Graphical illustration of the Data

Among all the eight (8) indicators), engagement in leadership-oriented conversation with graduate students earned the highest mean of 4.19, followed by depth of formal discussion in class. These two indicators are related in the sense that all respondents agreed to have benefited from the discussion whether through formal or informal ways inside the classroom. It can be concluded that these indicators were equipping the soon-to-be leaders the necessary ingredient to become successful leaders. It can be inferred also that discussions in the classroom were substantial and students considered them to be of great help in their preparation to lead. They believed that formal and informal learning are both learning. They both involve building new neural connections in the brain and adapting to new conditions. They are very much the same. (Cross, J, 2007) In terms of the intention of the learner; both formal and non-formal learning is intentional (i.e. the individual sets out with the intention of learning something), whereas with informal learning it is (mostly) unintentional (i.e. it happens as a consequence of doing something else). With informal learning, the learner may be aware s/he has learnt something, but in many cases may be totally unaware of it. All of the respondents were then able to learn through formal and informal ways in the classroom.

The third highest computed mean was their educational qualification. In the Philippines, being a school principal, an applicant must meet the educational requirement of finishing at least Bachelor's Degree in Secondary or Elementary; or Bachelor's degree with 18 professional education units as stipulated in Deped Order No.39, Series 2007. Respondents answered "ready" under educational qualification which is supposed to be "fully ready" as stipulated in the Deped Order.

The fourth highest mean was registered both on knowledge on leadership styles/approaches and their repertoire of leadership skills. Both knowledge and skills were considered in these indicators. Katozai (2005) argued that knowledge is a chief weapon in the hand of soon-to-be principal and therefore he/she should be a qualified man. An aspirant must be equipped with knowledge about methods of teaching, organization, and educational psychology . He should have up-to-date knowledge of the theories and principles of education presented by modern educationists. Nsubuga (2009) has recommended that a continuous professional development (CPD) system for school leaders be established and institutionalized in the education system. Nsubuga (2009) concluded that unless principals are well equipped with knowledge and skills in management and leadership, they would not be able to improve school performance significantly.

Sixth on rank was the respondents' presence of mentors to help them travel the journey of becoming a school principal. This indicator recorded a computed mean of 3.52. Mentoring is another crucial aspect of becoming a school principal. Three functions of mentoring are professional, career and psychosocial development. The professional development function refers to helping others learn the knowledge, skills, behaviors' and values of the leader's role. The career development function includes issues of career satisfaction, awareness and advancement. The psychosocial development function focuses on personal and social well-being, as well as role expectations, conflict and clarification/identity. Several primary processes are inherent in mentoring. The first and most basic is personal relationship. The second is active guidance, teaching and challenge. The third involves the management and implementation of a planned curriculum, especially one that involves the active collaboration of others in the school. These processes of personal relationship and active guidance involve an intentionality that is critical to the success of mentoring. Other mentoring processes include teaching/coaching, reflective mentoring, and sponsorship. The benefits of mentoring for the mentees can be summarized as: exposure to new ideas and creativity; visibility with key personnel; protection from damaging situations; opportunities for challenging and risk-taking activities; increased confidence and competence and improved reflection.

One of the primary development strategies for soon-to-be school principals is on-the-job experience or exposure to related administrative tasks and real life situations. Respondents recorded a computed mean of 3.14 which mean they were ready; yet this indicator revealed to have the next lowest mean among all the eight indicators. The reason behind such answers can be attributed to their present positions as regular teachers. Only five among the respondents were presently practicing leadership roles. The five respondents were classified as 2 Head Teachers, 1 College Dean, 1 school owner-administrator, and 1 school principal. The 16 remaining respondents were Teacher II and III respectively. As a result, little on-the-job experiences of the respondent further need for extensive training, support, and feedback to assist them in their next journeys.

The lowest computed mean (3.12) was about respondents' attendance to seminars and trainings but still interpreted to be "ready". Since majority of the respondents were teachers, their trainings and seminars were just attuned to their positions as well. Only few selected respondents scored 5 under trainings for they seek trainings and seminars through their own means. Though the group mean suggested a "ready" interpretation, it is undeniable that there are multiple benefits to attending an education conference: listening to inspirational big ideas, gaining quick tips you can apply, developing new connections and strengthening old ones are just some of the benefits. Returning to school refreshed and inspired will benefit the whole school. At a personal

level, attending conferences allowed someone to sharpen leadership skills, as well as developing and nurturing a particular area of interest.

The next discussion focused on the verbatim responses of the respondents to the question: What makes you ready to accept administrative position?

R1-With the voluminous tasks of a teacher and working under pressured circumstances, the respondent considered herself as "capacitated, effective, well and good" to any managerial duties and responsibilities. Aside from, the respondent was equipped of the required knowledge on organizational and educational management.

R2- Passing the principalship exam will make me eligible for the position. I am almost on the point of finishing my subjects in my Ph. D. I really would want to be a part of the "Change" in the department. I owe this mindset to my professors.

R3- I think I'm not ready to accept administrative position. Still aiming to get more real life experiences.

R4- Personal study on issuances of Deped, CHED and the Gov't agencies which are relevant to the duties of an administrator.

R5- With my years of experience in handling different programs and projects, I was able to acquire the skills of a good leader. Most of the time, I am also doing the work/ task of my immediate superior. I believe it gives the right opportunity to lead, I will be able to do what is the right thing to do. If you are aspiring to become a leader, you must study the leadership styles of your superiors and pick the right skills to possess and don't duplicate the skills that will not contribute to the organization.

R6-My experiences to lead teachers and organization such as science department coordinator, president of Bulacan Secondary Science Teachers association, President of faculty club, and attendance in school management trainings made me ready to accept administrative position.

R7-Advices and help from my leaders and mentors make me somehow ready for administrative positions.

R8- I believe I am now ready to accept administrative position because of the philosophies, theories and principles that I learned in the graduate school and now I am applying it as one of the curriculum chairpersons in the senior high school program in our school.

R9- My motivation and will to change the system in educational leadership in our schools division

R10- I have been exposed to leadership tasks, I acted as OIC for how many years and I made decisions which developed by skills and knowledge in the field.

R11- I have a lot of readings about human relationship and I believe it is necessary for a leader to know how is is going to deal with subordinates in order to navigate them towards the school vision and objectives.

R12- I have been the promoting youth leadership programs and I was exposed to leadership ideas as the adviser. I have learned also from the discussions during my classes in my Ph. D.

R13- I am presently a Head Teacher, this made me practice my administrative skills.

R14- I am not fully ready to accept administrative position, but I am trying my best to finish my Ph.d degree to fully equip myself to become an administrator.

R15- As a dean of my college, I believe I was exposed to the "real field" already. I believe I have the capacity to lead.

R16- Finishing my Ph. D in BulSU will make me ready to accept administrative position.

R17- With all the learnings in the class coupled with relevant trainings and exposure to real life situations as a coordinator, I think I am almost ready to be a

principal.

R18- I am at my last semester in my Ph. D, I may have learned so much from my subjects, but I think I need more exposure to related administrative tasks for I am just a teacher III.

R19- My knowledge on different leadership approaches and how administrative issues can be possibly resolved.

R20- If given the chance, I will take the principalship exam and apply all what I learned here in BSU.

R21- I will be pursuing my dream as a school principal.

The above mentioned verbatim responses were highlighted in these following concepts:

1. Knowledge of administrative/leadership ideas or approaches and other management concepts made the respondents ready to accept administrative positions.
2. Class discussion from professors and even classmates were substantial and very evident in the responses. This would also reflect that the Ph. D program offered a coherent learning to the students.
3. Exposure to administrative related tasks can contribute to their expertise and skills but their present position hindered them to make this happen.
4. Finishing their Ph. D will make them more equipped as leaders. They really hoped to apply all those teachings to the real world.
5. Relevant trainings and seminars were just the last on the list of all the indicators. This concluded that respondents were just almost ready in terms of their attendance to these trainings.
6. Mentoring along with relevant trainings were the two lowest indicators, it can be concluded that mentoring in the workplace seems to be lacking.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Aspiring to be a school principal needs tremendous preparation. It also comes with a fair share of challenges. In order to be a school principal, he/she must exhibit a variety of different traits and characteristics that will help the schools run well.

The transition from being a teacher to becoming a school principal takes time, experience, skills, and commitment. Becoming a workplace leader is possible for him/her who is willing to put in the effort and develop the skills required for leadership.

Leadership is both an opportunity and a challenge. Opportunity in the sense that he/she could show his/her own definition of leadership, moreover, it is an opportunity to practice learned concepts in the four corners of the classroom. This could also be an opportunity to realize his/her dream and be a part of that elusive "change" in the system. Leadership is a challenge. Every leader should go through a period of preparation. Doing so ensures a leader knows the roles and responsibilities he's stepping into. Moreover, at present situation, the role of a principal is to provide strategic direction in the school system. Principals enrich curricula, assess teaching methods, monitor student achievement, encourage parent involvement, revise policies and procedures, administer the budget, hire and evaluate staff and oversee facilities. Other important duties entail developing safety protocols and emergency response procedures. These were just few among the duties and responsibilities of a school principal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More indicators should be included to fully capture what makes a soon-to-be school principal ready to accept administrative position.
2. The graduate program curriculum should offer leadership program, an incorporation of working in the field to expose students with related tasks and real life experiences should be included as part of the requirement.
3. Aside from classroom- based discussions, seminars and trainings focusing on leadership management can be initiated to further enrich students' knowledge in different fields.
4. Mentoring schemes should be enhanced through creating pool of mentors within and outside the classrooms.
5. An in-depth analysis of the data should be made by using other method of research.

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